



Israel and Legitimacy:
Modern Achievement
vs.
Islamic Prejudice



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In the following pages we consider two sharply contrasting views of Judaism and its manifestations. In the first section, we see how Islamic textual materials, and succeeding layers of scholarly and popular comment, have fostered prejudice against Jews and Judaism, portraying them as loathsome to God and deserving divine retribution. While not all Muslims subscribe to these views, the presence of such material and the reluctance of mainstream Muslim scholars to acknowledge its effects ensure that with each new generation, some Muslims will see it as their divine mission to combat Jews in various ways, especially in terms of confronting the modern Jewish state of Israel.

In the second section, we move our gaze from the Islamic literary corpus and subject the Jewish state of Israel to scrutiny in diverse ways. We observe that the nation's founding fathers created a modern, flourishing state, reflective of the Jewish tradition of high cultural achievement. While the world's only Jewish state no doubt has its faults and is guilty of excess and neglect in certain ways, it is nevertheless a beacon of democracy in the region.

We are struck by the stark difference of perception of Jews and Judaism emerging from the two perspectives studied. The first seems to preordain perpetual warfare between those Muslims who buy into such toxic views and the Jews they stand against. The second offers great hope as a resource for the region if the Jewish state of Israel, and the world Jewish diaspora, are welcomed as neighbors by the Muslim majority nations of the Middle East.

Part 1: Islam and the Jews: From Ambiguity to Anathema

In 2002, an interview with a three-year-old Arab girl was screened on *Iqraa* television,¹ a joint Saudi and Egyptian channel. The interviewer was Doaa `Amer. The interview was subsequently translated into English, with the transcript including the following exchange:

`Amer: . . . are you familiar with the Jews?

Girl: Yes

`Amer: Do you like them?

Girl: No

`Amer: Why don't you like them?

Girl: Because . . .

`Amer: Because they are what?

Girl: They're apes and pigs.

Such evident anti-Semitism is shocking to Western readers. However, anti-Jewish slurs are relatively commonplace in much of the public media in Arab countries.

To understand how such attitudes are inculcated into the mind of a three-year-old child, we need to travel back in time to early seventh-century Arabia, where the seeds of modern Muslim anti-Semitism were sown. Our primary source will be none other than Islam's most sacred text, the Qur'an.

Muhammad and the Jews: A Blueprint for the Future

During Muhammad's life (570-632) there were sizeable Jewish communities in different locations in Arabia. According to his authoritative biography (the *Sira*), Muhammad expected the Jews to accept his prophetic claims. To this end he adopted a number of Jewish practices and beliefs: he connected Islam with Abraham by claiming that the patriarch and his son Ishmael built the Ka'ba, the great black shrine in the center of Mecca; he specified Ashura, or Day of Atonement, as the day for Islamic fasting; he also led his followers in praying towards Jerusalem, before shifting their prayers towards Mecca (Sura 2:142).

A small number of Jews embraced Islam, but the majority shunned the new faith and Muhammad's prophetic claims. Muhammad came to consider them profoundly hostile to him. However the Jews of Medina were greatly divided among themselves.

Muhammad moved from an attitude of reaching out to one of hostility towards the Jews. He accused them of concealing and tampering with the contents of their revealed Scriptures (Sura 4:44-49). He discarded the Jewish practices that he had adopted, substituted Mecca for Jerusalem as the direction of prayer (Sura 2:142), and adapted his religious message to embrace a more Arabian tone. The *Sira* comments:

Some Muslims remained friends with the Jews because of the tie of mutual protection and alliance which had subsisted between them, so God sent [a revelation] down concerning them and forbidding them to take them as intimate friends.²

The Jews of Arabia became scapegoats during Muhammad's military campaigns.

The Jews of Arabia became scapegoats during Muhammad's military campaigns. After the Battle of Badr (624) between the Muslims in Medina and the Meccan Arabs who opposed Muhammad, a Jewish tribe known as Banu Qainuqa was expelled from Medina. The Battle of Uhud the following year was similarly followed by the expulsion of another Jewish tribe known as the Banu Nadir, according to the *Sira*.³ Muhammad surrounded them in their compound for two weeks. After surrendering, the Banu Nadir were permitted one animal for every three persons and whatever the beast could carry. It was at this point also that Muhammad replaced his Jewish private secretary—who wrote for him in Hebrew and Syriac—with Zaid ibn Thabit, famous as the primary scribe of the Qur'anic text.

One key Jewish tribe remained in Medina: the Banu Quraiza. After the Battle of the Ditch (627) between Muhammad and the Meccans, the Banu Quraiza were accused of treachery and besieged. Upon surrendering they requested permission to depart as the Banu Nadir had done, but this request was refused. Muhammad sealed their fate by handing them over to an estranged ally of the Banu Quraiza, Sa'ad ibn Ma'az, who ruled that all Jewish women and children should be sold into slavery and that all Jewish men should be killed, as described graphically in the *Sira*:

Then they surrendered, and the apostle [Muhammad] confined them in Medina in the quarter of d. al-Harith, a woman of B. al-Najjar. Then the apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches . . . There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900 . . . This went on until the apostle made an end of them.⁴

Their property was divided among the Muslims.

Then came the incident at Khaibar. Muhammad put this oasis under siege for two months, meeting stiff resistance from its Jewish population. When it capitulated, Muhammad was more lenient than with the Banu Quraiza, ordering the Jews to pay half their returns as a special tax, or *Jizya*, which in return entitled them to special protection from Muslims. After this he besieged the Jewish colonies of Fadak, Wadu El Qura, and Taima. They all had to submit to Muslim rule and the payment of the poll tax.

In Muhammad's conflicts with the Arabian Jews over a decade, various outcomes had resulted: some converted to Islam, others paid a tax in return for protection under Islamic sovereignty, some were expelled, and many were executed. The prophet of Islam's harsh interactions with Jewry came to serve as the basis for

Islamic scriptural teachings and attitudes toward Jews, which in turn provided a blueprint for the future of Muslim-Jewish relations.

From the Qur'an to Anti-Semitism

Muslims regard the Qur'an as the infallible and eternal word of God, unchanged in form since the time of Muhammad. It is seen as the final revelation of God to mankind, replacing the Torah and the Christian Gospels, which Muslims consider to have been distorted by the Jews and Christians respectively.

Divided into 114 chapters in declining order of length, the Qur'an is committed to memory by specialist reciters. Most Muslims memorize one particular chapter, repeated five times per day in their prayers: the *Sura al-Fatiha*.

- 1 In the Name of the Most Merciful Allah
- 2 Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all Creatures
- 3 The Most Merciful
- 4 The King of the Day of Judgement
- 5 Thee do we worship, and of Thee do we beg assistance
- 6 Direct us in the right way
- 7 In the way of those to whom **Thou hast been gracious**;
Not of those against whom **Thou art incensed**,
Nor of those who **go astray**.

The final verse spells out God's attitude towards Muslims, Jews, and Christians respectively, according to most Muslim commentators on the Qur'an. God has been gracious to the Muslims; God is incensed with the Jews; the Christians have gone astray.⁵

Muslims hold the words of the Qur'an to be God's own words, not those of Muhammad. Qur'anic criticism of the Jews and Judaism therefore carries the divine imprimatur; devout Muslims are unlikely to open this view up for discussion or compromise. The Qur'an represents truth in an absolute sense; if God is incensed with a particular group, then believers should be as well.

Why is God incensed with the Jews? The Qur'an identifies multiple reasons:

First, though the Jews were given an early revelation from God (Q2:122), they did not implement God's decrees but deliberately distorted His teachings:

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for a miserable price! . . . (Q2:79)

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism is the discipline of discovering the original words of Scripture and thus evaluating the faithfulness of the various versions at hand. It is a mainstay of the Judeo-Christian scholarly tradition, and it must be brought into play when Muslim scholars claim that the Old Testament has been altered in order to slight Muhammad.ⁱ

Centuries of painstaking and fastidious research have gone into establishing which manuscripts—whether on papyrus, vellum, parchment, or paper; whether in scroll or codex (book) form—are truer to the “original autographs” (the first handwritten versions) of the various biblical passages. Consider, for instance, the “critical apparatus” (footnotes) for the above-mentioned Deuteronomy 18:15-18, as found in the standard Hebrew text, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Examination reveals careful comparisons of the printed Hebrew with such ancient sources as a thirteenth-century AD parchment in the British Museum; Origen's third-century AD construal of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament begun in the third century BC; and the Dead Sea Scrolls,ⁱⁱ Old Testament parchment manuscripts copied by the Jewish Essene sect over a century before Jesus' birth. The discovery of these scrolls between 1947 and 1956 showed a remarkable correspondence with the historic Masoretic text of the Old Testament, prepared roughly a thousand years later.

ⁱ E.g., Ali Akbar, *Israel and the Prophecies of the Holy Qur'an*, 5th rev. ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Marican and Sons, 1980), 3-4. See also “A Mozarabic Refutation of Islam,” in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 147.

ⁱⁱ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, edited by A. Alt, O. Eissfeldt, P. Kahle, and R. Kittel (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967/77), 319.

Muslims believe that the original Torah handed by God to the Jews no longer exists, with the modern Torah suffering from very significant gaps. In the words of the leading twentieth-century Pakistani Islamist scholar, Abul A'la Maududi, the Jewish scholars “not only perverted their Scriptures to suit their desires and vanities, but also blended with the original Text their own interpretation, their national history, their superstitions, their self-made theories, philosophies and laws. Then they presented all this mixture (contained in the existing form of the Bible) to be from God.”⁶

Second, Muslims draw on the Qur'an to accuse the Jews of intentionally deleting clear references to the coming of Muhammad from the modern Torah:

... who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah? ... (Q2:140)

Muslim scholars refer to the text of the Hebrew Scriptures in support of their claims that the Jews suppressed the Torah prophecies anticipating Muhammad. An example cited regularly by Muslim scholars⁷ is Deuteronomy 18:15-18, seen as containing one of the rare prophecies of Muhammad that the Jews neglected to delete:

The Lord said to [Moses]: “. . . I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command Him (Deuteronomy 18:15-18).

While Christians understand this passage as referring to Jesus, Muslim scholars take “brothers” to refer to the Arabs and “a prophet like you” to signify Muhammad.⁸

Because of these outrages, God's punishment awaits the Jews:

Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book? . . . but a party of them turn back . . . But how (will they fare) when We gather them together against a Day about which there is no doubt . . . ? (Q3:23-25)

These Qur'an verses provide a window into early contacts between Muhammad and the Jewish communities of Arabia. He expected the Jews to accept him as a prophet, but they tested him on their Scriptures and found him lacking and jeered at him. The Qur'an attributed the differences to Jewish distortions. The Qur'an records this controversy, which entered the broader discourse during Islam's early centuries.

Textual Criticism (*continued*)

The literature on textual variants comes down to adjudicating between such differences as a Hebrew manuscript which construes Genesis 1:26 to say, “over the cattle, and over all the earth,” and a Syriac (Aramaic) manuscript, which reads, “over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth.” And again, between a Hebrew version of Isaiah 2:12 (“against all that is lifted up and low”) and a Greek version (“against all that is high and towering, and they shall be brought low”).ⁱⁱⁱ In short, those familiar with the rigor of such scholarship are disinclined to think that uncomfortably pro-Muslim passages have been deleted without wide detection and opposition within the professorial community.

Furthermore, if Jews and/or Christians were so clever at removing other Muhammad-friendly verses, how could they have missed Deuteronomy 18:15-20, which Muslims appropriate for their own purposes? And if Jewish scholars were about the business of erasing troublesome passages, why did they leave in the awkward talk of a brutalized Messiah in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 (passages which “play into Christian hands”) and embarrassing descriptions of Noah's post-Flood drunkenness and Abraham's mendacity in Egyptian and Philistine courts? And if the deletions were supposed to have occurred before Muhammad's appearance, how could the rabbis have sufficiently anticipated “The Prophet” to launch a pre-emptive strike against him? Such problems make claims of anti-Muslim editing untenable.

ⁱⁱⁱ Anthony F. Campbell, “Preparatory Issues in Approaching Biblical Texts,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 6.

Anti-Semitism in the Hadith and the Commentaries

Anti-Jewish statements in the Qur'an are reinforced by books that provide a bridge between the Qur'an and ordinary Muslims—the sacred Hadith collections, records of Muhammad's words and deeds, and Qur'an commentaries. These books underscore the negative Qur'anic portrayal of Jews (and sometimes Christians), often in very subtle, almost implicit, yet powerful ways.

The classical commentator al-Baydawi explains the above mentioned Q3:23-25 about God's punishment awaiting the Jews in the following terms:

It is recorded that the first standard of the Infidels that shall be raised on the Day of Judgment is the standard of the Jews; then God shall upbraid them in the presence of the witnesses and then order them to Hell.⁹

The Hadith collections of Muhammad al-Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 875), two multi-volume collections of Muhammad's sayings and deeds, further graphically illustrate the pending punishment:

The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews.¹⁰

The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews . . .

Fruit of Qur'anic Anti-Semitism: The Hamas Covenant

How does an ancient multi-layered literary prejudice against Jews and Judaism translate into modern-day Muslim anti-Semitism? We will examine several case studies, beginning with the Palestinian Islamic radical group Hamas.

Hamas published its Covenant on August 18, 1988. This document declares at Article Eight that:

Allah is [Hamas'] target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution; Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes.¹¹

Based on the above statement, as well as on the Qur'anic verses relating to Jews discussed earlier, we can conclude that the very foundation principles for Hamas members are:

1. A view of God being "incensed" with the Jews,
2. because Jews deliberately corrupted God's revelation given to them,
3. for which they will be singled out for agonizing punishment on Judgment Day.

The Hamas Covenant begins with Q3:109-111, referring to Muslims as the most just and best of "nations."¹² The Covenant then presents 29 Qur'an excerpts and five Hadith excerpts in connection with the document's primary call for jihad against the Jewish state of Israel. The Covenant contains almost one excerpt from Islamic primary scriptures for each of its 36 articles. This is significant for three reasons:

1. Such connection between scripture and policy provides divine endorsement of the particular policy in question.

2. The quotations from scripture appear as integral to the formulation of policy.
3. Hamas thus appears to be fulfilling its goal of having the Qur'an as its constitution, or as the very bedrock of its existence.

The Hamas Covenant is published in professional booklet form. Of the 36 articles, the following specifically pick up on anti-Jewish themes, providing scriptural support in the process.

- Article Seven cites the above-mentioned Hadith that warns the Jews of the punishment awaiting them on the Day of Judgment.
- Article 11 draws on Q56:95 in unambiguously rejecting any compromise over the land of Palestine: “The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic *Waqf* [endowment] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up . . . This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force . . .”
- Article 13 rejects peaceful initiatives and conferences: “Now and then the call goes out for the convening of an international conference to look for ways of solving the (Palestinian) question . . . the Islamic Resistance Movement does not consider these conferences capable of realising the demands, restoring the rights or doing justice to the oppressed. These conferences are only ways of setting the infidels in the land of the Moslems as arbitrators. When did the infidels do justice to the believers?” This article cites Q2:120 as support: “But the Jews will not be pleased with thee, neither the Christians, until thou follow their religion; say, The direction of Allah is the true direction. And verily if thou follow their desires, after the knowledge which hath been given thee, thou shalt find no patron or protector against Allah.”
- Article 22 cites Q5:64 to speak of “corrupt doers” and rails against Jews in terms reminiscent of the worst Nazi propaganda:

“With their money, they took control of the world media, news agencies, the press, publishing houses, broadcasting stations . . . they stirred revolutions in various parts of the world . . . They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist revolution and most of the revolutions . . . they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, the Lions . . . they were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to colonize many countries in order to enable them to exploit their resources and spread corruption there . . . They were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, making financial gains and controlling resources. They obtained the Balfour Declaration, formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state. It was they who instigated the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations and the Security Council to enable them to rule the world through them. There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it.”

- Article 32 includes a call for ongoing struggle against the Jews: “The Islamic Resistance Movement consider[s] itself to be the spearhead of the circle of struggle with world Zionism and a step on the road. The Movement adds its efforts to the efforts of all those who are active in the Palestinian arena. Arab and Islamic Peoples should augment by further steps on their part; Islamic groupings all over the Arab world should also do the same, since all of these are the best-equipped for the future role in the fight with the warmongering Jews.” Q5:64 is cited in support: “. . . and we have put enmity and hatred between them, until the day of resurrection. So often as they shall kindle a fire of

war, Allah shall extinguish it; and they shall set their minds to act corruptly in the earth, but Allah loveth not the corrupt doers.”¹³

Fruit of Qur’anic Anti-Semitism: Co-opting Jerusalem

Given the extent of inbuilt anti-Jewish attitudes in Islamic scripture and discourse, it is little wonder that any Jewish elements that make an appearance in Islamic theology or history are reshaped to fit a Muslim mold. Jerusalem is a case in point.

Although mentioned around 800 times in the Old Testament and more than 140 times in the New Testament, Jerusalem is not mentioned by name at all in the Qur’an. Yet it is valued as Islam’s third most holy city, and this is achieved through co-opting the Jerusalem story for Islam. First, it is considered to be the place to which Muhammad flew on a horse and from which he ascended to heaven on his nocturnal journey to meet the prophets and God himself in AD 619. This appears in the Qur’an at Q17:1:¹⁴

Jewish elements that make an appearance in Islamic theology or history are reshaped to fit a Muslim mold.

Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless.

Muslim tradition identifies the two mosques mentioned in this verse as being in Mecca and Jerusalem. One author describes the importance of this night journey for Islam as representing “a significant change in the role of the Arabs in relation to the Jews in the purposes of God, representing a kind of spiritual conquest of Jerusalem by Muhammad.”¹⁵

A second factor in Jerusalem’s significance for Islam is that it is held to be the location of the final judgment at the end of days, when all good Muslims hope to go straight to Paradise.¹⁶ As we have seen, that judgment will involve affirmation for Muslims and condemnation for Jews.

The process of Jerusalem’s metamorphosis into a Muslim city was reinforced by history. Jerusalem was controlled by Muslim authorities of various empires between 638 and 1917. The Caliph Umar captured the city in 638, with the treaty offered to the residents of Jerusalem stating in blunt terms: “No Jew will be authorized to live in Jerusalem.”¹⁷ Although not put into effect, this prohibition signaled how Muslim rulers envisaged the future identity of Jerusalem.

The fifth Sunni Muslim Caliph, Mu’awiyya, took his oath of office in Jerusalem in 661, while the ninth Muslim Caliph, ‘Abd al-Malik, built the Dome of the Rock shrine between 687 and 691 on top of the site where Solomon built the original Jewish Temple to commemorate the prophetic night journey referred to in Q17:1. This development determined that there would be subsequent rival claims and counter-claims between Muslims and Jews regarding the sacred sites of Jerusalem.

“No Jew will be authorized to live in Jerusalem”

Under the Fatimids, a Shi’ite dynasty that gained control of the city in 961, non-Muslim minorities fell on hard times. Moshe Gil comments that the continual Fatimid campaigns against enemies “destroyed Palestine, and especially its Jewish population.”¹⁸

After 1,300 years of witnessing a steady erosion of their place in Jerusalem, it is little wonder that the State of Israel determined never again to relinquish Jewish control when their soldiers captured the Old City in the Six Day War of 1967.

Fruit of Qur'anic Anti-Semitism: Muslim Pogroms against the Jews under the Islamic Empires

Muslim lobbyists often claim that Islam has always been tolerant of religious minorities living in Islamic domains. However, a closer examination of historical records shows clearly that the Jewish experience under the Islamic dynasties was ambiguous at best, and at worst it was a bleak picture of persecution and massacre. The famous Austrian historian and Arabist G. E. von Grunebaum writes: "It would . . . not be difficult to compile a lengthy list of persecutions, arbitrary confiscations, attempted forced conversions, or pogroms."¹⁹

The mass beheading of the Banu Quraiza tribe in 627 was merely a foretaste of what was to come in subsequent centuries. The following representative sample of anti-Jewish pogroms (from a Russian word "for devastation") carried out by Muslims raises serious questions about the account of tolerance disseminated by Muslim propagandists.²⁰ In contrast with these accounts of Muslim violence against Jews down through the centuries, there is no evidence of Jewish massacres of Muslims during the same period.

In 1066, the Jewish quarter of Granada in Muslim Spain was razed by Muslims, with many Jews killed, including Joseph HaNagid, the Jewish vizier (high-ranking advisor to the Sultan), who was crucified. Inflammatory preaching by Muslim imams regarding supposed Jewish power and influence was the cause of this pogrom.

To the south in Morocco, similar pogroms occurred from time to time. An accusation against a Jewish vizier of mistreating a Muslim woman in Fez in 1465 led to thousands of deaths among Jews, both in the city of Fez and in other locations in Morocco.²¹

Similarly in the 19th century there were massacres of Jews in Marrakesh between 1864 and 1880, while to the east in Algiers, pogroms at regular intervals (1805, 1815, and 1830) led to the deaths of thousands of Jews.²²

Such attacks on Jewish persons were often accompanied by destruction of synagogues, sometimes sanctioned by official decrees.²³

Fruit of Qur'anic Anti-Semitism: The Apes and Swine Theme

Earlier we discussed an interview with a three-year-old girl on Arabic *Iqraa* television, in which she referred to Jews as "apes and pigs." Here is a case study demonstrating how ancient textual prejudice underpins and informs modern racism.

According to Islam's most sacred text, the wrath of God has various effects. One of the more unusual is the punishment of some transgressors:

Q5:60 Those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine . . .

The Prophetic traditions (Hadith), collected in the late ninth century, also refer to this divine punishment:

He heard the Prophet saying, “From among my followers there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk, the drinking of alcoholic drinks and the use of musical instruments, as lawful. And there will be some people who will stay near the side of a mountain and in the evening their shepherd will come to them with their sheep and ask them for something, but they will say to him, ‘Return to us tomorrow.’ Allah will destroy them during the night and will let the mountain fall on them, and He will transform the rest of them into monkeys and pigs and they will remain so till the Day of Resurrection.”²⁴

Although the above references do not overtly link the transformation into apes and swine with a particular race, Qur’an commentators added this detail from early on. Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 767), a pioneering commentator, linked this punishment with the Jews in his comment on Qur’an chapter 1 mentioned earlier:

**... the Jewish [religion],
against whom God was
wrathful. Monkey and pigs
are made from them.**

Guide us along the straight path: that is, the religion of Islam because there is no guidance in any religion other than Islam . . . The path of those whom You have blessed . . . Not those against whom You have sent Your wrath: that is . . . the Jewish [religion], against whom God was wrathful. Monkeys and pigs were made from them.²⁵

This theme became firmly entrenched in the emerging Muslim literature. Some one thousand years after Muqatil wrote his commentary, a similar reference to Jews is found in the *Kitab al-Tawhid* by the infamous Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791), father of today’s radical Wahhabis.

Allah transformed some of the Jews into apes because the ape outwardly resembles the human being, although they are separate and distinct from them.²⁶

In today’s strident Muslim discourse, this theme recurs frequently, especially in relation to the Jewish state of Israel. For example, Ali ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abdil-Hameed in his book, *Muslim Unity in Light of the Numerous Groups and Parties*, bewails the establishment of Israel in 1948, identifying its founders as “the brothers of apes and swine in the core of the Islamic lands from where the Prophet . . . had ascended to the heavens (i.e. Jerusalem).”²⁷

In similar vein, Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, the Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine, railed against Israel in a sermon at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on July 11, 1997:

Allah shall take revenge on behalf of his prophet against the colonialist settlers who are sons of monkeys and pigs . . . Forgive us, Muhammad, for the acts of these sons of monkeys and pigs, who sought to harm your sanctity.²⁸

Not to be outdone, Hamas makes use of this metaphor in its documentation. Hamas’ very first leaflet, dated January 1988, clearly saw the apes and swine theme as a means of galvanizing support:

O all our people, men and women. O our children: the Jews—brothers of the apes, assassins of the prophets, bloodsuckers, warmongers—are murdering you . . . Only Islam can break the Jews and destroy their dream.²⁹

Conclusion

Our discussion has ranged from the distant past to the present, reflecting the long trajectory of Islamic anti-Semitism, from its roots in Muhammad's life and the Qur'anic record of that life, down to its diverse modern expressions. The link between past and present is clear: anti-Jewish themes articulated in the primary texts of Islam have been echoed down the ages by scholars and popular preachers who act as a conduit for such prejudices to enter the broader Muslim consciousness.

One can only imagine the media and political outcry if Christian religious leaders were to speak *en masse* in such negative terms about another religious community. But of course not only would Christians not dare to do so; it would be against the very spirit of their faith to do so.

Also worthy of consideration are the ramifications of such attitudes within the Islamic texts and among Muslim people. With such toxic attitudes so entrenched among Muslims, how realistic is it to ask Israel to give away land that can serve as a buffer zone between it and its hostile neighbors? Indeed, while Israel should of course dialogue with its Arab interlocutors, the Jewish state needs clear evidence of Muslim reformers effectively addressing the anti-Semitic elements of their tradition, embraced by succeeding generations of religious leaders. Muslims who do not accept that such anti-Jewish attitudes are firmly rooted within their faith are either unaware of these elements in their literature, or are engaging in deep denial, or are actively implementing the practice of *taqiyya*, a doctrine of authorized and deliberate deception based on Suras 2:225 and 16:106 that allows Muslims to spread falsehood under certain circumstances in order to protect or advance the cause of Islam.

The beginnings of such a process of reform are in evidence among some Muslim reformers, especially those living in the safety of the West, but much remains to be done. With time, increased mass education, and the dissemination of liberal values, the prospects of eradicating Islamic anti-Semitism may well improve. In the meantime, Israel would do well to stay well armed, and the world's democracies should stand by her as she struggles to survive in a hostile neighborhood.

Having reviewed Islam's harsh view of the Jews, we will scrutinize that judgment by assessing the modern state of Israel.

Part 2: Israel: The Deep Cultural Difference

From its inception, the modern Jewish state of Israel has been under pressure and frequent attack by the surrounding Muslim states and their cobelligerent patrons throughout the Islamic world. Naturally, much of the world Jewish community, with its many Holocaust survivors, has rallied to Israel's side, providing funds, advocacy, and manpower to help the nation both survive and flourish. But the support is much broader than this, extending, for instance, to the United States in general and to its sizable evangelical populace.

Much of the evangelical campaign for Israel is based not only on reverence for their shared Scripture (the Jewish *Tanakh*, or "Old Testament" in Christian terms), but more particularly on readings of biblical prophecy concerning the children of Abraham and the end times. Here, though, in this booklet, we leave aside issues of prophetic promise and apocalyptic prediction and focus on broad principles inherent in Western civilization, the beneficiary of both classical and Judeo-Christian thinking.

Democracy

Among its neighbors, Israel is the only truly democratic state, the only one exhibiting constitutional kinship with the West.³⁰ Jordan, to the east is a "constitutional *monarchy*," with King Abdullah II exercising disproportionate power from the throne; Syria, to the northeast is a "republic under an *authoritarian regime*," but her elections are marginal (President Bashar al-Assad came to office with an unlikely 97.6% of the vote, and he is now holding to power by violent suppression of dissent); Lebanon to the north is designated a "republic," as is Egypt to the southwest, but, in recent history, neither nation has known popular sovereignty. Lebanon cannot control the activities of Hezbollah; and Egypt has elected as its president the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, after deposing "strongman" Hosni Mubarak.³¹

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Israel is the only truly
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Israel, in stark contrast, is very much a "parliamentary democracy," with its leaders accountable to the people through the many parties that represent them, and the military is strictly accountable to these elected leaders.³² The nation has "universal suffrage with free elections and an independent and effective judiciary." And though Israel enhances its Jewishness by special immigration policies,

The Arab minority actively participates in the political process. There are Arab parliamentarians, including Arabs as Deputy Speakers of the Knesset [Israeli parliament]. There are Arab judges, including on the Supreme Court, Arab cabinet ministers, Arab heads of hospital departments, Arab university professors, Arab diplomats in the Foreign Service, and very senior Arab police and army officers.³³

So why does Israel stand out in terms of governance?

For one thing, the surrounding Muslim states are increasingly answerable to Muslim shari'a law, with its totalitarian tendencies and its jaundiced view of freedom of religion and irreligion.

For another, the tribalism characteristic of Arabian/Muslim culture makes statecraft more difficult. It can turn politics into familial struggles rather than the clash of ideas to be resolved in the forum.

And then there is the matter of schooling, where Israel distinguishes itself. As Franklin Roosevelt observed, "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."³⁴

In this regard, the differences are particularly striking when it comes to literacy. As a writer for the *Economist* has observed: “The Middle East has a bad reputation when it comes to books; nowhere else do so few people read them.”³⁵ The problem is particularly keen among women, a difficulty widespread in predominantly Muslim cultures. For instance, in Egypt, 83% of the men can read and write, but only 59% of the women. And, of course, it matters what the literate populace is reading. A comparison of the best-selling books in Israel with those of the adjacent countries (when one can find such lists) is telling, with a generous and cosmopolitan sampling of fiction and non-fiction in Israel,³⁶ and a more parochial list in surrounding Muslim states.³⁷

When asked at the close of the American Constitutional Convention in 1779, “What kind of a government have you given us?!” Benjamin Franklin replied, “A Republic, madam, if you can hold onto it.” In those terms, Israel seems to be the only state in the region that can “hold onto” democracy, and it is certainly worth the effort. For as Reinhold Niebuhr observed, “Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”³⁸

A Free Press

As it says in Proverbs, “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed,” and Israel has no shortage of “counselors,” many of them at odds with one another over matters large and small. Lively, public conversation, with doses of self-criticism, is essential to the health of a nation, given that man is a fallen creature, liable to mistakes in thought and missteps in behavior. Everyone needs accountability and counsel, and a free press, such as Israel’s, provides for them in generous measure.³⁹

Freedom, democracy, and journalism grow up together, symbiotically. There are more than 40 print newspapers in Israel, with more than 20 of them appearing daily—half again as many as one finds in metropolitan Chicago, whose population is roughly the same as Israel’s. These dailies are published in Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, French, and English, some of them dating back to the 1930s, and they represent a range of political, social, and religious conviction. (This contrasts with the pre-Israel days when the Ottomans banned all Hebrew-language newspapers in the region.)⁴⁰ In addition, there are many online papers published jointly with their print editions or as stand-alone electronic periodicals. Some typically take the side of the nation against its detractors (e.g., debka.com); others are more critical of Israel (e.g., btselem.org).

Over 70% of Israelis use the Internet, so the people have instant access to worldwide commentary on their country, whether friendly or not. The picture is different for Israel’s neighbors, with Internet usage around 30% in Jordan and Lebanon, and 20% in Syria.⁴¹ And the choice of online newspapers in these four adjacent countries is small, especially if one looks for English editions, which number about a dozen—all of which typically lambaste Israel on a regular basis.

Israel alone permits and nurtures a lively and contentious press, characteristic of the West and essential to responsible government.

In short, the Israeli populace, outnumbered 14 to 1 by its immediate neighbors, sustains the region’s only journalistic powerhouse. Israel alone permits and nurtures a lively and contentious press, characteristic of the West and essential to responsible government.

Stewardship of Resources

The Israelis have distinguished themselves by their stewardship, by making the most of what they have been given. “Between 1980 and 2000 the number of patents registered in Israel was 7,652 compared with 367 for all the Arab countries combined.”⁴² This fits the record of Jews in general, who have been the recipients of nearly 200 Nobel Prizes, primarily in the sciences, despite being a fraction of one per cent of the world’s population. And in the case of Israel, their thoughtful industriousness has blessed the land, causing “the desert to bloom.”

These developments led President Kennedy to observe,

I first saw Palestine in 1939. There the neglect and ruin left by centuries of Ottoman misrule were slowly being transformed by miracles of labor and sacrifice. But Palestine was still a land of promise in 1939, rather than a land of fulfillment. I returned in 1951 to see the grandeur of Israel.⁴³

Whether or not “grandeur” is too strong a word, progress has certainly been remarkable. And this does not reflect poorly on the Arab and Turkish people per se. They are a wonderful people, made in the image of God, capable of all that is good in humankind. Unfortunately, the fatalism emerging from core Islamic doctrines has not been helpful to their cultures.

The Israelis, in contrast, have resisted this fatalism that plagues their neighbors. Instead, they have shown themselves to be problem-solvers, convinced that “where there’s a will there’s a way”—and the land has been blessed.⁴⁴

Of course, this sort of talk can suggest a spirit of Jewish triumphalism and can garner greater sympathy for Israel’s “underdog” detractors, but one must not miss the overarching point. This nation, smaller than New Jersey in both population and land mass, must cope with longstanding and seemingly intractable anti-Semitism in the Middle East and fight daily for survival in a furnace of opposition from neighboring Arab states. So it is important to see Israel as worthy of admiration and protection. For this purpose, we recognize the contributions that this singular Jewish state is making to the region and the world at large, not only as an example of high achievement under difficult circumstances but also as a source of life-giving technology for those who are willing to receive it.

Globally Beneficial Ingenuity

Consistent with the historically high level of professional achievement characteristic of the Jewish people in general, “Israel has more scientists and engineers per capita than any other country,”⁴⁵ and so it is no surprise that the nation has been inventive in crafting items essential to its survival, including such military assets as the sophisticated “Iron Dome” air-defense system, with its Raphael missiles. But the benefits of Israeli research and development carry well beyond national defense, bringing relief to people from all backgrounds. For instance, only a few miles from an “Iron Dome” deployment near Rehovoth stands the Weizmann Institute of Science. Here, medical research ranges from the performance of the brain’s neurohypophysis, where “biochemical commands are passed from the brain cells to the bloodstream,”⁴⁶ to the causes of Batten disease, “a rare but fatal neurodegenerative disorder that begins in childhood.”⁴⁷

Such is the creative resiliency of the Jews, which Russian émigré Natan Sharansky explains as a matter of survival:

For us in the Soviet Union, we received with our mothers' milk the knowledge that because you are a Jew—which had no positive meaning to us then, only that we were victims of anti-Semitism—you had to be exceptional in your profession, whether it was chess, music, mathematics, medicine, or ballet. . . . That was the only way to build some kind of protection for yourself, because you would always be starting from behind.⁴⁸

As a result, in the USSR, “some thirty percent of the doctors [and] twenty percent of the engineers” were Jewish, though Jews made up only about two percent of the population. Whatever the reason, the Jews of Israel are extraordinarily ingenious, and the nations of the earth are beneficiaries of their scientific and technological enterprise.

It is a great pity that enmity between Israel and its neighbors has undermined the promise of mutual benefit. President Kennedy framed the problem and the prospects this way:

. . . the Jews of Israel are extraordinarily ingenious, and the nations of the earth are beneficiaries of their scientific and technological enterprise.

The technical skills and genius of Israel have already brought their blessings to Burma and to Ethiopia. Still other nations in Asia and in Africa are eager to benefit from the special skills available in that bustling land. Why should the Middle East alone be cut off from this partnership? And why should not the people of Israel receive the blessings available to them from association with the Arab world?

When we think of the possibilities of this association, an emotion of soaring hope replaces our somber anxieties about the Middle East. Ancient rivers would give their power to new industries. The desert would yield to civilization. Disease would be eradicated, especially the disease that strikes down helpless children. The blight of poverty would be replaced by the blessings of abundance.⁴⁹

The Status of Women

Though the ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel have been particularly dismissive of Westernized women who are active in civic and cultural affairs, the nation as a whole relies upon the knowledge, resourcefulness, and initiative of its women to keep it strong and fruitful—in the marketplace, journalism, the military, the corporate boardroom, the university, and the halls of government (most notably in the leadership of Prime Minister Golda Meir). They are educated to this end and their contribution is substantial, as was that of the woman described in Proverbs 31.

The plight of women in the surrounding Muslim nations is a study in contrast. Indeed, there is no Israeli literature remotely comparable to the body of lament and protest issuing from women writers in the Islamic world.⁵⁰

“Purity of Arms”

While there are clear examples of callousness, criminal negligence, murder, and cover-up by members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the decades of the nation's existence, such departures from decency are neither legal nor celebrated in Israel.⁵¹ The line against rogue forces was drawn early when, in June of 1948, the IDF sank a supply ship operated by the terrorist, Jewish paramilitary group, Irgun. The *Altalena* had

sailed from France, carrying 5,000 rifles, 650 machine guns, 50 mortars, and millions of rounds of ammunition—arms with which Irgun hoped to seize more of the country, though terms of the 1948 truce forbade it. (This was the same Irgun who had killed 254 unarmed Arabs in the village of Deir Yassin in April of 1948. An offshoot group blew up a large section of the King David Hotel in 1946, killing 91.)⁵² When the shooting was over, 14 Irgun lay dead, with 69 wounded; the IDF lost two dead and six wounded.⁵³

Though there are lapses in performance, Israel still espouses the principles of the Western just war tradition and trains her soldiers to respect them—what they call “Purity of Arms”:

The soldier shall make use of his weaponry and power only for the fulfillment of the mission and solely to the extent required; he will maintain his humanity even in combat. The soldier shall not employ his weaponry and power in order to harm non-combatants or prisoners of war, and shall do all he can to avoid harming their lives, bodies, honor and property.⁵⁴

No nation has a clean record by this standard, the US and UK included; indeed, military instructors in these and other Western nations both admit and condemn atrocities such as the one that occurred in the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai in 1968. In this way, the forces seek to uphold or restore the standard.

This is not the case with Hezbollah and Hamas, who rain B302 rockets on Israel from the north (with anti-personnel ball bearings to maximize civilian casualties) and launch sheets of haphazardly aimed Katyusha rockets from the south. These are the same people who target civilians riding buses, sitting in cafes, and attending theatres—and even rig secondary bombs meant to kill aid workers hurrying to assist the victims of the first blast.⁵⁵ Their killing of innocents is not accidental or careless, but rather, intentional. And when suicide bombers are involved, families are honored and compensated for the loss of their “martyred” kin.⁵⁶

Though there is suffering on both sides, numbers alone do not tell the story. Indeed, German civilian casualties outnumbered British civilian casualties in WWII, but this does not tip the moral balance in Germany’s favor.

Furthermore, there is a journalistic asymmetry with regard to this ongoing conflict. In simplest terms, both Israel and Gaza are full of reporters willing and free to chronicle, magnify, and even embellish Israeli missteps in combat; however, there is no safe room in Gaza for journalists, foreign or domestic, who speak well of Israel or ill of Palestinian military and paramilitary ventures. And so public perception is skewed.

A Place of Full Welcome and Refuge for the Jews

Throughout human history, Jerusalem with its surrounding territory has had many owners, with many shifts in power. Thus it was that control of the city passed from the child-sacrificing Canaanites to the Exodus Jews in 1400 BC. This was transfer by conquest, to be followed by other dramatic turnovers—to the “Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Umayyads, Fatimids, Abbasids, Crusaders, Mamluks, [or] Ottomans” in successive centuries.⁵⁷ And with each change in government came immigrants who found the new regimes congenial, as was the case with Arabs who streamed up from Arabia.

Of course, might, by itself, does not make right (though it may serve a righteous cause). But might does give title to land. In every instance, the government, whether that of a nation or an empire, determines who owns what and how much of it they may keep. Thus, the state exercises the power to tax and to invoke eminent domain. It may do so in admirable fashion or it may offend a variety of sensibilities, but sovereignty is the key to determining what land belongs to whom and under what conditions.

So what shall one make of Israel's attempt to reestablish a nation in the Holy Land, some 2,000 years after the Romans drove out the Jews and sought to erase their influence in the region? These were the Hebrew people who saw their temple destroyed in AD 70, and who watched as maps were changed to honor their ancient enemies, the Philistines (hence, "Palestina")—maps which substituted "Neapolis" ("new city," the modern "Nablus") for the biblical "Shechem," the first Canaanite city visited by Abraham.

Not surprisingly, the Jews made repeated attempts over the centuries to simply return to their homeland, and "there are places, especially in Galilee, where they never left at all."⁵⁸ And, though many Jews have prospered and distinguished themselves in foreign lands over the years, as a people, they have endured a "trail of tears,"⁵⁹ leading them through seasons and regions of extreme anti-Semitism, into ghetto confinement, and into Hitler's death camps, where roughly a third of the Jews on earth were annihilated. So they have looked homeward to a land they could once again call their own. And they came not as invaders, but as immigrants buying property for new residence and development. The Jewish National Fund, established in 1901, had purchased 25,000 acres by 1921 and then 89,500 acres by 1935.⁶⁰

In 1947, two years after World War II, 494,000 acres (772 square miles) were under Jewish ownership. Of that land, 25% had been bought from Arab Palestinians and 40% from absentee landowners in other nations, who had purchased confiscated property from the Ottoman Empire. Much of the rest had come into the hands of Palestinian Jews who remained on rented Ottoman land when that empire fell at the end of World War II.⁶¹

When the British withdrew in May of 1948, there were 650,000 Jews living in Israel in 305 towns, 233 of them standing on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund.⁶² One of these cities was Tel Aviv, built on sand dunes north of Jaffa on land purchased from Ottoman Turks.⁶³

Residence on legally purchased land was no guarantee that the Jews would be safe from attack. The Arabs came to fear and resent the increasing Jewish presence, even as some of their own brethren sold them land. Many Arab tenant farmers were expelled from the newly purchased property, and to consolidate these

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territorial gains, Israeli deeds stipulated that the land could not be sold to non-Jews. Consequently, there were regular armed incursions through the first half of the twentieth century, including attacks on 11 Jewish settlements before 1914, a riot in Jerusalem and a raid near the Sea of Galilee in 1920 (which prompted the formation of the Jews' first defense force, *Hagana*), the killing of 60 Jewish residents of Hebron in 1929,⁶⁴ and attacks on Jewish settlements by the newly formed *fedayeen* (Arab guerrillas) in 1931.⁶⁵

Furthermore, the "urban professional and middle classes, predominantly Christian, resented the new Jewish immigrants. It was Arab Christians who, in June 1891, organized the first Arab protest to the government against Jewish immigration."⁶⁶ These Arab Christians had come to terms with the Muslim majority and even "participated together with the Muslims in celebrating the Prophet's birthday."⁶⁷ Of course, these Christians valued the measure of economic and social status they had managed to acquire in Palestine, and they understood that their fortunes might decline with the ascent of Jewish professionals and businessmen.⁶⁸ So it is not surprising that "after 1908 . . . a consistent activity against Jewish settlement started . . . which was undertaken mainly by two Arab newspapers: *al-Filastin* and *al-Karmil*. They were both owned by Palestinian Christians . . ."⁶⁹

So bitter was Arab feeling that, in 1941, the Grand Mufti Haj Amin-al-Husseini, the most influential leader of Palestinian Arabs, approached Adolf Hitler for assistance: "The Arabs were Germany's natural friends

because they had the same enemies as had Germany, namely the English, the Jews, and the Communists.” Hitler assured him that “Germany stood for uncompromising war against the Jews.” By his account, “That naturally included active opposition to the Jewish national home in Palestine, which was nothing other than a center, in the form of a state, for the exercise of destructive influence by Jewish interests.”⁷⁰

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Jews of Europe were increasingly caught in a vise. As Israel’s first president Chaim Weizmann put it, the world was “divided into places where they [could not] live and places into which they [could not] enter,”⁷¹ including Palestine. In an effort to keep the peace and maintain control, the British put severe restrictions on Jewish immigration, and even the United States turned away a shipload of Jews fleeing Germany, an incident recounted in the book and subsequent film, *Voyage of the Damned*.⁷² So the Jews turned to illegal immigration into Palestine, with more than 30 ships embarking from Black Sea ports in Bulgaria and Romania in 1939 alone.⁷³

In 1945, the war ended and Jewish real estate purchase in Palestine continued. Still, the majority of the land remained in Arab hands—until, that is, 1948. What happened next is a matter of great and continuing debate, with competing Palestinian and Israeli narratives, and with “historians on both sides . . . presenting documents and facts” to bolster their claims.⁷⁴

On May 15, 1948, “the day after Israel was founded [along the lines of a two-state partition, with support of the UN, but not the Arab League] . . . it was attacked by the armies of five Arab countries aimed at destroying the new state.”⁷⁵ When the dust had settled, approximately 800,000 Palestinian

Arabs had landed elsewhere—300,000 on the West Bank, annexed by Jordan in 1949; 100,000 in Jordan proper; 175,000 on the Gaza Strip, which was administered, but not annexed, by Egypt; 100,000 in Lebanon; 80,000 in Syria. One hundred fifty thousand remained in Israel. Only Jordan offered the refugees full citizenship.⁷⁶

Many left in panic, but some were removed by Israeli forces. Many of those who chose to leave were wealthy or members of the professional class, and this had a debilitating effect on those who remained.⁷⁷ These “elite left in the hope of returning—they left without their possessions, and did not sell their property,”⁷⁸ and David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, wrote that this had a “domino effect” on the remaining Arabs. But Palestinians retort that the departure of this ten percent cannot begin to explain the flight of the rest.⁷⁹ Others note that the 1948 war produced Jewish as well as Arab refugees, but critics of Israel say there is no fair comparison of the two.⁸⁰ Some say that the Jewish mayor of Haifa asked the Arabs to stay and to disregard claims that to do so would make them “renegades”;⁸¹ others claim the Haifa Arabs were victims, pure and simple.⁸² Some say that Israeli soldiers were guilty of rape; others attribute this unsubstantiated charge to an “Arab tendency to magnify . . . events in retrospect.”⁸³ And so the claims and counterclaims continue, and one must weigh the parties’ reputation for dispassionate candor, where it can be found.

It seems there were promptings from the Arab world at large, leading many Palestinians to believe that “their absence would be a short one.”⁸⁴ Syria’s prime minister Khaled al-Azm, reflected on the situation: “Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who

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encouraged them to leave. Only a few months separated our call to them to leave and our appeal to the United Nations to resolve on their return.”⁸⁵

When the UN did speak to the issue in 1948, through Resolution 194, it said that refugees should be permitted to return and be compensated for their losses, so long as they wished to live at peace with their neighbors.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, many Palestinians have not shown themselves adept at peaceful cohabitation with Israelis, and there is no Arab interest in reciprocal resettlement and compensation for Jews expelled from Muslim lands, Jews who saw tens of billions of dollars in assets confiscated.⁸⁷

To address the refugees’ grievances, Israel has proposed several systems of reparation through the years.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Palestinian Arabs have refused to settle for anything less than reclamation of their pre-1948 land. But this would mean the end of Israel. As Columbia University’s Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies, Rashid Khalidi, has observed, without sympathy for Israel,

In practical political terms, the return of three million Palestinians to the areas of what is now Israel where they (or their forebears) originally lived would overturn the demographic transformation which made possible the establishment of Israel as a state within a substantial Jewish majority in 1948. It is highly unlikely—some would say completely inconceivable—that this would be acceptable to any Israeli government under any circumstances which can be envisioned.⁸⁹

Indeed, it could not, for national suicide is not an option. And many understand the perspective of Jonathan Sacks, England’s chief rabbi, who observes, “Today there are 82 Christian nations and 56 Muslim ones, but only one Jewish one: in a country smaller than the Kruger National Park [in South Africa], one quarter of one per cent of the land mass of the Arab world.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, should Israel be replaced by a new,

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Muslim-majority, Arab nation, then the remaining Jews (and Christians) living there would become, at best, second-class citizens, as they are throughout North Africa, Turkey, the Middle East, and the Central Asian Republics—wherever Islam predominates.

This became clear to Khalil al-Sakakini (1878-1953), who was “one of [the] most active Arab Christians at the Palestinian Arab national congresses” in the 1920s.

He once thought that he and his fellow believers could flourish in the region, but later in life, he wrote sadly to his son, “No matter how my standing may be in science and literature, no matter how sincere my patriotism is, no matter how much I do to revive this nation . . . as long as I am not a Moslem I am nought. If you desire to amount to anything, then be a Moslem and that will be peace.”⁹¹

But now Jews have found a place to stand with dignity in the Middle East, and, under the Law of Return, enacted in 1950, Israel accepts all Diaspora Jews who choose to come their way.⁹² With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian Jews flocked to Israel, with 200,000 arriving in 1990 alone.⁹³ That same decade, thousands of Ethiopian Jews joined the migration,⁹⁴ which has come in waves through special operations named Moses, Sheba, Joshua, and Solomon, the headcount now nearing 100,000. With such an influx of Jews from a range of ethnicities and language groups into a tiny country, the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption has its hands full, but the doors remain wide open.

Though the nation is small and crowded and constantly under fire from one enemy or another, its immigrant refugees know they will now be living among a people who cherish them and who will never forget their special, historical plight.

Conclusion

Harvard's Samuel Huntington was surely correct when he said that the West and the Islamic world were engaged in a "clash of civilizations," and the Middle East continues to be exhibit A. This conflict goes to the heart of what it means to be a responsible citizen of the world as well as a person of faith. Not surprisingly, the two competing systems have been at odds since the seventh century, when the newborn Islamic faith first launched invaders toward all points of the compass, to seize Spain, India, the Balkans, and the Upper Nile.

Israel's safety is not a narrowly Jewish concern, any more than Western support of Japan over China in the Cold War was a narrowly Buddhist or Shinto concern. The overriding issue is preservation of democratic ideals, including religious liberty and the right to free expression, in an ideologically hostile region.

Some argue that, given the broad divide, the problem cannot be solved, but only managed.

This may well be the counsel of wisdom, for Arab opposition to Israel seems implacable. It is grounded both in the Muslim impulse to dominate (as evidenced by the play of shari'a law in every Muslim-majority nation on earth), and in the harsh assessment of the Jews writ large in Muslim tradition. Thus, the scandal of a strong, prosperous, Jewish nation in the heart of a socially troubled and economically challenged Middle East is very hard to bear.

Nevertheless, it becomes increasingly difficult for despotic Muslim leaders to insulate and intimidate their people. The Arab Spring may be turning into the Islamist winter, and the long-term prospects are not good for allegiance to a faith that has not served its adherents well in many respects.

Millions of Muslims have emigrated to the West for the sake of a better life. Perhaps their exposure to the fruit of democratic freedoms will help foster movements for substantial change within their homelands. Perhaps their co-religionists will begin to leave aside ancient enmities and develop dynamic policies for a new era in the Middle East. One might then hope that with time, critical debate, and education, a more generous view of the Jewish people and their modern state will prevail among Muslims. Until that day arrives, it is incumbent upon the world's democratic forces at both official and civil society levels to stand with Jews and Israel, to rebuke her when she is at fault, and to encourage her and support her in her times of great challenge.

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²⁷ Ali ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abdil-Hameed, *Muslim Unity in Light of the Numerous Groups and Parties* (Birmingham, UK: Salafi Publications, n.d.), 13.

²⁸ "Senior PA Official: 'Destroy America'—'Jews: Sons of Monkeys and Pigs,'" *Freeman Center Website*, July 13, 1997, http://www.freeman.org/m_online/aug97/lerner1.htm (accessed May 4, 2012).

²⁹ Esther Webman, "Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizballah and Hamas," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism Website*, September 7, 1998, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/730/currentpage/36/Default.aspx> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³⁰ These designations as well as literacy figures are drawn from the CIA's *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³¹ Mohamed Morsi was elected June 24, 2012, and assumed office on June 30, 2012.

³² For instance, the current prime minister retains his office through a coalition of 74 Knesset members (out of 120), drawn from the Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu, Labor, Shas, United Torah Judaism, and Jewish Home parties. The opposition holds 46 seats, occupied by members of the Kadima, National Union, New Movement-Meretz, Hadash, United Arab List, and Balad parties. The breakdown represents the most recent popular vote, translated into Knesset percentages, with each member elected for a four-year term.

³³ Robbie Sabel, "Israel Is Not an Apartheid State," in *Israel: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Myra Immell (Detroit: Greenhaven, 2011), 70-71. For instance, Ali Yahya, an Arab Muslim, was first Israel's ambassador to Finland, and later to Greece (see "Israeli Arab Appointed New Israeli Ambassador to Greece," *European Jewish Press Website*, <http://www.ejpress.org/article/11890> [accessed May 4, 2012]). Also, today, Salim Joubran, an Arab, serves as a permanent member of the Israeli Supreme Court (see "The Judiciary: The Court System," *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website*, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Branches%20of%20Government/Judicial/The%20Judiciary-%20The%20Court%20System> [accessed May 4, 2012]).

³⁴ Franklin Roosevelt, "Message for American Education Week," *The American Presidency Project Website*, September 27, 1938, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15545#axzz1jLDM5I4A> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³⁵ “Revolution between Hard Covers,” *The Economist Website*, January 28, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21543588> (accessed May 16, 2012).

³⁶ “Best Sellers,” *Haaretz*, February 17, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/books/best-sellers-1.343959> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³⁷ Mona Eltahawy, “What They’re Reading in Egypt,” *The Guardian*, March 9, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/mar/10/internationalwriting> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1945), xi.

³⁹ Typical was a meeting in the fall of 2011, when three journalists from the widely circulated Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, briefed a group of visiting Americans on economic, diplomatic, demographic, and military matters. Though their insights were helpful, the session was most memorable for the clash of ideas. All three worked for the same paper, which some describe as “center-left,” (as distinct from the more “center-right” *Jerusalem Post*), but they were not concerned to toe a “party line.” They struck sparks among themselves, even as their paper’s editorial board strikes sparks with other papers in the country. Contributors to this booklet were present.

⁴⁰ Michael Keren, “The Press and Civil Society in Israel,” in *Israel’s First Fifty Years*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 223.

⁴¹ “Internet Users in the Middle East,” *Internet World Stats Website*, March 31, 2011, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁴² Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 93.

⁴³ “Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention, Statler Hilton Hotel, New York, NY,” August 26, 1960, *The American Presidency Project Website*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=74217#axzz1jLMDZqNh> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁴⁴ The Hula Valley in the nation’s far north provides a case in point: Fed by springs flowing from the Golan Heights, the valley was dominated by a shallow lake and marshlands for millennia. It provided water for travelers, respite for migratory birds, good hunting and fishing grounds, and some agricultural tracts. Small communities grew up in the region, but malaria was a scourge, and human settlement was severely limited for centuries.

Particularly troublesome was a bridge built in AD 1260, one whose supports were so substantial that they constricted the headwaters of the Jordan, turning much of the Hula Valley into pestilential swampland—a condition that continued under Arab and Turkish rule for nearly seven centuries (See Tamar Zohary and K. David Hambright, “Lake Hula—Lake Agmon,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/geo/Hula.html [accessed May 4, 2012]). Though there were suggestions and attempts to ameliorate conditions in the 1800s, the swamp was not drained until the Israelis undertook the project in 1951, completing it in 1958. Critical to the fledgling nation’s survival and development, the Hula Valley project yielded more than 12,000 acres of new farmland (approximately 19 square miles) and saved more than eight billion gallons of water a year, which was being lost to evaporation.

When, however, it became clear that the engineers had overdone it (with loss of wetlands and resident species, with spontaneous fires in peat exposed to air, and with a flow of nitrates into Lake Galilee), Israeli environmentalists pushed back through the newly formed Society for Protection of Nature and Nature Reserves Authority. At their urging, a variety of steps were taken to balance the ecosystem (crop rotation; tree planting; construction of Lake Agmon), while preserving genuine agricultural gains. Now, tourists and migratory wildlife—as well as farmers—are finding the region attractive (See Tamar Zohary and K. David Hambright, “Lake Hula—Lake Agmon,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/geo/Hula.html [accessed May 4, 2012]).

Other striking examples of stewardship, such as those concerning reforestation and salt-water fish farming in the Negev Desert, can be found in Dan Senor and Saul Singer's *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* (New York: Twelve, 2009), 111-113.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, 94.

⁴⁶ "A Hormone Ensures Its Future," *Weizmann Institute of Science Website*, November 2, 2011, <http://wiswander.weizmann.ac.il/a-hormone-ensures-its-future?press-room-rb> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁴⁷ "Unraveling Batten Disease," *Weizmann Institute of Science Website*, November 2, 2011, <http://wiswander.weizmann.ac.il/unraveling-batten-disease?press-room-rb> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁴⁸ Senor and Singer, *Start-Up Nation*, 127.

⁴⁹ "Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention."

⁵⁰ For instance, *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali; *Cruel and Usual Punishment* by Nonie Darwish; *A God Who Hates* by Wafa Sultan; *The Trouble with Islam Today* by Irshad Manji. And these Muslim women have been joined in their cause by such European writers as Italy's Oriana Fallaci (*The Rage and the Pride*) and Norway's Asne Seierstad (*The Bookseller of Kabul*).

⁵¹ See for instance, "Israel Troops Admit Gaza Abuses," *BBC Website*, March 19, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7952603.stm (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁵² Lawrence Joffe, "Whose Land?" in *Israel and the Palestinians*, ed. Martin Wright (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989), 20-21. Of course, there were atrocities on both sides, as when Arab forces killed 40 Jewish doctors and nurses (21).

⁵³ Eric Silver, *Begin: The Haunted Prophet* (New York: Random House, 1984), 98, 100, 108.

⁵⁴ From orientation packet for the Machtzavim-IDF Educational Leadership School in Jerusalem. See also "The Spirit of the IDF: The Ethical Code of the Israel Defense Forces," *Jewish Virtual Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/IDF_ethics.html (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁵⁵ "Scattered Saviours," *The Economist Website*, January 28, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21543488> (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁵⁶ Christopher Schult, Britta Sandberg, and Ansgar Mertin, "Life Insurance for Palestinian Suicide Bombers: Arab Bank Pays Out Blood Money," *Spiegel Website*, February 9, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,465438,00.html> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁵⁷ Jonathan Sacks, "Israel Rightfully Belongs to the Jews," in *Israel: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Myra Immell (Detroit: Greenhaven, 2011), 53. Sacks observes, "[Spanish philosopher and Hebrew poet] Judah Halevi went there in the 12th century. So did [medieval Jewish philosopher and Torah scholar] Maimonides and his family, though they found it impossible to stay, [Spanish Talmudist and physician] Nachmanides went after being exiled from Spain. There was a large community there in the 16th century" (Sacks, "Israel Rightfully Belongs to the Jews," 52).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁹ An expression coined with reference to the "Great Removal" of American Indians from their eastern lands to reservations west of the Mississippi, a brutal winter journey which cost the Cherokees thousands of lives in 1838.

Parallels with the Jewish situation are instructive. See the PBS article, “The Trail of Tears,” *PBS Website*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1567.html> (accessed May 4, 2012).

⁶⁰ “Our History,” *Jewish National Fund Website*, <http://www.jnf.org/about-jnf/history/> (accessed May 25, 2012).

⁶¹ Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict*, rev. ed. (Oxford: One World, 2003), 143-144.

⁶² “Our History.”

⁶³ Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict*, 17.

⁶⁴ Josephine Bacon, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization* (London: Quarto, 1990), 190.

⁶⁵ Joffe, “Whose Land?,” 14-19. Also, a “national mass uprising” by Arabs rejecting a British plan to divide the country into Arab and Jewish states, which ran from 1937 to 1939, left nearly 4,000 Jews, Arabs, and Britons dead.

⁶⁶ Anthony O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society, c. 1800-1948,” in *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony (London: Melisende, 1999), 45.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁸ Part of this was a function of literacy rates. For instance, the 1931 census reveals that among Palestinian Christians, 71% of males and almost 45% of females were literate, compared to 25% of males and 3% of females among the Muslims living there. *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁰ “German Chancellor Adolf Hitler and Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini: Zionism and the Arab Cause (November 28, 1941),” in *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 6th ed., ed. Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (New York: Penguin, 2001), 52-53.

⁷¹ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 80.

⁷² “The Tragedy of the *S.S. St. Louis*,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Holocaust/stlouis.html> (accessed May 4, 2012). In 1960, a movie was also made concerning the fate of another ship, the *Exodus*, which carried 4,500 displaced Jews in 1947. The British captured it and sent it back to France (Adam M. Garfinkle, “Genesis,” in *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Alvin Z. Rubinstein [New York: Harper Collins, 1991], 30).

⁷³ Bacon, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jewish Civilization*, 190.

⁷⁴ Ilan Pappé, “Were They Expelled? The History, Historiography and Relevance of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,” in *The Palestinian Exodus: 1948-1998*, ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Reading, UK: Ithaca, 1999), 37.

⁷⁵ Israeli journalist David Grossman, quoted in James Ciment, *Palestine/Israel: The Long Conflict* (New York: Facts on File, 1997), 34.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁷⁷ Garfinkle, “Genesis,” 31.

⁷⁸ Pappe, “Were They Expelled? The History, Historiography and Relevance of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,” 51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸¹ Joffe, “Whose Land?,” 24.

⁸² Pappe, “Were They Expelled? The History, Historiography and Relevance of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,” 48.

⁸³ Silver, *Begin: The Haunted Prophet*, 94-95.

⁸⁴ Joffe, “Whose Land?,” 24.

⁸⁵ Ciment, *Palestine/Israel: The Long Conflict*, 35.

⁸⁶ See Article 11, “UN General Assembly: Resolution 194 (December 11, 1948),” in *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 85.

⁸⁷ Richard L. Cravatts, “There Is No Right of Return,” in *Israel: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Myra Immell (Detroit: Greenhaven, 2011), 83.

⁸⁸ Ghada Karmi, “The Question of Compensation and Reparations,” in *The Palestinian Exodus: 1948-1998*, ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Reading: Ithaca, 1999), 201-203. Beginning in 1948, Israel began to offer compensation payments, with special regard for “refugee property in rural areas, for undamaged urban property and for Palestinian bank accounts left behind.” Through the years, other suggestions, clarifications, and qualifiers have been added to the mix—including the once-for-all, exclusive nature of the payment, linkage to Arab reparations for displaced Jews, and establishment of an international fund to share the cost.

⁸⁹ Rashid Khalidi, “Truth, Justice and Reconciliation: Elements of a Solution to the Palestinian Refugee Issue,” in *The Palestinian Exodus: 1948-1998* (Reading: Ithaca, 1999), 229.

⁹⁰ Sacks, “Israel Rightfully Belongs to the Jews,” 53-54.

⁹¹ O’Mahony, “Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society, c. 1800-1948,” 51-52.

⁹² Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict*, 56.

⁹³ Ofira Seliktar, “The Changing Political Economy of Israel: From Agricultural Pioneers to the ‘Silicon Valley’ of the Middle East,” in *Israel’s First Fifty Years*, ed. Robert O Freedman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 211.

⁹⁴ Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami, *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict*, 73.