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The Immorality Of It All

By Daniel C. Maguire

In 1887, in a speech at the Sorbonne, the French scholar Ernest Renan observed that "forgetting" is a "crucial factor in the creation of a nation." A nation requires an ennobling unifying narrative—what Marx called "a tissue of lies"—to becloud unseemly memories that besmirch its seedy origins. To this end, each nation spins its own self-serving *Aeneid*. Renan said this strategic amnesia will include even the wholesale slaughter of certain ethnic and religious groups within the claimed national borders.[1]

Israel is a case in point.

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About This Issue

Daniel Maguire, our feature writer, is professor of religious ethics at Marquette University, where he specializes on issues of social justice and medical and ecological ethics. He is the author of 11 books, including "The Horrors We Bless: Rethinking the Just-War Legacy" and "The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity."

- Muhammed Omer is a Palestinian journalist based in Gaza, whose op. ed. piece "Gaza Under Israel's Onslaught" appeared in The New York Times of July 22, of this year.
- Mads Gilbert is a doctor from Norway who authored our December 2012 *Link* "When War Criminals Walk Free" about his work in Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital during Israel's winter 2008-9 invasion; he was back in Gaza again for Israel's summer 2014 assault.
- Max Blumenthal is an award-winning American journalist whose latest book "Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel" is an unflinching account of the facts on the ground in Israel and Occupied Palestine.

All three of the above were among 14 witnesses who appeared before the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in Brussels, on September 25, 2014, to assess Israel's recent actions in Gaza. Excerpts from the Tribunal's summary of findings are on page 15. The full summary is on our website: www.ameu.org.

Bertrand Russell, the philosopher and Nobel Prize laureate who organized the Tribunal in 1966, did so with the aim that "this tribunal may prevent the crime of silence." Our hope is that this issue does just that.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

(Continued from Page 1.)

Israel is the child of Zionism. Define Zionism and you have defined the moral underpinnings of Israel. There have been tortured back and forth debates about whether Zionism is racist: of course it is. At its core, Zionism is an imperial form of ethnic cleansing. Its moral heart is empire; its strategy is ethnic cleansing, the extirpation of one ethnic group to make room for Jews or those who tenuously claim to be Jews. Zionism is an ongoing process. Its inner logic allows no surcease until the ethnic outcasts are cast out.

This has never been a secret. Joseph Weitz, the administrator responsible for the colonization of Palestine, put it bluntly: "Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both people together in this country.... The only solution is a Palestine ... without Arabs. And there is no other way than to transfer Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them, not one village, not one tribe, should be left."[2] David Ben Gurion, Israel's first head of state, said that the Zionist goal has always been "to secure … that the whole of Palestine will be Jewish, and not only a part of it."[3] Early Zionism did not blush before words describing a crime against humanity. Yigal Allon, a commander of the Palmach, the elite fighting force of the Haganah, boasted that the Zionists were "*cleansing*" Palestine of Arabs.[4]

In 1919, a fact-finding mission appointed by President Woodrow Wilson reported that in meetings with Zionists it was clear that the Zionists looked forward to a "complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine."[5] President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in February 1945, spoke to Ibn Saud about the "equity" of importing Jews into Palestine. The Saudi monarch disagreed saying the idea of a national home for Jews in Palestine was based on "a tissue of deceit and trickery," and he warned that "this outwardly prosperous country [would be] torn from within with strife and drenched with blood."[6]

As Zionism progressively achieved its cleansing goals, candor waned and mendacity grew into national policy, with only occasional slips. That the land-grabbing mission has never changed is witnessed by the still ongoing land thefts euphemized as "settlements" in the West Bank and Jerusalem and the militarily enforced economic blockade (siege) and suffocation of Gaza.

This relentless cleansing process has been sanctimoniously shrouded in the Israeli miasma of (a) peace-talk pretense and faux negotiations, and, (b) in a classical feat of hocus-pocus legerdemain disguising all their genocidal cleansing violence as "defense." Like Humpty Dumpy in Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass," Humpty says "a word means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." Like Humpty, "peace" in the Zionist lexicon means submission by non-Jewish Palestinians to occupation and siege and "defense" means brutally blasting into submission those who oppose occupation and siege.

In this epochally successful Big Lie, Israel has convinced many people, the American Congress, and almost all American Jews, that the cruelly occupied non-Jews in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the besieged people in Gaza are threatening to drive poor victim Israel into the sea. Forget that the besieged and occupied people have no army, navy, air force or even an airfield...much less the resources for a decent human life. To ask if Israel has "a right to defend itself"—its hackneyed excuse—is like asking if a rapist has a right to defend himself if his victim is resisting the rape.

Meanwhile, like a child who in the face of massive evidence keeps believing in Santa Claus, duped American diplomats shuttle back and forth refusing to admit that nothing less than "complete dispossession" has ever been and still remains the Zionist intent.

If the People of Gaza were Jews

Don't forget the gods. The gods are always front and center when nations form. The Zionist god is a capricious specialist in real estate distribution who hands out eternal deeds to people of his choosing. "God promised it to us," said David Ben Gurion, a man of no known theological expertise.[7] Yitzhak Baer, the German-Israeli historian, in 1947 wrote "God gave to every nation its place, and to the Jews he gave Palestine."[8] That was the reigning mythology as Palestine was vivisected that very year. God-talk always thickens the plots of nations. Didn't the Protestant reformer John Calvin tell us that no heed is to be paid to humanity when the honor of God is at stake? If the deity wants Palestine only for Jews, the presence of non-Jews is a sacrilege. It is "the will of God" that they be "cleansed."

If the 1.8 million people in Gaza were Jews they would be given homes, ample supplies of clean water, government subsidies. Because they are non-Jews they are in what Jewish-American theologian Marc Ellis, former director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Baylor University, calls "the biggest prison in the world."[9] And to quell all resistance from the prisoners, the fourth strongest military power in the world periodically "mows the lawn," blasting children, women, and men into stone-age primitivity. Because the Gazans elected a Hamas government that Israel did not like, Israel, with servile America's blessing, embarked on an act of offensive war called *siege* or *blockade* claiming that any resistance to its "offense" must be met by Israeli "defense." And so the desperate Gazans, like David, hurl unguidable pebbles at the Goliath Israel.

Of what crime are the imprisoned besieged Gazans guilty … what crime merits such genocidal, collective punishment? *Their crime is their failure to be Jews.* It is criminal for these non-Jews to be on soil reserved by the Zionist god for Jews only.

The Zionist project is based on a fiction that has no scholarly historical grounding. According to this Zionist myth, in the year 70 CE, the Romans deported a genetically and culturally unified group of people, the Jews, and sent them en masse into exile. For 2000 years, eschewing all intermarriage and assimilation, never engaging in successful proselytism or attracting converts to their religion, they moved through history immune to the vicissitudes of life, a pure race of biologically linked wandering Jews yearning for a return to their God-given Palestine, their one true home. Remarkably, these exiles from Canaan include blue-eyed Russians and black-skinned Ethiopians but, in what has to be the greatest mystery in the history of genetics, this richly diversified group is made up of only one genetic stock.

Of course, not a word of that is true.

Solid Jewish and other scholarship has exploded this fake history, but the myth, with whack-a-mole persistence, keeps resurfacing in full vigor. Zionist scholarship was co-opted by ideology and glaring facts were sacrificed to Zionist demands. As Shlomo Sand, an Israeli professor of history at Tel Aviv University writes, this Zionist mythology planted the lie that "an ancient people or race was uprooted from its homeland in Canaan and arrived in its youth at the gates of Berlin."[10]

Another Jewish writer, the journalist and author Arthur Koestler, was denounced as a heretic when he stated the obvious. "The large majority of surviving Jews in the world is of Eastern European .... mainly Khazar origin. If so this would mean that their ancestors came not from the Jordan but from the Volga, not from Canaan but from the Caucasus .... and that genetically they are more closely related to Huns, Uyghur, and Magyar tribes than to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."[11] As Shlomo Sand says, in or-

der to fabricate a singular *ethnos, a distinct Jewish race* holding a claim to all of Palestine, the Zionists had to ignore history, genetics, and modern biblical scholarship and "take a flying leap backward to an ancient, mythological and religious past."[12] There is no more of a DNA test for Jewishness than there is for Lutheranism. The Zionist effort to find a biological homogeneity among all the Jews—and a fictitious history of expulsion with a "right to return"—is chimeric to the point of silly. It is the Palestinians who were routed from their homes who have a "right of return," not the Zionists who invaded Palestine under false pretenses.

Arthur Koestler, in dismissing Israeli "illusions" about their "racial origins," offers a feeble alternative .... that the legitimacy of Israel rests on the United Nations gratuitous decision of 1947 to allow the theft of Palestinian land to fulfill the Zionist dream.[13]

But the Zionist dream of a right to return is equally illusionary. According to Shlomo Sand the Romans never deported entire peoples.[14] They simply crushed troublesome people on site. They had neither the means nor the interest in deporting them. Conclusion: *There is absolutely no evidence of a forced exile of the mass of Jews from Palestine and therefore there is no "right of return."*

In the nineteenth century, Jews held 4 percent of Palestinian land, Christians, 10 percent, and Muslims the rest. Today Jews own or control 100 percent of Palestine, using occupation and siege to subdue non-Jews, while grabbing more and more of their land. The New York Times of Sept. 1, 2014 reports that Israel is now poised to seize 1,000 more acres of West Bank land for a Jewish settlement around Bethlehem. Will that change? Will the Israelis give back what they have taken from the Palestinians? Will the United States give this part of the continent back to the Indians?

Of course not. What has to change—for the ultimate safety of Israel itself—is an end to Israeli expansionism, tyranny, and terrorism. For without its contrived unifying fake memory, its fake theology, and its fake science, Israel, in the words of Shlomo Sands, has "no justification for annexing Arab Jerusalem and establishing settlements in the West Bank, the Gaza strip, the Golan Heights, and even the Sinai Peninsula."[15] Forget the Zionist grand myth: Israeli ongoing expansionism is a simple case of imperial greed.

Zionism: An Empire Project

President Reagan's "evil empire" is a tautology; all empire is evil. Empire is mugging writ large. By definition, it is the economic and military exploitation and dominance of victim peoples by a more powerful force. There is nothing subtle about its malice. The marks of empire are (A) what is loosely called "racism;" (B) violence; and (C) metastatic spread.

(A) "Racism" as used in the United Nations debate on Zionism has suffered from a lack of definition. Racism is only one "*ism*"—alongside others such as sexism, heterosexism, and militarism—all species of a broader genus. That genus is *tribalism*, one of humanity's most primitive and poisonous penchants. Tribalism is the ultimate *us-vs.-them* instinct. Anthropologist Ralph Linton writes that in the tribal mentality, one's tribe represents "the limits of humanity" and non-tribesmen are perceived "as fair game to be exploited by any possible means, or even as a legitimate source of meat..."[16] They have no rights you need to respect, any more than the grass does on the lawn you are mowing.

Although Zionism has never been able to decide what makes a Jew a Jew (no minor problem that), it is only Jews who have full humanity and full human rights. In 1891 Ahad Ha'am wrote of the Palestinians "that the Arabs are all wild beasts of the desert, a people akin to jackasses who do not understand what is going on around them"[17] These "jackasses" have no right to their homes and the land they may have lived on for millennia. In 1921, Zionist Israel Zangwill

wrote: "To fold their tents and 'silently steal away' is their proverbial habit; let them exemplify it now."[18]

Tribalists, like thieves, recognize one another and feel a kind of kinship. The only Jews, for example, for whom Hitler had any praise in his "Mein Kampf" were the Zionists.[19] The same perversity that infected Nazism prevails in the laws of tribal, racist Israel today. Non-Jewish Israelis cannot form any independent organization to work for their rights. The Agricultural Settlement Law of 1967 bans non-Jewish Israelis from working on Jewish National Fund lands, i.e. on over 80 percent of the land in Israel. All the generous public resources reserved for military veterans are denied to non-Jewish Israelis. The law also prohibits the sale or leasing of state-owned land to non-Jews. Non-Israelis do not have freedom of movement and are subject to arbitrary curfews and voting restrictions. West Bank non-Jewish Palestinians are banned from going to Gaza or to most Arab countries, and their relatives there are not allowed to visit them.[20] On the West Bank, according to the United Nations, BBC News, and Amnesty International, 80% of all the water is reserved for Jews. In Gaza, 90 to 95 percent of the water comes from its only water resource, the Coastal Aquifer, and this is contaminated and unfit for human consumption, according to Amnesty International. In Israel's caste-based state not to be a Jew is to be stigmatized, impoverished, and water-deprived. All very Hitlerian, all very tribal (racist), all very genocidal. And all—and to this I will return—very un-Jewish in terms of the noble moral traditions of Judaism.

(B) Empire is intrinsically violent. People don't surrender their homes, farms, and possessions voluntarily. The inherent violence of the Zionist project was clear from the start. On no foreign policy issue have we had more forewarning. In 1919, President Wilson organized the King Crane Commission to Palestine to find out what the inhabitants of Palestine thought about the mass importation of Jews into their territory. A decent idea on Wilson's part and one would think it a self-evident concern. Not so. The British Foreign Secretary George Curzon thought this inquiry "the most absurd and inappropriate idea in the world." The racism in this process was not limited to the Zionists. Wilson persisted and the commission concluded that we should not shut our "eyes to the fact that the anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and Syria is intense and not lightly to be flouted. No British officer, consulted by the Commissioners, believed that the Zionist program could be carried out *except by force of arms."*[21]

Ten years later the violence was rampant, with Arabs killing Jews and Jews killing Arabs. A British report in 1929 said that "the Arabs see the Jewish immigration not only as a menace to their livelihood, but as a possible overlord of the future."[22] An all too accurate prescience.

Israel did not become a military superpower by choice; violence is an imperial necessity for Israel as long as their land-stealing agenda and their flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions persist, and as long as generous Arab offers to settle for pre-1967 borders are summarily rejected.[23]

Truth is an alien in empires and it has famously been called the first casualty of war. How should we judge Israel's "wars," starting with the 1948 "War of Independence," called more honestly by the Palestinians, *al Nakba*, the catastrophe? *War by definition is state-sponsored violence.* It implies comparably resourced state adversaries. This was not a war in that sense. The Jews had a disciplined well supplied force, the Hagana: the Arabs had only loose and uncoordinated groups that "had a total lack of logistics and supplies."[24] The War of Independence had the moral qualities of a rape. Over 700,000 Palestinians were brutally driven from their homes; over 500 of their villages were destroyed and given Hebrew names.[25] As Prof. Marc Ellis

puts it in his well named book, "Judaism Does Not Equal Israel," Israel did not have an immaculate conception.[26] Its conception, instead, was a crime against humanity, aided and abetted by the United States and other great state powers.

In international discourse on war, "the just war theory" has become the centerpiece. Bits and pieces of it are used—though mainly abused—by all parties in warring conflicts. President Obama referenced it in his remarks on the occasion of his premature Nobel Peace Prize. Tracing back to Greco-Roman times the theory attempted to put some brakes on kill-power as policy. It set up six criteria all of which must be met if the violence is to be "justified."[27] They are:

(1) ***A just cause.*** Ethicist David Hollenbach writes: "The only just case is defense against unjust attack."[28] Preemptive war against a nation that is not now, but may become an enemy is not a just cause.

(2) ***Declaration by proper authority.*** This excludes vigilante wars or wars that violate international law. International law is the best that the community of nations can do to prevent private acquisitive interests from dominating.

(3) ***Right intention.*** This means that the avowed purpose of the war is the true reason. This also outlaws empire-builders and wars to steal resources like oil, metals, land, or water.

(4) ***The principle of non-combatant immunity.*** This forbids collective punishment by siege or the use of attacks where the death of innocents is not incidental but intrinsically linked to the means used. In simple terms it means that you can't fire into a crowded room and claim you only wanted to hit the bad guys.

(5) ***Last Resort.*** Warring is unjust when the goals sought in the war can be achieved by alterative non-violent means such as diplomacy, mediation, and accommodation.

(6) ***The principle of proportionality.*** The war must do more good than harm and the forces contending must be comparably endowed with strength. It bans disproportionate fire-power. This is in stark contrast to Israel's policy of unleashing overwhelming force. Called the Dahiya Doctrine—it is named for a suburb of Beirut whose tall apartment buildings the Israeli army reduced to rubble during its 2006 Lebanon war—this is the same doctrine that a U.N. Fact-Finding Commission, the National Lawyers Guild, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International all testified was followed in Israel's winter 2008-9 assault on Gaza, in which Israel either directly targeted civilians or recklessly caused their deaths.[29] The situation was more calamitous in Israel's 50-day assault on Gaza this past summer in which, according to Richard Falk, former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territories, Israel again employed the Dahiya Doctrine in order to terrorize a civilian population—an action that is "unequivocally illegal under international customary law."[30]

The merit of "just war theory" is that it places the burden of proof on the warrior, not the conscientious objector. It tilts humanity away from bludgeoning as national policy; it points toward reason-power as opposed to kill-power. If a war can be "justified" it must pass not one but all six criteria. Failing only one of those tests means that the "war" is immoral, an unconscionable exercise of collective murder and ecological devastation.

For Israel, the war to begin all wars was in 1948, the so-called War of Independence, celebrated in Israel and in the international Jewish diaspora. It was the original sin that spun a multiplicity of subsequent uses of kill-power. It failed, not one, but all six of the "just war" tests. (1) It had no "just cause" because it was not defense but offense, a work of empire-building, land grabbing, and ethnic cleansing. (2) The United Nations and the national actors who ap-

proved lacked the authority to uproot the inhabitants who did not vote for their own expulsion and who did not cause the Holocaust. (3) Right intention is rooted in truth and the Zionist project was based on the illusion of a tribal deity who ordered ethnic cleansing. The Germans, not the Palestinians, did the Holocaust, but a chunk of their land was not offered in reparation. (4) Non-combatants were targeted directly and intentionally. Children, men, and women were attacked indiscriminately, their humanity downsized by racist assumptions. (5) It was not a "last resort" but a first necessary step to "cleanse" the inhabitants to make room for Jews. (6) Disproportionate power victimized the Palestinians from the start and this set the standard for other violent actions, such as the periodic pulverization of Gaza. the attack in 1967 on the unarmed U.S.S. Liberty, the murder of Rachel Corrie in 2003, and the Israeli piracy attack on the unarmed Mavi Marmara in 2010.

Lest we forget:

The U.S.S. Liberty. On a cloudless day, June 8, 1967 during Israel's six-day war, Israeli naval and air force, with full knowledge of what they were doing, attacked and almost sank an American ship, the U.S.S. Liberty. The Israelis wanted no surveillance, even from the United States, of their land-grabbing invasions. The Liberty was an unarmed American spy ship in international waters. Nine hours before the attack, the Israeli pilots had identified the ship with its colors aloft as American and even identified the name of the ship. Sailors on deck of the liberty waved at the Israeli pilot; what had they to fear from a friend! Former C.I.A. officer Ray McGovern reports the following exchange between a horrified Israeli pilot and Israeli headquarters:

Israeli pilot to ground control: "This is an American ship. Do you still want us to attack?"

Ground Control: "Yes, follow orders."

Pilot: "But, sir, it's an American ship; I can see the flag.

Ground control: "Never mind. Hit it."[31]

And hit it they did. First they jammed and destroyed all the communications equipment on deck so it could not call for help, then in a relentless one hour attack, they killed 34 American seamen and wounded 171. They then began shooting up the life rafts American seamen began to deploy. Extermination of the ship and all evidence was the clear goal of the attack. After one hour, Seaman Terry Halbardier managed to rig up a makeshift antenna and signaled the U.S. Fleet.

The U.S.S. Saratoga acknowledged the call and dispatched four F-4 Phantom jets to help. But within minutes, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered the jets returned. Rear Admiral Lawrence Geis, commander of the carrier force in the Mediterranean, relayed the message, but told the Saratoga to relaunch in 90 minutes.

President Johnson then took the unusual step of ordering the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recall all fighter planes. When Geis protested the order to McNamara, he was shocked by what he heard next. According to James Bamford, a journalist noted for his writing about U.S. intelligence agencies, President Johnson came on the line and told Geis that "he didn't care if the ship sank, he would not embarrass his allies."[32]

Amazingly, members of the surviving crew were "threatened with court martial and prison if they so much as mentioned even to their wives what had actually happened. They were enjoined as well from discussing it with one another lest public opinion be inflamed against the Israelis."[33] The event was never fully investigated by the U.S. or Israel. Israel's image was more important than the murder of American sailors.

In a prophetic statement, George Ball, former Undersecretary of State, said: "If America's leaders did not have the courage to punish Israel for the blatant murder of American citizens, it

seems clear that their American friends would let them get away with almost anything."[34] And so it has come to pass.

Rachel Corrie. On March 16, 2003, also a cloudless day, a 23-year old American citizen, Rachel Corrie, as part of a nonviolent group working in Gaza, was trying to prevent Israeli forces from destroying water wells and homes. Rachel was fully visible wearing a flak jacket and speaking into a bullhorn. The Caterpillar bulldozer was heading for the home of the Nasrallah family, home to two brothers, their wives and five children. The bulldozer had two occupants in the cab and there was a nearby armored personnel carrier observing. Rachel was high enough to look straight into the cab and into the eyes of the two Israeli drivers. The bulldozer did not stop. Her fellow workers screamed and waved their arms, but the bulldozer did not stop. It ran over her twice and she died in the arms of Alice Coy, a Jewish member of her group form England.

Israel claimed it was an innocent mistake and, again, Americans bowed to the lie.

The Mavi Marmara. On May 30, 2010, well-armed Israeli special forces, in an act of piracy in international waters, boarded the lead ship of an unarmed flotilla trying to bring medical and other urgent needs to a Gaza under siege. The Israelis killed nine people, one an American citizen. The rest were Turkish citizens. Turkey protested vigorously. The United States simply confirmed George Ball's prediction and limply let it pass. Israel is the only nation that can kill Americans with impunity.

(C) Empires are marked by metastatic spread. Greed is the motor of empire and greed is a thirst that is never slaked. The Zionist empire did not stay in Palestine. Its control needs drove it abroad finding a power base in the Jewish diaspora, most dramatically in the United States of America. Jacob Neusner, a prolific Jewish-American scholar of Judaism, puts it directly: "American Judaism must be deemed a wholly Zionist Judaism."[35] American Jews, he says, have a "mythic mode of perception and being by reference to awful events they never witnessed, let alone experienced and by the existence of a place which they surely do not plan to dwell in or even to visit." What he calls "the myth of Holocaust and redemption" shapes American Jewish consciousness "along the lines of a vision of reality beginning in death, 'the Holocaust,' and completed by resurrection or rebirth, 'Israel.'"[36] Even among secular Jews that myth inspires an uncritical religious devotion to the "resurrection" which is Israel.

Following in the vein of Neusner's sense of Jewish identity, is French historian Esther Benbassa. Her book "Suffering as Identity: The Jewish Paradigm" shows how Jewish suffering, of which there has been plenty, was encapsulated in the Holocaust. This solidified the fervid Jewish belief that *there is no suffering like Jewish suffering*. Jews become a community of sufferers. After World War II "the overwhelming majority" of Jews became "fixated on suffering and its corollary, victimhood, the two pillars of contemporary Jewish identity....For many secularized Jews, suffering and victimhood now have the status of a virtual dogma. To tamper with or question them is for some a kind of sacrilege."[37]

What Neusner cites as the *de facto* mindset of most American Jews is a central dogma in Zionist orthodoxy. Zionism tells all Jews in the world that, unless they live in Israel, they are in *Golah*, in exile. Their true country, the one that deserves their primary loyalty, is Israel, even if they are citizens of some other country. Says Neusner: "Being a minority, and, as I said, not a much admired or emulated minority, these people find themselves persistent strangers, strangers at home."[38]

This deeply emotional, mythic identification with Israel finds powerful practical political expression in the Jewish vote which dominates

American Middle East policy. President Harry Truman was honest about his dependence on "the Jewish vote" in his 1948 upset victory over Dewey. "I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."[39] And the American-born, future Israeli prime minister Golda Meir described President Eisenhower as limited in his response to Israel's invasion of the Suez Canal on the eve of the 1956 Presidential election "because of the Jewish vote." (Eisenhower, it should be noted, did demand, prior to the election, that Israel immediately withdraw from the Canal, vowing to "handle our affairs exactly as though we don't have a Jew in America," while knowing full well that, if he had to use force to stop the Israelis, "I'd lose the election. There would go New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, at least."[40])

Anti-Semitic attacks on Jews in western, Christian countries do have a long horrible history, not limited to Nazism. Christianity set up a logic of anti-Semitism that Hitler could simply build on and mechanize. The result of seeing the state of Israel as the cure results in a tightly knit, utterly reliable Jewish vote in the United States with an influence far beyond the small number of American Jews. Israel is called "the 51st American state." More than ten million dollars a day flow from our coffers to theirs. Donations to Zionist organizations are, by the power of the Jewish vote, tax deductible, paid for by American Jews and non-Jews alike. George Ball calculated that our support of Israel costs us eleven billion dollars a year, but, again, we don't complain.[41]

Jewish-American Silence—And Non-Jewish American Silence

Jews who are acutely sensitive to other justice issues are often mute on Israeli ethnic cleansing, land theft, and slow genocide. Their silence is toxic. Jews rightly lament the silence of so many during the Holocaust of Jews and others in Germany. American Jewish silence now is morally indictable.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is increasingly recognized as the bully on the American block, but AIPAC would be impotent without the reliable backing of American Jews. With that backing, Congress has become Israeli-occupied territory, and politicians who do not tow the AIPAC line are attacked and removed by the lobby's cash and influence. Witness Paul Findley, Earl Hilliard and Cynthia McKinney who dared to speak out. Uri Avnery, former Jewish member of the Knesset, says that when Prime Minister Netanyahu speaks to Congress, members vie with one another to applaud, "jumping up and down like yo-yos."[42] AIPAC is there watching and the ghosts of Findley, Hilliard, McKinney *et al* hover over the chamber. And so Israel gets from the Congress a slavish compliance no president or other foreign nation ever had or could have. It amounts to a whole new genre of *coup d'etat*.

We are all Zionists now. Americans (not just American Jews) are <u>not</u> innocent victims. Through practiced indifference we underwrite American support of Israeli Zionism. We raise no political objection when our government becomes, in the words of the Jewish writer Tony Judt, "Israel's paymaster."[43] Our tax dollars are fueling the bombs that slaughter Arab children. After Israel killed over 2,100 Palestinians, most of them civilians, in its 2014 assault on Gaza, what did our elected representatives do? The Senate by a unanimous vote and the House by a 395-to-8 vote approved an additional $225 million in emergency funding for Israel to replenish its arsenal of interceptor missiles for its Iron Dome defense system. It didn't matter that a leading missile expert, Prof. Theodore Postol of M.I.T., concluded that the Iron Dome failed the vast majority of the time; the funding passed with no questions asked.[44]

We know what is going on and we subsidize it. The "damned spot" of guilt is upon our voting and our tax-paying hands.

Why I Am a Jew

Criticism of Israeli ethnic cleansing is "anti-Semitic." Jewish critics are "self-hating Jews." ***Correction*****:** criticism of the Zionist project is not anti-Semitic. To identify Judaism with Zionism insults Judaism and promotes anti-Semitism as Zionist Israeli crimes against besieged and occupied Palestinians become better known. As groups like Jewish Voice for Peace show, it is utterly Jewish and in accord with Jewish moral traditions to critique Zionism and call for divestment, boycott and sanctions against the Zionism of Israel. I sent an article of mine, "An Ethical Critique of the United States-Israel Alliance" to all the members of The Society of Jewish Ethics, inviting dialogue.[45] I got one reply, and that accused me of anti-Semitism.

To find vigorous criticism of the ongoing Zionist project you can go to Israel where more candor can be found on the issue among left wing scholars, activists, and the press. Do not, however, look to the American press, not even to the liberal, left wing media. Criticism of Zionist crimes is a place where not even a Rachel Maddow dares to tread.[46]

I wrote an article called "Why I Am A Jew."[47] That might surprise my Irish Catholic parents as well as the bishop who ordained me a Catholic priest. It needn't, since they too are Jews. The moral core of Judaism is the moral core of its offspring Christianity. And that core is a moral splendor, one for which every Jew and all the heirs of Judaism should be grateful. It is Judaism, not Israel, that should swell Jewish hearts with pride. Abraham Heschel, one of the leading Jewish theologians of the 20th century, worried at the foundation of Israel that the state could become alienated from Judaism.[47] That, I aver, is precisely what has happened.

Much of the Bible is *descriptive* of the way life was lived in barbaric times and that is often disgusting. In fact, if you want literature to support ethnic cleansing, genocide, slavery, and indiscriminating violence, the Bible is the book for you. It has been a veritable handbook for Zionist imperialists and for other Bible-toting genocidal ethnic cleansers such as the Crusaders, the Conquistadores, and "New Zion" Americans as they wiped out native peoples and ghettoized African slaves and their descendants—all the while claiming to be doing God's bidding. A bit of Deuteronomy gives the flavor of it.

> When Yahweh your God brings you into the land what you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canannites, the Perizzites, the Hivites .... and when Yahweh your God give them over to you … you must utterly destroy them …. Show them no mercy …. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God: Yahweh your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deut. 7:1-11; 9: 1-5; 11:8-9, 23:31-32)

So the Palestinians are not alone in history. They are the new Hittites, Girgashites, and Canannites joining the native peoples of Latin America and native Americans and African Americans in the United States.

Of course the Bible is anything but a reliable history book. The details of the Israelite invasion of Canaan, including Joshua ordering the sun to stand still in the heaven so he could complete his slaughter, would not pass a fact check. They may be chauvinistic imaginings projected centuries later into a fictive past replete with bravado. Scripture scholars like Michael Prior think the early Israelites might actually have been natives of Canaan and there was neither invasion from outside nor revolution within.

Whatever their origins, those gory texts got written and they resonated viciously through time. If they are all that Judaism has to offer, Judaism should be consigned to the moral cesspool of history. But that is not all.

The Exodus/Sinai story in novels, films, and homilies suffers shrinkage; it gets reduced to historical facticity, i.e. stuff that happened. Bible readers long assumed that the drama of the Exodus was an historical event recorded by ancient journalists struggling to get their facts straight. Archaeologists Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman state the reality: "There was no mass Exodus from Egypt." [48]

But this does not mean that nothing important happened back there. Poetry happened. Social experimentation happened. Forget the frogs and parted seas engulfing the bad guys; what really happened was a dramatic revolution of political and social consciousness that the poetic authors were presenting in epic form. Feudalism and imperialism were the reigning paradigms of social organization and against enormous odds the tribes that became Israel took all of that on. The poets of early Israel, often called prophets, dreamed dreams of a "new heaven and a new earth." And for two remarkable centuries,1250 to 1050 B.C.E., they had considerable and influential success … not creating Utopia but inchoately showing what a new world order could look like. It is not too much to say that they forced history to turn a corner and that modern democratic theory owes deep debts to their achievements.

This is more exciting than mythic tales of plagues sent upon the Pharaoh. This radical rethinking of social existence and this early short-lived experiment is more threatening to all Pharaohs, modern and ancient, than fictive plagues. In a time soaking in blood, the poets of Israel did what only poets can do; they broke free from the shackles of the given to find glimmerings of the possible. They pushed for a social order that would topple the mighty from their thrones. The Exodus/Sinai epic poem was about people-power, the 99 percent taking on the 1 percent. It depended on a "consensual understanding of and commitment to common interests, requiring, as it were the ancient tribal equivalent of an enlightened and publicly active citizenry." The 99 percent had to do it since the one percent were corrupt. The one percent were, as Micah put it, "rich men who are full of violence; the city's upper classes speak falsehood and their tongues frame deceit." (6:12)

They made pioneering efforts to institutionalize sharing and that word so hated on the Right, *redistribution*. They urged the weaving of compassion into the political economy through Sabbath days and Sabbath and Jubilee years … all with the goal of a poverty-free society (Deut. 15:4). Doom awaits societies that "grind the faces of the poor" (Isa. 3:15). Security comes from planting a poverty-banishing justice (Isaiah 32:17), not from kill-power. Precociously—and fighting against the grain of history—they insisted that you cannot build "Zion in bloodshed" (Micah 3:10). "Neither by force of arms nor by brute strength" would the people be saved (Zech. 4:6). The "song of the military" will be silenced (Isaiah 25:5, 2). Better to beat those swords into plowshares and turn the earth green with hope, not red with the mayhem called war (Isa. 22:4; Mic. 4:24).

What is contained in *Exodus* chapters 1 to 24 has been called the first ideologically-based socio-political revolution in the history of the world.[49] It deserves two Nobel prizes, one in Peace and one in Economics. That is moral Judaism, the polar opposite of Zionism. Zionism married the horror-texts of Hebraic literature, giving them new life in modern Palestine, while totally missing their moral vision.

The early Christian theologian and philosopher St. Augustine said that all nations are brigands. None is a model for any religion. What a

disgraceful defection it is to identify Judaism with the rogue that Israel has become.

Israel is trying to live an ill-fated fiction. Some American Jews are awakening to Israeli crimes against the Palestinians. Most American Jews under 35 do not have that same romantic loyalty to the Zionist myth. Israel's military supremacy in the Middle East may prove irrelevant. As one professor at Hebrew University put it almost 50 years ago: "Israel may be able to win and win and go on winning till its last breath, win itself to death .... After every victory, we face more difficult, more complicated problems .... The abyss of mutual hatred will deepen and the desires for vengeance will mount."[50] In the age of suitcase-size atomic bombs, micro-biological weapons, and pinpoint accurate drones, Israel's Iron Dome—it matters not its effectiveness—cannot ward off all threats.

Criticism of Israel's suicidal path is an act of friendship. Friends do not let friends drive off a cliff.

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Russell Tribunal on Palestine: Summary of findings "The Gaza War (2014) under International Law: An Inquiry into Israel's Crimes, Responsibility, and the Response of the International Community." Extraordinary session, Brussels, 25 September 2014. **Jury:** John Dugard, Miguel Angel Estrella, Christiane Hessel, Richard Falk, Ronnie Kasrils, Paul Laverty, Ken Loach, Michael Mansfield, Radhia Nasraoui, Vandana Shiva, Ahdaf Soueif, Roger Waters. **Witnesses**: Paul Behrens, Desmond Travers, David Sheen, Eran Efrati, Mohammed Omer, Mads Gilbert, Mohammed Abou Arab, Paul Mason, Martin Lejeune, Ashraf Mashharawi, Ivan Karakashian, Max Blumenthal, Agnes Bertrand, Michael Deas. **Excerpts** from the summary of findings are presented below; the **full summary** is available under news items at www.ameu.org.

Over the course of the 50-day conflict, some 700 tons of ordinance were deployed by the Israeli military forces in the context of a sustained aerial bombardment and ground offensive… These actions resulted in: the deaths of 2,188 Palestinians, at least 1,658 of whom were civilians; 11,231 civilians injured; damage to 18,000 housing units; the internal displacement of some 110,000 civilians; the complete destruction of eight medical facilities and damage to many others, such that 17 out of 32 hospitals were damaged and six closed down as a result; massive destruction of water facilities leaving some 450,000 civilians unable to access municipal water supplies; the destruction of Gaza's only power plant facility rendering the entire Gaza Strip without electricity for approximately 20 hours per day; numerous attacks on and destruction of three UNRWA schools which were being used as temporary centers of refuge; the total destruction of some 128 businesses and approximately $550 million worth of damage caused to agricultural land and livestock; attacks on cultural and religious property; and finally, the conflict has left some 373,000 children in need of direct and specialized psychosocial support…

Israel is the occupying power in the Gaza Strip. As the occupier, Israel cannot be considered to be acting in self-defense under the rules of public international law in its resort to the use of force in Gaza… Under international law, people living under colonial rule or foreign occupation are entitled to resist occupation. Israel's actions are those of an occupying power using force to maintain its occupation and to suppress resistance, rather than a state resorting to force in lawful self-defense...

The Tribunal has heard testimony pertaining specifically to three policy directives of the Israeli military—namely, the Dahiya Doctrine (which involves the deliberate use of disproportionate force to collectively punish the civilian population for the acts of resistance groups or political leaders), the Hannibal Directive (the destruction of an entire area for the purpose of preventing the capture of Israeli soldiers) and the Red Line policy (which involves the creation of a "kill zone" beyond an arbitrary and invisible "red line" around houses occupied by Israeli forces). Each of these policies deliberately and flagrantly disregards protections afforded to civilians and civilian property under international humanitarian law, and fundamentally involves indiscriminate violence against the civilian population of Gaza…

The Tribunal finds grounds to believe that a host of additional crimes and violations of fundamental human rights have been and continue to be committed on discriminatory grounds against the Palestinian people… In this respect the Tribunal notes the following non-exhaustive list of violations: murder; torture (including the case of 16 year-old Ahmad Abu Raida, who was abducted by the Israeli military, whipped with a wire and threatened with sexual assault while under interrogation, and forced to act as a human shield for the Israelis); sexual violence (such as Khalil Al-Najjar, the imam in Khuza'a who was forced to strip naked in public)...

Israel's policies and practices in Palestine have for decades aimed at ensuring that Palestinians submit to Israeli domination. This has been effected through settler colonial policies based on the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. This process continues today through the settlement of the West Bank and imposition of a regime of apartheid and segregation, the siege of Gaza and the prolonged collective punishment of its people, as well as the criminal conduct of repeated military operations and systemic violations of Palestinian human rights designed to ensure that Palestinians forfeit their right to self-determination and continue to leave their country…

One notable instance [of calls to violence against Palestinians] is Israeli legislator Ayelet Shaked's widely reported publication in July 2014 defining "the entire Palestinian people [as] the enemy," arguing for the destruction of "its elderly and its women, its cities and its villages, its property and its infrastructure," and stating that the "mothers of terrorists" should be destroyed, "as should the physical homes in which they raised the snakes."

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