

## **The Promised Land Revisited: Two Failed Entities in Need of a New Paradigm**

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What is to be done? Why is it that neither countless plans, nor continuous wars, nor endless negotiations could divide this land between the sea and the river and bring justice and peace? Could it be because this land just cannot be divided? Defiant has been this small piece of land in its refusal to be dissected into pieces. It is as though to prove the wisdom of the native chief in North America, who when called upon by the white president to talk about dividing the land answered: "Land does not belong to Man in order for him to divide it".

There are numerous reasons why such division is not possible:

1. Identity and mytho-history of both Palestinians and Jews are based on the total land area. Neither side will forever accept being deprived of what they consider their homeland.
2. Demographic mix: 450'000 Jews live in "settlements" on land occupied in 1967. And 1'25 million Palestinians live within the armistice line drawn in 1949. Most of the refugees were expelled from land within that armistice line.
3. Considering the geography and population distribution, no borders can be drawn. As the simple rural Palestinian saying goes: "Once you have scrambled the egg, you cannot unscramble it". Jerusalem and the other holy places cannot be divided. To quote The Economist newspaper in its April 15, 2006 issue: "God-given muddle that God alone may be able to sort out".
4. The scant natural resources, especially water, in such a small piece of land, cannot be divided, and will stay a source of tension.
5. The economy, trade, and the labour force are intertwined
6. Politico-legal legitimacy: States based on ethnicity rather than citizenship are discriminatory and violate international law and human rights conventions.

In fact, with this present condition, the whole land area is de facto one entity. It is one geography, with shared resources, mixed demography and shared economy. What it now has is vast inequality of political power, economic wealth and distribution of resources; in addition to denial of the rights of refugees to return to their homes. Only the remediation of such disparities can bring peace. This is what we are working for.

Here is a statement by Meron Benvenisti, former deputy mayor of Jerusalem to that effect in the periodical Challenge number 99, September-October 2006.

*"What we have is a de facto bi-national reality, and it is irreversible. The demographic pressure, the limited natural resources which all must share, and the huge economic gap between Israelis and Palestinians make it impossible to resolve the conflict by means of two states. Many Palestinians are beginning to see that there is no chance for two states. The next step will be to say, "Annex us! We want civil rights!" Then will begin a classic struggle to create equality".*

In calling for this solution to this conflict, the struggle will be over values not a violent struggle over a small piece of land. We choose human beings and the society over states; inter-ethnic solidarity over national and religions fanaticism; being and becoming over having and accumulating. Such choices have always been available for Humanity to make.

Let us address those who say that we are unrealistic dreamers:

What other than history do we have to tell how events will unfold? Whenever colonialists could not exterminate the indigenous population, they ended up in one political entity. Palestine will not be the exception. In its manifest progress towards moral perfection, albeit nonlinear, Humanity has done away with slavery, and will eliminate colonialism and imperialism. We should be encouraged that the alternating periods of history between the prevalence of the oppressor and that of the vast populations, usually lasting about 30 years, has recently entered the period favoring the masses.

And you “realist”, where did your intelligent realism lead us? Have you not learned the lesson of history that there are no short-cuts in the struggle for moral progress and human rights? What resolution do you have for this conflict? The fact is: you have no alternative solution.

### **Let us address Palestinians:**

We have continuously been acting reflexively because of the state of urgency we have been living under for decades. We need to plan for what we want for the long term, and collectively as a nation, including those who are in historic Palestine and those in the Diaspora.

It is said that two women both claiming to be the real mother of a baby asked for the decision of a wise judge. When he proposed to cut the baby and give each woman a half, the real mother refused the decision.

In 1947, like the mother of the baby, we refused to cut up the land. But the judge had neither the interest of the baby, nor that of the women as his priority, he had his own interests in mind. What we now have is de facto one entity, albeit with vast disparities between Arabs and Jews. Why should we accept that the land be cut up? And does it hurt a baby to have more than one mother?

We have over- emphasized the role of the “state” in our collective existence and its importance to our welfare as a nation. Rather than the “state”, our emphasis should be on the homeland and the society. Such emphasis on the state will lead us to make compromises that are detrimental to our existence as a nation. The acceptance of a state within the 1967 borders, even the most favorable conditions of dismantling all the settlements, which will not happen, will deprive over two-thirds of our people of their homeland. Such an acceptance will leave us facing the logical question many in the world ask: If you want a state based on ethnicity for yourselves, why do you deny the same for the Jews?

Such a state will have scant resources and will be dependent on foreign sources for its survival. And with the imbalance of power with Israel, and with the neighboring countries being governed by forces that do not represent their people; such a state cannot possibly be independent. Its share of the scant resources, such as water, trade and the economy, and military power will not be favorable. Such an existence reminds one of the saying of Rafi

Eitan in 1983, who was then chief of staff of the Israeli army and now leader of a party in the Knesset: *“When we take the land, we will leave the Palestinians like cockroaches in a bottle.”*

The science of politics defines the role of the state as the division of what is of value among its population, be that value political or economic. As the value becomes more scant, infighting becomes more severe. This explains the corruption and the fighting over political and economic resources and the resulting weakening of the social fabric of our communities since the establishment of the Authority under the Oslo Accords. Have we not been socially and economically better off without this illusionary authority? Does this not prove the saying: *“A nation cannot be defeated but a state can”*.

Our occupation with the “State” caused us to lose much of our connectedness with the Arab peoples. Our leaders address governments rather than nations; and of those leaders, we find them negotiating with chiefs of intelligence services. This illusion of a government has kept us from realizing that the Zakat (2.5% tax on wealth) of just three wealthy Arabs is equivalent to the budget of the Palestinian Authority; while our young men build the Apartheid Wall and the settlements in order to survive. And we have significantly contributed to the production of wealth of those individuals.

As a nation, we have to reconnect with the Arab and Muslim Worlds and the popular forces of the whole world; for our liberation is indivisible of the liberation of the Arab World in particular and the world at large. We must always make it clear that the struggle is that of an indigenous population against colonialism and imperialism. The world should not see this as a conflict between nations or religions. We need to develop goals that the vast majority subscribes to: human rights and equality; against of all kinds of racism; and for political, economic and social democracy. Organizations based on ideologies (nationalism, Islamism, liberalism or Marxism) are divisive and detrimental.

We now question whether it is in our interest to call on the Authority to dissolve itself or restrict its function to basic services. The Palestine Liberation Organization should be significantly reformed or replaced by a new organization. Such organization should democratically represent all Palestinians, and will not be based on factions. Its membership should also be open for Jews in preparation for a democratic state for all who live on the land of historic Palestine and the refugees.

Let us listen to two statements, one by a Palestinian and the other by an Israeli, concerning the resolution of this conflict. The first is by the late intellectual Edward Said, who wrote in 2001 in the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram an article titled: The only Alternative.

*“What we never concentrated on enough was the fact that to counteract Zionist exclusivism, we would have to provide a solution to the conflict that, as in Mandela’s words, would assert our common humanity as Jews and Arabs. Two people in one land. Or, equality for all. Or, One person-One vote. Or, a common humanity asserted in one state”*.

The other statement is by the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who said in the 19February, 2004 issue of Haartz:

*“We don’t have unlimited time. More and more Palestinians are uninterested in a negotiated, two-state solution, because they want to change the essence of the conflict from an Algerian paradigm to a South African one. Form a struggle against “occupation” in their parlance, to*

*a struggle for one man-one vote. That is, of course, a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle and ultimately a much more powerful one.  
For us, it would mean the end of the Jewish State”*

## **Addressing Jews everywhere:**

Let us consider what you have right now and what you can have under one democratic state.

Israel as a political entity has been a failed experiment. It has failed to attract more than one third of the Jews of the world because the vast majority have a better quality of life where they live. And rather than being a support for the Jewish Diaspora, it cannot survive without it; and Israel has become a financial and moral burden on the Jews.

Israel has failed to be independent because it cannot survive without the financial, military and political support of the United States. It has become an appendage of the United States in its drive to world hegemony and its oppression and exploitation of the Middle East and its resources. Towards that end, Israel has waged wars and caused untold misery to the peoples of the area. Can you count on the continued support of the United States? There is already talk, even among the right wing in the United States, that Israel is a burden. The United States is an empire in decline; can you count on its continued ability to maintain the peripheries of its empire?

Israel, by its own admission and its own “basic laws” is a racist and undemocratic state because of its blatant discrimination against the Palestinians, the indigenous population. Israel has also failed to provide a quality of life for its inhabitants. A rigorous scientific study of the quality of life based on 39 criteria of 215 major cities of the world conducted by Mercer Human resources Consulting rated Tel Aviv, the only Israeli city included, to be at the same level of third world cities such as Bangkok and Sao Paulo. Over one-third of Israeli children are under the poverty line, the highest among industrialized countries. And according to the Central Bank of Israel, poverty increased over 50% in the past 5 years. Violence in schools is second only to the United States. It is said that you have the fourth or fifth strongest army in the world, and over 200 atomic bombs; however, a child has to pack his knife with his sandwich before he goes to school; can your nuclear bombs protect him from his peers? Israel is a failed entity. The Organization Transparency International has rated Israel as one of the most corrupt among industrialized countries, because of the practices of your political and economic elites.

Has Israel not caused you to change your role in the history of Humanity from a force for moral progress and human rights to that of an appendage of the most aggressive and oppressive of the world powers.

Let us remember that when, at the height of the cold war in the united states, when they searched to find someone to sacrifice in order to silence the progressive forces, they found two Jews, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who they executed accused of treason on unconvincing and flimsy evidence.

Let us also remember the two Jews, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, fighters against racial segregation in the southern United States who, together with their Black comrade, were assassinated by racist forces in 1964. Are you like the song written for Goodman: “*He Is My Brother*”, or has Israel made you the brothers and sisters of that other New Yorker, Baruch Goldstein? What a difference Israel made in your role in the history of Humanity!

To the Jews who were until recent history in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa: do you not remember how Israel embraced apartheid South Africa to the end, exchanging technology to build nuclear bombs, in addition to economic and political cooperation. By any objective criteria, the Apartheid policy that Israel is practicing against Palestinians is much worse than South Africa ever practiced against the Black indigenous population. We call upon you to go beyond ethnicity and reach deeper for your humanity.

We ask Jews everywhere: What is the primary character of Israel. Is it really Judaism? Who controls Israeli society from the top down to the administrator of an elementary school? Not the graduates of Yeshiva Schools, but the graduates of the military establishment. Israel's primary character is a colonial-mercenary military state. Among its many other failures, has Israel failed to be a Jewish state?

Are you as Judaism wants you to be: "A light upon nations", or have you become a fire upon nations. You may have won a small piece of land, but have you lost your soul, your humanity?

Let us see what you can have as an alternative in one-democratic-state with equality for all.

You can live in peace rather than existing to fight .Even if you become a minority, you could be guaranteed to be a protected minority with control over issues that concern you such as religion and culture. The country could be a spiritual-cultural home for all Jews of the world. If, as you say, you want to come back home, then you need to come with your body and soul. For it is with the body not soul you came. Not with the soul but with the sword you came. The sword of colonialism and imperialism. Europeans discriminated against you because they considered you Easterners and inferior. Now you "come back" and say to those in the East: "We are European and superior", this irony has to end.

Let us both isolate our opportunists who have no love for or allegiance to anyone but themselves. Your neoconservatives-neocolonialists and our opportunists who are so eager to be the administrators of a prison they can call a state.

Such a country, in true peace with the populations around it will have a large economic market open to it. Such a country can be an economic and cultural bridge between the Middle East and Europe and North America. You then will be free to again be a light upon nations.

To those who say that Arabs and Jews cannot coexist together as if there is something primordial keeping them from living together in peace, we say this is false and cynical. Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted and prospered since these religions existed until colonialism came to the area. Many historians consider the golden age of Judaism to be in Spain where Muslims ruled for about 800 years. And when the Muslim rule was replaced by Catholics, the Jews went to other Muslim countries such as Morocco and Turkey. Even during the British Mandate period before 1948, and in spite of the Zionist attempts to separate Jews from Palestinians, thousands of workers worked side by side in the refineries, rail roads and government institutions with no significant violence. Violence only erupted after the separation resolution of the General Assembly of 29 November, 1947. It was separation that led to violence, not the other way around.

We both share the experience of being scattered, oppressed and discriminated against. Let us show the world the metal we are made of. We can be like two statuettes made of gold that

when struck emit beautiful music. We can show the world what the human spirit can overcome. Let us join in a chorus of beautiful music. It is a choice we can make as an alternative to this sorry state for all.

Let us accelerate the coming of the day when a Jewish grandfather and a Palestinian grandfather can sit with their grandchildren on the top of Mount Carmel. The four of them contemplating the vastness and beauty of the sea; each grandfather talking to his grandson about the history and heroics of his people, while the fathers toil together in equality and solidarity.

## **Addressing Europe:**

This conflict is of your making. It is your moral obligation to resolve it, and this is also directly in your interest economically and strategically.

Zionism and Israel are ideological products of Europe. For, neither Moses nor Maimonides (Ibn Maimon) one reads in the writings of Theodore Herzl. Hegel is who one reads, with his talk of the “soul of the nation” and “the nation-state as a manifestation of God’s will”.

Zionism is also a manifestation of the European colonialist thought that prevailed during the nineteenth century in Europe. For almost every other nationality went out of Europe to colonize a piece of the world; with their attitude that any land that is inhabited by non-Europeans is figuratively empty and should be available to Europeans. And why not Jews! It is this combination of the one nation-one state ideology and the colonialist movement with its racist and supremacist attitudes towards non-Europeans that inspired European Jews to embark on a colonialist adventure. For if Zionists were “coming back home”, why did they wait 19 centuries, and why to the very height of European nationalism and colonialism. And while you have passed this stage of your development, why do you persist in supporting Israel, a European state fossilized in the nineteenth century. You do not find it acceptable to have your states based on ethnicity rather than citizenship, and you have made considerable progress towards establishing a superstate with many nationalities. At the same time, you continue to support a state that is by its own admission for Jews only, with institutionalized discrimination against other religions and nationalities. Do you not remember your nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries when nationalism prevailed, and how that was the cause of almost continuous wars? Why then do you continue to support fanatic nationalism and its continuous wars? Without your full support; especially that of Britain, France and Germany; Israel could not have been established and maintained. There was Great Britain with its conspiratorial accord of Mark Sykes and the French Georges Picot in 1916 to divide the Arab World among themselves. This was followed by the Balfour declaration in 1917 and the Paris Conference of 1919, with the plans to create Israel, in order to, in the words of Winston Churchill, “protect the Suez Canal, our great imperial life-line.”

Rather than fulfilling its mandate by the League of Nations to help the people of the Arab World develop their state, Britain appointed from 1920 to 1925 Herbert Samuel, a known Zionist, as a high commissioner in Palestine, who established the nucleus of the Jewish state with administrative, financial, educational and military institutions for the Zionists only, and separate from those of the indigenous population. The British government used its full military powers to suppress any protests against these measures and continued to facilitate the immigration of Zionists and strengthen their institutions.

The Germans and Austrians supported the new Israeli state with vast amount of money, which was crucial to its survival.

The French, in addition to their conspiracies with the British, built the nuclear weapons for Israel that continue to menace the whole area and threaten world peace.

The current conflict, if unresolved will continue to perpetuate tension between you and the Arab and Muslim Worlds. It is in your interest to have the area in a state of durable peace and develop economically. This is in your economic interest, for the area is your natural trading partner due to its proximity.



Towards that end we call upon you to disconnect your policy towards the Middle East from that of the United States. For in addition to your economic and strategic interests, there are considerable cultural differences between Europe and the United States that left those studying comparative anthropology wondering: which way is West? One would hope that these cultural differences will be reflected in your foreign policy.

## **Addressing the International Community**

The establishment of Israel with the direct sponsoring and continued support of Western Europe and the United States has caused a continuous state of war and tension in the whole Middle East and threatens world peace. We call upon you to take active interest in resolving this conflict.

Israel has defied the international community by refusing to implement the resolutions of the United Nations, the judgments of the International Court of Justice, and international conventions on human rights. It has refused to implement resolution 194 of the General Assembly of the United Nations calling for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. It was spared being censured by the Security Council by a veto of the United States of America 41 times.

Israel has defied the international Court of Justice calling for the dismantling of the apartheid wall which is built on territories occupied in 1967. It has occupied by force since 1967 those parts of historic Palestine known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip refusing to withdraw as repeatedly called upon by the United Nations resolution 242. It has caused tremendous hardship for the 3.5 million Palestinians who live there with the intention of driving the population off the land as they have previously done in 1948.

The General Assembly in its resolution number 3379 of 1975 called Zionism a Form of racism. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Noble Peace Prize Laureate, from South Africa, visited Palestine/Israel and wrote in the British newspaper The Guardian 29 April, 2002 issue:

“I have been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us Black People in South Africa». Let us call upon Archbishop Tutu to start a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for this conflict as he did in South Africa and Northern Ireland.

In fact, what Israel is doing to the Palestinians is much worse than was ever done in South Africa.

What we now have in Palestine/Israel is a de facto one entity but with vast disparities between Jews and Palestinians. We aim for a durable peace for the Middle East and consequently for the whole world through establishing one state for Jews and Palestinians with equality and political, economic and social democracy.

Such goal cannot be achieved without your intervention. If Israel continues to defy international law, human rights conventions, and United Nations resolutions; we call upon you to boycott and sanction Israel.

## **What Means the Promised Land?**

It is said that this is a holy land. But is this a way to treat a holy land? Its trees are being uprooted by the thousands. Its houses are being destroyed. Its archeological sites and physical heritage is being markedly altered, and is being scarred with walls and hundreds of check points. Its water and meager resources are being over exploited and polluted. And together with nuclear radiation is resulting with one of the highest cancer rates in the world. With over 10'000 people in prison including over 400 children, it has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Not a day goes by without civilians being killed by some of the most lethal weapons ever invented.

It is said that this is the "Promised Land". But, what does the "Promised Land" mean? This is what Martin Luther King said 3 days before he was assassinated by racist forces in the United States. On an early April day in 1968, he stood among the cherry blossoms of Washington, and with his unmistakable voice said: "I have been to the top of the mountain and I have seen the Promised Land, when a Man will be judged by his character, not the color of his skin."

On the football and cricket fields of England, sons of English workers sing: "we shall build a new Jerusalem on the green and pleasant land of England". And we: Palestinians, Jews, and with us all those struggling for the moral progress of Humanity shall build a new Jerusalem on the green and pleasant land of Jerusalem. Those who have any doubt, look and see how far we have come: we slaves, we women, we the indigenous populations everywhere, we the wretched of this Earth. Look how far we have come!