

Israel and the Promised Land

Ali Tahmasbi

Translated from the Persian by Mehdi S. Shariati

Translator's note:

One of the most redundant, abused, and meaningless word that is uttered by politicians, ideologues, and ordinary people in areas ravaged by conflicts and wars is “peace.” Everyone is wishing for “peace” particularly in areas of the world whose people live in the present but with diverse levels of understanding of the past and access to cultural and material resources. Masses of people guided by inherited beliefs and often interpreted by individual’s representative of powerful groups in society, are victims of what Ali Shariati called stupefaction (*istehmaar*). Once convinced of their righteousness, they show no tolerance for alternative views regardless of historical and structural contexts. Current conflict between state of Israel and the stateless Palestinians (people in the besieged Gaza strip and occupied West Bank) still yearning for a national state after ۷۶ years of occupation by Israel, is a flame lighted by the embers of colonialism. Contrary to the popular narratives based on biblical accounts, the source of conflict in terms of colonialism, and geopolitics is complex. Reliance on strange hermeneutics has generated hate, racism, degradation of otherness, ahistorical view of others, wars and terrorism including state terrorism. Alliances in this case between Jews and Christians) with the aid of historical/biblical narratives are often used for defending national interests at the

expense of others including occupation and confiscation (۱). The hallmark of conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians is occupation—a fact that is denied by the Israeli state as they cite biblical references. On this basis the occupied people do not have the protection either by the laws of the occupier or by international law. Israel according to the late Rabbi Meir Kahane (۲) must ignore “democracy” and only pay attention to the Torah. The following short article is written by Ali Tahmasbi, a scholar of antiquity (historical narratives and contexts) and a contributor to research in discovering the depth and breadth of Khorasan Erfan (Mysticism) and its contemporary vitality. Tahmasbi substantiates his thesis by relying on biblical passages and their contemporary usage.

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According to the Torah (Genesis, ۱۵), in a mysterious evening, and in a lonely and scary desert, an event happened to Abraham that fate of all the children of Israel were defined by that event. Although on that day, no one else witnessed the incident except the vultures (Genesis, ۱۶), but since the description of this event is found in the Holy Bible, it has received eternal validity:

On that day, God made a covenant with Abraham, and said, "I have given this land from the Nile to the Euphrates to your descendants" (Genesis, ۱۷). Also, to avoid any misunderstanding, it has been repeatedly emphasized in several cases that

“Abraham's descendants” refers to only those who are descended from Sarah through their mother, who was Abraham's queen and chosen by God (Genesis, 21:12). To make sure that God's covenant with Abraham was more precise and specific, it was decided that among the Isaac's children, only Israel (Jacob) and his descendants were considered the subject of the covenant (Genesis, 28:1-5).

These words in the Old Testament reflect key issues. Of course, “the oldest” of this covenant is raised in relation to the New Testament, which is, Christianity. And Christianity accepts this without rendering the Old Testament irrelevant.

Therefore, the Old Testament is the promise of giving the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates to Israel forever, and the New Testament is the promise of the kingdom to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ whether they are from the same race as Abraham or not. Since the kingdom is infinite and unlimited, for this reason, the invitation of Christianity to the New Testament is also open to all races and nationalities (universalizing religion) Making it a missionary and expanding religion. But the land and its resources are limited, and it is not possible to make everyone a partner. For this reason (among others), the Jewish ritual is not propagated, and being Jewish requires genealogy and proof of sovereignty.

Christianity considers Abraham as the "Father" -- as a religious or faith father. Therefore, all those who are Christian are also considered to be descendants of Abraham (Roman, 9:13-14) and by extension can consider themselves spiritually Israelis who have been promised the extraterrestrial Jerusalem rather than the geographic Jerusalem. On this basis the God of Christianity and the God of Judaism is the same and therefore there should be no conflict between them. But if the

teaching of the Old Testament had been decoupled from Christianity and only the New Testament became the core text, then the ability of Christianity to claim any role in the civilizational process would have been insignificant. And for this reason, the Western World opted for the creation the Judeo-Christian identity. The God of Israel had already determined each partner's share-- The heritage of Israel, and the kingdom of Christianity. The land is the territorial inheritance of Israel, and the extraterrestrial and spiritual realm is the inheritance of Christianity.

However, there is only one small point in this narrative that challenges the mind and that is what if instead of the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates, the Torah had designated the lands from England to Italy as Israel's heritage? Would the civilized Christian world still support Israel and the God of Israel, and the God of Christianity would have been the same?

In the region of greater Middle East particularly from the Nile to the Euphrates (the promise land of the children of Israel), endowed with enormous fossil resources, its people have been constantly struggling with poverty, war, and oppression.

Israel is here also. But there is a different God rules. A God who not only does not recognize Israel's covenant with Yahweh, does not consider the land between the Nile and the Euphrates as the land of this tribe, it does not even recognize the existence of Israel as a state and more importantly, it considers the Judaized Christianity an alien and an enemy. What are the factors that have caused these gods to come out of their mythical tombs and brush off the dust of their face and enter the collective sole of fundamentalists and denied the masses of people access to the God of peace. But at the same time, it cannot be ignored that each one of the two front somehow considers itself the heir of God, a God that created Israel and in particular the Jewish fundamentalists as his friend and others as enemies. This very belief is also the case on the other side. And naturally all believers must as matter of principle

and duty to fight the “enemies of God” and for their wars they have religious justification. Often the war between groups, peoples, and nations is viewed as the war between two falsehoods, and “we” have never participated in these wars since “we” are never wrong! No explanation is needed; when Muslim fundamentalists confront the Christian fundamentalists and when confronting Israel, they consider themselves right and the other side false often supported by verses from the holy books.

For a long time, the Muslim nations have been humiliated and this constant humiliation has been a compelling reason to find verses in the Quran in support of war and jihad. But what is the justification on the other side for their overwhelming righteousness? It is important to consider the possibility that the religious justification on the part of Israelis for war (struggle) is much stronger than the religious justification of the Muslims. As pointed out, anyone who is familiar with the religious history of Israel, and with their most holy book-the Torah can understand that Israel’s war against other people in the Middle East and the occupation of Palestinian lands is according to the Israelis a holy war which will not end any time soon. A convincing and indisputable reason according to them all the land between the Nile and Euphrates is a gift from God as promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis, 12:7). Since the land is not in the possession of the “rightful heirs,” – the children of Israel- any action that can help regain control of the land is permissible. Minimum familiarity with history and the sacred texts of the Jews, knows that the belief in the racial supremacy of Israelites and “God’s favorite” or “chosen” is one more uniqueness of these people and for this reason the religion of the Jews, is a non-universalizing religion. Not only not universalizing, but all other races and people who wished to join them must accept menial jobs. Therefore, all

non-Jews can become the servants of the Jews and if they refuse not only their mass killing is not sinful, but it will be according to God's will (Judges, 18).

From point of view of survival strategy sanctioned by the book, whenever the Jews had confronted an enemy (either people or political state) stronger than themselves, they are advised to try to participate in the process of decision making and influence them in their own favor. The story of Joseph in the court of Pharaoh (Genesis, 37:1-50), Daniel in the Babylonian Empire, Esther the favorite Queen of Xerxes and Mordechai as a minister in the Achaemenid Empire, are example of such strategies and behavior as dictated by their religion. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise if a substantial number of the most sensitive positions in the contemporary powerful states are in the hands of the heirs of Jacob. The Jewish people in more than three thousand years have learned that if it cannot cut off an oppressive hand, it must be kissed and then use that hand for their own benefits. This is not a treacherous and deceiving act, but a religious duty for the protection of the collective. Therefore, Israel's wars with the people of the Middle East admittedly, are religious wars, justified and according to religious criteria. They are wars of right against wrong (falsehood). It is obvious that the flames of such wars will not be doused anytime soon. The current war for the conquest of Palestine is neither nor the last. It is one of the inevitable future wars.

Islamic fundamentalists also are trying to sell their harsh actions against Israel as mandates from God—war against falsehood, infidels, and according to religious teachings. The Israeli fundamentalists on the other hand have been able to publicize the actions and the rhetoric of the Muslim Fundamentalists to their own advantage; first by rallying all the Jews in the World against a common enemy whose aim is the total destruction of Israel and second to publicize the harsh actions of the Islamic Fundamentalists as uncivilized, inherently anti-modern and dangerous to the peace

and security of the world that Islam itself presents, thereby creating a Western shield to stop them.

Therefore, based on these assumption we can say that the fundamentalism of Jews and the fundamentalism of the Muslims do not allow a chance for peace and in this quagmire the Palestinians whose houses are demolished, often bloodied and burnt and have become the largest refugees in the World, are victims of the war of Gods. In these horrific conditions, not even the Israelis who do not submit to fundamentalism and do not approve of occupation and whose aim is to live in peace, are victims of God's of war.

Now we need to ask ourselves, is it possible to distinguish between good and bad, right, and wrong by employing the fundamentalist religious criteria? If one is of Jewish or a Muslim fundamentalist, the Manichean worldview is expected and the group that one belongs to then is the right side. I cannot accept the legitimacy of war between right and wrong, justification of poverty and humiliation of Palestinians and the killing of Jewish or Palestinian. But I can provide strong and convincing reasons from the Torah and the Quran to support my contention that both the fundamentalist Jews and the fundamentalists Muslims have formed a united front against "righteousness." The historical experiences of the children of Israel shows that when this tribe acts hegemonic and exploitative, in a brief time implodes and becomes refugee. Whether one is Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, and tries to be involved in the World by using exclusive religious dictates, it would be better to find commonalities acceptable to all and can unite the followers of these religions and nationalities and generate collective understanding. Sadly, the religious and political leaders, speak of God, religion, peace, security only as a political ploy to accomplish their hidden agenda. What can guarantee perpetual peace is collective wisdom, collective awareness and the prevention of sensationalist propaganda and religious

emotionalism. These days, we can use the ‘universal declaration of human rights’ as collective wisdom and try to implement at least some of what is contained in the declaration. Indeed, this could be a useful service to religion. The world needs more wisdom sensationalism from any source. Masses of people around the world are in dire need of peace, home, comfort even if at its minimum and not as the fundamentalists advocate, religion, and conflict on that basis.

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Endnotes:

۱) “Ben-Gurion saw an independent Palestinian state as a mortal danger to Israel. So, he made a secret deal with King Abdullah I, dividing between them the territory allocated by the UN partition plan to the Arab Palestinian state. All Ben-Gurion's successors inherited the same dogma: that a Palestinian state would be a terrible danger. Therefore, they opted for the so-called” “Jordanian option” – keeping what is left of Palestine under the heel of the Jordanian monarch, who is no Palestinian (nor even Jordanian - his family came from Mecca)" (Uri Avnery, Gosh Shalom, September ۱۷, ۲۰۱۱).

٢) Rabbi Meir Kahane was a New York born America-Israeli and founder of Jewish defense League, who repeatedly called Arabs derogatory names and, on that basis, advocated policy prescriptions (too difficult for a substantial number of progressive Israelis to accept), posthumously continues to influence “settlers” policies. He is a personal hero of Itamar Ben Gvir and the ideologue of the ultra-nationalists Kahanist movement known for violent removal of Arabs from Israel and all Israeli-occupied territories. His followers continue to believe that “a good Arab, is a dead Arab.”