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# OUTPOST



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# The Encirclement of Jerusalem

William Mehlman

With much of the West's political elite, including its Greater Tel Aviv branch, on extended angst duty over the prospect of President Donald Trump relocating the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, major swaths of world Judaism's signature city and its surrounding areas are illegally and virtually unopposedly being swallowed in an Arab vortex of stone and cement. The past few years have borne witness to the construction of more than 15,000 unlicensed, unregistered housing units in east Jerusalem and its tributaries by "thugs" and "criminal gangs posing as contractors," as described by Bassam Tawil in a recent report for the Gatestone Institute.

In a process conspicuously devoid of subtlety, "they lay their hands on private Palestinian plots, preferably land whose owners are living abroad," Tawil avers, and quickly move in to seize control. One east Jerusalem victim of this broad daylight hijacking related to the reporter that "they tell you if you don't like it, you can go to court, knowing that by the time the legal procedures are over, they will have succeeded in completing another tall building and even selling some of the apartments. They tell us it is a national duty to build as much as they can on empty land, otherwise the Jews will be building there."

The Gatestone correspondent's disclosures are totally in sync with the facts uncovered by human rights lawyer and Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs scholar-in-residence Justus Reid Weiner in his new illustrated book *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon*. Based on interviews across the political spectrum, it documents a pattern of politically motivated behavior and criminal profiteering that characterizes much of the construction in and around the Arab sector of Israel's capital. "Illegal construction," Weiner writes, "has reached epidemic proportions." He recalls one senior Arab official boasting "they have built 6,000 homes without permits during the last four years, of which less than 200 were demolished by the city."

Moreover, Weiner informs us, this frantic pace of unlawful construction continues unabated in the face of the city's authorization of more than 3,600 permits for new housing in the Arab sector, "more than enough to meet the needs of Arab residents through legal construction until 2020."

The excuse offered by sympathetic Israeli NGOs that Arab Jerusalemites are forced to build illegally because of systemic municipal rejection of their permit applications is glaringly at odds with the facts. "Arab residents who wish to build legally," Weiner submits, "are free to consult urban plans translated into Arabic and to receive individual assistance from Arab speaking employees." Arab and Jewish applicants are subject to an indiscriminant wait of 4-6 weeks for approval, which includes the payment of an identical fee (about \$3,600) for water and sewage connections.

The charge of attempting to further "Judaize" Jerusalem--directed at a municipal planning commission Arab leaders have boycotted over the last 35 years--does not hold water. Jerusalem's Arab population share has risen from 27 percent to 32 percent since the city's reunification and legitimate new Arab housing construction has outpaced Jewish construction. In contravention of these facts, Weiner declares, we have seen an Israeli Arab and Palestinian leadership spending hundreds of millions



of dollars to subsidize and encourage massive felonious construction in the conduct of a “demographic war” against the Jewish state and its capital.

The parameters of that war defy the imagination. From Ras Al-Amoud to Jabal Mukaber at the southern and eastern perimeters of the city, from Kalandrya to Anata in the north, unlicensed, unplanned, whole villages have been slapped together for the sole purpose of creating “irreversible facts on the ground.” They fail even the most minimal engineering and architectural standards with safety concerns thrown to the four winds. Virtually all of this wildcat invasion of stone and cement-block, moreover has been directed at “Area C,” the 59 percent of the “West Bank” supposedly under exclusive Israeli civil and military control per the Oslo Accords, in a city reunified under Jewish sovereignty 49 years ago. All of which makes it fair to ask, as Tawil does, whether “building a great collar of cement” north, east and south of Jerusalem, choking it off from all but westward Jewish expansion, was part of the Oslo Accords or simply in its unread footnotes?

Nothing more definitively disposes of the notion that the products of this construction putsch—single family dwellings to high-rise apartment blocs—inform a legitimate Arab housing need than the fact that hardly anybody is buying them. Priced at \$25,000 to \$50,000 per apartment unit in a city in which two bedroom flats fetch upwards of \$250,000, they are on the receiving end of the biggest no-confidence vote in Jerusalem real estate history. The reasons are self-explanatory. No bank worthy of the name is about to grant mortgage loans on these jerry-built creations thrown up by “contractors” who did not own or otherwise knowingly stole the land on which they were building. Few of their prospective buyers have the money to put down for an outright purchase. Those who do are smart enough to give these “bargains” the widest possible berth.

So there they stand, empty, haunted symbols, Tawil contends, of the “hypocrisy and raw malice” of their European financial enablers, among others, and “a Western mainstream media—those dozens of correspondents who see with their own eyes the Palestinian settlements rising on every side of Jerusalem but choose to report only about Jerusalem. The sheer enormity of the project,” he adds, must raise the inescapable question: “Why?”

Israel will be pondering the answer long after its bulldozers have hopefully exposed the limited shelf-life of “facts on the ground.”

*William Mehlman represents AFSI in Israel.*

## Zionism101

**Chaim Weizmann Part 1: The Balfour Declaration**” is now available. You can see it via the following link:

<http://zionism101.org/NewestVideoVimeo.aspx>

Or log in at [www.zionism101.org](http://www.zionism101.org).

“Chaim Weizmann Part 1: The Balfour Declaration” describes Chaim Weizmann’s first decades. Born into a small town in the Pale of Settlement, as a young man Weizmann moves to Britain where he becomes a famous scientist and Zionist leader. He is the crucial figure in obtaining the Balfour Declaration, a British promise to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine.

If you haven’t already, please watch our completed video courses.

## **From the Editor**

### **Fake News**

“Fake news” has suddenly emerged as a major issue. But no one has drawn attention to the fact that large scale dissemination of fake news by the mainstream media had its birth in Israel’s 1982 war in Lebanon. The situation was so bad that AFSI published a study by Edward Alexander “NBC’s War in Lebanon: the Distorting Mirror.” NBC was only chosen, Alexander wrote, “because the malpractices common to the three major networks were drawn out into extreme or radical form by NBC.”

To take only a few examples: On August 2 a photograph seen round the world showed what was described as a severely burned baby girl with her arms amputated, allegedly wounded in an Israeli bombardment. NBC’s Fred Francis reported Secretary of State George Schultz’s endorsement of Ronald Reagan’s view that “the symbol of this war” was that “picture of a baby with its arms shot off.” It turned out the baby was a healthy boy (NBC even had the sex wrong) with a broken left arm in a cast. NBC never corrected the misrepresentation. NBC disseminated ludicrous numbers (invented by the PLO) of “600,000 homeless civilians” and 10,000 civilian deaths at the hands of Israel. It eluded NBC that “600,000” was more than the total population of southern Lebanon under Israeli control. It turned out the number who died was closer to 100 than 10,000. The bogus figures were cited by NBC time and time again and never retracted. NBC also repeatedly described Beirut as a city “slowly reduced to rubble” from which almost all civilians had fled when photographs showed the city essentially intact with people crowding into supermarkets.

Alas, the current uproar is likely to make matters worse as gatekeepers (especially in Europe) primarily go after critics of government action on politically sensitive issues (like Muslim immigration) in the name of stopping “fake news.”

### **Fake News from JTA?**

The JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) is the mainstream news service for Jewish media around the globe. Daniel Greenfield has reported on the deceptive way in which JTA has provided “news” on supposed Jewish support for Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), at this writing a frontrunner for chairman of the Democratic National Committee. For many years Ellison, a convert to Islam, was affiliated with Farrakhan’s anti-Semitic Nation of Islam (at times acting as its spokesman). Moreover, writes Greenfield, Ellison “has lied about it and distorted his past.”

You wouldn’t know this from the JTA’s recent story. It is about 300 Jewish community leaders, including 100 rabbis, who have signed a letter in support of Ellison. The letter states that it is not an endorsement of Ellison for DNC chair but is “a call to reject the unfair and baseless accusations some have leveled at him.” Greenfield notes that the JTA story is essentially “a press release repeating most of the letter’s contents while making it seem like this was an independent initiative.” In fact, says Greenfield, minimal investigation would have shown that the source of the letter is “Keith for DNC”, a website prepared and paid for by the campaign to make Ellison the DNC’s next head. What’s more, the JTA provides no names of the “leaders” and 100 rabbis who signed on. (Subsequent to publication of the article, the JTA provided several names, most of them anti-Israel activists.) Greenfield sums up: “The story is blatantly dishonest and it’s another example of the extremists in the media promoting an extremist candidate using deceptive and dishonest tactics.”

### **Modern Language Association Shoots Down BDS**

The boycott-Israel movement received a welcome setback as the 25,000 member Modern Language Association (MLA), at its annual convention in Philadelphia in January, rejected a motion to boycott Israeli universities.

It's a welcome reminder that when opponents mobilize these outrageous resolutions can be defeated. Russell Berman, a former president of the MLA, reports that following the 2014 MLA convention in Chicago, which featured a pro-boycott session, opponents organized an MLA Members for Scholars Rights to counter the boycott movement. This led to the recent showdown in Philadelphia between rival resolutions, for and against BDS. The call to boycott was turned down and the resolution to refrain from boycotting endorsed (although by a narrower margin). The votes are the more welcome given that the MLA, under then president Louis Kampf, pioneered passing political resolutions that had nothing to do with the mission of academic associations.

### **You Can't Say Temple Mount on the Temple Mount**

Jerold Auerbach, professor emeritus of history at Wellesley College, who now lives in Israel, describes a multi-faith group of students from UCLA on a guided tour of the Temple Mount, site of the ancient Jewish Temples as well as the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque. Their guide was well known archaeologist Dr. Gabriel Barkay. As he explained the history of the site, he referred several times to the Temple Mount. A Waqf guard interrupted, telling Barkay not to use the term Temple Mount. When he did so again, two Waqf guards dragged him to Israeli officers nearby and demanded Barkay be evicted from the Mount. The police declined but suggested he refrain from further identifying the Temple Mount as the Temple Mount. Barkay then said "TM", in place of Temple Mount. To Auerbach this was a teachable moment for the students, underlining the folly of censorship, given that, as he puts it, "To say Temple Mount on the Temple Mount is equivalent to saying It's raining" when it's raining.

To this reader what was most shocking about the episode was that Israeli police would in effect endorse the Waqf's efforts to impose its insistence that "the Jewish people don't have a connection to the land," which, as Auerbach says, is the real meaning of its censorship.

### **Obama's Last Shot**

With only three hours to go before Trump's inauguration, Obama took his last shot at Israel (and the Republicans) releasing \$221 million in U.S. funds to the Palestinian Authority. Funding had been blocked by two Congressional "holds", normally respected by the executive branch. Congress wanted to end glaring abuses, such as the PA's awarding families of terrorists up to \$3100 a month (there's a sliding scale, the more Israelis killed, the more money awarded). To appreciate the size of the awards, the average salary in the PA is \$276 a month. It's estimated that in total \$137.8 million will go to subsidize terror in this way. So Obama will have more than fully funded the program. (Of course the administration claims the money will only go for "humanitarian" purposes when in fact, as *The National Review* notes, the PA simply transfers the money to the PLO which handles the terror subsidies.) In an extraordinary move, the Trump State Department has blocked sending the funds.

### **On the Southern Policy Law Center**

Flemming Rose, who was editor of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* when it ran the Mohammed cartoons that caused an international firestorm, has written a thoughtful book about his experiences and their broader significance: *The Tyranny of Silence: How One Cartoon Ignited a Global Debate on the Future of Free Speech*. In it, he contrasts the importance attached to free speech in Europe and the U.S. where, Fleming writes, freedom of speech is far more valued and legally upheld.

But for how much longer? In the U.S. the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is in the forefront of those seeking to make criticism of ideas with which it disagrees illegitimate. It does this, to quote columnist Don Feder, by "taking legitimate conservatives and jumbling them with genuine hate groups (the Klan, Aryan Nation, skinheads, etc.) to make it appear that there's a logical relationship between, say, opposing affirmative action and lynching, or demands for an end to government services for illegal

aliens and attacks on dark-skinned immigrants.” Even the staid American Enterprise Institute is denounced by the SPLC as an organization that “seeks to make bigoted and discredited ideas respectable.”

Currently the Southern Poverty Center has its sights aimed at those who dare to criticize Islam. The SPLC specializes in compiling lists of extremists supposedly beyond the pale, who can then be dismissed by mainstream media on the basis of showing up on these lists. In October 2016 the SPLC published *A Field Guide to Anti-Muslim Extremists*, supposedly responsible for “fueling” acts of public “hatred” against “American Muslims.” Included are such well-informed, sober and courageous critics of radical Islam as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Daniel Pipes (editor of *The Middle East Forum*), Robert Spencer (founder of *Jihad Watch*), David Horowitz (whose bravery in confronting anti-Semitism on U.S. campuses makes him an unsung hero), Frank Gaffney (former Undersecretary of Defense and founder of the Center for Security Policy) and Brigitte Gabriel (author of *Because They Hate* and founder of ACT for America).

In his excellent report on the SPLC in *Frontpage*, John Perazzo notes that SPLC’s “hate group counts” have been shown to be devoid of legitimacy. For example, he quotes Laird Wilcox, a specialist in fringe political movements, whose analysis of one SPLC list of 346 “white supremacist groups” revealed that in fact there were only “about 50” such functioning groups. A subsequent review of 800 plus ‘hate groups’ published by the SPLC revealed that over half “were either non-existent, existed in name only, or were inactive.”

Why does the SPLC inflate its lists? The better to raise money. Some of the organization’s most trenchant critics have been its political fellows on the far left. For example Perazzo quotes the late Alexander Cockburn (a vicious critic of Israel who lost his post at *The Village Voice* in 1984 for taking \$10,000 from a pro-Arab group) calling SPLC head Morris Dees the “arch-salesman of hate-mongering.” Ever since 1971, wrote Cockburn in 2009, “U.S. Postal Service mailbags have bulged with [Dees’s] fundraising letters, scaring dollars out of the pockets of trembling liberals aghast at his lurid depictions of hate-sodden America.”

Dees’s scare tactics have been extremely successful, presumably especially with Jews, easy to frighten with visions of Nazis and skinheads everywhere. According to an article in *The Weekly Standard* SPLC has assets of a quarter of a billion dollars. It spends so little of this on actual programs that Charity Watch, a monitor of nonprofits, has consistently given SPLC its lowest grade of “F” for stockpiling assets far beyond a reasonable reserve.

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## **In Memoriam: Steven Plaut**

AFSI deeply mourns the loss, not only to his family but to Israel and the Jewish people, of Professor Steven Plaut.

Born in Philadelphia in 1951, Plaut emigrated to Israel at the age of 30, becoming a professor of economics at the Graduate School of Business of Haifa University. He almost died of cancer over a decade ago, recounting his brush with death in his book *The Scout*. He finally succumbed to the disease at the age of 65.

Plaut was a fierce champion of Israel who pulled no punches in his articles, many of which appeared as columns in *The Jewish Press*. He immediately recognized the folly of the 1993 Oslo accords; clearly setting forth the reasons they undermined the state. For over two decades he lashed out at Israeli leaders, whether on the left or (ostensibly) on the right, who persisted in pursuing the two state delusion. In one memorable column he declared the real name for the Oslo appeasement process and the subsequent “Road Map” was “the Cult of Moloch,” a Canaanite cult whose chief feature, according to the Bible, was the sacrifice of children.

At times, for Plaut, Israel's misguided policies defied rational discourse and he resorted to satire and verse.

Plaut was also erudite, something that could be overshadowed by his biting rhetoric.

We reprint here a 2013 column that represents Plaut at his polemical and scholarly best-- as topical now as the day it was written.

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## On the 'Tikkun Olam' Fetish

Steven Plaut



"The central mitzvah or commandment for our era is the mitzvah of Tikkun Olam. It is the defining mission of Jews to strive for the repair of the world by making society more just, fair, egalitarian, and sensitive. Judaism demands that we repair the world by striving for social justice. It is the mission of Jews in the Divine Plan for the universe to repair the world by repairing man, by improving and advancing mankind."

The above paragraph is a fair representation of what has become the defining *raison d'être* of Judaism as conveyed by non-Orthodox liberal Jewish organizations and synagogues in America. It is not a direct citation from any of them, but is an accurate paraphrase of what has become the canon of non-Orthodox Jewish liberalism in our time.

It is the "modernized" and contemporary "reinterpretation" of "Jewish ethics" as defined and inculcated by much of the Reform and Conservative movements. It is also the "theology" of Jewish radical leftist groups operating at the fringes of the Jewish community, including the "Renewal/ALEPH" movement, the "Eco-Judaism" groups, the "Tikkun community" of people and groups that are satellites to the magazine by that same name published by tikkun-activist Michael Lerner, and what remains of the "Reconstructionists." Lerner, it should be added, discovers "repair of the world" even in LSD consumption.

What are we to make of "Tikkun Olam" proclamations?

The most important thing that must be understood about the Tikkun Olam catechism in the United States is that each and every sentence in the above proclamation is false.

First of all, there is no such thing as a mitzvah or commandment of "Tikkun Olam." Jews are nowhere commanded to "repair the world." In all the authoritative or traditional compilations of the commandments of Judaism, none list "Tikkun Olam". The expression itself does not appear anywhere in the Torah or in the entire Bible.

Those assimilationist liberals who insist that the entire "ethics of the Prophets" can be reduced to the pursuit of "Tikkun Olam" have to explain why none of the Books of the Prophets use the term. "Tikkun Olam" is used sporadically in the Talmud, but as a technical term for resolution of certain judicial problems that arise before rabbinic courts.

The only place the expression appears in Jewish prayer is in the "Aleinu" and there it clearly has nothing at all to do with social justice. In the "Aleinu," Tikkun Olam is explicitly explained in the prayer text itself as the quest to eliminate pagan superstition and to see God's rule of the universe implemented. It is a theological concept, not a social, political or environmental one.

In Judaism, the world does not get repaired by redistribution of income and wealth nor by cutting carbon emissions, but by humans subordinating themselves to God's will.

Secondly, "Tikkun Olam" does not mean that Jews are obligated to strive to make the earth a more just, clean, fair and equal place. Nowhere in Judaism are Jews commanded to restructure or re-

engineer the societies of nations. Jews have a certain obligation to participate in the Jewish community and to assist other Jews, especially Jews living in hardship, including through charity. Even within the Jewish community, there is no religious imperative or justification for coerced schemes of income or wealth redistribution, aside from payments to the Levites and priests. And while there is no prohibition against Jews using their resources to assist the downtrodden among the non-Jewish nations, there is also no Judaic imperative to do so.

The Torah and the Prophets do speak out about the plight of Jewish widows, orphans, and converts, but in every single case where the matter is brought up, the concern is for protecting the rights of these weaker groups in the courts, assuring they do not face judicial discrimination. There is no official obligation to transfer resources to these disadvantaged groups except for the "tithe for the poor" collected out of agricultural produce in two years out of seven. (If you do the math, it averages out to about 3% of farm resources per year.)

The idea that it is somehow the religious duty of Jews to "repair mankind" is not only unfounded, it is a manifestation of the ignorance of assimilationist Jewish liberals. The simple fact of the matter is that in actual Judaism, it is none of the business of Jews to fix or repair humanity. More generally, in Judaism it is the job of Jews to repair the Jews--a not inconsiderable task--not to repair the world.

Non-Jews are not in need of being "repaired" by Jews, at least as long as they observe the seven "Noahide Commandments," the rules of living that Jews interpret to be conferred upon all humans, all descendants of Noah, by God. Beyond that, what the gentiles do and how they do it is none of the business of Jews, and Jews simply have no religious standing to interfere.

It is certainly not the job of Jews to instruct non-Jews about matters such as income and wealth distribution, abortion, environmentalism, health care provision, or discrimination. Only in matters of cruelty that negate the Noahide Laws are Jews commanded to interfere.

Indeed, the very notion that Jews are so ethically superior that they are entitled to instruct non-Jews in ethics is completely foreign to Judaism. The self-image of Jews in the Torah is that of a group of people awash in their own moral failures and foibles, from the Golden Calf to the paganism of the era of the kings of Judah and Israel. The moral imperative of the Torah is for the Jews to improve and reevaluate their own behavior, not to pretend to have the moral superiority to preach to the entire non-Jewish world.

"Man" may very well be in need of redemption and improvement and repair, but it is not the business or job of the Jews to carry these things out. And it would be hubris to think that Jews are morally equipped to do so. Jews have more than their hands full in attempting to repair Jews.

Jews are, in general, not obligated to oppose or reform unjust laws of the nations, at least as long as those laws do not require Jews to abandon their religion. It is the religious moral imperative of Jews to obey the law of the land and that is all. In democracies in which Jews may vote and express ideological positions, there is no Torah-based objection to their doing so.

At the same time, there are generally no Torah-based ideological positions when it comes to those same policy questions. A Jew is free to favor or oppose Obamacare, shale oil extraction, and Quantitative Easing for any reason he or she sees fit. It would be a sacrilege and disrespectful to drag the Torah into the debate as the basis for a Jew's opinion. The Torah has more important matters on its theological plate.

It is just as wrong to attempt to recruit the Torah and "Tikkun Olam" as artillery support for ideological positions regarding other fashionable questions of the day. Probably one of the most common misuses of "Tikkun Olam" by liberals involves environmentalist trendiness. But the only real environmentalist statement by the Torah is that God will never allow planetary destruction to take place, and that every time one sees a rainbow in the sky one should remember that the doomsday warnings by the radical environmentalists about man destroying the planet are negated by the Torah.



As for the insistence by the "Eco-Judaism" groups that vegetarianism is the highest form of "Tikkun Olam," the true position of the Torah on the subject needs to be mentioned. The Torah completely prohibits vegetarianism at least once a year, on the evening of Passover, and while it does not prohibit it for other holidays, eating meat on those holidays is strongly recommended. However, Rabbi Kook sees vegetarianism as a positive development in the world.

As for the recruitment of "Tikkun Olam" as the moral basis for other trendy political positions, one of the clearest ethical positions in all of Judaism is its strong opposition to homosexual relations.

The Torah does not exactly say that inequality in the world is a good thing, but it also does not say that it is a bad thing. Humans are free to try to do something about it if they so please, just like they are free to end slavery (which the Torah and Talmud limit to humane parameters, but never mandate be ended).

No one is religiously commanded to drive an SUV or to use disposable diapers, but neither is there any Jewish basis for opposing such things. One is free to oppose them all on the grounds of their own merits and demerits. But one should at least have the intellectual honesty to do so without misrepresenting Judaism by making "Tikkun Olam" the basis for one's political position.

The bottom line is that, at the hands of Jewish liberals, "Tikkun Olam" has become a nonsense mantra representing nothing more than the replacement of actual Judaism with a pseudo-theology consisting entirely of the pursuit of liberal political fads.

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## Britain Gets It Right. Twice. What Gives?

Melanie Phillips

Extraordinary! The British government has started making bold and good moves. No fewer than two such sets of developments have been spotted in as many days.

On Sunday, at the Paris conference called to get the Middle East peace process back on track and stick the knife into Israel good and proper before Obama leaves the White House, Theresa May's government refused to sign its closing statement. "There are risks," said the UK Foreign Office, "that this



conference hardens positions at a time when we need to be encouraging the conditions for peace. We have particular reservations about an international conference intended to advance peace between the parties that does not involve them – indeed which is taking place against the wishes of the Israelis."

You don't say.

Not content with that, according to *Ha'aretz* the UK the next day used its veto to prevent the EU Foreign Affairs Council from passing a French resolution adopting the Paris conference conclusions.

Can this really be the same British government that just three weeks earlier not only voted for the infamous Israel-bashing UN Security Council resolution 2334 but helped draft it and push it through? No wonder *Ha'aretz* called the move "highly irregular".

It would be thoroughly uncharitable to suggest that Britain's stance at Paris, like Mrs. May's onslaught on US Secretary of State John Kerry's speech attacking Israel a few days after resolution 2334, happened because she suddenly became aware that it might not be the most brilliant strategy to thoroughly cheese off the incoming, pro-Israel US President. So I won't.

It would be even more uncharitable to suggest that because President-elect Donald Trump stated in his interview with *The Times* of London that “the UK may have another chance to veto if what I’m hearing is true, because you know you have a meeting as you know, this weekend”, Mrs May promptly fell into line. So I won’t suggest that either.

I will merely observe that the Foreign Office statement did specifically add that the Paris conference was taking place “just days before the transition to a new American President when the US will be the ultimate guarantor of any agreement.”

And I will also observe that Britain’s Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has exulted that Britain is negotiating a post-Brexit trade deal with Trump, who has been saying in turn what a brilliant move Brexit was. It is hard to overstate the importance for the UK of such a trade deal with America which would enormously strengthen Britain’s hand in negotiating its departure from the EU.

This relates to the second positive development. After months of failing to respond robustly to EU threats to damage Britain as much as possible over Brexit; after allowing the impression to be created that Britain was a powerless supplicant at the EU table; and after doing nothing to quell the wailing from British “Remainers” opposed to Brexit that the UK was in danger of falling out of the EU through a “hard Brexit” of punishing tariffs that would undoubtedly bring about the economic apocalypse Remainers had been predicting since the referendum campaign, suddenly the May government has started stating the obvious: that although Britain wants a mutually beneficial Brexit deal, if push comes to shove the UK can hurt the EU far more than the EU can hurt the UK.

At the weekend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, was suddenly transformed from a mouse into a man-eating tiger. He threw off his previous temporizing attitude and threatened that, if the EU tried to punish Britain for leaving, the UK government would turn London into a corporate tax haven and undermine the EU’s own economy.

This followed the apparently Damascene conversion of Mark Carney, the Bank of England Governor who had curdled the blood during the referendum campaign with his forecasts of imminent economic doom after a Brexit vote. Last week, however, he admitted that Britain’s economy would grow at a faster rate than he had expected and that if Britain was forced into a “hard Brexit”, the EU would have more to lose than the UK.

“I am not saying there are not financial stability risks in the UK, and there are economic risks to the UK, but there are greater short term risks on the continent in the transition than there are in the UK,” he said.

You don’t say.

The International Monetary Fund has followed suit. It has revised upwards its previous downbeat assessment for Britain’s prospects, now predicting the UK would grow by 1.5 percent this year – the biggest upgrade of economies it has forecast for 2017.

Meanwhile the EU’s chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, whose fabled ferocity had been used to make the Brits’ flesh creep, told members of the European Parliament at a private meeting that he wanted a “special” deal to guarantee EU firms and countries access to the City of London’s financial markets.

You bet he does.

Of course, since the Treasury, the Bank of England and the IMF were all so wrong in forecasting immediate disaster for the British economy in the event of a Brexit vote, one has to say that a word of caution might be appropriate about accepting their judgment now.

Moreover, even the most ardent Brexiteer has always accepted there will almost certainly be some downside for the UK from a break of the dimensions of departing from the EU.

And maybe the British government will soon revert to its normal cynical, unprincipled and defeatist attitude towards the rest of the world.

Nevertheless this new, optimistic and robust embrace of reality, not to mention the government's "highly irregular" if not unprecedented stand against the bad guys and in defense of their Israeli victims, is truly wondrous to behold.

Readers of a nervous disposition should look away now. For could this already be the Trump effect in action?

Of course, since President Trump's election spells the end of civilization as we know it, that cannot possibly be the case. So I won't suggest it.

*Melanie Phillips is a British journalist and author. This appeared on [Melaniephillips.com](http://Melaniephillips.com) on January 16.*

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## Where Israel Advocacy Fails, and How It Can Succeed

Chloe Valdary



This past November, the student newspaper at McGill University in Montreal responded to accusations that it had been providing a platform for anti-Semitism. While denying the specific charge, the editors emphatically reasserted their core position—namely, that the student paper “maintains an editorial line of not publishing pieces which promote a Zionist worldview, or any other ideology which we consider oppressive.”

This blunt statement is a reminder that hatred of the Jewish state is rapidly becoming the default position on many college campuses. Meanwhile, Israel's friends, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, are left to ask what, if anything, can be done to stem the rising tide of anti-Israel venom.

In more than five years of involvement in advocacy for Israel, both as a college student and in a professional capacity, I've spoken at hundreds of events, worked with dozens of organizations, designed campus programs and social-media campaigns, and advised members of Congress, donors, and even Israeli government officials on how best to advance the cause of the Jewish state. As a member of the “millennial” generation, I have also been privy to the frustrations and complaints of my activist, pro-Israel peers whose own enchantment with the Jewish state is a driving force in their lives and who believe that too much institutional support is going to forms of advocacy that have outlived their usefulness.

Partially in response to these frustrations, I conducted a year-long study of how pro-Israel groups engage millennials. What works? What doesn't? How to improve? In addressing those questions, I compared the available survey data about the attitudes of young Americans toward the Jewish state with what pro-Israel groups are currently doing to reach them, and conducted hundreds of interviews with students, professors, essayists, and professional activists.

The conclusion I eventually arrived at, presented below in severely boiled-down form, is that some kinds of Israel advocacy are at best of limited effectiveness and at worst can do more harm than good. Yet I also found some approaches that promise significantly greater success.

Let's start by looking quickly at current attitudes among all Americans between the ages of eighteen and thirty. According to several polls taken in the past few decades, most members of this age cohort, while nominally pro-Israel, are largely indifferent to the Jewish state or have no interest at all in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. If asked whether they are more sympathetic to Israel or to the Palestinians, a great many will answer “Israel”—according to a Gallup poll conducted last February.

Americans in this age range favor Israel over the Palestinians by a margin of 54 to 18 percent—but, when, pressed they make clear their lack of much knowledge about, or devotion to, either side. Evidence suggests, moreover, that this neutral group is the fastest-growing sector of the youth population. Indeed, a survey of California university campuses found that 75 to 95 percent of students fall in this “soft middle.”

These ranks of the unaffiliated and ambivalent are unlikely to be engaged by traditional methods of advocacy; they won’t come to hear a pro-Israel speaker or read a pamphlet about how the peace process is being held back by Palestinian, not Israeli, leaders, or about Hamas’s hate-filled intentions and ideology. Indeed, there’s reason to believe that, among those not already interested in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, discussion of it tends less to inspire curiosity than to induce apathy. To these onlookers, the situation appears too messy and too complicated to lend itself to any obvious solution; the good guys and bad guys aren’t easily identifiable; and meanwhile the rhetoric of partisans on both sides seems angry, obsessive, and overheated.

Not even the most carefully crafted and well-articulated pro-Israel arguments can dispel these impressions. Indeed, among young Jews in particular, the sociologist Theodore Sasson has observed that, when it comes to Israel, they tend to be positively turned off by the compulsive fixation on “the conflict” displayed by most American Jewish institutions.

And yet herein, precisely, lies the challenge: how to encourage support for Israel among those who may tell pollsters they are already pro-Israel but are generally apathetic, and among those who are entirely without an opinion. How to reach them? What, in particular, have Israel-advocacy groups been doing in this regard? Is any of it effective?

For purposes of this brief essay, I’ve divided these pro-Israel groups into two types—builders and defenders—and I’ll cite two or three exemplars of each type.

Birthright, founded in 1999 to “strengthen Jewish identity” and create “solidarity with Israel,” primarily by sending Jews aged eighteen to twenty-six on three-week trips to the Jewish state, is a paradigmatic builder. Its purpose is to foster a sense of affection for Israel, both as an end in itself and, even more, as a means of forging a stronger commitment to Judaism and the Jewish community.



Beyond merely highlighting Israeli technical and entrepreneurial ingenuity, this approach offers something of palpable value to students.

Other builders could be named, but the general profile is essentially the same.

In contrast to that profile, the activity of defenders is mainly focused on producing explicitly pro-Israel materials, planning pro-Israel events, and fighting against anti-Israel propaganda and BDS resolutions. Thus, without naming names, the mission statement of one quintessential defender cites its resolve “to fight against the delegitimization campaign and inspire others to join us.” Another characterizes one of its principal aims as providing “assistance to students to . . . address propagandistic assaults on Israel.” The materials of a third are likewise designed to respond to calumnies perpetrated by detractors and anti-Israel groups. In short, the agenda of such organizations is defined to a significant

extent by their enemies, and they appeal mainly to the small number of students who are already invested in the fight.

This is hardly to deny the value of defenders. Disinformation and boycott campaigns must be countered. Even if few people will actually be persuaded to change their minds about Israel, defenders play an important role in providing encouragement and backbone for pro-Israel activists facing a sea of animosity. Moreover, there is added value in preaching to the choir: the defenders' activities reinforce a base of pro-Israel students whose example can stir more timid souls and, when a specific battle is won, provide enlivening confirmation of aggression countered and beaten back. Indeed, the success of the builders depends in a certain measure on the success of the defenders.

Still, given the lay of the land I described above, I conclude that builders can accomplish more. On the whole, their programming is shaped not by the libels of enemies but by the perspectives and interests of their target audience, and their primary mandate is to generate affinity and enthusiasm for the Jewish state. Undermining anti-Israel campaigns is a byproduct of this activity, if certainly a welcome one. Indeed, in reframing the conversation—not about why Israel isn't guilty but about why Israel is great — builders can even, to some degree, recapture the initiative from the likes of Students for Justice in Palestine and J Street. They do so by approaching the issues of terrorism, the Palestinians, and European anti-Semitism from a different and healthier perspective—a perspective no longer defined by the perverse image of the Jewish state as a brutal colonial occupier or an altogether illegitimate entity.

That, at least, is the ideal. But how, exactly, are builders to go about reaching it? How can college students and recent graduates who are indifferent to Israel be made to care about it—especially if they are unlikely even to participate in a program like Birthright? Reorienting Israel advocacy requires a change in thinking. To reach millennials, it is not enough to say that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, or a beacon of freedom in a sea of oppression. These descriptions, too, ultimately focus on what Israel is not—that is, a repressive dictatorship like its neighbors. To reach millennials, Israel advocacy has to focus on what Israel is, on its human face: the face of a small country whose people dream big, and who can inspire others—that is, millennials themselves—to dream big.

This, in turn, requires rhetoric that reflects the cultural and humanitarian values to which Israel gives expression. And that rhetoric needs to be couched in millennials' own language and conveyed largely through electronic communication, specifically social media. Successful outreach thus requires a familiarity with the latest interests, perspectives, fashions, and trends of popular culture, and (without being superficial or shallow) must reflect the everyday, non-political experiences and interactions of twenty-year-olds in both Israel and America.

By looking beyond the Israel-Palestinian conflict—to the way that Israel's youthful society is shaped by its food, music, arts, literature, traditions, film, and other cultural expressions—both Jews and non-Jews might begin to see in Israel's extraordinary successes lessons that can be applied elsewhere, whether to California's water problems or to the plight of the Kurds. This has added value: by highlighting what Israel has to give and does freely give the world, it enables outreach to other campus groups, especially minority groups, thus forming important connections that can help inoculate against BDS, a movement that has itself conspicuously furthered its agenda through partnerships with unrelated organizations.

But beyond this, for Jews and non-Jews alike, Israel's history contains within it compelling human messages: the sum and substance of peoplehood, the "dignity of difference"—to use Jonathan Sacks's felicitous phrase—that is reflected in Jewish national aspirations, the challenging exercise of self-rule and its accompanying excitements, the vibrant renaissance of collective and personal purpose.

Indeed, by creating an association between Israeli society and the limitless possibilities of human fulfillment, pro-Israel advocates can even help provide an answer to the inner cravings of this generation. My generation is one that, in however self-absorbed a fashion, is desperate for meaning and purpose—for, in a word, enchantment. And as I and many others can testify, few human collectives are

as packed with meaning and purpose, or are as outright enchanting, as is the Jewish collective in its national home in the land of Israel.

*Chloe Valdary founded a pro-Israel group while a student at the University of New Orleans. This article appeared in Mosaic on January 11.*

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## The Gray Lady Doth Protest Too Much

Gilead Ini

Fact-checking season is in full swing. Whether the conversation is about "fake news," "alternative facts," or any other euphemism for false information, there's a renewed media focus on examining the veracity of claims.

*The New York Times* is trying to capitalize on public concerns about accuracy with an online advertisement that states, "In a world of fake news, independent, fact-based journalism stands apart." Then, in large font, is the hard sell: "Truth. It comes at a cost."

The ad campaign comes in the face of a particularly costly truth: Among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans, confidence in the mass media has plummeted to all-time lows. Most Americans just don't trust that the media will report the news fully, accurately, and fairly.

*The New York Times* certainly hasn't been immune to those trends. So the advertisement's focus on "facts" and "truth" may be an attempt to reverse its own falling fortunes, first by branding the newspaper as a reliable and accurate source of information, and second by refocusing the public's distrust onto political discourse, and by positioning itself as a foil to perceived dishonesty in politics.

But readers, regardless of how much they trust or distrust government, should be skeptical of the newspaper's repeated assurances that it can be relied on for accurate and impartial reporting. In fact, as measured by its reporting on one particular hot-button issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict, *The New York Times* has if anything shown an increasing tendency to circulate fake news and alternative facts of its own.

### **Falsehood: The Palestinian Authority Supports "Two States for Two Peoples"**

The falsehoods in recent weeks have been fast and flagrant. In late December, *Times* journalist Max Fisher told readers that the Palestinian Authority supports "two states for two peoples" — the idea that the conflict should be resolved with a Jewish state and a Palestinian state living side by side in peace. It's an egregious falsehood. The formula is "unacceptable," says Palestinian official Nabil Shaath. "The story of 'two states for two peoples' means that there will be a Jewish people over there and a Palestinian people here. We will never accept this."

His boss, Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, has been equally clear. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again. I will never recognize the Jewishness of the state, or a 'Jewish state.'"

*New York Times* editors have refused to set readers straight with a correction — despite repeated requests from CAMERA that they do so.

### **Falsehood: Donald Trump "Vowed to Support Israel No Matter What"**

An article published in January opens with the claim that Donald Trump "has vowed to support Israel no matter what." When asked about the provenance of this claim, editors admitted the article was not referencing any specific statement by Trump. Instead, they insisted, the "vow" is a sort of composite of his collective statements. In other words, reporters told readers of a vow that did not really exist.

The newspaper has refused to correct the misinformation.

### **Falsehood: A Paris Communiqué Called for "A Return to the 1967 Boundaries"**

In that same news story, readers were told that, at the end of an international meeting in Paris about the two-state solution, "countries issued a joint communiqué that reaffirmed support for...a return to the 1967 boundaries between the Israelis and Palestinians, including the removal of Israeli settlements from the West Bank."

In fact, the communiqué says nothing at all about a return to specific boundaries, nor does it reference the removal of settlements.

Editors insisted no correction is warranted.

### **Falsehood: Settlement Land is Objectively "Palestinian Territory."**

*The New York Times* has also taken to insisting that Israeli settlements in general are built on "Palestinian territory." But even according to formal agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, the status of these lands is to be determined in negotiations between the parties. The newspaper has taken a partisan position, then, and dressed it up as an objective fact.

Editors have stood by this misrepresentation, and have even indicated that the newspaper, as a matter of policy, refuses to describe the disputed land as "disputed." Other disputed territory across the globe, meanwhile, is routinely described as disputed in the pages of *The New York Times*.

It's easy to make lofty promises about "fact-based journalism" and "truth." But an examination of what the newspaper publishes shows something else entirely. It shows fabricated provisions of a communiqué. It shows nonexistent vows attributed to the US president even while actual vows by the Palestinian leadership to "never accept" a Jewish state are ignored, and worse, turned on their head.

In each of the cases discussed above, the newspaper insisted that it made no errors. In a sense, this is true. The word "error" suggests a mistake. But with the newspaper defending its misreporting, one is left to conclude that the falsehoods were not made in error. They were intentional.

There's little doubt that, in a world of fake news, the public would be served by a scrupulous organization that confronts fiction with facts. Until *The New York Times* can get its own facts straight, its claim to be that organization should be seen as more false advertising.

*Camera* (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting) published this article on January 24.

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## **The Treason of the Intellectuals**

**Ruth King**

Recently a friend lamented that the academic elite in prewar Germany ignored the Nuremberg Laws, Kristallnacht and the impending genocide. They were indifferent—in some cases rejoiced—as Jewish colleagues were stripped of their faculty positions and Jewish students lost their rights to pursue degrees in the professions.

Another participant in the group mentioned that at the same time, here in America, major universities had quotas for Jewish faculty and students, a practice which continued for years after World War II.

All this elicits opprobrium from academic elites today.

But where is the outrage among academic elites over the thinly veiled anti-Semitism in virtually every college and university which is manifested in the Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) movement, Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, American Muslims for Palestine, U.S. Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, to name only a handful.

A few academic groups have spoken up. Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME) has confronted campus anti-Semitism strongly. The National Association of Scholars (NAS) has sharply

criticized the BDS movement “because it violates core principles of academic freedom...attempts to limit the free expression of ideas...attempts to use instruments of coercion to advance a point of view and...attempts to politicize the content of education and research.” Fordham University has now balked at fostering the BDS movement by refusing an application from Students for Justice in Palestine to form a chapter on campus.

But where is the outrage of professors rushing to their classes through quads peppered with anti-Semitic posters and students?

Where is their concern about the Middle Eastern Departments in their own schools which have been taken over by radical leftists, disciples of Edward Said and Rashid Kahlidi, who pervert history and apologize for Arab/Moslem terror? Most of these pseudo-scholars belong to the Middle East Studies



Association (MESA) which bills itself as “a non-political association that fosters the study of the Middle East [and] promotes high standards of scholarship and teaching.” It does

nothing of the sort. In fact the group actively promotes Israel bashing among its 3,000 members.

In 2015 MESA members approved a resolution affirming “the right of MESA members to engage in open and transparent discussion of the boycott of Israeli academic institutions in the context of the annual meeting and other forums.” In November of that year a discussion was held on whether MESA should take a collective position regarding BDS. Jens Hanssen, of the University of Toronto, a strong proponent of BDS, deflected the suggestion that MESA refrain from taking an overtly political position which could impact their mandate. He stated: “We have no choice. We are political by being nonpolitical. And we are political by being political. That is the quandary we are facing.” Huh?

Thus MESA, even without a collective resolution of organizational support for BDS, is responsible for trickle down anti-Semitism by their member professors who teach and promote the racist ideology that the Jewish people have no right to dwell in their ancient homeland, that by doing so they violate the rights of local Arabs, who, incidentally, have more rights under Israeli jurisdiction than in any Arab country.

So why are “scholars” silent about an epidemic of Jew hatred that is infecting academia? Where are the myriad “counselors” and department heads and the “progressive” professors who feel everyone’s pain but that of increasingly isolated Jewish students who defend Israel?

These academics hold themselves in high regard for their supposed celebration of “diversity,” but they are hypocrites, cowards and traitors to the cause of education and truth.



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