

ON GAZA AND BEING JEWISH

I have been paying close attention to the slaughter in Gaza but have been emotionally unable to write about it. I am forcing myself today. The most recent figure I have for the death toll is 32,246 killed including 29,720 civilians, and that number includes 12,660 children. Those numbers are from Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, and they are three days old so at this point lower than an unknown current total. It is a genocide by any standard. Entire families have been wiped out, many of them.

I'm aware that I am writing on a highly-charged issue but maybe we can agree that those killed were all human beings, all worthy of life in the eyes of God. Let me mention right away that there has been a much smaller number of Israelis killed, confined to Oct 7 except for military, and they are also human beings, all worthy of life in the eyes of God.

I am still encountering the familiar lies, the lies that assume that Palestinians are terrorists, and that they use their children as human shields, and so by this logic, they all deserve to die. These are indeed lies, put forward with an atrocious amoral conclusion, and in fact it is well documented that the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) has used Palestinian children as human shields. It has become familiar to me that Zionists accuse Palestinians of doing the things that they themselves do.

At this point, I want to say that I am writing this as an essay to go out quickly to a mailing list. I am not providing documentation here. Documentation is available for anything I claim and I will provide for anyone asking. And, in the interest of brevity, as much as possible, on a subject that doesn't readily tolerate brevity, there is much I will leave out. But I will be happy to fill in the gaps for anyone asking.

I think that since this conflict has turned into what is undeniably a genocide, reflection on the entire picture is called for. My life has been tied up in it, first as a supporter of Israel, and much later as a supporter of the Palestinians. I want to talk about this from my own personal perspective.

I WAS RAISED JEWISH AND ZIONIST

I was raised Jewish, and was taught this about being Jewish: We are members of a group that all of humanity hates for no reason. (They are actually jealous of our superior morals and intellect). Never trust a goy (non-Jew). Even if they are friendly at first they will turn on you sooner or later. You will at some point be called "dirty Jew". It is an honor to be a member of this universally hated group. Don't ever deny being a Jew. Even if you deny it, if another Hitler comes to power, you will be thrown into the ovens with the rest of us.

I have come to recognize this as child abuse. However, I do not blame my parents, as the culture we lived in was saturated in this mentality.

The attitude communicated to me about Zionism and Israel was an extension of the attitude about being Jewish. Israel never did anything wrong to anybody. We wanted to be nice neighbors with the Arabs. They just hate us for no reason, just like everybody hates us for no reason.

EARLY ZIONISTS

In investigating Zionism, it is interesting to find that the early Zionists never claimed that Jews were "hated for no reason" as I was taught. This seems to be a result of post-holocaust trauma. They took on what non-Jewish Europeans called a "Jewish problem", blamed both sides for the inability to get along, and sought to resolve it.

At that time, in late 19th century Europe, empires were ending and ethno-centric states were the new feature on the map. Zionism declared that the way to resolve the "Jewish problem" was an ethno-centric Jewish state (for white Ashkenazi Jews). Different locations were considered and Palestine was settled upon, due to the fact that this was the site of the origin of the Jewish religion, and as such would make it a more attractive destination. At that time Palestine's population was approximately 80% Muslim, 15% Christian, and 5% Jewish.

In the decades of pre-statehood Zionist settlement, there was no pretense about Zionist intentions. There was agreement that this was a colonial project, and objection from the native Arab population was expected. A "Transfer Committee" was in place conducting research on the native population in order to facilitate later removal of that population. Zionists considered themselves allied with European Anti-Semites, as they had the common goal of removing Jews from Europe and sending them to Palestine. A Zionist terrorist organization actually sought an alliance with the Nazis, citing common goals of ethnically pure states.

HATED FOR NO REASON

I want to address the issue of Jews as a group hated for no reason, and do so from my own experience.

When I was seven years old and in the second grade in Pearl River, New York, a little girl in my class said, "My daddy said you killed Jesus". For much of my life I filed that away as having been a victim of "classic anti-Semitism". Imagine my surprise then, when decades later I came across new reports of a young Swedish woman, and international worker, who was volunteering to escort Palestinian children to school in occupied Hebron. She was accosted by a group of Jewish settlers who knocked her down and broke a bottle over her face causing serious injury, while chanting "We killed Jesus. We'll kill you, too."

Looking into this further, not only did I find numerous examples of Israelis expressing pride in the killing of Jesus, but also found that the Jewish Talmud has Jesus spending eternity in boiling excrement, and directs Jews to spit on the cross. Christian clerics in Jerusalem are actually spat upon quite frequently, since, with a Jewish government in place, Jews are less inclined to conceal this behavior.

When I was not much older, I remember being taken by my parents to visit an elderly aunt who was living in an Orthodox Jewish nursing home. There were Orthodox Jewish children there. They were not allowed to play with me and my brother. Their parents considered us "Goyim" (non-Jews), and as such we were unclean (even though we were Jewish).

When I was a teenager I became president of a Zionist youth group. One evening our adult sponsors brought us new song lyrics to familiar melodies for group singing. They had my friends and me singing song lyrics about killing Arabs.

When I was in my twenties, living and working in Israel, playing piano at a luxury hotel, I knew I was supposed to like the place but I didn't. It just felt racist to me, even though I didn't yet know the true history. While there I found out that the state would not marry couples of mixed religion. Of course I didn't realize that this was just the proverbial "tip of the iceberg" of Israeli abuses, but I felt like I didn't want to live in a place with such a law. A job offer brought me back to the states.

When I have stood in the demonstrations against the "Salute to Israel" parade on Fifth Ave., I have witnessed thousands of children from various synagogues and Jewish community centers chanting, "2,4,6,8, Israel is the Jewish state. 3,5,7,9 There's no such thing as Palestine". They were obviously taught this chant by the adults in charge. More child abuse.

Today in New York and New Jersey, there are towns that are literally being taken over by Orthodox Jews. One such town is Chestnut Ridge, New York where I went to High School, and where my parents still live. The rabbis there direct their congregations as to whom to vote for, and in this way they get the politicians who do their bidding elected, and they often get themselves elected, particularly to school boards. Their kids don't go to public schools, and they gut the school systems, voting down school budgets, acquiring properties for pennies on the dollar for their own use.

Synagogues are being built in residential neighborhoods in violation of zoning laws. In one well-known case in my parents' town, a permit was submitted for a three-car garage, and a synagogue was built looking like a three car garage on the outside. My parents have been frequently harassed by Orthodox who want their home. I have personally been harassed by same, trying to get me to convince them to sell.

The people who are opposing the Orthodox take-over are often secular Jews. Ironically many of those secular Jews support Israel, failing to see the connection between Jewish entitlement as it is expressed on different sides of the ocean.

I say these things not to condemn the Jewish people, the tribe that raised me, but to point out that my own life experience has been full of less than stellar Jewish behavior. I can't go along with the idea that we've never given others reasons to resent us.

THE TRUE HISTORY

Subsequent to the Holocaust against the Jews in Europe, during which members of my family were murdered, Zionism, which had been a marginalized political agenda, was suddenly taken very seriously. World sympathy began to favor a Jewish state in Palestine.

As a child I was taught about the war for Israeli independence, in which plucky little Israel prevailed, by the grace of the God that many Zionist Jews don't believe in, over monstrous Jew-hating Arabs who tried to "drive us into the sea".

What actually happened was this: The UN passed the Palestine partition plan in 1947, in a vote heavily influenced by the US, in which the UN violated the terms of its own charter, by allocating more than half of Palestine to a settler colonial entity, the Zionists, over the wishes of the majority population. Through 1948 and into 1949, Zionist terrorists wiped over 500 towns and villages off the map, committed 30 documented massacres, and made over three quarters of a million people homeless. They took over 78% of Palestine, much more than the partition plan had assigned, and the state of Israel was born. The Palestinians refer to this chapter of their history as "The Nakba", Arabic for catastrophe.

Israel was admitted to the UN conditionally, requiring they allow return of those who became refugees in 1948. That never happened. The population within Israel does include a sizable Arab population, who are allowed to vote and to run for office, but they may not form political parties which object to Israel as a JEWISH state, that is, a state that is by definition, not their state.

Subsequent to the achievement of statehood it was discovered that there wasn't enough enthusiasm among European Jews to attract adequate numbers for Israel. So, while the Zionist program was initially for white Jews, the decision was made to convince Jews from Arab lands to immigrate. This was done in some cases by false flag operations. Zionist agents set off bombs in synagogues in Baghdad to frighten Iraqi Jews into leaving. Another false flag operation, the Lavon Affair in Egypt, resulted in problems for Jews there and subsequent immigration. The immigration of Arab Jews to Israel is mis-characterized as a mass deportation similar to the Nakba, creating a sort of "tit for tat" justification-in-retrospect for the nakba.

In 1967 Israel attacked its neighbors and occupied the remaining 22% of Palestine, which to this day has been under a brutal occupation. Israel also conquered other territories beyond Palestine. Some land has been returned, some not. Settlement of occupied lands began immediately after conquest, in violation of international law, and deliberately making the popular "two state" solution impossible.

Subsequent to a 1975 UN resolution finding that Zionism is racism, (later overturned under pressure), Israel sought to improve its image by bringing in a population of black Ethiopian Jews. But once in Israel, not only were they victims of racial discrimination, the females among them were subject to uninformed and involuntary medical sterilization. And a population of black Nigerian Jews, equally qualified to consider themselves Jewish, was refused permission to immigrate. So black Jews are welcome in Israel as long as there are not too many and as long as they don't reproduce.

Arab Jews, who don't call themselves Arabs (but who know that their parents spoke Arabic when they immigrated from Morocco and Tunisia, etc.) are welcome because they're not as dark and because they do a great job of out-whiting whiteness in their obligatory right-wing Zionist hatred of their Arab Muslim and Christian cousins, the Palestinians.

Life for Palestinians in the occupied territories has consisted of a thousand daily humiliations and deprivations, intentionally, as Israel hopes to inspire the people there to leave as the result of abuse. In occupied Gaza conditions have been worse than elsewhere.

In 2005 the Jewish settlements in Gaza were evacuated as a smoke-screen for increasing settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Since the election of Hamas in 2006, Gaza has been under siege, with bombs dropped on them at intervals. Every few years, Israel has been conducting mass-murder there. To those who object to Hamas, I point out that any organization representing the Palestinians is going to be vilified, and while I wouldn't vote for religious extremists myself, I don't blame a people who are third and fourth generation refugees living under occupation for turning to them.

As for Oct. 7, I don't pretend to be an expert on what happened. It appears it was expected, the location of a music festival changed, defenses relaxed, and it appears that many Israelis were killed by friendly fire. Israel has, on occasion, employed the Hannibal directive, killing its own rather than letting them be taken captive. Although many were taken captive and are still being held.

But I don't think anyone could have expected the genocide we have been witnessing, with hospitals bombed and journalists murdered, and a death toll of unimaginable proportions, indicating unimaginable suffering, with many dying slow torturous deaths under the rubble.

WHAT IS ISRAEL?

To understand what Israel is, I would like to construct a parallel state here in the US. Let's imagine that white people perceived themselves as endangered (and in fact many do!), and they decided they needed to have a white state in New Jersey. I choose it because it's where I live and it's approximately the same size as Israel.

So they got a lot of international support and committed ethnic cleansing of the non-white people of New Jersey, killing many and making many more refugees, largely sent off to a couple of pockets of land, one down the shore, another on the "East Bank" of the Delaware. (It's convenient that we have comparable geography!) And then declaring an independent white state and giving it a white name. Let's call it "Caucasia". The remaining non-whites in Caucasia are second class, more like ninth class citizens there.

Then Caucasia conquers the territories not initially conquered and subjects the inhabitants to a brutal occupation while building for-whites-only settlements in them.

That's Israel. The propaganda tells us it's the only democracy in the Middle East, while it's not a democracy at all. It can't be since it maintains an artificial Jewish majority by keeping a refugee population out in defiance of international law. And propaganda tells us it's our only ally in the Middle East. "Every time anyone says that Israel is our only friend in the Middle East, I can't help but think that, before Israel, we had no enemies in the Middle East".
—Fr John Sheehan

THE SITUATION TODAY

It is considered Anti-Semitic to say that Jews have too much influence. Zionist Jewish organizations like the ADL strive to achieve as much influence as possible in order to accuse you of anti-Semitism if you say that Jews have too much influence. Read that again.

AIPAC has ruined careers of politicians who aren't sufficiently pro-Israel, and has made sure that Democrats and Republicans, who disagree on various issues, are in lock-step in supporting Israel. President Biden, who has in the past, openly declared himself a Zionist, ("You don't have to be a Jew to be a Zionist!") has done absolutely nothing to hold Israel accountable for the current slaughter. Trump recently made an appalling speech in which he threatened to deport pro-Palestine demonstrators and accused them (us- I participate) of shouting "Kill Jews". This has literally never happened. I've been participating in, and organizing demonstrations for close to 20 years.

The chant often heard at demonstrations, "From the River to the Sea Palestine Will be Free" has been interpreted to mean "Kill Jews". It doesn't. It means free for EVERYBODY, including Jews, who everybody acknowledges have always been a part of Palestine. This controversy has cost some university presidents their jobs.

The chant "Intifadah" has been interpreted to mean "Kill Jews". It doesn't. It means "uprising", and uprising has been appropriate for a people who have been ethnically cleansed, occupied, and murdered in various wars for 75 years, now victimized by outright genocide. Much more reasonable than "2,4,6,8..."

Jewish Zionist influence began by creating a false Christianity, beginning with the Scofield Reference Bible, taking the Christian bible and putting manipulative Zionist interpretation of scripture in the margins. This was the beginning of the now massive Christian Zionist movement, which has somehow interpreted Jesus' teachings to support ethnic cleansing and has given Israel support in its ongoing ethnic cleansing of the ancient Palestinian Christian community.

And Jewish Zionist influence turned Orthodox Jewry, initially 100% anti-Zionist, into the most rabid right-wing component of Zionism. Judaism clearly forbids Zionism, and yet beginning with Rabbi Kook a hundred years ago, a declaration that the messianic age has begun served to give Orthodox Jews the excuse it needed to embrace Zionism. The early Zionists were anti-religious atheist Jews, who rightfully earned the wrath of Orthodoxy, which has now become their greatest ally. (There are notable exceptions, especially the ultra-Orthodox Neturei Karta Jews who remain steadfastly anti-Zionist and pro-Palestine).

The adoption of Zionism by the Orthodox brought to it a particularly ugly religious justification for racism. They refer to the settling of Jews in places formerly inhabited by Muslims and Christians as the "redemption of the land".

It's Anti-Semitic to say that the political landscape, the media, and Hollywood are all controlled by Zionists, but Zionists have worked very hard to make it so!

A FEW PALESTINIAN FRIENDS OF MINE

ust to make this personal, I want to mention a few Palestinian friends.

Karimah Zuhdi Tarazi, daughter of the late PLO ambassador Zuhdi Tarazi, is a Palestinian Christian, a nurse, whose family is from Jerusalem. She has lost 51 people among her extended family and friends in the current slaughter in Gaza. It is staggering to even write this. She is a Christian, worth saying again, as are the people she lost to Israel's bombs. This is not a Jew vs Muslim conflict.

Ayman Nijim's family are Muslims from Gaza. They are originally from Isdud, Palestine, which became Ashdod, Israel in 1948, when his family lost their home and landed in Gaza as refugees. He has never visited Isdud, or Jerusalem. He is not allowed. When I visited Jerusalem, he asked me to write his name on a piece of paper and take photos with his name in the photos so he could see himself in his beloved capital city. Ayman and his immediate family live in the US, and he is very actively trying to help his extended family who remain in Gaza. He works in international relations.

I was a guest at Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh's home in Beit Sahour, Palestine, in the Christian Triangle. He lived in the states for many years, and had teaching positions at Yale and Duke, but decided to go back home with his wife Jesse and now has a teaching positions at Bethlehem University. He has written two books on Palestinian issues. He also founded the Palestine Natural History Museum. He has citrus trees on his property, but due to insufficient water availability he can't give them enough to bear fruit. But walking out the front door of his home, one gazes across a valley to see illegal Jewish settlements on the next hilltop, where they have plenty of water for their swimming pools.

THE SOLUTION

The solution is easy, and it's always been easy. Allow the refugees and their descendants to return. End all Jewish supremacist laws and policies. With justice there will be peace. Jews in Israel just need to get used to the idea of having Muslim and Christian neighbors, just like the ones I have here in New Jersey.

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

1) Don't be influenced by Zionist propaganda! 2) Don't hate me for writing this. 3) Read everything you can on this subject. Read both sides. It becomes easy to see who is telling the truth and who is obfuscating. 4) Meet people who have lived inside this situation. Seek them out. Learn from them. 5) Make demands of our politicians. Don't settle for excuses. Confront them for enabling genocide.

For Jews: Be willing to investigate our history. Be willing to challenge the things you were taught. For non-Jews: When you hear Jewish friends say something that you know is false, stop being polite about it.

PARTING THOUGHTS

This is no different kind of human being called a Jew. Maybe it's time to reconsider the whole concept of a "Chosen People" as well as the concept of exile and return. Many Jews have been at home in many diverse places. I'm at home in New Jersey. I am not in exile.

Israel is NOT a safe haven for Jews. One does not achieve safety by committing atrocities. The Jewish people's survival is NOT dependent upon Zionism and Israel, but may be dependent upon abandoning those things. The Jews had the sympathy of the world after the holocaust, but are squandering it by committing another one.

WITH GOD AS ONE, ALL OF HUMANITY ARE BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

ALL PEOPLE ARE CHOSEN. ALL LANDS ARE HOLY.

Rich Siegel

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