

THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM
Part II

QUESTION ONE: Are the Jews in the Middle East as invaders or as imperialists?

The answer, of course, is that the Jews who created a great nation in Palestine 3200 years ago, are the only people since that time to have an independent state in Palestine. Ever since the conquest of Judea by Rome, there has been no independent state in that area until the Jews again established their nation after the United Nations authorized the partitioning of Palestine in 1948.

The Jews who came to Palestine as refugees from Hitler found there a large number of Jews and a somewhat greater number of Arabs, but there was no Arab nation in Palestine. Palestine, after World War One was a British mandate territory, and one of the missions of that mandate, as spelled out by the League of Nations, was to establish a homeland for the Jews there, a commitment further extended by the British Balfour Declaration.

The Jews who came to Palestine escaping from Hitler were hardly in that kind of physical condition to dispossess anyone. The land on which they settled was purchased for them through certain international charitable funds like the Jewish National Fund. The Jewish National Fund treasury was fed by dimes and nickles from the pushkis, or charity cans, of your grand-mother and mine.

It is a mistake to assume that in the interim after the Romans left and before the turn of this century that Palestine ever was a thickly settled land. Until recently, most of its barren and swampy land was wanted by no one, including the Arabs. Many Jews settled on just this kind of neglected land and turned it into a garden. We have to understand that in the settling of this unwanted land, no one was dispossessed or harmed. Indeed, as the Jews raised the productivity level of the land, as they introduced more advanced farming methods, the land was able to support more and more Arabs, so as the Jewish population increased, so did the Arab population.

QUESTION TWO: Why Are There So Many Refugees and Why Are The Israelis Blamed For Them?

Refugees are the inevitable result of any war. The recent Jordanian Civil War produced many refugees. The Viet-Nam War has produced hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of refugees. Arab leaders have instigated two major wars against Israel, in 1948, and, again, in 1967. In each case, there were refugees. Let us understand, there were Jewish refugees resulting from these wars

as well as Arab refugees. The 200,000 and more Jewish refugees from Arab lands resulting from the war of 1948 were welcome and absorbed by the State of Israel. There is no accurate count of the number of Arab refugees in 1948, but it is generally believed that the number is somewhat higher than the number of Jewish refugees produced by the same war. The difference between the two groups of refugees is that the Arabs refused to absorb their own people where the Jews were eager to absorb their kinsmen. For example, there is the little known story of how Nasser put barbed wire around the Arab refugees in Gaza, for fear that they would infiltrate into Egypt.

The Arab propagandists have tried to say that the Israelis thrust out the Palestinian Arabs at bayonet point. In considering whether the Arabs were chased out or simply fled of their own accord, William Montalbano, writing in the "Herald" on Oct. 4th, says, "The balance of evidence indicates that most fled". Mr. Montalbano does not spell out the fact that Arab leaders over the radio and through their newspapers pleaded with their people to leave the cities and villages so that Arab gunners and planes would be free to bomb and strafe, even as the Jordanian army recently did in Amman.

Those Arabs who disobeyed the requests of their own leaders in 1948, some 200,000 of them, stayed in Israel, are now Israeli citizens, attend Israeli schools, vote, and enjoy the highest standard of living in the Arab world. Clearly, if the Arab refugees had chosen not to flee, they would have cause to respect and not to hate the Israelis.

QUESTION THREE: Why Doesn't Israel Readmit the Refugees and Terminate the Hatred?

This question is not asked by those who have been to Israel or by those who understand the Middle East situation. It is asked by those who are naive, or by those who wish to embarrass the Israelis, or by those who wish to build up the myth of Jewish cruelty, as does Mr. Buckley in his Oct. 4th column. Says Mr. Buckley, in effect, "All the refugees want is to come home".

In this regard, we must understand that most of the refugees are not the same people who left Israel in 1948. Most of those who left originally were innocent victims of the military schemes of Arab leaders. The majority of those in Arab refugee camps today are the children or grand-children of the original refugees. They never saw or lived in Israel. They fancy that the metropolitan cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa are the cities their people built and developed.

Nothing could be further from the truth. These cities, as they stand today, are products of Jewish energy and imagination. Yet what the refugee leaders seek is to throw the Israelis out. They want to take over the cities they imagine were taken from them, and they want to take over the land which they dream that they fertilized and drained.

We have witnessed in the Jordanian Civil War the cruelty that Arabs can impose on Arabs. One reporter after another has said, "I have never seen any madness like this". We ourselves saw on TV Jordanian troops destroying thousands of their own innocent citizens in order to get a few snipers. We saw guerillas shooting anyone (and anything) that moved, whether they were newspaper reporters, Red-Cross ambulances or air-planes loaded with refugees.

Can you imagine what these people would do to Jews if they were permitted to come to Israel in large numbers? They would do what Nasser and Hussein and all the other goody-goodies have declared they wanted to do to the Israelis all along. They would tear them limb from limb, even as Hussein's soldiers mutilated some of the guerillas.

We all stared in disbelief at the uncontrollable mobs attending Nasser's funeral in Cairo. Hundreds were crushed in what was merely a peaceful demonstration. In Beirut, 200 people were wounded from gunshots which were merely a symbolic part of Nasser's funeral observance. Are we to assume that these people merely want to come to Israel and settle peacefully in an orderly fashion? Are they willing to be part of an Israeli nation? Are they able to follow its laws which reflect the discipline of Western rather than Arabic culture? The questions themselves seem to demonstrate the impossibility of what some well-intentioned and compassionate people suggest.

The Israeli position of the refugees is simple. They did not create the refugee problem. Arab military leaders did. To take into Israel the original refugees plus their hundreds of thousands of children and their-children, all of whom have been taught to hate Israelis, would be like committing suicide. On a TV interview a few weeks ago, Abba Eban repeated the positive Israeli plan for the refugees. Let there be an international conference to plan a settlement. Israel will eagerly participate in that conference and will share as strongly as possible in the solution.

FINAL QUESTION: What Can We Jews in America Do?

First of all we have to understand clearly that much of the current anti-zionism is just another pretext for anti-semitism. It is aimed at you and me as much as it is aimed at the Israelis. Secondly, we must know enough about the Mid-East situation to tell the true story to all who will listen.

Beyond that, we have to help the Israelis stand firm. At the present time, the United States has opened its arms arsenal to the Israelis. We do not know how long that arsenal will be open. It has not always been open. It is usually closed. Israel now has an unusual opportunity controlled by two uncertainties, time and money.

I hope that no Jew would wish the poverty-stricken and largely illiterate Arab peoples any harm. We wish for them improved living conditions, more education, better health standards, less hatred, and peace. We certainly do not wish them physical harm.

But we do not wish less for our own people, and we shall take such steps as is in our power to help Israel.

The traditional liturgy on the High Holidays teaches that on the New Year it is decided who shall live and who shall die. The implication of the teaching is that the worshippers, by their determination and action, help to make this decision. Let us make certain in our own mind and hearts that in the year ahead we shall not say kaddish #1 for our brethern in Israel.

1. Prayer for the dead.

Rosh Ha-Shanah, 5731 - 1970
Rabbi Dr. Herbert Baumgard
Beth Am
Miami, Florida