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Philistines Weren't Aegean Pirates After All

*New study of 3,200-year-old documents
from Ramses III suggests the much-reviled
Philistines were not alien belligerents but
native Middle Easterners*

By Ariel David

Jul 23, 2017

**Archaeologists find the last hideout of
the Jewish Revolt in Jerusalem**

- **Oldest modern human remains outside
Africa found in Israel**
- **Not by bread alone Neolithic people in
Israel first to farm fava beans, 10,000
years ago**

Research into ancient Egyptian records from the 12th century B.C.E. is shedding new light on a mystery archaeologists have been debating for decades: the origin of the Philistines and other marauding "Sea Peoples" that appeared in the Levant during the late Bronze Age.

The research, and other recent discoveries, suggest the enigmatic Philistines may have been a native Middle Eastern population, rather than invading pirates from the Aegean islands, as traditional scholarship holds.

The Philistines may also have played a much less nefarious role than previously thought in the sudden and unexplained collapse of great civilizations – including the Hittite empire, Egypt and Mycenae – that occurred around the 12th century BCE.



*Uncovering the Philistine graveyard, dating to
about 3,000 years ago, in Ashkelon. Gil Cohen
Magen*

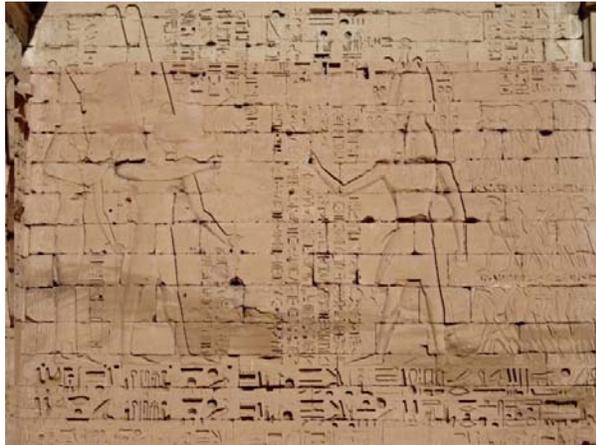
"We shouldn't think of the Philistines and the other Sea Peoples as this huge coalition of Mediterranean fighters who whoosh through the land and destroy everything in their way," says Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, the curator of Egyptian archaeology at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, whose doctoral research at Tel Aviv University resulted in the article published last week in the *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*.

Biblical influences

The study reinterprets ancient Egyptian records from the reign of Pharaoh Ramses III, which have long been known to researchers and have formed the basis of what we know about the early history of the Sea Peoples, of which the Philistines were just one group.

The so-called Harris Papyrus, a biography of Ramses III written under his son and successor Ramses IV, tells us that the pharaoh defeated the "Peleset" – as the Egyptians called the Philistines and other Sea Peoples early in his reign (around 1190 B.C.E.) and brought them back as captives to his lands.

Historians have used this document to explain how the Philistines first settled on the southern coastal plain of Canaan: They were brought there as prisoners and then gained independence when Egyptian control over Canaan waned a few decades later, just in time to become the wicked archenemies of the Israelites described in the Bible.



Pharaoh Ramses III leading the captive Peleset (a.k.a. the Philistines) before Amun: Relief in the first court of the funerary temple of Ramses III, Medinet Habu, Egypt. Olaf Tausch, Wikimedia Commons

But there is a problem with that interpretation, Ben-Dor Evian notes. The papyrus literally says the defeated foes were “brought as captives to Egypt,” not Canaan, and “settled in strongholds” there.

Previous generations of scholars may have been too eager to interpret Egyptian texts to fit the Biblical narrative, she says.

“We know from the Bible that the Philistines lived in five main cities – Gaza, Ekron, Gath, Ashkelon and Ashdod, and we know that Gaza used to be an Egyptian fortress so we put two and two together and say: ‘Aha, Ramses settled them in Gaza,’” Ben-Dor Evian explains. “But this papyrus was written in the 12th century B.C.E., while the Bible, most scholars today agree, was probably written much later.”

Resettling prisoners in the heartland of the empire, rather than in peripheral areas like Canaan, was common Egyptian practice, Ben-Dor Evian says (and the Israelites would experience similar treatment at the hands of the Babylonians centuries later).



Pottery with typical Philistine markings, found in the pre-Solomonic city found beneath Canaanite ancient Gezer. Sam Wolff

There is evidence that the captives “from the Great Green” – one of the terms with which the Egyptians referred to the Sea Peoples – were probably resettled in the west of the Nile Delta region, and may have even been pressed into military service. A different papyrus from Ramses’ time tells us that the pharaoh mobilized 100 Philistines and 200 Sherden (another of the Sea Peoples) to help deal with a Libyan rebellion to the west of Egypt. This would only make sense if the warriors were close at hand – rather than far off to the east in Canaan, Ben-Dor Evian argues.

A vicious enemy, or embellishment by Ramses?

But where did those defeated Philistines originally hail from?

The answer may come from inscriptions and reliefs found at Medinet Habu, Ramses’ funerary temple, which describe the pharaoh’s campaigns against the Sea Peoples, depicting two large battles, one at land and one at sea. The reliefs do not give names for their locations, and traditional scholarship held the battles were coordinated assaults that occurred almost at the same time in northern Sinai and the mouths of the Nile. But not all agree.

“There was this vision of a coordinated attack from land and sea,” Ben-Dor Evian says. “It’s part of the allure of the Sea Peoples: they were so good that they could coordinate their attacks on Egypt on land and sea at a time when there was no instant communication.”



A Philistine altar from the late Canaanite era. Leonid Padrol, courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority

But the battle reliefs at Medinet Habu are not connected; they are interrupted by a scene of Ramses hunting lions, suggesting the two encounters probably happened at very different places and times. Furthermore, the land battle scene is accompanied by depictions of humped oxen and carts carrying women and children.

These images, previously interpreted as further evidence of a mass migration of the Sea Peoples from foreign lands, are actually standard iconography used to identify locations in Syria and the northern Levant, Ben-Dor Evian says.

“Egyptian war reliefs don’t contain a location for a battle, because the reliefs are on the outside of the temple, and most people can’t read so there’s no point in writing,” she told Haaretz in an interview. “They used artistic conventions, icons, just like we do.”

Further confirming the northern context of the land battle is an inscription at the temple, describing the Sea Peoples as a scourge that had made a camp in Amurru after laying waste to Hatti (the Hittite empire), Alashiya, Carchemish and Arzawa.



The Lion Gate in the ancient Hittite city of Hattusa, Turkey, showing the typical Mycenaean style. Bernard Gagnon, Wikimedia Commons

All these kingdoms – except for Alashiya, which was in Cyprus – were located between modern-day southeast Turkey and northern Syria.

This list of terrifying deeds is likely historically inaccurate, Ben-Dor Evian notes: the Hittite empire had already fallen decades before Ramses’ campaign, while Carchemish is one of the few cities that was not destroyed during the Bronze Age collapse.

Perhaps Ramses was trying to justify his decision to go to war, or was making his foes look more powerful than they were to aggrandize his victory. If so, his propaganda effort worked so well that thousands of years later this inscription is still the basis for viewing the Sea Peoples as an all-powerful military machine that swept, barbarian-invasion-style, through the entire Mediterranean.

As the Hittites fell

Ben-Dor Evian suggests that while piracy by the Sea Peoples and warfare may have contributed to weaken the great empires of the age, we need to look elsewhere for the main causes of the Bronze Age collapse, such as the increasing complexity of those civilizations and the difficulties centralized powers faced in sustaining them. In 2013, a study by Tel Aviv University added climate fluctuation to the list of possible culprits, showing a long period of drought in the late Bronze Age that may have driven mass migration and conflict.

As for the origins of the Philistines, Ben-Dor Evian says it seems likely the people Ramses III defeated may have been simply locals from Syria or Anatolia who filled the vacuum created by the fall of the Hittite empire.

The A Levantine origin for the Philistines is further supported, she says, by the fact that the Medinet Habu inscriptions identify the Sea Peoples as *teher* – the same term reserved to describe Syrian or Anatolian warriors allied with the Hittites during the battle of Kadesh, the great clash that Ramses II had won against his northern foes around 1274 B.C.E., nearly a century earlier.

“So, they were not this unknown group that suddenly appeared out of nowhere,” Ben-Dor Evian concludes.

The Aegean hypothesis fights back

Some archeological discoveries also seem to support this view. The presence at Philistine sites of Aegean-style pottery, long seen as evidence of their Greek origin, has now been shown to be a local imitation of Cypriot earthenware.

Meanwhile, the discovery at Tel Tayinat, in southeastern Turkey, of several inscriptions referring to the kingdom of “Palastin” or “Palasatini” also suggests the Philistines may have started as a neo-Hittite power in the northern Levant and later migrated south as the Egyptians lost control of Canaan in the mid 12th century.

That does not mean that the Aegean hypothesis has completely lost steam. Archeologists who last year uncovered the first Philistine cemetery ever found, in ancient Ashkelon, have described the burials there as typically Aegean.

It is likely that the Philistine culture that emerged in southern Canaan was the result of various influences and migratory waves from different locations across the Mediterranean, says Aren Maeir, a professor of archaeology at Bar-Ilan University who heads the excavation at Tell es-Safi, the site of ancient Gath.

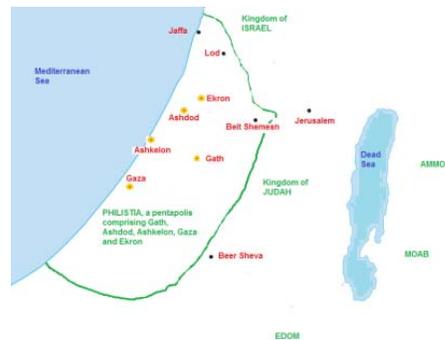


Map of the Hittite, Assyrian and ancient Egyptian empires Wikimedia, Elaboration by Haaretz

“In the material culture of the early Philistines we see something from Greece, from Cyprus, from Crete, from western Anatolia,” Maeir told Haaretz in a telephone interview.

The archaeologist does agree with Ben-Dor Evian that the Philistines appeared earlier than previously thought and have been unfairly characterized as particularly warlike invaders.

“We see many people of different origins who settled aside the Canaanite inhabitants,” he said. “Despite some localized destruction, most of the Canaanite sites continue to exist peacefully alongside the Philistine ones.”



Map showing best-understood rough boundaries of Philistia and the "pentapolis" - five cities that had been under Philistine control: Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gaza. Haaretz



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Haaretz Contributor

Israel's Possible Paths to Nuclear War

By Louis René Beres

July 22, 2017



The Baker explosion, part of Operation Crossroads, a nuclear weapon test by the US military at Bikini Atoll, Micronesia, 25 July 1946. Image by US DOD via Wikipedia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: North Korea's nuclearization has implications for Israel's nuclear deterrence posture. There are several plausible means by which a nuclear conflict could arise in the Middle East. It may be time to consider a phase-out of Israel's "deliberate nuclear ambiguity" and to focus Israeli planning around evaluations of enemy rationality.

In the end, we still depend upon creatures of our own making. Goethe, Faust

For the moment, at least, global concern about nuclear war is focused on North Korea. The Middle East nevertheless remains a possible site for future nuclear conflict, and Israel's strategy for dealing with this prospect warrants close examination. Worth pointing out, too, is that these two seemingly discrete theaters of potential nuclear belligerency are not mutually exclusive.

Quite the contrary. Nuclear warfare events in these two distant places could become mutually reinforcing.

Any conceivable resort to nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula would almost certainly affect nuclear incentives elsewhere. At a minimum, any breaking of the longstanding nuclear taboo in Asia (southwest as well as northeast Asia, if coup-vulnerable Pakistan is factored in) could enhance the

presumed usability of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

There are overarching questions to be asked. How, precisely, might Israel find itself in some form or other of a nuclear war? Under what circumstances might it use nuclear weapons?

For the moment, at least, any such concerns might appear baseless. After all, Israel remains the only presumptive nuclear state in the region.

But Tehran, like Pyongyang, will not desist from its nuclear ambitions. Iranian membership in the Nuclear Club is more than likely to occur within the next several years, the Vienna 2015 Iran Agreement notwithstanding. Moreover, even in the absence of a single regional nuclear adversary, the Jewish State could still find itself having to rely upon nuclear deterrence against certain biological and/or massive conventional threats.

To answer its most basic nuclear questions, Jerusalem's strategic planners will need to adhere closely to well-established canons of systematic inquiry, logical analysis, and dialectical reasoning. There are four plausible, intersecting narratives that "cover the bases" of Israel's nuclear preparedness: 1) nuclear retaliation; 2) nuclear counter-retaliation; 3) nuclear preemption; and 4) the fighting of a nuclear war.

1) Nuclear retaliation

Should an enemy state or alliance of enemy states ever launch a nuclear first strike against Israel, Jerusalem would respond, to whatever extent possible and cost-effective, with a retaliatory nuclear strike. If an enemy first strike were to involve some other form of unconventional weapon, such as high-lethality biological weapons of mass destruction, Israel might still launch a nuclear reprisal. This response would depend in large measure on Jerusalem's calculated expectations of follow-on aggression, and also on its assessments of comparative damage limitation.

If Israel were to absorb "only" a massive conventional attack, a nuclear retaliation could not be ruled out, especially if: (a) the state aggressor(s) were perceived to hold nuclear and/or other unconventional weapons in reserve; and/or (b) Israel's leaders were to believe that exclusively non-nuclear retaliations could not prevent annihilation of the Jewish State. A nuclear retaliation by Israel could be ruled out entirely only in those circumstances in which enemy state aggressions were conventional, "typical" (that is, sub-existential, or consistent with previous historical instances of enemy attack in both degree and intent), and directed solely at hard targets (i.e., Israeli weapons and military infrastructures and not at "soft" civilian populations).

2) Nuclear counter-retaliation

Should Israel feel compelled to preempt enemy state aggression with conventional weapons, the response of the target state(s) would largely determine Jerusalem's next moves. If the response were in any way nuclear, Israel could plausibly turn to nuclear counter-retaliation. If the enemy retaliation were to involve other weapons of mass destruction, Israel might feel pressed to escalate.

Any such initiative would necessarily reflect the need for what is more formally described in orthodox strategic parlance as "escalation dominance."

All pertinent decisions would depend upon Jerusalem's early judgments of enemy intent, and on accompanying calculations of essential damage limitation. Should the enemy state's response to Israel's preemption be limited to hard-target conventional strikes, it is unlikely that the Jewish State would move on to nuclear counter-retaliation. If, however, the enemy's conventional retaliation were "all-out" and directed against Israeli civilian populations, not just Israeli military targets, an Israeli nuclear counter-retaliation could not be excluded.

It would appear, then, that such a counter-retaliation could be ruled out only if the enemy state's conventional retaliation were proportionate to Israel's preemption, confined exclusively to Israeli military targets, circumscribed by the legal limits of "military necessity" (a limit codified in the law of armed conflict), and accompanied by explicit and verifiable assurances of non-escalatory intent.

3) Nuclear preemption

It is exceedingly implausible that Israel would ever decide to launch a preemptive nuclear strike. Although circumstances could arise wherein such a strike would still be rational, it is unlikely that Israel would ever allow itself to reach such dire circumstances. Unless the nuclear weapons involved were somehow used in a fashion consistent with the laws of war, this all-out form of preemption would represent an especially serious violation of international law.

Even if such consistency were possible, the psychological/political impact on the world community would be fiercely negative and far-reaching. This means an Israeli nuclear preemption could be expected only when (a) Israel's state enemies have acquired nuclear and/or other weapons of mass destruction judged capable of annihilating the Jewish State; (b) these enemies have made clear that their military intentions parallel their capabilities; (c) these enemies are believed ready to begin an active "countdown to launch;" and (d) Jerusalem believes Israeli non-nuclear preemptions cannot possibly

achieve minimum levels of damage limitation – that is, levels consistent with physical preservation of the state and nation.

4) Fighting a nuclear war

Should nuclear weapons ever be introduced into an actual conflict between Israel and its enemies, either by the Jewish State or by an Arab/Islamic foe, the fighting of a nuclear war could ensue at one level or another. This would be true so long as: (a) enemy first strikes against Israel do not destroy Jerusalem's second-strike nuclear capability; (b) enemy retaliations for an Israeli conventional preemption do not destroy Jerusalem's nuclear counter-retaliatory capability; (c) Israeli preemptive strikes involving nuclear weapons do not destroy adversarial second-strike nuclear capabilities; and (d) Israeli retaliation for enemy conventional first strikes does not destroy enemy nuclear counter-retaliatory capability.

It follows that in order to satisfy its most essential survival requirements, Israel must take immediate and reliable steps to ensure the likelihood of (a) and (b) and the unlikelihood of (c) and (d).

In all cases, Israel's nuclear strategy and forces must remain fully oriented towards deterrence and never towards the actual fighting of a war. With this in mind, Jerusalem has likely already taken steps to reject tactical or (relatively) low-yield "battlefield" nuclear weapons and, as corollary, any corresponding plans for counter-force targeting. For Israel, nuclear weapons can make sense solely for deterrence *ex ante*, not for revenge *ex post*.

These four core scenarios should remind Israel of the overriding need for coherent nuclear strategy and doctrine. Among other things, this need stipulates a counter-value targeted nuclear retaliatory force that is secure from enemy first strikes, and simultaneously capable of penetrating any enemy state's active defenses. To best meet this imperative security expectation, the IDF would be well advised to continue with sea-basing designated portions of its nuclear deterrent force (that is, placing them on submarines). Naturally, to best satisfy the equally important requirements of penetration capability, Tel Aviv will have to stay well ahead of all enemy state air defense refinements.

Sooner rather than later, Jerusalem will need to consider a partial end to its historical policy of "deliberate nuclear ambiguity." By incrementally removing the "bomb" from the "basement," Israel's planners would be better able to enhance the credibility of their very small country's nuclear deterrence posture. However counterintuitive, the mere possession of nuclear forces does not automatically bestow credible nuclear deterrence.

Always, in strategic nuclear planning, reason must hold pride of place. Would-be aggressors, whether nuclear or non-nuclear, must be encouraged to believe that Israel has the willingness to launch measured nuclear forces in retaliation, and that these forces are invulnerable to first-strike attacks. Additionally, these enemies must be made to expect that Israel's designated nuclear forces would penetrate their already deployed ballistic missile and related air defenses.

It follows that Israel could benefit substantially from releasing certain broad outlines of relevant strategic information. Without a prior and well-fashioned strategic doctrine, no such release would make any sense.

All such information could support the perceived utility and security of Israel's nuclear retaliatory forces. Released solely to maximize Israeli nuclear deterrence, it would center purposefully upon the targeting, hardening, dispersion, multiplication, basing, and yield of selected ordnance. Under certain conditions, it must be understood, the credibility of Israeli nuclear deterrence could vary inversely with the perceived destructiveness of its relevant weapons.

In the end, Israel, heeding Goethe, must depend upon policies and calculations of its own making.

Accordingly, what is currently happening on the Korean peninsula could have serious implications for what eventually happens in the Middle East. One especially crucial and common focus in both theaters of potential nuclear conflict is the presumed rationality or irrationality of the adversarial state leaderships. The same questions that now surround Kim Jong un could soon pertain to Iran's decision-making elite.

Israel, like the US vis-à-vis North Korea, will need to prepare very differently for a rational nuclear adversary than for an irrational one. In such bewildering circumstances, Jerusalem decision-makers would need to distinguish between genuine enemy irrationality and pretended enemy irrationality. In actual practice, operationalizing such a subtle distinction will not be easy.

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1492 Expulsion, Inquisition, Balfour Declaration and the European question!

By Hatem Bazian

July 25, 2017

History is full of many inhumane European practices such as from the crusades to the Inquisition and Expulsion. We all know European rejection of others was the leading factor, so, what was the root cause?

The combination of the 1492 Expulsion and Inquisition of Muslims and Jews may seem out of place at a first glance when the Balfour Declaration is discussed and added to the list. For sure, all these three are monumental events, but while in the case of the Expulsion and Inquisition the consequences were immediate and discernable with hundreds of thousands effected, the Balfour Declaration is only a letter that had far reaching consequences but is less understood from an epistemological and historical perspective. In my view, what brings these distinct and historically separate occurrences is Europe's relations, past and present, with the constructed other is that Europe has had a permanent problem with the other and it has been the hallmark of the past 500 years of history in the region.

In 1492, Europe - and particularly starting in Spain - embarked on crafting a "pure" racial and religious identity which required the forceful expulsion and conversion to Christianity of both Muslims and Jews. Achieving this "pure" or, if I may, the "pure" European to the "source" meant the Expulsion for those who challenged the newly self-crafted cantors of identity, White and Christian. Understanding and accepting that race is a socially constructed category does not mean it was not vested with meaning and mobilized by power to effect those ascribed with inferior racial characteristics. Setting aside the actual invention of Whiteness and Europe as distinct categories, the "purity" of European blood and race was constructed on externalizing and otherizing Muslims and Jews. Consequently, the constructed European identity meant the negation of Muslims and Jews being part of the "us," forever to be the despised and otherized as "them," which meant an epistemic and structural exclusion from 1492 onward (some theorize an earlier demarcation).

If to be a European meant to be White and Christian then the Muslim and Jewish subjects couldn't be true Europeans to the "source," since they failed on both counts. This raises even more complicated questions concerning the Inquisition itself. Could a Muslim or Jewish person become European by means of a conversion since the identity has two elements that are infused epistemologically? The European White Christian identity is constructed with theological line of argumentation, which means that "purity" of blood, i.e. the foundation of modern racism is theologically constructed that precludes the inclusion of the Muslim and Jew even after conversion. The Inquisition becomes not only a function of ascertaining correct conversion, but also a system of violence intended to control and marginalize if not to totally eliminate the theologically constructed inferiors. "God" himself demands purification of space, time and bodies from the defilement of the inferior being in proximity to the divinely ascribed superior race, the European White Christian person to the exclusion of all other.

This brings us to the European Question - Europe's inability on an ontological and epistemological basis to accept inclusivity and equality of all members of the human family. The inherent superiority or, if you may, the European White Supremacy is incapable of emerging out of its paradigmatic box of racial purity despite claims to the contrary that were articulated in the enlightenment and modern period. The foundational basis of European identity has not shifted much and racial superiority has been codified into domestic and international legal structures that obfuscate the reality deeply embedded into the racial system.

At this point you may ask what is the connection that is implied in the title of the essay and if we can put these three items together. In 1492, Queen Isabella I of Castilla and Ferdinand II of Aragon decreed the Expulsion of Jews first and then Muslims from Andalusia as well as setting in motion the Inquisition to guarantee the authenticity of conversion by both communities. For all intended purposes, the Inquisition managed to economically, politically and socially dispossess Muslims and Jews while structurally constituting them as the impure other, so that an orthodoxy of race and blood could be constituted. The consolidation of European White and Christian identity occurred by means of the Inquisition tormenting those who were deemed to be insufficiently Christian and for sure non-White. What began with the Expulsion in 1492, followed by forced conversion and the Inquisition, was concluded with a second round of massive expulsion and removal of Moriscos in 1609 and afterward. Thus, Europe's achievement of purity of "race" and "religion" was achieved by means of genocide, torture and transfer of Muslims and Jews to the outside.

The Balfour Declaration boils down to the European question, the inability to include the internal Jewish and, at present, the Muslim other. I am intentionally flipping the argument and paradigm on the use of the "racial" question. European thinkers as well as Zionists used and accepted the terminology that framed Jewish personhood and rights in Europe as a question needing a solution. "The Jewish question" is nothing else than a European framing of their racial epistemology constructed around and after 1492. Being a Jew is not a question, but an aspect of a religious and social identity that was problematized in the formation of modern Europe based on Whiteness and Christianity.

In the same way, the Inquisition and Expulsion externalized the Jewish subjects from "pure" Europe, the Balfour Declaration in 1917, allowed the "Jewish question" to be answered on historical anti-Semitic basis by externalizing and racializing of the Jewish subject. The Balfour Declaration is the triumph of Europe's Inquisition over inclusion and equality. At the core of the Balfour Declaration is the assumption that a Jewish person does not belong in Europe for he/she, as a person, does not share or have anything in common with the European counterpart. This is, if one understands or accepts the racist and supremacist notion that to be a European means to be White and Christian, which is superior to every other constructed racial human category. The Balfour Declaration formulates the modern European purity to the "source" in racial, cultural and scientific terms, which stipulates the voluntary "removal" of Jews from Europe to a new colonial enterprise.

In 1492, the Expulsion and Inquisition were carried out by force and torture but the uniqueness of the Balfour Declaration is found in a segment of modern Jewry, the Zionists and almost 50 years before WWII, who internalized Eurocentric anti-Semitism and accepted to voluntarily and in partnership to remove themselves from Europe and become partners in a distant settler colonial project. The consequences of the Zionist embracing of Europe's anti-Semitism as the only way to resolve the endemic racism that emerge from the historical development of European identity itself, is the severing of long standing relations and epistemic alliances between Muslims, Arabs and Jews that had extended over centuries. The implication of the Balfour Declaration is that it universalized European "purity of race" identity formation and made it the basis for relations across the Global South.

Far from being a Jewish liberation movement, Zionism at the core is the total surrender of Jewish moral and ethical agency as well as its historical resistance in alliance with the Muslim world opposite European White Supremacy. At best and through the Balfour Declaration, Zionism has achieved the role of

a middle man for European political, economic, social and religious hegemony in relations to the Global South. Accepting the impossibility of "integration" of a Jewish person in Europe is the highest form of anti-Semitism and racial epistemology, a position that Herzl and the founders of Zionism have accepted and internalized.

The crisis in Palestine emerges directly from the depths of European history of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The "European Question" has not been answered and the forging of this "purity of race to the source" is still around and finding manifestation in all types of internal policies and regulations affecting the Muslim, Jewish and people of color subjects as well as externally in the constant intervention around the globe to civilize and modernize the "permanently" conceptualized inferior other.

In all honesty, the question that must be asked is what are the historical, philosophical, literary, theological and cultural roots for European rejection of equality and inclusiveness of others, which translated into genocidal racist tendencies in the past and contemporary period. For anyone struck with amnesia and for whom history is only yesterday, then this list can serve as an illustration; the Crusades, Inquisition and Expulsion of Muslims and Jews, Genocide in the Americas, Slavery, Colonialism across the world, WWI and WWII. Notice that I did not bother to list low intensity conflicts post WWII and the Cold War, which maimed and destroyed the lives of many across the Global South. We must speak of a European question and dispense the idea that a Muslim, Jewish and people of color problem exists, but rather that they are collectively problematized to maintain Europe's denial and obfuscation of the roots of the rejection of inclusivity and tolerance. Indeed, Europe is in urgent need of a structural 12 step program that can address the layered and historical denial of its problem with living with the global and diverse other.



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Daily Sabah

Ex-Gaza strongman says Hamas deal will open border

Former Fatah leader Mohammad Dahlan says UAE set to build new \$100 million power plant for Palestinian coastal enclave

BY [AGENCIES](#)

July 23, 2017



Mohammed Dahlan gestures as he speaks during an interview with The Associated Press in his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Jan. 3, 2011. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed, File)

An exiled Palestinian politician who quietly negotiated a power-sharing deal for Gaza with former arch foe Hamas discussed the details for the first time in an interview, saying he expects it to lead to a swift opening of the blockaded territory's border with Egypt and an easing of crippling power outages. The Egypt-Gaza border crossing is expected to open by late August and funding has been secured for a \$100 million power plant, Mohammad Dahlan, a former Gaza security chief, told The Associated Press in a phone interview from the United Arab Emirates. Dahlan said his chemistry with Gaza's newly elected Hamas chief, Yehiyeh Sinwar, helped forge the once unthinkable alliance. The two grew up in the tough streets of southern Gaza's Khan Younis refugee camp before joining rival camps, the Hamas terror group and the nominally secular Fatah movement, respectively.

"We both realized it's time to find a way out" for Gaza, Dahlan, 55, said in an hour-long conversation Saturday. He said both sides had learned lessons from the destructive rivalries of the past.

The deal, backed by Egypt and the UAE, is still in the early stages of implementation. There are no guarantees of success, but all involved seem to benefit.

It enables Egypt to contain Hamas, the terrorists on its doorstep, through new security arrangements. Dahlan has a chance to return to Palestinian politics. And

cash-strapped Hamas can prolong its rule through the promised border opening.

If it goes ahead, the deal could deliver a crushing blow to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who presides over autonomous enclaves in the West Bank.

Abbas has a toxic relationship with Hamas, which seized Gaza from him in 2007, and with Dahlan, a former top aide he sent packing in 2010. A Hamas-Dahlan alliance would further sideline the 82-year-old Western-backed Abbas and undercut his claim that he represents all Palestinians.

The objectives of the Dahlan-Hamas deal — ending the border blockade, reviving Gaza's battered economy — could also weaken Palestinian statehood aspirations by creating a "mini-state" in Gaza.

For more than two decades, Palestinian leaders, including Abbas, have unsuccessfully sought to establish a state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in negotiations with Israel. Israel, which captured those territories in the 1967 Mideast war, withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but still controls most of the West Bank.

The territories sit on opposite sides of Israel which has deepened the geographic separation with strict travel bans.

Dahlan dismissed concerns that his deal with Hamas will gradually turn Gaza into a separate entity.

"We are patriots, not separatists," he said, adding that he would do everything in his power to prevent a further drifting apart of Gaza and the West Bank.

The multi-millionaire with far-flung business interests in the region and close ties to leaders of Egypt and the UAE said he no longer aspires to replace Abbas.

"I have no ambitions to be president," he said.

"Maybe that was the case when I was younger, but now I see the situation. ... Seventy percent of the land is in the hands of the Israelis, and they have no intentions to give us a state."

Dahlan said the new deal is meant to revive Palestinian political institutions that have been paralyzed since the 2007 split between Hamas and Fatah. This would include a new attempt to form a national unity government and revive parliament. Dahlan said Abbas is welcome to lead such efforts, but that "we are not going to wait for him forever" to make a move.

Previous Abbas-led efforts to form a unity government with Hamas backing have failed over the years, with both sides ultimately refusing to give up power in their respective territories. In recent weeks, Abbas took a different approach, stepping up financial pressure on Gaza to force Hamas to cede ground there.

Azzam al-Ahmed, an Abbas aide who negotiated with Hamas in the past, said Sunday that the Dahlan-Hamas understandings "are going nowhere."

He said Abbas' Palestinian Authority supports Gaza with \$1.2 billion every year, covering wages of ex-loyals, social welfare payments and electricity. He suggested Dahlan and Hamas would be unable to cover such sums.

Al-Ahmed also said Egypt assured Abbas "that they are not going to help any new entity in Gaza."

However, the lengthy negotiations between Dahlan's representatives and a Hamas team in Cairo last month would not have been possible without Egypt's blessing, participants said.

Dahlan said meeting the needs of Gaza, a crowded sliver of land on the Mediterranean with two million inhabitants, presents huge challenges.

He said he has raised funds to refurbish Gaza's gate to the world, the Rafah crossing with Egypt, and that he received Egyptian assurances that the crossing will open by the end of August.

"Everyone who needs to travel will be able to travel," he said.

Over the past decade, Rafah only opened sporadically because of the blockade, and thousands of Gazans are currently on waiting lists, hoping to travel abroad for study, work or medical care.

The UAE has promised \$100 million for a power plant that would be built on the Egyptian side of the border, Dahlan said. Once the exact location is chosen, construction would take 18 months, he said.

In recent years, Gazans have endured blockade-linked rolling power cuts, most recently lasting as long as 20 hours a day. Egypt has been sending fuel to Gaza's existing power plant in recent weeks, as part of the understandings.

Hamas officials describing the deal have said their group will remain in charge of security in Gaza.

Dahlan is to raise money and advocate for Gaza abroad.

He hasn't been back to Gaza since the Hamas takeover in 2007.

In the months preceding the takeover, he had led Fatah forces in Gaza street battles with Hamas.

Grievances of the families of people from both sides killed in the fighting — about 700, according to Dahlan — still haven't been addressed.

Disbursements to the families from a multi-million-dollar UAE-backed compensation fund are to begin soon, in an attempt to buy calm that is in line with tribal traditions.

Several dozen of Dahlan's lieutenants and key supporters are expected to return from exile as part of the arrangements.

Dahlan said he will remain in exile.

"It's better for Gaza that I stay in the diaspora and approach everyone who can extend a helping hand to Gaza," he said

NEWSROOM

Muslim Memoirist Who Works With Zionists to Try and Forge Islamic-Jewish Ties

Haroon Moghul, the author of 'How To Be a Muslim: An American Story,' on his influences, struggles, and hopes for his new book

By Yair Rosenberg

June 9, 2017

I first discovered Haroon Moghul when I noticed him following me on Twitter. Normally, this wouldn't have attracted my attention, except that I was pretty sure that he disagreed with most of what I was writing. In today's world of social media silos and political polarization, it's rare to come across people who seek out viewpoints that vastly differ from their own. And given that much of my writing relates to the ideological minefield of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I almost never encounter them. Yet here was a Muslim writer and thinker who seemed to be following my work even though he often fundamentally disagreed with it—not to attack it, or me, but simply to learn.

Naturally, I asked Moghul to lunch.

From him I learned about a new Muslim-Jewish project in which he'd recently taken part: the Muslim Leadership Initiative of the Shalom Hartman Institute. The program was an innovative effort by brave Jews and Muslims to understand each other's stories not by dancing around the concerns that divide their communities—Israel/Palestine chief among them—but by tackling them head-on. Fast forward to today, and Moghul is a full-time MLI staff member overseeing the fifth cohort of young Muslim leaders who will be joining the program in Jerusalem.

Moghul's new memoir, *How to Be a Muslim: An American Story*, is many things, but it is not about this remarkable work, which began after the time period covered in the book. But in unstintingly chronicling Moghul's personal struggles with his faith, mental illness, and both the Western and Muslim worlds, the book does explain how the author became someone who could straddle even the widest ideological divides without fear.

I spoke with Moghul about his memoir, his faith, and his work.

This is a book about yourself, and in some sense, for yourself—you describe it as a form of therapy—and for fellow Muslims who are looking for answers in a very difficult modern world. But it's also clearly intended for people quite different from yourself, including those who may not know very much about Islam, or even met any Muslims. What do you hope these people will take from it?

I think there's a few things that I wanted to get across. The first is what it's like to struggle with doubt and faith and mental illness, and how that plays out in a person's life. Because I think that's a story that a lot of people, regardless of faith, can relate to. I also wanted to communicate something of the complexity and richness of being Muslim. A lot of the conversations we have about Islam are pretty one-dimensional; they're either glowingly positive or astonishingly negative, and I wanted to strike out a middle ground, which is where I think most Muslims—like most complex religious people—are. Finally, I thought it was an important story in terms of what it's like to feel a cleavage between your public self and your private self, and there's probably a lot of folks in this day and age who can relate to some of that.

People often look at visibly religious individuals from the outside and impose certain expectations on them, assuming they hold certain beliefs or fulfill certain roles, even when it's not where those individuals actually are in their own faith journey.

Yeah. For a lot of folks who are Muslim, the last sixteen years [since 9/11] have been pretty much this incredibly challenging time where you might have to work out your personal relationship to religion while the entire country and even the whole planet has a debate about your religion and the value of your religion in the world.

In working out that personal relationship for yourself in the book, you cite a wide array of authors and thinkers, from filmmakers to theologians. Are there any particular books or writers, Muslim and not, that you looked to as models for your own writing?

There are a few books that probably influenced me pretty considerably. One was Yossi Klein Halevi's *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist*. [Halevi is Moghul's colleague at the Shalom Hartman Institute Muslim Leadership Initiative, and his book chronicles his journey from the far-right Jewish fringe.] I found it really interesting and helpful and enlightening to think about what it's like to inhabit an ideology and then to come to terms with your own relationship to religion. To struggle with growing up and becoming an adult and realizing that maybe the way that you think about your tradition isn't sufficiently complicated to reflect

who you are as a person. Although I think calling my book “Memoirs of a Muslim Extremist” would probably have been a *bit* more charged in this political environment.

Reza Aslan’s book, *No God But God*, which is not a memoir per se but is very much an intimate, personal, and accessible study of Islam, had something that I wanted to capture, which is the ability to communicate a complex tradition in a way that anyone can pick up and say, “Oh, now I get that!”

And there’s also [ex-hasid] Shulem Dean’s book, *All Who Go Do Not Return*. He and I end up on the opposite side of the same question, namely, are we supposed to believe in God, but what I found so affecting was how incredibly heart-wrenchingly honest he was. There were a few points in that book where I started tearing up because I was overwhelmed by what he was going through, and I was moved by the incredible courage it took for him to go through that life and then for him to tell that story. I recognize that even though his journey and mine go in different directions, there is something really inspiring and important about sharing your story, and for people who are struggling with the same demons to know that they’re not alone.

You clearly have a great affinity for science fiction, which comes across not just in this book, but in your other writings. You’ve even pondered the theological implications of extraterrestrial life. Many Jews have also been captivated by and contributed to science fiction over the years. Is there any particular work of science fiction that better helped you understand your own faith?

I don’t know if it helped me understand Islam, but Michel Faber’s book *The Book of Strange New Things* is a novel about a Christian missionary who’s sent to a planet where there’s an indigenous species that’s intelligent but much more primitive than humanity. It’s a really cool book because this missionary isn’t exactly sure why this species wants to become Christian, and he also has no idea what’s going through their heads because he has to learn their language and their culture and it’s so different. So it’s this incredibly intimate portrait of what it’s like to try to communicate something that’s deeply important to yourself to people who are literally alien. And there was an element of that with my own experience with my parents’ [Muslim immigrant] background—feeling like, as a minority, you’re always the stranger and you’re constantly forced into translation. And I think that’s something I tried to convey with the book and do with the book.

Something that comes up in the acknowledgements to the book is that you didn’t get to include a significant portion of your life, because books have

editorial deadlines and memoirs have to end somewhere before the subject’s actual life picks up. What didn’t make it in, and is there anything you wish could have been included?

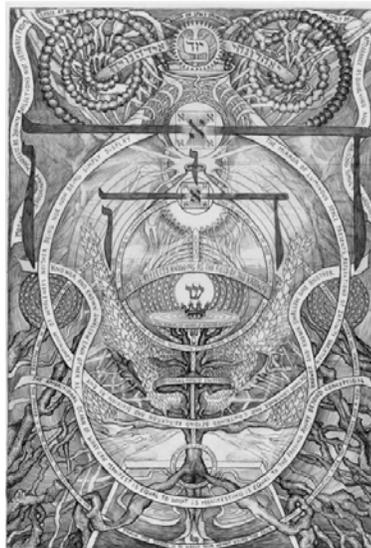
Probably the most glaring omission is how I ended up working for the Shalom Hartman Institute, but you have to end a story at some point, and I thought it made sense to end the book right when I came back from Dubai and was trying to figure out how the different pieces of my life go back together. It’s a really difficult process, and I didn’t want to end the book on this simple, happy-go-lucky, *Everything’s great now! I figured it all out! Now my life will have no problems and I will never make the same mistake twice!* (I have.)

What I can say is that for me to work at a Jewish educational institution that proudly identifies itself as Zionist, it’s really weird and probably could not be understood without understanding my story. So, this book is the story of how I got to a place where I could contemplate working at a place like Hartman, and actually enjoy it and appreciate it and shrug off any criticism I got for it. But I had to go through all those failures, and all those trials, and all those tragedies, in order to get to a point where I’m okay with this.

Related: I Spent the Shabbat After Trump’s Election With Muslim Leaders from Across America
Muslim Voices After Trump [Tablet series]

Yair Rosenberg is a senior writer at Tablet and the editor of the English-language blog of the Israeli National Archives. Follow him on Twitter and Facebook.

Tablet



Alchemical Drawings by David Chaim Smit

Myth

Israel Is the Largest Beneficiary of US Military Aid

By Hillel Frisch

February 10, 2017

Countless articles discrediting Israel (as well as many other better-intentioned articles) ask how it is that a country as small as Israel receives the bulk of US military aid. Israel receives 55%, or \$US3.1 billion per year, followed by Egypt, which receives 23%. This largesse comes at the expense, so it is claimed, of other equal or more important allies, such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea. The complaint conjures the specter of an all-powerful Israel lobby that has turned the US Congress into its pawn.

The response to the charge is simple: Israel is not even a major beneficiary of American military aid. The numerical figure reflects official direct US military aid, but is almost meaningless compared to the real costs and benefits of US military aid – which include, above all, American boots on the ground in the host states.

There are 150,500 American troops stationed in seventy countries around the globe. This costs the American taxpayer an annual \$US85-100 billion, according to David Vine, a professor at American University and author of a book on the subject. In other words, 800-1,000 American soldiers stationed abroad represent US\$565-665 million of aid to the country in which they are located.

Once the real costs are calculated, the largest aid recipient is revealed to be Japan, where 48,828 US military personnel are stationed. This translates into a US military aid package of over US\$27 billion (calculated according to Vine's lower estimation). Germany, with 37,704 US troops on its soil, receives aid equivalent to around US\$21 billion; South Korea, with 27,553 US troops, receives over US\$15 billion; and Italy receives at least US\$6 billion.

If Vine's estimate is correct, Japan's US military aid package is nine times larger than that of Israel, Germany's is seven times larger, and Italy's is twice as large. The multipliers are even greater for Egypt. Even the Lilliputian Gulf states, Kuwait and Bahrain, whose American bases are home to over 5,000 US military personnel apiece, receive military aid almost equal to what Israel receives.

Yet even these figures grossly underestimate the total costs of US aid to its allies. The cost of maintaining troops abroad does not reflect the considerable

expense, deeply buried in classified US military expenditure figures, of numerous US air and sea patrols. Nor does it reflect the high cost of joint ground, air, and maritime exercises with host countries (events only grudgingly acknowledged on NATO's official site).

US air and naval forces constantly patrol the Northern, Baltic, and China Seas to protect American allies in Europe and in the Pacific – at American expense. Glimpses of the scale of these operations are afforded by incidents like the shadowing of a Russian ship in the Baltics, near run-ins between Chinese Coast Guard ships and US Navy ships dispatched to challenge Chinese claims in the South China Sea, and near collisions between US Air Force planes and their Chinese counterparts in the same area.

In striking contrast, no US plane has ever flown to protect Israel's airspace. No US Navy ship patrols to protect Israel's coast. And most importantly, no US military personnel are put at risk to ensure Israel's safety.

In Japan, South Korea, Germany, Kuwait, Qatar, the Baltic states, Poland, and elsewhere, US troops are a vulnerable trip-wire. It is hoped that their presence will deter attack, but there is never any assurance that an attack will not take place. Should such an attack occur, it will no doubt cost American lives.

This cannot happen in Israel, which defends its own turf with its own troops. There is no danger that in Israel, the US might find itself embroiled in wars like those it waged in Iraq and Afghanistan at a cost of US\$4 trillion, according to Linda J. Bilmes, a public policy professor and Harvard University researcher.

Japan's presence at the top of the list of US military aid recipients is both understandable and debatable. It is understandable because Japan is critical to US national security in terms of maintaining freedom of the seas and containing a rising China. It is debatable because Japan is a rich country that ought to pay for the US troops stationed within it – or in lieu of that, to significantly strengthen its own army. At present, the Japanese army numbers close to 250,000, but it is facing the rapidly expanding military power of its main adversary, China. A similar case can be made with regard to Germany, both in terms of its wealth and its contribution towards meeting the Russian threat.

What is incomprehensible is not why Israel receives so much US military aid, but why Japan has received nine times more aid than Israel does. This is a curious proportion given the relative power Israel possesses in the Middle East and its potential to advance vital US

security interests in times of crisis, compared to the force maintained by Japan relative to China.

Ever since the Turkish parliament's decision in March 2003 not to join the US-led coalition, and the Turkish government's refusal to allow movement of American troops across its borders, Israel has been America's sole ally between Cyprus and India with a strategic air force and (albeit small) rapid force deployment capabilities to counter major threats to vital US interests.

It takes little imagination to envision these potential threats. Iran might decide to occupy Bahrain, which has a Shiite majority seriously at odds with the ruling Sunni monarchy. It might take over the United Arab Emirates, which plays a major role in the air offensive against the Houthis, Iran's proxies in the war in Yemen. There might be a combined Syrian and Iraqi bid to destabilize Sunni Jordan, in the event that both states subdue their Sunni rebels. Any of these moves would threaten vital energy supplies to the US and its allies. Only Israel can be depended upon completely to provide bases and utilities for a US response and to participate in the effort if needed.

The politicians, pundits, and IR scholars who attack Israel and the Israeli lobby for extracting the lion's share of US military aid from a gullible Congress know full well that this is not true. Israel receives a small fraction of the real outlays of military aid the US indirectly gives its allies and other countries. These experts also know that 74% of military aid to Israel was spent on American arms, equipment, and services. Under the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, that figure will be changed to 100%. The experts simply cite the wrong figures.

The US is now led by a businessman president who knows his dollars and cents. He has been adamant about the need to curb free-riding by the large recipients of real US aid. He will, one hopes, appreciate the security bargain the US has with Israel – a country that not only shares many common values with the US, but can make a meaningful contribution to American vital interests with no trip-wires attached.

Prof. Hillel Frisch is a professor of political studies and Middle East studies at Bar-Ilan University and a senior research associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

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BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 410, Air Force planes and their Chinese counterparts in the same area. February 10, 2017.

The Iranian Intellectual Who Inspired the Islamic Revolution and Admired Israel

Iran Week: Jalal Al-e Ahmad's astonishing and paradoxical account of his 1963 travels in the Holyland, newly translated and reissued as 'The Israeli Republic'

By Scott Abramson

June 26, 2017

When Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran in 1979, ending his exile just as the Shah was beginning his, he came as the victor of a 16-year war between the turban and the crown. Khomeini himself had fired the war's first shots on June 3, 1963, in an attack on the Shah for sins of every description, not least Iran's cooperative relations with Israel. "Is the Shah an Israeli?" Khomeini asked, adding that the monarch was an "infidel Jew." The royal response was not long in coming. Khomeini was promptly hauled off to prison, and on June 5 (the 15th of the Persian month of Khordad), following riots across Iran protesting Khomeini's arrest, the Shah's men scattered the crowds with gunfire. The suppression of the protests left the ayatollah to conclude, "Israel does not wish the Qur'an to exist in this country." Iranian history would remember the "15th of Khordad Uprising" as setting in motion the wheel of revolution that would complete its circuit in 1979.

Before Khomeini was sent into 15 years of exile (from which he could agitate against the Shah under much less scrutiny), he was released from prison to a half-year of house arrest. Confined to his simple quarters in the holy city of Qom, he pressed on in his fight against the Shah while receiving many admiring visitors. Among those who came to pay tribute was Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Iran's preeminent intellectual in the 1960s. Though a slack Muslim himself whose daily round was more likely to include vodka than prayer, Al-e Ahmad had launched the fateful search for Islamic authenticity in Iranian society in the 1960s with his 1962 pamphlet *Gharbzadegi*, or "Westoxification." A "holy book for several generations of Iranian intellectuals" in one scholar's appraisal, *Gharbzadegi* contends that Iranians who had embraced the West had become "strangers to themselves," being at once unfaithful Iranians and

sham Westerners. Worse yet, these Iranians were not just fraudulent but, as the title *Westoxification* indicates, they were diseased. All was not lost, though, because their disease had a cure: If the West was the toxin with which Iranians had poisoned themselves, Islam was the antidote.

Gharbzadegi found a vast audience in the Iran of the 1960s and '70s, amid the country's galloping modernization and among those who felt they had been left in its dust or, at least, dirtied by it. Its appeal spanned many different sectors of literate Iran, extending to clerics and seminarians, secular leftists, bourgeois traditionalists, and intellectuals disenchanted with liberalism. In this way, *Gharbzadegi's* diverse readership predicted the diverse coalition of revolutionaries who, inspired by the pamphlet, would dethrone the Shah.

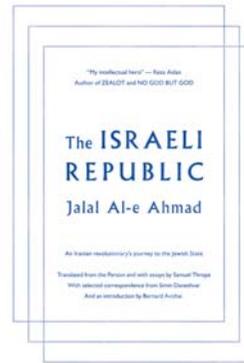
Al-e Ahmad would not himself live to see this conversion of inspiration into action in 1979, having died 10 years earlier at 46. Nevertheless, *Gharbzadegi's* resonance with so many Iranians from so many different walks of life and its call for Islamic authenticity made him a posthumous patron of the Iranian Revolution. His legacy is duly honored in the Islamic Republic, where he is the namesake of a major literary prize, an expressway in Tehran, and a face on stamps issued by Iran's postal administration.

The meeting at Khomeini's home in Qom between these two gravediggers of the Shah's monarchy was a meeting between two mutual admirers. Khomeini would later even praise Al-e Ahmad, which was exceptional in itself, considering any praise in the ayatollah's discourse was a rare break in what was otherwise an infinity of denunciation. Khomeini's praise was, in fact, singular: Al-e Ahmad would be the *only* contemporary writer—whether Iranian or foreign, lay or clerical—the ayatollah ever endorsed.

What was probably the sole encounter between Al-e Ahmad and Khomeini lasted only 15 minutes and was of little historical consequence. Yet, if seen against the backdrop of preceding events, the meeting takes on a rich contextual irony. For just a few months before the "declaration of war" against the Shah that had landed Khomeini in prison, Al-e Ahmad had visited the same Israel that the ayatollah was thundering against. What is more, he had not only visited the Jewish state as an official guest but Al-e Ahmad, arguably the Iranian Revolution's most influential lay muse, admired Israel.

Al-e Ahmad's admiration for the country he had "dreamed of seeing" found expression in a travelogue he wrote documenting his visit. Originally published in part in 1964 and in full in 1984, it was recently brought out in paperback by Restless Books under the title *The Israeli Republic* and deftly translated by Tablet contributor Samuel Thrope. The title itself,

Thrope's own artful creation, calls for a word of explanation. Apart from being an analogizing allusion to the "Islamic Republic," *Israeli Republic* dramatizes



Al-e Ahmad's *religious* admiration for his subject: Al-e Ahmad goes so far as to call Israel a *velayet*, an Arabic-derived Persian word that in modern Shia theology designates not so much a state as a political trust, of which God is the trustor and the government the trustee. To give just one example, article five of the Iranian constitution says that, pending the reappearance of the Hidden Imam (Shiism's messianic figure) and the establishment of his earthly rule, the *velayet* (the Islamic Republic, in this case) is to be under clerical custody. In his introduction to *The Israeli Republic*, Thrope explains Al-e Ahmad's "provocative" application of the word to Israel thus: "In referring to Israel as a *velayet*, Al-e Ahmad ... is envisioning Israel as a *particularly Islamic kind* of ideal polity in which divinely guided leaders—less than prophets but more than politicians—rule."

Al-e Ahmad's 13-day visit to Israel in February 1963 was the work of Zvi Rafiah, then a young Israeli diplomat in Tehran (and years later the congressional liaison officer at the Israeli embassy in Washington). A committed Persophile, Rafiah took up friendships with some of Iran's most celebrated cultural personalities during his two-and-a-half-year stint there. Thanks to him, Israeli officialdom agreed to an initiative to bring the Iranians of his acquaintance to Israel at the state's expense. It was under these auspices that Al-e Ahmad and his wife, the feminist litterateur Simin Daneshvar, came to Israel. Daneshvar, who was more advanced than her husband in years as well as literary ability, would later contribute the first novel by an Iranian woman to the modern Persian canon. She, too, entertained an interest in Israel, though not with her husband's intensity.

Though the popular imagination today may strain to conceive of, say, regular air travel between Tehran and Tel Aviv, in the era of the Shah, this was hardly remarkable. El Al airliners had, in fact, regularly plied

the skies between the two cities. It was true that the Shah's sensitivity to domestic and Arab opinion kept Iran and Israel from ever establishing full ambassadorial relations, but Tehran and Jerusalem still enjoyed a friendly, if quiet, association. So if it was not remarkable that the Israeli flag was once a fixture of the Tehran cityscape (flying as it did over Israel's de facto embassy, on what today is pointedly called "Palestine Street"), what was remarkable was that it was probably disciples of Jalal Al-e Ahmad who stormed the already-evacuated embassy in 1979, replaced the Israeli flag with the PLO's, and turned over the keys of the building to Yasser Arafat.

Al-e Ahmad's Israeli itinerary, which Rafiah plotted for him, took him and Daneshvar to the country's main visitor haunts and cities. They watched a stage production of *War and Peace* in Tel Aviv, lodged for two days at kibbutz Ayelet HaShahar in the Galilee, and toured Yad Vashem. Two custom features of their trip are also of interest: Al-e Ahmad visited the Israeli Ministry of Education, which entertained him at a vinous lunch, and Daneshvar twice lectured at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Each stop on the itinerary seemed to find the excitable Al-e Ahmad seized by a different emotion. At Yad Vashem, this, not unexpectedly, was grief. His travelogue tells of his being moved to tears by the poignancy of the museum guide's remarks. Yad Vashem, though, was not Al-e Ahmad's introduction to the Holocaust. He had earlier made a study of the subject for his own enlightenment—reading the Nuremberg proceedings, for example—well before his visit to Israel was ever in prospect. Al-e Ahmad's sorrow over "the 6 million Jews who were slaughtered in the crematoria of a Europe leprous with fascism" is all the more striking when contrasted with the denial, trivialization, and mockery of the Holocaust by his disciples in the Islamic Republic.

Al-e Ahmad had also been interested in kibbutzim long before opportunity offered for him to visit one. It was this "cornerstone of the House of Israel," as he calls it in the travelogue, that had ignited his interest in Israel in the first place. After leaving Iran's communist Tudeh party in the late '40s, he and his fellow defectors discovered in the kibbutz a superior alternative to the Soviet *kolkhoz*, the repressive Russian version of an agricultural collective. This was in 1948, he says, from which point he and his circle were "regular consumers of Israeli newspapers and magazines and pamphlets." His fascination with Israel that the kibbutz had inspired later broadened to an interest in Jews, an interest he nourished by reading the Hebrew Bible. Daneshvar, for her part, likewise saw the kibbutz as a model. Thus does Ayelet HaShahar's guestbook preserve an entry she recorded (discovered by Israeli historian Lior Sternfeld) that

says as much: "As I see it, the kibbutz is the answer to the problem of all the countries, including our own."

Al-e Ahmad did not just see the kibbutz as a model for Iranian emulation; he saw Israel itself this way. In his view, Israel had mastered the formula of modernizing without Westernizing: Israelis, in their self-respect, had embraced the tools and technologies of the modern industrial West and made significant advances as a result. But they did this without, if the biblical allusion may be permitted, selling their Jewish birthright for a mess of Western pottage. This is what made Israel "the best of all exemplars of how to deal with the West."

Another Israeli synthesis he thought Iran could learn from was Israeli society's fusion of East and West. To him, as far as East and West were concerned, in Israel the twain not only met, they mingled in harmony. "They have poured East and West together in one narrow chalice." Exactly what he meant by this—beyond Israel's absorption of immigrants from the East and West—he does not specify. In any case, it seems that, to Al-e Ahmad, Israel's equilibrium between Jewish culture and Western technology and between East and West more generally was part of a larger Israeli knack for integration—whether of immigrants from different cultures, of religion into society, of socialism and *laissez-faire*, or of democracy and the nation-state. Whatever Israel's failures on each of these counts, Al-e Ahmad found more to commend than to criticize.

But criticize he does, albeit not without contradicting himself. If, in one place, Israel is described as "a miracle ... whose leaders march onward in the name of something loftier than human rights," in another it is called a "coarsely realized indemnity for the fascists' sins." This latter description is his own take on the familiar charge that Israel is Western compensation for the Holocaust drawn from the Palestinians' bank account. In this telling, the Palestinians are "the victims of the victims," as Edward Said would later put it. But if Al-e Ahmad believes that the Holocaust was "the West's sin, and I, an Easterner, am paying the price," this seems a price that, on balance, he was pleased to pay. "I, who suffered [this way] at the hands of these rootless Arabs," he writes, "am happy with the presence of Israel in the East." Here, then, he exchanges his empathy with the Palestinians as common victims of the West for empathy with the Jews as common victims of the Arabs.

Yet the travelogue's fifth and final chapter, purportedly written in July 1967, four years after the rest of the work and a month after the Six-Day War, is less a contradiction than a thoroughgoing about-face. Whereas the first four chapters of the book are, for the most part, a tribute to Israel, the fifth chapter is a

venomous coda that denounces Israel and, yes, Jews. In contrast to the preceding chapters, which are free of anti-Semitism, the last is a digest of pretty much every anti-Semitic conceit the modern imagination, in all its luridness, has devised: “The French press is in the hands of Jews”; “Jews manage all the television transmitters in New York (13 networks), and most of the publishing houses and newspapers”; Israel has “the support of Wall Street capitalists and the Rothschild Bank”; “Jewish people are frugal, of course. We know this from long ago”; “It is Zionism that is dangerous, for it is the other side of the coin of Nazism and fascism.”

Although it is true that after the Six-Day War some Iranian intellectuals who had sympathized with Israel soured on it, there is good reason to suspect that the travelogue’s bizarrely incongruous fifth chapter is either a fabrication or, at least, a distortion perpetrated by Shams Al-e Ahmad, Jalal’s brother. Shams, who had falsely claimed his brother had been murdered by the Shah’s secret police, was one of Jalal’s literary executors and one of Khomeini’s appointees to lead the postrevolutionary Committee of Cultural Revolution. In 1984, he had the travelogue published in full for the first time under a title he himself had conceived, *Journey to the Land of the Angel of Death* (a pun on “Israel” because in Islam—as well as in Judaism—Azrael is the Angel of Death).

Shams’ own zealotry, his devotion to Khomeini, and the fact that the complete travelogue first saw the light of publication in the Israel-phobic Islamic Republic are not the only circumstances that point to his possible authorship of more than just the title. Apart from the discrepancies of content and date, the fifth chapter further differs in its diction (which is more ornate) and in its form (which is epistolary).

But is it possible that Shams was not following the example of Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche, Frederick’s sister and literary executor, who interlarded the Nietzsche Archive with Nazi-inspired falsifications she then attributed to her late brother? Unlikely as it is, for all the last chapter’s anomalies, it is indeed possible that all five chapters were by the same hand. Perhaps the best evidence in favor of its authenticity is the erratic temper of Al-e Ahmad’s mind itself. As an intellectual, Al-e Ahmad was impulsive, inconsistent, and overwrought, so changing allegiances was not out of character for him. Even his famous advocacy of Islam was the last in a series of flirtations with several other doctrines. Daneshvar acknowledges this in *Jalal’s Sunset*, her elegiac memoir of her marriage, observing that “his partial return to religion” had come after he “had already tried Marxism, socialism, and to a certain extent, existentialism.”

Quite apart from this, Al-e Ahmad’s life was a profile in paradox. He was a detractor of the West who

longed to live in Western Europe, a self-proclaimed feminist who badly mistreated his wife, a champion of Islam who led a decidedly un-Islamic lifestyle, an opponent of the Shah who worked in the monarchy’s service for a time, and a former critic of the mullahs who came to see them as the saviors of his country. Not for nothing, then, does Daneshvar wonder in *Jalal’s Sunset*, “Are all men a bundle of contradictions, or was it only Jalal?”

Whatever the authorship of the travelogue’s last chapter, it nevertheless remains that an Iranian writer who helped lay the foundation for a state consecrated to Israel’s destruction had visited and, at least at one time, admired the Jewish State. And if this is ironic or contradictory, then it fits smoothly into a history of relations between Iran and Israel and between Iran and Jews more generally that has been defined by irony and contradiction.

The history of the Jews of Iran is a case in point. Nowhere else in the Muslim world did Jews both suffer so grievously and flourish so thoroughly. Forced conversions, pogroms, blood libels, and discriminatory legislation embittered the lot of Iranian Jews for centuries only to give way to the era of the Shah and his father (1925-1979), during which Iranian Jews enjoyed full civil equality, seldom met with violence, and even thrived to the point that by the 1970s, as the Iranian-born Israeli scholar David Menashri speculates, “on per capita terms they may well have been the richest Jewish community in the world.” If the likes of Ali Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad revel in denying the Holocaust, another of Iran’s sons saved many Jews from the Nazis’ death machine in the 1940s: While serving at the Iranian embassy in Paris, Abdol Hossein Sardari issued more than a thousand passports to Jews in France, thereby reducing the number of victims of a genocide the Islamic Republic insists did not happen. And if Iran’s government, more than any of its counterparts in the Middle East, is notorious for its anti-Semitic pronouncements and initiatives (e.g., the sponsorship of conferences that deny the Holocaust and of cartoon contests that ridicule it), a 2014 poll by the ADL found that Iran’s people are the least anti-Semitic in the world’s most anti-Semitic region. So, in light of all these paradoxes, maybe an Iranian intellectual who both admired Israel and inspired the Iranian Revolution is not so strange after all.

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The June 1967 Six Day War - mega bonus to the USA

By Yoram Ettinger

May 24, 2017

The expanded strategic cooperation between Israel, Saudi Arabia and other pro-US Arab Gulf States in 2017 – in the face of clear, present and lethal threats posed by Iran’s Ayatollahs and Islamic terrorism - has its roots in the June, 1967 Six Day War and the civil war in Yemen during the early 1960s.

The impact of the June, 1967 Six Day War transcended the Arab-Israeli conflict. It highlighted Israel as a unique national security producer for the US, extending the strategic hand of the US and upgrading the US posture of deterrence, without requiring US personnel and bases.

In June, 1967, the Israeli beachhead delivered a critical geo-strategic bonus to the US, while dealing a major setback to the USSR, by devastating the military power of the anti-US, pro-Soviet Egyptian President Nasser, who was fully-engaged in his megalomaniacal goal to dominate the Arab world. Nasser transformed Egypt from a conservative pro-Western monarchy (until the 1952 revolution) to a hotbed of anti-US, intra-Arab revolutionary fire, which almost consumed the conservative Jordanian Hashemite regime in 1956 and consumed the conservative regimes of Iraq and Yemen in 1958 and 1962 respectively.

Supported by the USSR, Nasser harnessed terrorism, subversion and conventional military means – mostly in Yemen, the Achilles Heel of Saudi Arabia - in order to control Yemen as a platform to surge into the Arabian Peninsula, aiming to bring-down the pro-US, oil-producing Arab regimes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Nasser aspired to gain control of the vitally strategic straits of Bab-el-Mandeb (Red Sea) and Hormuz (Persian Gulf), which would have dealt the US and the West a major military and economic blow in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Red Sea and the Mediterranean arenas.

While intra-Arab terrorism and subversion has remained an integral part of the Middle East, the resounding defeat of Nasser, in 1967, shattered the regional profile of the Egyptian dictator, forced him to withdraw his substantial military force from Yemen, ended a five-year Egypt-Saudi Arabia war by proxy

and tilted the intra-Arab balance of power against the pro-USSR radical Arab regimes in favor of the pro-US conservative Arab regimes.

It snatched the Saudi King Faisal from the jaws of a potential defeat in Yemen – which could have toppled the House of Saud – and, therefore, bolstered the life-expectancy of the Saudi royal family, Saudi Arabia’s power-projection, Riyadh’s intra-Arab prestige, and US-Saudi Arabian strategic cooperation. The same applies to the other pro-US Arab regimes in the Arabian Peninsula.

The 1967 War, also, terminated Nasser’s military training of Iranian Arab separatists in Khuzestan (western Iran) and Iranian dissidents, opposing the Shah of Iran, who was America’s “Policeman of the Gulf.”

Simultaneously, Israel defeated the military force of the pro-Soviet Syria – which was a major Arab power until the 1967 War – thus denying the Hafiz Assad regime an opportunity to invade, and annex, the pro-US, militarily inferior Jordan, which was perceived by Damascus as part of (southern) Greater Syria. Furthermore, a September 1970 Syrian invasion of Jordan - during the September 1970 civil war between Jordan’s King Hussein and the Palestinians – was withdrawn after three days due to the US mobilization in the Mediterranean, the effective Jordanian military performance, and the deterring deployment of Israeli troops to the joint Israel-Syria-Jordan border, as well as Israel’s readiness to activate its air force (at the request of the US and Jordan).

While the House of Saud condemned Israel and the USA in a fury of **talk**: “We consider any country supporting or aiding Zionist-Israeli aggression against the Arabs as aggression against us,” the Saudi **walk** took a different turn, as highlighted by University of Michigan’s Prof. John Ciorciari. Realizing the regional impact of the Six Day War, Riyadh extended mere symbolic support to Egypt (e.g., dispatching a military brigade, which arrived after the war had ended), refrained from switching to any anti-US, or non-aligned, international bloc, and minimized the economic consequences of the short-lived oil embargo (fully lifted on September 2, 1967), focusing on the critical long-term relationship with the US and on the real threat (which was just crippled by Israel): Arab radicalism and Communist penetration.

While proclaiming publicly and feverishly its allegiance to the Palestinian cause, Riyadh made it clear – just like all other Arab capitals - that the Palestinian issue was not a crown-jewel of the House of Saud (notwithstanding Saudi/Arab rhetoric, which overwhelms most Western policy makers and media);

they expelled hundreds of Palestinian activists from the kingdom, in order to keep dissent in close check.

Prof. Ciorciari submits the following assessment of the US strategic priorities made on May 23, 1967 by Prof. Eugene Rostow, Special Assistant to President Johnson: “The main issue in the Middle East, today, is whether Nasser, the radical states and their Soviet backers are going to dominate the area. A related issue is whether the US is going to stand up for its friends, the moderates, or back down as a major power in the Middle East.”

Will the US foreign policy establishment heed Rostow’s assessment, which is as accurate in 2017 as it was in 1967, scrutinize the larger context of US-Israel relations, concentrate on the Arab “walk” and not on the Arab “talk,” and focus on top – and not low – national security priorities?!

Israel Hayom

The Islamic State Loses an Important Ideological Weapon

By Scott Stewart

May 1, 2017

Last week, the Islamic State released the eighth edition of its Rumiyaḥ monthly magazine. Its cover story: an article lionizing Rumiyaḥ's former editor, Ahmad Abousamra, who was killed in January by a U.S.-led coalition airstrike near Tabqa, Syria.

Other experts have already done a commendable job of retracing Abousamra's steps as he transformed from a graduate of the University of Massachusetts Boston's computer science program to a propagandist of terrorism. (I encourage readers interested in his past to look at the profiles compiled by CNN's Paul Cruickshank and the Long War Journal's Thomas Joscelyn.) Rather than repeating their good work, I'd like to use Abousamra's case to look at the importance of propagandists to extremist groups such as the Islamic State — and the impact their removal from the battlefield can have in the fight against terrorism.

Spreading the Word

As I noted a few weeks ago, propagandists have always played a crucial role in terrorist groups' recruitment and radicalization efforts. In fact, early

anarchists viewed terrorism itself as a form of propaganda, spread with the help of the media. Advances in the printing press and telegraph enabled anarchists to transmit their messages worldwide; decades later, jihadists became the early adopters of the internet. The Islamic State is no exception, and it has used social media to give its propaganda an unprecedented global reach.

But technology is a tool that is only as effective as the message it conveys. Many different actors have tried to use social media to promote their ideologies or sell their products, but very few have seen the success that the Islamic State has. Part of the group's appeal can be attributed to the apocalyptic nature of its beliefs and the excitement it has generated by telling followers they can help bring about the final battle between good and evil. Yet such claims are hardly unique: There are plenty of other cults with similar views, some of which have even tried to bring about the end of days. What set the Islamic State apart were its dramatic victories on the battlefield in 2014, which lent credibility to the group's promises to conquer the world. But even so, those wins were greatly amplified by the skill of the propaganda team the Islamic State had assembled under Abu Muhammed al-Furqan, the man in charge of the group's media *diwan*, or department.

One of al-Furqan's first orders of business was to assemble a sweeping team of ideologues, writers, graphic artists and IT staff — one of whom was Abousamra. According to Rumiyaḥ, Abousamra was then put to work organizing the department's foreign language section, which was tasked with providing translations of Arabic videos and written products. Eventually Abousamra and his team created the Islamic State's widely known Dabiq magazine, named after the small village in Syria where the group's foretold final battle was supposed to take place. Abousamra renamed the magazine Rumiyaḥ, or "Rome," in September when it became clear that the Islamic State was going to lose Dabiq to a Turkish-led military operation. (A separate prophecy refers to the conquering of Rome.)

The Ideological Bombmaker

As a university-educated American fluent in English, Abousamra was not unlike al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) spokesman Anwar al-Awlaki, who became quite popular through his ability to deliver engaging sermons in English. Al-Awlaki's videos were often more appealing than the propaganda of his jihadist predecessors, which typically featured older Arabic-speaking men giving lectures that then had to be subtitled or translated for audiences who didn't understand the language. Recognizing the importance

of attracting the support of Western Muslims as well, al-Awlaki worked with fellow AQAP member Samir Khan to launch Inspire magazine — a webzine designed to recruit, radicalize and equip young English-speaking Muslims to conduct attacks abroad.

Khan himself was a member of the demographic group his magazine was intended to draw in, and he innately understood how to appeal to it. Though his first attempt at media outreach, a blog named InshallahShaheed, wasn't especially successful, his snarky style and sensibilities combined with al-Awlaki's star power and AQAP's jihadist credentials to make Inspire magazine a hit. In fact, it's not uncommon to find that grassroots terrorists involved in plots and attacks around the world have read Inspire and relied on its bombmaking instructions — even if they claim to be affiliated with the Islamic State.

But since Khan's death in September 2011, the magazine hasn't been the same. Khan's deputy, Yahya Ibrahim, replaced him as editor but lacked his drive, acerbic wit and creative talents. Under Ibrahim's lead, Inspire has published only nine editions, compared with the seven it released in the 21 months that Khan was at its helm. (Two of the editions published after Khan's death, moreover, were largely completed in advance by Khan himself.) Clearly, not just any American or British English speaker, as Ibrahim was, can replace a gifted propagandist.

Some skills are simply innate. And as in any organization, these exceptional individuals are vital to terrorist groups. Even with a deep bench of team members and a well-laid succession plan, it's tough for jihadist networks to replace key personnel who have extraordinary abilities — a truth that applies to propagandists as much as it does to operational planners, logisticians and bombmakers. In fact, in many ways propagandists are similar to bombmakers; one need only look at the attacks that radicalized Muslims in the West have conducted to see their destructive art on full display.

Of course, there is a difference between innovative bombmakers and technicians who simply follow the instructions of others. Think of music: Many people can play an instrument by reading sheet music, but few can compose original, high-quality songs. Even fewer can improvise a masterful solo on command. The same is true of bombmaking. It's not that difficult to follow a bombmaking manual, but it isn't as easy to create new bomb designs, and it's even harder to build an effective improvised explosive device in hostile territory. Eliminating an experienced bombmaker can thus have an outsized impact on a terrorist group's capabilities.

Still, a bombmaker's reach extends only as far as his devices can be spread. A propagandist, on the other hand, is much less constrained. Though he can certainly impact his immediate surroundings by giving speeches, handing out flyers or distributing newspapers, a propagandist can also access a global audience with the help of the internet and social media — creating ticking time bombs well behind enemy lines. The attacks that have taken place in Chattanooga, San Bernardino, Nice, Sydney and Stockholm over the past few years are a testament to terrorist groups' ability to wield propaganda as a weapon, spreading their influence to other countries, continents and hemispheres.

Disarming the Enemy

As I've thought about Abousamra's death, it has become clear to me that the impact he and others like him, such as Khan and al-Awlaki, have had will long outlive them. But while it is impossible to erase the propaganda they have already produced, cutting short their careers will ensure, at the very least, that they do not make even more to aid in radicalizing would-be terrorists in the future. Furthermore, by removing an influential thought leader, the group's philosophy may fail to evolve to meet its ever-changing environment or counter arguments against it, presenting an opportunity for those looking to combat it.

AQAP managed to find others to replace al-Awlaki and Khan, but they never truly filled their predecessors' shoes. The Islamic State will likely encounter the same obstacle as it loses popular figures like Abousamra, al-Furqan, Abu Muhammed al-Adnani and Mohammed Emwazi. Take it from me: The latest edition of Rumiya was a painful read, and I couldn't help but wonder as I waded through it whether any young aspiring jihadists would even bother trying.

Stratfor



By Scott Stewart
VP of Tactical Analysis,
Stratfor

Was Isaac Bashevis Singer Religious?

Twenty-six years to the day after the death of the great Yiddish-American Nobel Prize winner, the clarity of his moral voice rings ever more true

By David Stromberg

July 24, 2017

At a time of wholesale equivocation across social fronts—political, moral, religious—it is difficult to find a voice that is clear, knowledgeable, authentic, or complex. The chorus of shouts resounding from all corners of the cultural spectrum makes it hard to ground our convictions in solid perspectives not undermined by the severity of discourse rising around us. Looking to the past, we may find chilling parallels to times of great upheaval, without quite understanding how such extreme forces will manifest themselves in our time. Yet we can also look back to cultural figures who have survived such times to better understand the historical significance of our era while it is happening. In doing so, we create deep continuity between past, present, and future, not just for its own sake, but for the sake of our own spiritual and moral integrity—which becomes even more significant when attacked by false morality and claims of supremacy. In such times, the voice of Yiddish-American author Isaac Bashevis Singer gains new value, as an author who spent much of his time not only telling stories, but investigating the troubling tendencies of humankind to instigate destruction—and reclaiming, despite that destruction, a meaningful relationship to what religion is meant to do for the human spirit.

Singer has long been recognized as a master storyteller, his literary achievement embraced for its specific cultural content no less than for its universal themes. He was considered a secular writer who wrote about the old ways of Eastern European Jews. But his personal connection to the tradition he inherited, including the orthodox Judaism into which he was born, remained conflicted throughout his life as a writer. The modernity of his themes and techniques, his ability to reach secular audiences, his historical knowledge, coupled with the skill to make it interesting to contemporary readers—all this helped make Singer attractive to those who wanted a feeling of the old world wrapped up in current sensibilities. Singer appeared to understand the appeal of his image as a storyteller-of-old, playing it up in his many interviews and appearances, and developing a public

persona that remembered the past without adhering to its harsh standards in the present. His artistic project, especially right after the Holocaust, aimed to create a record of the Polish Jewish life that had been lost—in a way that would speak to postwar audiences. But there may have been more to his project than memorializing the past. His work could also instigate, in certain hidden ways, an authentic Jewish life in the present—creating the conditions of a reinvigorated future that are increasingly necessary and relevant.

Fiction was where Singer's *Yiddishkeit*—which he translates as Jewishness and which I would suggest can be understood as Jewish life—found its fullest expression. It was his way of being Jewish with others. Unlike Jewish thinkers who found ways to channel different aspects of their Jewishness into scholarship, philosophy, or religious thought, Singer focused his attention on literature. And unlike other Jewish writers, his literary imagination focused on the mystical aspect of experience—on the power of spirit as it animates and drives the human soul and body—especially the function of what we call the erotic and demonic in human behavior. Singer's *eroticism* was not about sexuality but a sense of mystery and excitement—the thrill that can be found in spirituality and also in religion. The *demonic*, too, was less about evil as an objective phenomenon, than the mysterious drives that led people into destructive behavior—manifesting itself as evil in the world. The soul seeks thrills, one might say, and finds it either through the erotic or demonic. And Singer believed that truly inspired religion harnessed the thrill of the erotic and channeled the spirit toward life rather than death.

In his stories, Singer repeatedly affirmed the power of religion to maintain identity, community, and tradition, yet he also portrayed its underbelly—its vulnerability to dogma and corruption. He used a subtle manipulation of literary technique and religious knowledge without fully revealing his personal convictions, and always placing emphasis on describing the struggle between human nature and human spirit. He never returned to an observant lifestyle, but there was a constant back-and-forth between his literary practice and his *Yiddishkeit*. Some critics saw a measure of hypocrisy in this position, since it espoused behavior that Singer did not fulfill. Yet it also presented a challenge to bridge two paradigms—old-time orthodoxy and contemporary modernity—that were often in conflict throughout his lifetime. What he offered his readers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, was an old-world *conscience*, with its values and beliefs, alongside a modern *consciousness*, an awareness of the futility and absurdity of existence—creating a hybrid orthodox-existential moral position that could help stake out a meaningful life in the contemporary world.

Singer's patterns of thought were deployed through literary images and structures in his fiction. His largely understudied critical articles reveal the deliberate stride of an author who, while developing his writing abilities and literary career over decades, thought out and articulated almost every step he took in literature—and then pretended that it came to him as naturally as walking. Singer appeared to fulfill genre expectations while stretching their boundaries, offering readers a familiar package while mixing up all the internal pieces into powerful new forms. Many scholars have spoken of his use of other storytelling forms—the *Mayse-bukh* stories (Stark-Adler), Rabbi Nachman's tales (Roskies), journalistic *reportazh* (Miller)—experimenting to create new combinations of theme and structure. Yet this resulted in more than an approach to literature that had never existed before. Its fusion of forms put forth a unique vision that challenged common conceptions of past and present, religious and secular, tradition and progress. It made all sides question the validity of their assumptions.

A story like “The Destruction of Kreshev” (1943), starts as a *shtetl* love story that elevates the value of learning over wealth. But it soon exposes the dangers of intellectualism and finally ends with Dostoevskian motifs translated into the Yiddish language and Jewish context—crime (*khet*) and punishment (*shtrof*), repentance (*tshuve*), confession (*moide* and *misvade*), and penance (*sigef*). Singer even includes the corruption of a young woman and her suicide by hanging—taken straight from the repressed chapter of Dostoevsky's *Demons*. Modern consciousness has reached Jewish conscience and the result is destruction (*khurbn*). Singer's translation of forms and language from one literature into another results in an effect of thrill and discomfort. But it also stretches the boundaries of Jewishness, bringing foreign forms into familiar contexts, and helping pull Jewish thinking into the modern world. Yet the final vision remains closely determined by Judaism. In contrast to Raskolnikov's case, the sins are left unredeemed by the punishment of suffering, and the story ends with the image of a father who, despite losing his daughter to iniquity, recognizes that this is God's world and that, as a Jew, he must cling to God's word—as it appears in the Torah and as it has been observed for generations. The world of the past has been infected by modern demons but the image of faith remains that of tradition.

Singer used Jewish modes of thinking to express universal ideas—just as he translated universal ideas into Yiddish and so introduced broader contexts into Jewish modes of thinking. Jewishness was no more or less central than universality, even if the former provided the symbols for the latter. The important part in Singer's work is the ability to move back and forth between the two. And he does so by presenting the

symbols of tradition at the same time that he frustrates their significance—showing their emptiness when not followed through with faith and intention. The marriage between Shloimele and Lise in “The Destruction of Kreshev” results not in companionship but in her disgraced death and with Shloimele going into exile—*avek in goles*. And while the characters in “Kreshev” wallow in sin and iniquity, Singer ends the story with a Jewish image of complex faith despite loss and pain. Lise's father clings to Jewish tradition even after her death—praying during the high holidays, eating his holiday meals alone, building the booth for *sukkot*—and, after liquidating his estate and leaving the town that reminds him of misfortune, even leaves money for the town's charities.

Outside of fiction, Singer was himself exiled from religious life by time and space. He existed in a no-man's land between old-world Hasidism and modern nonobservance that could never again be bridged after the historical upheaval of the Second World War and the Holocaust. He was not religious in the orthodox sense he himself understood the term to mean, yet he was also not secular the way most people understood the term, because his spiritual worldview fed on an orthodox sensibility of the past and a strong belief in God. In his work, the symbols that provided comfort and strength in the ongoing iterations of exile were those that maintained and connected us to tradition. But this only worked if we chose them ourselves—if they were symbols of our choices. To engender an inspired *Yiddishkeit*—a living Jewishness or Jewish life—meant to understand Judaism as choice. It also meant recognizing its limits in helping us cope with the same suffering that brought us to this understanding. Yet it was in our power to turn exile into Diaspora, alienation into community, and suffering into joy—resurrecting the symbols of tradition each time anew. Singer did this in fiction, depicting the conflict between tradition and spirit, his portrayal of Jewish life repeatedly resurrecting its symbols in the imaginations of his readers. And this is only one step from resurrecting them in reality.

Exile is the crisis that our freedom of choice can turn into action. While rooted in Judaism and carrying particular significance to those brought up with that history or tradition, Singer's works touch on universal themes of personal growth and communal belonging. And by making the crisis palpable, his stories raise the dilemma of identity as a nexus of elements in tension—spirit and body, individual and community, action and choice, rebellion and tradition—with which everyone grapples, in varying degrees, at one point or another. The tension between these various opposing elements are staged in his narratives and while his characters fail to integrate them, his stories do succeed in conjuring them up in readers' imagination—leaving us with the challenge of finding ways to integrate the

different aspects of our own experience. While never returning to religious observance, Singer created works on the border of religion and rebellion, corruption and integrity, creativity and destruction—repeatedly invoking the conflict between demonic profanity and erotic religiosity. This in itself was a genuine expression of the challenge to live a good life, portrayed in traditional Jewish terms yet universally accessible to modern sensibilities, and opening these dilemmas to readers through spell-binding stories.

Underneath its aesthetic concerns, then, Singer's writing carried a moral imperative, expressed in a portrayal of the life of the spirit in the material world. Where his characters fail to integrate Jewish particularity with universal morality, his stories succeed in conjuring up these elements in his readers' imagination—in their conscience and in their consciousness—precipitating the challenge of finding ways to integrate the different aspects on their own. Unable to extricate himself from a traditional mindset and fully immerse himself into secularism, Singer created works that situated themselves on the border of religion and rebellion, corruption and integrity, creativity and destruction—invoking the conflict between demonic profanity and erotic religiosity, and the choice that these disparate impulses precipitate. This in itself amounted to a kind of spiritual-religious action that functioned within culture without any sense of threat or coercion. It was a genuine portrayal of the challenge to live a good life, portrayed in traditional Jewish terms accessible to modern sensibilities, and opening these dilemmas to readers through entertaining stories. Singer kept alive the wisdom and spirit of Judaism in works that would have been considered unacceptable in the traditional Jewish world from which he came. In a sense, his works themselves existed on the border between secular and religious texts—prompting us repeatedly to choose to live creatively.

Tablet is proud to present Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story "The Gift of the Mishnah" in English for the first time. Originally titled "Mishnayes," it was published in 1960 in Di goldene keyt and included in the Yiddish collection Gimpl tam, making it an important part of Singer's oeuvre that never found its American audience. Moshe Spiegel's English translation, made during Singer's lifetime, was supervised and corrected by the author, and prepared for publication by David Stromberg. [The Gift of the Mishnah - tabletmag.com](https://www.tabletmag.com)

David Stromberg is a writer, translator, and literary scholar based in Jerusalem.

A Futile Encounter

By Predrag Finci

Heidegger appreciated poetry, he wrote a couple of poems himself, not terribly impressive ones, but only once in his life, he found himself in the company of a truly great poet – Paul Celan. He had an opportunity to discuss poetry with the poet, and he was lost for words, despite the fact that he always referred to words and language. A German *Denker* and a Jewish *Dichter*, Martin Heidegger („being-towards-death“) and Paul Celan („Death is a master from Germany“) met. They had not spoken much. Many had expected much from the encounter between Heidegger and Celan, they thought a decisive word would be uttered, that the truth would surface. And all the while they talked about herbs. Heidegger, a man to whom rural life appealed and who liked to do carpentry, liked to tend his garden and cherished the Earth (*Erde*) of which he happily chatted about with his farmer neighbours (*Volk*). Celan was focused on his own painful silence and the growth of plants, perhaps not all of earth was a ditch, perhaps a new life was to emerge from the ashes and flowers and grass would cover the grave mounds and the ashes of the perished.

If you think about it, and if you take into account all they have ever written, one can conclude: Heidegger and Celan could not talk about anything else but plants, the only life form that belonged to both and to which they both felt close. All other talk would involve death, death imposed by the Nazi ideology to which Heidegger had an overt affinity, while Celan as a potential victim of the ideology was waiting for death, with anxiety, in hiding. All other topics would have made for an agonising discussion on destruction, other topics would have proved to be an insurmountable difference of two very variant worldviews and conflicting fates, two lives that could not intersect at any point. Perhaps, at that moment, both of them realised the meaning of Heidegger's view „angst discovers nothing“. What the one thought, the other never felt. And vice versa: what the poet wrote did not touch the philosopher. A futile encounter. Encounter that could not happen. They met, a great philosopher and a great poet, but they did not connect. They were people belonging to different worlds. The poet and philosopher are neighbours but very distant from each other. This is how Heidegger would have surmised the encounter in a different context and for different reasons.

Predrag Finci (born 5 August 1946 in Sarajevo) is a philosopher, author, and essayist.

Israeli Team Develops Method to Monitor Tumors Without Radiation



August 27, 2017

Doctors at Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center have developed a new method to monitor tumors without injecting patients with radioactive substances or exposing them to ionizing radiation.

The method, detailed in a study published Thursday in the *Nature Communications* journal, was developed by the director of the Center for Hyperpolarized MRI Molecular Imaging, Rachel Katz-Brull, and her team at Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Katz-Brull showed that by using magnetic resonance imaging, the nucleus of a phosphorous atom can alert doctors to suspicious acidity levels in the body, thereby revealing the possible existence of a tumor. The researchers used a special technique that allowed them to more easily identify the nucleus, enabling it to appear to "shine" 10,000 times brighter than normal.

"This diagnostic tool relates to the metabolic activity of the cells in a tumor or other tissue that may be suspicious," Katz-Brull said. "It may provide a better way to determine whether tumors are malignant or benign, and help test the efficacy of treatment."

The groundbreaking method makes it possible to avoid a biopsy or other invasive procedures to measure a tissue's acidity levels, and also to determine whether a tumor is malignant or benign without having the patients undergo unnecessary radiation or be exposed to radioactive materials.

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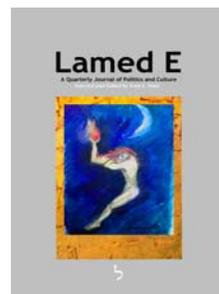
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