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Table of Contents		
A Stav For All Seasons	William Mehlman	Page 2
From The Editor	Rael Jean Isaac	Page 4
Qatar, The Arab League and Israel	Sarah Honig	Page 6
Mark Twain vs. Edward Said	Rita Kramer	Page 9
The Bell Tolls For Anti-Semitism	Howard Jacobson	Page 10
Why Do 150,000,000 Europeans Hate Israel?	Giulio Meotti	Page 11
The Z Street Complaint in Federal Court		Page 13
Saturday People, Sunday People	Ruth King	Page 14

A Stav For All Seasons

William Mehlman

Israel, being a place where square pegs are regularly adjusted to round holes, one should perhaps be prepared to accept with a certain degree of *sang-froid* a meeting of the minds between a "Haredi" (ultra-Orthodox) minority wedded to a calcified religious status quo and a fundamentalist secular minority in avid pursuit of a bill of divorcement of the Jewish nation-state from its Biblical roots.



Such is the situation that defines itself in the passionate opposition of both factions to the candidacy of Rabbi David Stav for the position of Chief Rabbi of Israel's two and a half million-member "Ashkenazic" (Westernoriented) community in an election to be decided sometime in June. The passion aroused by Stav's candidacy is hardly surprising. While the triumphant emergence of 41 year-old Naftali Bennett and his 12-member "HaBayit

HaYehudi" ("The Jewish Home") religious Zionist party from the recent national election was expected to open a window to some fresh air on the national religious scene, Stav's arrival might be more accurately compared to a "Nor'easter."

Bennett, who brought religious Zionism back from a political Siberia, promised, among other things, to wrest the chief rabbinate from the clutches of a coercive anti-Zionist, ultra-Orthodox cabal and return it to Zionist auspices; to put a moderate, compassionate face on the procedures dealing with marriage, divorce and conversion; and to lend moral, political and halachic (religious legal) support for injecting a modest core of mathematics, science and English into the all-Torah curriculum of the Haredi yeshiva network.

If Economy and Trade Minister Bennett, who doubles as Minister of Religious Affairs, meant what he said during an election campaign that captured the imagination of significant numbers of secular voters, then the installation of David Stav at the steering wheel of the Chief Rabbinate should be a no-brainer. Not only would the 53 year-old father of nine, inter alia founder and chairman of the forward-looking Tzohar Rabbinical Organization, professor at the Metivta Women's Seminary in Bar-Illan University and chief rabbi of Shoham, be the first non-Haredi in almost two decades to occupy the Chief Rabbinate's office in Jerusalem, he is the choice most likely to breathe life into Bennett's vow to reset Jewish religious life in Israel on a 21st Century course.

Jerusalem-born, ex-IDF veteran Stav, scion of that rarest of rarities, a fervidly Zionistic Hassidic family, gives no quarter to his critics on either side of the religious spectrum. In an interview with *Forward's* Nathan Jeffay he laid out a campaign aimed at reconfiguring an Israeli rabbinate, currently directed toward "satisfying one sector" [the ultra-Orthodox community], which has produced an Israeli public that "likes to hate Judaism and the Jewish heritage," into an approachable body dedicated to serving the entire public. "My dream," he told Jeffay, "is that a couple gets an appointment [to register a marriage] for 9 a.m. and they

will be out at 9:30 a.m. During those 30 minutes they will drink a cup of coffee with some cookies and in those 30 minutes have done whatever they needed to do."

The deregulation of a bureaucratic nightmare that has sent untold numbers of couples – particularly one of whose members happens to be a convert to Judaism – fleeing to Cyprus and points west to get married, is the tip of an iceberg that has confined tens of thousands of mainly former Soviet Union immigrants and their children to an identity limbo (Jewish-affiliated but not Jewish) from which there appears no escape. It has raised the specter, Stav warns, "of a society divided into two nations." Among a population of upwards of 300,000 former USSR immigrants who have Jewish lineage but are not halachically Jewish, the staterun, Haredi-controlled Conversion Authority approved a grand total of 4,293 converts in 2011.

The crux of the problem, as Stav sees it, has been that when candidates for conversion who fully identify culturally as Jews meet with ultra-Orthodox religious officials pre-conditioned to reject them, they feel as though they are being "investigated by an agent of the police or the Mossad" (Israel's national intelligence agency). Stav says he would roll out the welcome mat for them, hoping to convince the rejected and those too disillusioned to even try that there is true value in becoming Jewish. As former IDF Chief Rabbi Amichai Ronsky submitted in getting behind Stav's candidacy, "he has the ability to create a new reality among our people of love and respect for Torah."

That "new reality" is ironically facing its stiffest opposition from "Tekuma," a four-member Knesset faction within Bennett's own Bayit Yehudi party. Representing a phalanx of religiously conservative, albeit Zionist, rabbis who look askance at Stav's "liberalizing tendencies," they clearly defined what they were getting at in a letter to the party's leaders imploring them not to agree to the "imposition" of a secular core curriculum on a Haredi yeshiva system devoted exclusively to Torah study. They also came down with both feet on a proposed expansion from 150 members – the majority of them rigidly conservative rabbis – to 200, including 40 women, of the electoral committee that will select the new Chief Rabbi. The enlargement of the committee is considered critical to Stav's election.

Less pervasive but no less intensive is the opposition to Stav from the far left, stemming for the most part from his efforts to head off an Israeli civil marriage law. Uri Regev, head of "Hiddush," the primary lobbyist for that measure, has characterized a Stav-led "inclusive, accommodating and liberal" chief rabbinate as nothing more than "an illusion." This prompted an editorial headlined "There Are No Moderate Rabbis" in the sharply left-leaning *Ha'aretz*, declaring that "he [Stav] wants to perpetuate the denial of civil rights and, at most, promises that with him the handcuffs will be covered with fur."

"Stand and Deliver!" As an alumnus of "Sayeret Matkal," the IDF's elite strike force, Bennett well understands the meaning of that renowned U.S. Marine credo. "He is facing a crossroads, which will determine whether the electoral success of Bayit Yehudi was a transitory phenomenon or is poised to achieve a genuine revolution in the religious life of Israel," Isi Leibler noted in one of his "Candidly Speaking" *Jerusalem Post* essays. If the former, Leibler added, "he will have lost an historic opportunity to achieve a national religious renaissance by reasserting religious Zionism's rightful role as the dominant force in Israel's religious life."

For that cause, there may not be another tomorrow.

From the Editor

Orwell -- Alive and Well in Canada

The indispensable Mark Steyn reports in *National Review Online* on the Orwellian episode in Canada in which Inspector Ricky Veerappen, head of the York Regional Police's "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Bureau," warned the rabbi planning to host a speech by Pamela Geller that her speech "would not be endorsed by York Regional Police." As Steyn observes, it is not up to the police "to endorse" speech and the fact that the police thinks it is "testifies to how deep runs the spongey, insinuating soft-totalitarian rot of 'diversity.'" Steyn notes that when cops are sent around to synagogues to threaten rabbis in the name of diversity and inclusion, it "must give the old-school fascists a laugh at their Monday-night poker game in hell."

The BBC -- Beyond Parody

The BBC is one of the most practiced calumniators of Israel. It recently outdid itself, defending a May 1 article on the BBC News website by its BBC Arabic reporter Ahmed Maher entitled "Tunisia's Last Jews at Ease Despite Troubled Past." A reader contacted BBC Watch to protest Maher's claim that he had searched the web extensively in an effort to corroborate media reports of alleged YouTube videos showing radical Islamists threatening Tunisian Jews but could find none of them. The reader provided BBC Watch with four video clips that had apparently eluded Mr. Maher's search.

The BBC's response was a doozy. The BBC said it had contacted Mr. Maher who reaffirmed that there were no attacks on Tunisian Jews, that "the chants heard in the four links cited are against 'the State of Israel and Jews but not Tunisian Jews.'" As for the fact that one of the demonstrations on the video was held in front of the Tunis synagogue, the BBC says that Mr. Maher had consulted "one of the most prominent Salafi, Wahabi sheikhs in post-revolution Tunisia" and he said this was "taken out of context" because the protesters were on their way to the Egyptian embassy and just stopped in front of the synagogue to express their anger at "the Zionist entity."

As the Algemeiner says: "Get it? According to the BBC, if Tunisian Islamists (and presumably any elsewhere too) chant 'Killing the Jews is a duty' or 'Khaybar, Khaybar ya Yahud' or 'the army of Mohammed will return,' then local Jews have nothing whatsoever to worry about because in fact they are not referring to them--or indeed to Jews at all--but to Israel, which should apparently be perfectly understandable."

Divestment--from Sanity

Fresh from their divestment onslaught on Israel, the student and faculty divestment enthusiasts at Swarthmore College have demanded that the college divest from any companies involved in the extraction of fossil fuels. For comedic value--and puerile self-righteousness--it's hard to beat the op-ed by members of the religion faculty in Swarthmore's *Daily Gazette*. An excerpt:

"We believe that continued investment in the extraction industries directly implicates our community in exploitative ecological destruction....Every generation has the opportunity to seize the moment and battle its own forces of oppression and degradation so that future generations can live safer, healthier and more meaningful lives. Many of the great social movements in our country's and Swarthmore College's history--the abolitionist groundswell of the 19th century, the suffragist associations of the early 20th century, the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and, most notably in recent history, the LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer] and divestment movements today--were energized by prophetic campus leaders, students, staff, and faculty alike, who brought together their passions for justice to animate a moral force for change more powerful than any other force to stop them. To paraphrase William James, and in the face of cataclysmic climate change,

today we must wage the moral equivalent of war by becoming more disciplined, more resourceful, and more visionary in fighting the causes of global ecological depredation. Fossil fuels divestment is one such strategy in this effort, and, in concert with Swarthmore Mountain Justice and Religion students, we call on Swarthmore College to divest from extraction industries that are ruthlessly exploiting the environment for economic profit."

Leaving aside the obscenity of comparing the destroy-Israel divestment movement to the antislavery or civil rights movement, the hypocrisy of these worthies is outmatched only by their folly. They don't mention that Al Gore, the pioneer in popularizing what writer Peter Glover aptly calls the anticarbon jihad, sold his TV cable channel to *Al Jazeera*, financed by Qatar, whose money of course comes precisely from those evil extraction industries. Nor that they and the other "prophetic campus leaders" might begin by divesting from themselves, since they are "exploiting the environment" by exhaling carbon dioxide with their every breath and are, along with animals, rightly known as carbon based life forms because up to 18 percent of their body weight is carbon.

The absurdity of all this Chicken Little, the Sky is Falling hysteria is perhaps best summed up by atmospheric physicist and MIT meteorology professor Richard Lindzen: "Future generations will wonder in bemused amazement that the early twenty-first century's developed world went into hysterical panic over a globally averaged temperature increase of a few tenths of a degree, and, on the basis of gross exaggerations of highly uncertain computer projections combined into highly implausible chains of inference proceeded to contemplate a rollback of the industrial age."

The Kerry Shuffle

Secretary of State John Kerry is yo-yoing between Washington and Jerusalem, on another absurd project, right up there with changing the world's climate--making "peace" between Israel and the Palestinian Arab rump currently ruled by Abbas. Just as the climate apocalyptics warn with boring regularity that we have one last chance to save the planet, going, going, gone, so we hear for the umpteenth time that there is now one last fast slipping away chance to bring "the peace process" to a happy conclusion before all is lost. Thus Kerry on his most recent trip announces that "over the horizon... one can see the challenges" that make it important "to resolve at this moment, when there is a willingness for people to look for a way [to achieve an agreement]." Apart from the fact that the only inducement the aging Abbas could possibly have to achieve an agreement would be to avoid a possibly lengthy final illness by ensuring he met a speedy end at the hands of his co-religionists, what on earth is the Obama administration thinking?

Iran is on the cusp of becoming a serious nuclear player, planning, according to Yuval Steinetz (who holds the key responsibility for intelligence affairs in the Knesset) to produce dozens of bombs each year, upending the balance of power in the region. Syria is a mess, with Assad, backed by Iran, confronting on the ground Al Qaeda affiliates so extreme that Al Nusra is being labeled "moderate" compared to the rival Al Qaeda in Iraq. In Iraq itself, as Andrew McCarthy observes, Sunnis and Shiites have reverted to their default position of internecine butchery. Lebanon is in imminent danger of a return to civil war, as Sunni and Shiite factions battle--for now-- chiefly on the Syrian side of the border. Abdullah's kingdom buckles under the strain of huge numbers of Syrian refugees and a restive Muslim Brotherhood eager for its own "springtime in Jordan." And Obama focuses his efforts on destabilizing the only relatively calm corner of the Middle East?

As Dore Gold has noted, the old Sykes-Picot borders of the Middle East, drawn after World War I, are being transformed on the ground. And what were merely armistice borders--never officially recognized by anyone--following Israel's War of Independence, are being treated as the only holy borders in the Middle East?

Qatar, The Arab League and Israel

Sarah Honig

Editor's note: Sarah Honig talks of the way Israeli concessions, intended to bolster its image, have the opposite effect. Yet Israelis seem incapable of learning from experience. Emanuel Navon describes the recent annual conference of the leading Israeli think tank, The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), where the main agenda was to promote the idea of unilateral disengagement from Judea and Samaria. Most worrying, although the INSS project defies logic (as a result of the 2005 unilateral disengagement from Gaza Israel was forced to go to war in December 2008 to stop the shelling of its citizens, resulting in the public relations catastrophes of the Goldstone Report and the Marmara incident), Navon observes that "implementing it seems to be what Benjamin Netanyahu is up to." He has imposed a construction freeze in Judea and Samaria, has been talking of the virtues of referenda, and is working on neutralizing his own Likud party through a top-down appointment system in place of primary elections. To Navon it looks like the Sharon scenario all over again.)

The wardrobe adaptability of the Emir of Qatar Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani is very telling. The

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The Emir of Qatar

same goes for his cousin, Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani.

When it serves their purposes, Qatar's staggeringly wealthy two most powerful players strut about in very traditional Arab garb. But when the occasion deems it expedient, they soothe subliminal western anxieties by donning tailored suits of the exceptionally elegant sort that proliferates in European Union forums. That purportedly imparts an impression of trustworthiness.

The cousins' policy line is just as chameleon-like. There's a yawning gap between their utterances in

English and in Arabic.

Not too many years ago, Qatar was an Israeli success story, or so it was widely believed in Jerusalem. Relations with Doha, especially trade ties, flourished from the mid-Nineties. They weren't formal or full, yet they were hardly covert. Everyone knew about them. Unnamed Qatari higher-ups had reportedly visited Israel and Shimon Peres, then deputy premier, openly visited Qatar in 2007. Tzipi Livni did the same a year later. Other Israelis, such as Ehud Barak, hobnobbed with the emir.

But Qatar unilaterally abrogated these ties after Operation Cast Lead. Doha offered to restore them if Israel allowed unrestricted shipments of building materials to Gaza. Since these can be used to build bunkers, Israel refused.

However, the Qatari transformation isn't only Israeli-linked. Qatar had become the financial sponsor of the misnamed Arab Spring, bankrolling assorted Muslim Brotherhood insurgents and their allies. The upheavals shaking the Arab world – Syria foremost – were in effect orchestrated by Doha.

The emir – despite his excellent personal ties with Israelis, Americans and other Westerners – has used his clout and unimaginable riches to bring to power and sustain Islamist forces that are fundamentally inimical to the West, to say nothing of their implacable hatred for the Jewish state.

With abundant hype, pomp and circumstance the emir visited Gaza last autumn. It was the first such high-profile gesture by a head of state since Hamas seized power in 2007. It allowed Gaza to eclipse Ramallah and demonstrate that the post-Arab-Spring rise of the Muslim Brotherhood bolsters Hamas, itself a Brotherhood offshoot.

This yet again underscored the Brotherhood's reinforced impact, via collusion with Gulf State Islamists. The inherent incendiary potential cannot be belittled, even if US President Barak Obama prefers to obfuscate the gloomy reality he has helped create.

No matter what spin was spun, the emir was clearly seen as meddling in the intra-Palestinian squabbles, putting his full political weight behind the utterly rejectionist Hamas that explicitly proclaims its aspiration to destroy Israel.

The emir underwrites his support with financial largesse as well. This puts him in league with particularly fanatic forces. He has, for example, been a most generous benefactor to such militant jihadist groups as Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaida subsidiary now on the warpath in Syria.

Not to be omitted is the pivotal importance of the Qatar-based *al-Jazeera* news network, which serves the Thanis' agenda at the expense of even token journalistic integrity. *Al-Jazeera's* inflammatory tendentious reporting has fomented insurgencies in Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria.

One would therefore assume that such non-too-innocuous intervention would decisively give the lie to Qatar's purported moderation and peaceful inclinations.

But on the opportune occasion of the Qatari prime minister's recent stopover in Washington, the chameleon switched colors again. Stylishly attired in a dark confidence-boosting business suit and schmoozing Secretary of State John Kerry and Vice President Joe Biden in cordial English, their guest successfully peddled worn old merchandise as a novel revolutionary concept.

Needless to stress, Obama's crew bought it all, lock, stock and barrel as per the Kerry/Biden inclination from the outset. Perhaps they together suggested the stratagem that they later appeared to laud as an extraordinary breakthrough in attempts to resurrect Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Of course the raison d'être of these talks is — one way or another — to squeeze Israel back into those incredibly untenable 1949 armistice lines, in effect till June 4, 1967 and now misrepresented as bona fide borders.

And so, the international community and Israel's ever-obliging left-wing were quite expectedly wowed when al-Thani declared that "The Arab League delegation affirmed that agreement should be based on the two-state solution on the basis of the 4th of June 1967 line, with the [possibility] of comparable and mutual agreed minor swap of the land."

Been there. Heard that. But so what? When supposed honest brokers determine that the secondhand castoff is in fact spanking new, their say-so ostensibly constitutes a sterling seal of approval. Such recycling in turn becomes a means to ply more pressure on Israel with a perceived fresh Arab concession, which is nothing of the sort.

For one thing, Qatar's Gazan protégés spurn the rehashed concoction. Haniyeh minced no words: "To those who speak of land swaps we say: Palestine is not a property, it's not for sale, not for a swap and cannot be traded."

Ramallah figurehead Mahmoud Abbas wasn't more forthcoming. He couldn't afford to even appear to be.

But even that's not new. Territorial swaps were already discussed by then-premier Ehud Barak in his near-desperate peace-drive of 2000-2001 that began in Stockholm, continued in Camp David and expired ignominiously in Taba.

Barak's ultra-dovish foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami kept detailed journals throughout the negotiations. These featured in a very lengthy interview granted to *Ha'aretz's* Ari Shavit. Published on September 14, 2001 and entitled "The Day the Peace Died," Ben-Ami's extensive monologue still offers spellbinding insights.

Among them is that when territorial swaps were proposed, the Palestinian side "would only consider taking possession of Kochav Yai'r" – where Barak resided at the time. There were also not-so-veiled threats of violence. Chief PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat named September 13, 2000 as a deadline. Two weeks thereafter the intifada raged.

When the prolonged haggling was over, Ben-Ami retroactively understood that Israel "operated under misguided conceptions about the other side's intentions. For Arafat Oslo constituted a megacamouflage behind which he exerted political pressure and employed varying measures of terror to undermine the very notion of a two-state solution."

Ben-Ami notes that while Israel kept retreating from one "red line" to another, eventually agreeing to hand over almost anything the Palestinians insisted upon, including much of Jerusalem and its Holiest of Holies, "never at any point did the Palestinians so much as draft any counter-proposals."

That, Ben-Ami belatedly concluded, "was the crux of the matter. The Israeli side forever finds itself in a dilemma: either we quit because this bunch is unwilling to suggest anything, or we manage one more concession, one more kvetch [squeeze in Yiddish]. At the end, however, even the most moderate person arrives at a point in which he admits to himself that the other side has no endgame. Kvetch after kvetch but they're never satisfied. It never ends."

With painstaking detail Ben-Ami lists each and every vital position from which Barak and his team were reluctantly pushed by the intractable Palestinians. Even while Israeli negotiators sacrificed Jerusalem, the Palestinians "weren't ready for as much as allowing a face-saving formulation for Israel."

A senior American go-between opined to Ben-Ami that "all the Palestinians want is to humiliate you." They even degradingly rejected a last shameful Israeli entreaty for "subterranean sovereignty underneath the Temple Mount, denying that we have any right whatsoever there."

When Ben-Ami was willing to make do with a Palestinian undertaking not to dig atop the Mount, "because it's holy to Jews, they adamantly refused to agree to any mention of any sanctity anyplace for Jews."

What distressed Ben-Ami most "wasn't just their refusal but how they refused – with total contempt. They were dismissive and arrogant towards us....They weren't willing to make even an emotional or symbolic conciliatory gesture. In the deepest sense they were loath to acknowledge that we have any claim here."

Camp David eventually flopped, according to Ben-Ami, because "the Palestinians refused to give us any inkling about where their demands would terminate. Our impression was that they constantly sought to drag us into a black hole of another concession and another, without there being anything like a discernible finish-line."

Ben-Ami's unavoidable conclusion was that "more than the Palestinians want their own state they want to condemn ours... They always leave loose ends... to keep viable the option that at some future point someone would pull these ends and unravel the Jewish state."

To be sure, like his fellow leftists, Ben-Ami even then couldn't bring himself to fully renounce his patently indefensible ideological creed. But although still professing faith in his smitten idols, he nonetheless cautioned against "ignoring what was revealed to us — Palestinian and Islamic positions which defy our very right to exist. We mustn't continue the culture of kvetch which might lead us to suicide...We must no longer relinquish Jewish and Israeli patriotism. We must understand that we aren't always guilty. We must learn to say 'till here and no farther.' If the other side aims to destroy even this nucleus, we must steadfastly defend it."

Ben-Ami at least learned something. But in 2008 another prime minister, Ehud Olmert, sought to magnify Barak's errors and then some. Nonetheless, even his remarkable offer was rebuffed.

Now Netanyahu is called upon to make concessions once more, if for no other objective than for improving our tarnished image. Here, however, we need to pause and wonder why our image is at all tarnished. It's mind-boggling how the Arabs can appear so conciliatory when sacrificing nothing, while Israel is regarded as intransigent when conceding endlessly and at great existential risk.

It may well be that our reputation is sullied precisely because of our very readiness to concede. Our pliability isn't without detrimental consequences. Even futile negotiations do great harm down the line. Simply put, egregious territorial generosity undercuts all future Israeli bargaining positions. In the

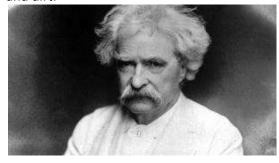
meantime the Arab side's show of goodwill is eminently achieved merely by sending out members of the Qatari ruling family – or their counterparts elsewhere in oil-glutted Arabia – always in their sartorial best to impress world opinion with suitable blandishments.

Sarah Honiq is an Israeli writer. This appeared on her blog, sarahhoniq.com on May 17, 2013.

Mark Twain vs. Edward Said

Rita Kramer

In 1869 Samuel Clemens, known to the world as Mark Twain, published *The Innocents Abroad*, an account of one of the first organized group tours of Americans to Europe and the Holy Land. He found Palestine "a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land," in Jerusalem nothing but "rags, wretchedness, poverty and dirt."



Whatever one thinks of Edward Said as a literary critic, in *The Question of Palestine*, speaking of "the Palestinian Arab...who happened to be living on the land [which was] being tilled, villages and towns built and lived in by thousands of natives" Said implies that this description applies to the time of which George Eliot is writing in *Daniel Deronda*. But the land to which George Eliot sends Daniel Deronda and his bride was, at the time of which she writes, according to Mark Twain, a bleak

and barren country, barely populated.

It was to be developed in the years to come, the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century, by Jewish emigrants from Europe, bringing with them modern means of agriculture, irrigating the land, growing crops and introducing modern medicine along with clean water, establishing villages and towns which drew Arabs from around the region seeking better lives with a higher standard of living. Trouble was to come in later years, but that is beyond the time of which George Eliot writes and in which she sends her hero to his new life in Palestine, These arrivals displaced no one, and actually provided improved living conditions for those who lived among them. In a common phrase, they made the desert bloom.

In Chapters 46 to 56 of his account of his travels in the Holy Land, Mark Twain, an objective observer with no ax to grind, describes a "blistering, naked, treeless land....whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds; a silent, mournful expanse." The Christian holy sites were surrounded "by bald hills and howling deserts...ugly and cramped, squalid, uncomfortable and filthy,"...the population "in ragged, soiled and scanty raiment, all abject beggars." He found Jerusalem "mournful and dreary and lifeless" and added, "I would not want to live here." He saw few inhabitants but "lawless Bedouins up in arms." Leaving Samaria for "barren" Judea, "We saw but two living creatures. They were gazelles"...in "a desert paved with loose stones, void of vegetation, glaring in the fierce sun."

In the words of this observer at the time of Daniel Deronda, he found "a limitless desolation" in which "Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes....nothing grows but weeds....Nazareth is forlorn....[in] the Promised Land one finds only a squalid camp of Bedouins of the desert....Bethlehem is untenanted by any living creature and unblessed by any feature that is pleasant to the eye. Renowned Jerusalem itself...is become a pauper village." The borders of the Sea of Galilee, the sites associated with Jesus and the disciples, "a silent wilderness...a shapeless ruin...the home of beggared Arabs [and] long ago deserted by the devotees of commerce."

The picture of desolation Mark Twain recorded at the time of his visit, separated by just six years from the time of Daniel Deronda's voyage, is very far from the tilled land, the "villages and towns built and lived in by thousands of natives" of Edward Said's imaginary portrayal.

Rita Kramer is a member of Outpost's editorial board and the author of eight books, the most recent Flames in the Field.

The Bell Tolls For Anti-Semitism

Howard Jacobson

Gather round, everybody. I bear important news. Anti-Semitism no longer exists! Ring out, ye bells, the longest hatred has ceased to be. It's kaput, kicked the bucket, shuffled off its mortal coil, joined the bleedin' choir invisible. It's a stiff, ladies and gentlemen. **An ex-prejudice!**

I first heard the news in a motion passed by the [London] University and College Union declaring that criticism of Israel can "never" be anti-Semitic which, if "never" means "never", is a guarantee that Jew-hating is over, because ... Well, because it's impossible to believe that an active anti-Semite wouldn't – if only opportunistically – seek out somewhere to nestle in the manifold pleats of Israel-bashing, whether in generally diffuse anti-Zionism, or in more specific boycott and divestment campaigns, Israeli apartheid weeks, end the occupation movements and the like. Of course, you don't have to hate Jews to hate Israel, but tell me that not a single Jew-hater finds the activity congenial, that criticising Israel can "never" be an expression of Jew-hating, not even when it takes the form of accusing Israeli soldiers of harvesting organs, then it follows that there's no Jew-hating left.

These tidings would seem to be confirmed by Judge Anthony Snelson who, investigating a complaint that the union was institutionally anti-Semitic, encountered not a trace of any such beast, no suggestion it had lurked or was lurking, not the faintest rustle of its cerements, not so much as a frozen shadow on a wall.

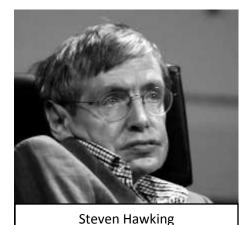
Indeed, so squeaky-clean was the union in all its anti-Israel motions and redefinitions of anti-Semitism to suit itself, that Judge Snelson berated the Jewish complainants, a) for wasting his time with evidence, b) for irresponsibly raiding the public purse, and c) for trying to silence debate, which is, of course, the rightful province of the boycott and divestment movement.

It was this same Judge Snelson, reader, who ruled in favour of a Muslim woman claiming the cocktail dress she was expected to wear, while working as a cocktail waitress in London's Mayfair, "violated her dignity". Not for him the cheap shot of wondering what in that case she was doing working as a cocktail waitress in a cocktail bar in Mayfair.

If she felt she was working in a "hostile environment", then she was working in a "hostile environment", which is not to be confused with a Jew feeling he is working in a hostile environment since with the abolition of anti-Semitism there is no such thing as an environment that's hostile to a Jew.

My point being that Judge Snelson's credentials as a man who knows a bigot from a barm cake are impeccable.

And now, with Stephen Hawking announcing, by means of an Israeli-made device, that he no longer wants to talk to the scientists who invented it, or to Israeli scientists who invented or might invent anything else, or indeed to Israeli historians, critics, biologists, physicists of any complexion, no matter what their relations to Palestinian scholars to whom he does want to talk, we are reminded that the cultural boycott with which he has suddenly decided to throw in his lot is entirely unJew-related, which is more good news.



"Peace", that is all Professor Hawking seeks, a word that was left out of his statement as reproduced on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign website, presumably on the grounds that everyone already knows that peace is all the PSC has ever wanted too.

To those who ask why Israel alone of all offending countries is to be boycotted, the answer comes back loud and clear from boycotters that because they cannot change the whole world, that is no reason not to try to change some small part of it, in this case the part where they feel they have the most chance of success, which also just happens to be the part that's Jewish.

That this is, in fact, a "back-handed compliment" to Jews,

John MacGabhann, general secretary of the pro-boycott Teachers' Union of Ireland, made clear when he talked of "expecting more of the Israeli government, precisely because we would anticipate that Israeli governments would act in all instances and ways to better uphold the rights of others", which implies that he expects less of other governments, and does not anticipate them to act in all instances and ways better to uphold the rights of others. And why? He can only mean, reader, because those other governments are not Jewish.

I'd call this implicit racism if I were a citizen of those circumambient Muslim countries that aren't being boycotted – a tacit assumption that nothing can ever be done, say, about the persecution of women, the bombing of minorities, discrimination against Christians, the hanging of adulterers and homosexuals, and so on, because such things are intrinsic to their cultures – but at least now that we have got rid of anti-Semitism, tackling Islamophobia should not be slow to follow.

It's heartening, anyway, after so many years of hearing Israel described as intractable and pitiless, to learn that activists feel it's worth pushing at Israel's door because there is a good chance of its giving way.

It's further proof of our new abrogation of anti-Semitism that we should now see Israel as a soft touch, the one country in the world which, despite its annihilationist ambitions, will feel the pain when actors, musicians, and secretaries of Irish teachers' unions stop exchanging views with it. All we need to do now is recognise that those who would isolate Israel, silence it and maybe even persuade it to accept its own illegitimacy intend nothing more by it than love.

Can the day be far away when Israel no longer exists, when the remaining rights-upholding, peace-loving countries of the region come together in tolerance and amity, and it won't even be necessary to speak of anti-Semitism's demise because we will have forgotten it ever existed? That's when Jews will know they're finally safe. Ring out, ye bells!

Howard Jacobson, a British writer, won the Man Booker Prize award for The Finkler Question. This appeared on May 22nd at http://www.theaustralian.com.au.

How Did 150,000,000 Europeans Come to Hate Israel?

Giulio Meotti

"The Jewish religion is under attack in Europe", declared the Conference of European Rabbis president Pinchas Goldschmidt. Many polls (such as the study on behalf of the German Social

Democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation) bring an iconic number measuring the disaster: 150,000,000 Europeans have a delegitimizing and demonizing view of the State of Israel and its citizens.

For a large sector of Europe, the cities, skyscrapers, hospitals, cinemas, and schools on that tiny sliver of land named "Israel" are merely real estate that will be restored to Islam once this malefic Jewish form is swept away.

This is a popular mobilization against Israel in the "Raus mit Uns" spirit. 150,000,000 Western citizens believe that Zionism is a misconceived project to be brought to an end as soon as possible. It is the consequence of the Palestinian-Islamic psychological war (note: the European Union has just contributed 20 million euros to the payment of salaries and pensions for April of nearly 76,000 Palestinian Arabs).

See what happened to Europe's Jews in little more than a week.

- In Hungary, where Adolf Eichmann obsessively hunted down all the Jews, a wave of fascist Judeophobia is poisoning the social cohesion and the head of the Raoul Wallenberg Association was injured in and anti-Semitic attack.
- A Labour party member in the UK, Nazir Ahmed, resigned after anti-Jewish remarks made on television.
- A scientific genius, Stephen Hawking, embraced the racist boycott of the State of Israel.
- The BBC planned a "documentary" claiming that the Jewish exodus from Jerusalem was a myth.
- Dozens of French mayors rallied for the liberation of the Palestinian terrorists.
- In the French town of Villeurbanne, a rabbi and his son were stabbed. It was an ordinary week of anti-Semitism in Europe.

The threat against Israel's existence has become strategic in Rome, Berlin, London, Paris, Budapest, Amsterdam and Stockholm. Indiscriminate hatred against the Jews pervades European parliaments as much as in the Muslim *madrassas*. The call for Israel's destruction echoes through Europe's schools and mosques, textbooks and newspapers, TV series and pseudo "documentaries".

It is today's greatest manipulation of opinion, of the kind immortalized by George Orwell in 1984 as a "Two Minute Hate": Europe's publicists, civil servants and educators incite violence directly when they describe Jews as "bloodsuckers", "colonialists", and many similar epithets. One step at a time, Europe is subverting the legitimacy of the Jewish people once again.

I have always felt an affinity with European intellectuals. But, it is with pain and surprise that I witness, one lifetime after Hitler's Holocaust, the willingness of all too many to collaborate in the monstrification of the Jews. This is how Europe built an anti-Semitic public opinion of 150,000,000. This is how Israel has become an expendable myth among the European educated classes.

"Peace" can come only with the recognition in the Middle East of Israel as a national state of the Jewish people; the addition of the State of Israel to all the maps used in schools in the Islamic world; the elimination of the extensive anti-Israeli propaganda campaigns in the Muslim media and schools; the promotion of interactions among scientists, scholars, artists, and athletes; the abandoning of the delegitimization of Israel at the United Nations; the outlawing of terrorist groups devoted to the killing of Israelis and the destruction of Israel; the end of the economic boycott against Israel; the institution of full diplomatic relations with Jerusalem as Israel's indivisible capital; and last but not least, the proclamation of theological fatwas prohibiting the murder of "infidels".

Europe is working hard to prevent all these necessary steps.

Because according to Europe's mainstream, "peace" will prevail when Israel is dismantled, just like tranquility will prevail in the "Holy Land" when Zionism has been eliminated.

Europe is witnessing the creation of a majority according to which Israel is a superpower with extraordinary military power and wealth and is a committed and merciless enemy of humanity.

Europe's public opinion has been persuaded to believe that Israel is a state that ought to be dismantled forthwith. Europe's population count today is 730,000,000 citizens. What would happen if the anti-Semitic worm infected the mind of all of them?

Can Israel really remain immune from that eruption of psychotic anti-Jewish illness?

The writer, an Italian journalist, is the author of A New Shoah that researched the personal stories of Israel's terror victims, published by Encounter. This appeared on IsraelNationalNews.com on May 17.

The Z Street Complaint in Federal Court

(Editor's note: While attention has been concentrated on the abuse of power by the IRS in relation to tea party-connected organizations, Jewish organizations have also been targeted. The ZOA's tax exempt status was challenged and Z Street (Z stands for Zionism in deliberate contrast to the anti-Israel J Street), after years of vainly waiting for IRS approval, brought suit and is finally --two and a half years after filing its complaint-- scheduled to have its day in the District of Columbia federal district court on July 2. Below is a section from Z Street's complaint to the court, worth reading both because it exposes the real behind-the-scenes grounds the IRS targets Jewish organizations--if they differ from Obama's policies--and reveals the absurd grounds offered up front.)

- A. The plaintiff in this case, **Z Street**, is a nonprofit organization devoted to educating the public about Zionism....
- B. Z Street brings this case because, through its corporate counsel, **Z Street** was informed explicitly by an IRS Agent on July 19, 2010, that approval of **Z Street's** application for tax-exempt status has been at least delayed, and may be denied, because of a special IRS policy in place regarding organizations in any way connected with Israel, and further that the applications of many such Israel-related organizations have been assigned to "a special unit in the D.C. office to determine whether the organization's activities contradict the Administration's public policies." These statements by an IRS official that the IRS maintains special policies (hereinafter the "Israel Special Policy") governing applications for tax-exempt status by organizations which deal with Israel, and which requires particularly intense scrutiny of such applications and an enhanced risk of denial if made by organizations which espouse or support positions inconsistent with the Obama administration's Israel policies, constitute an explicit admission of the crudest form of viewpoint discrimination, and one which is both totally un-American and flatly unconstitutional under the First Amendment.
- C. **Z Street** brings this case seeking a Declaratory Judgment that the Israel Special Policy violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; and for injunctive relief barring application of the Israel Special Policy to **Z Street's** application for tax-exempt status or to similar applications by any other organization; and to compel full public disclosure regarding the origin, development, approval, substance and application of the Israel Special Policy.
- D. The United States Internal Revenue Service has defended this case by claiming that special review of **Z Street's** application for exemption from tax is necessary because **Z Street** deals with Israel, and Israel is a country with a heightened risk of terrorism. Plaintiff passes without comment the irony that the government claims to be investigating intensively an organization whose charter opposes terrorism, and which is devoted exclusively to speaking in support of a country victimized by terrorism, on the theory that such intensive review is necessary to prevent terrorism, because such an organization might be funding terrorism. Plaintiff alleges that, as more fully detailed below, the government has never sought from **Z Street** any information regarding any of the factual issues that the government claims it needs to investigate to prevent the funding of terrorism, and that the government has never

provided to **Z Street** any of the information that the government claims it is obliged to disseminate to applicants for exemption from tax, to guard against the use of tax-exempt funds to promote terror.

- E. Indeed, although the government claims that its policies are necessary to enable the government to obtain or to provide information relating to terrorism, the government has not actually stated that it did seek any such information from **Z Street**, or provide any such information to **Z Street**. And in fact the government has not done either.
- F. Although the government has neither sought from **Z Street**, nor provided to **Z Street**, any information relating to the funding of terrorism, the government has sought from **Z Street** detailed information regarding the identity and background of **Z Street**'s leadership.
- G. Because the government's claimed justifications are totally unrelated to any information sought by, or provided by, the government as part of its intensive investigation of **Z Street**, it is apparent that the justifications espoused by the government in this case are not the actual drivers of the government's decision to investigate **Z Street** intensively.
- H. This is further substantiated by the fact that, as more fully detailed below, the IRS has included in its investigation of another application for exemption from tax, submitted by a purely religious Jewish organization that is not involved with Israel or politics at all, the demand that that organization state "whether [it] supports the existence of the land of Israel" and by the requirement that the organization "[d]escribe [its] religious belief system toward the land of Israel."
- I. Under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, a government decision about how intensively to investigate an applicant for exemption from tax cannot be made on the basis of the applicant's political or religious views, or on the basis of whether those views are inconsistent with the positions of the administration.

Saturday People, Sunday People

Ruth King

An underreported tragedy of the Middle East is the persecution and exodus of Christian communities that have lived there for centuries, some for millennia, well before the advent of Islam. The irony is that today Israel is the only country where the Christian population is growing. The sorry exception is in the Arab controlled regions of Judea and Samaria.

Lela Gilbert, in her inspiring book *Saturday People, Sunday People: Israel through the Eyes of a Christian Sojourner*, describes her life in a country she came to visit but now makes her home.

Although Gilbert grew up in a family supportive of Israel, for her the defining moment was Israel's triumph in the 1967 War--whose 46th anniversary will be celebrated on June 5th this year.

She watched with concern as, in the following decades, Israel's enemies increased in number, with Muslims joined by fellow travellers throughout the world, including the leadership of the mainline churches who shrugged off the fiercest faith driven diatribes against Jews, Christians and other "infidels."

Alarmed by these trends, in 2006 Gilbert decided to visit the land that fascinated her as a writer and as a practicing Christian. To her family's surprise and to Israel's great benefit, Gilbert would be no ordinary tourist. She rented a flat in Jerusalem and began her sojourn. She currently divides her time between Jerusalem and California.

What is amazing about this book is the way Lela Gilbert resonates to Israel's dangers, its security concerns, its diversity, its army, its vitality and its destiny, feeling them as her own. In her words: "....I came with the conviction that an assault upon Jews is an implicit assault upon Christians, since it strikes

at the root of the same ancient tree." She experiences the hypocrisy, the lies and libels of the world's "enlightened" elite; she feels horror at the unspeakable jihadist terrorists who murdered the Fogel family including women and babies in their beds. She absorbs "the heavy weight of sadness pressed against the whole country." She also has witnessed the fear of Christians in PA-ruled Bethlehem, similar to the fear of Christians throughout the Muslim world--in Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

But Lela Gilbert also experiences the holiness of Israel, the eternal miracle of the Sabbath in Jerusalem, the joys of Passover and Sukkot, the renewal and commitment of Tisha B'av and the optimism that pulses through Israel with the belief that the best is still to come.

With the Bible as her GPS, Gilbert has visited every corner of Israel and spoken to Israelis--and Arabs--from every background. She has visited the "settlements" of Judea and Samaria--from the handsome villas of the towns to the hilltop "outposts" where she went to ancient wine cellars as well as new vineyards on the windswept hills. In Gilbert's words: "For a number of reasons, the passage in the bible referring to the Israelites coming into the land and claiming their land has held important personal meaning for me."

Ruthie Blum, the American born Israeli journalist and our mutual friend, has described Lela Gilbert thus: "Lela is what I call 'one of us.' She gets it about America, and she gets it about Israel. She is a rare breed who, upon her arrival in Israel, immediately grasped that the issues in both countries are very similar. It is not only that, as a pro-Israel Christian, she has a belief in the justice of the Jewish homeland. It's more complicated than that. She actually understands the threat to democracy and free cultures that radical Islam poses. Aside from that, she managed to become socially enmeshed in Jerusalem society in a way that even many Jews who immigrate here have difficulty doing. She's a real treasure."

Gilbert writes that during her first days in Israel she visited a shop on Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street. The owner was curious about her as a writer and as a Christian who would come during the war in Lebanon. He gave her a gift—a silver Star of David—with the words: "It is my way of saying thank you for being with us."

I can only add "Thank you Lela Gilbert, for this book."

Outpost

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