

from a Jewish point of view.....

INTRODUCTION

Attitudes towards Jews and the Jewish state are often an expression of deeper issues lurking beneath the surface. Think of to the relationship between earthquakes and tectonic plates.

This is an attempt to reveal the 'tectonic plates'.

WHAT'S AT THE BOTTOM OF IT ALL?

It was a Catholic priest, Father Edward Flannery (1912-1998), who put his finger on the crucial point: "It was Judaism, he said, "that brought the concept of a God-given universal moral law into the world. The Jew carries the burden of God in history [and] for this has never been forgiven". (1)

WAS FATHER FLANNERY RIGHT?

Absolutely.

But he could have added something extra: alongside the 'God-given universal moral law' is an equally God-given 'particular' law.

The God-given particular law is the bedrock of Judaism and defines Jews as Jews – observant or not! For example, almost all non-observant male Jews are circumcised. And this will have occurred, in accordance with Jewish law, as near as possible to the biblically prescribed eighth day after birth. At some stage therefore, even non-observant Jews come into contact with the 'particular' law.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: 'THE JEW CARRIES THE BURDEN OF GOD IN HISTORY AND FOR THIS HAS NEVER BEEN FORGIVEN'?

What it means is this: Given the way God is 'packaged' in the Hebrew Bible, Jews sometimes have a hard time with those who are not Jews explaining their relationship to The Almighty. As 'chosen people', Jews often find themselves with a lot of explaining to do.

Consider:

1. A *universal* God of **all** mankind who reveals Himself to the whole world only through one people, the Jews.
Why do it this way?
Surely, a *universal* God would reveal himself to everybody, *universally*.
2. The universal God piles on the difficulty. He seems to want to be worshipped in a very particular way by just this one people, the Jews. Only *they* are told how to worship Him. On this basis alone, Jews are inevitably cast in role of Teacher's pet – whether they like it or not. This has bred massive resentment from day one.

3. So, OK. "If you can't beat them, join them".

Not so easy.

The Bible casts Jews as a people, a people with a religion and a people with a land with defined borders in which to practise their religion.

Joining this people is like joining no other: conversion first, passport second. Far easier to conceive alternative religions - Christianity and Islam, for example.

For Jews, it looks like a bad deal. It's a wonder they put up with it. There are certainly enough joke e-mails doing the rounds claiming time is up on the contract between Jews and The Almighty. Someone else's turn!

Seems like 'no takers'. And no wonder!

Jews have had to face the full impact of the predictable resentment with which other peoples – both in history and today – view their unique role in the Bible as intermediaries between God and the world.

As the percipient Father Flannery concluded, hatred of the Jew became "the greatest hatred in human history" (1).

This venerable priest, by the way, devoted his life to advancing Catholic-Jewish relations and is the author of: *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*.

IS THERE A DISCERNABLE PATTERN TO ACCUSATIONS AGAINST JEWS AND THE JEWISH STATE?

Yes there is. While the *content* of alleged Jewish iniquities is as large as life itself, the *form* of accusations is almost always the same.

First, *form*: accusations against Jews, and nowadays, the Jewish state, betray latent anger, fury even – a desire to see the 'biter' bit. This is an agenda of people tired of feeling they have been put into a moral dog-house; people trying to turn the tables.

From the Jewish point of view, the world is mysteriously overturned. Far from being victim, the Jew is cast as principal villain, public enemy no. 1. In this scenario, far from upholding moral values (as Jews like to believe they do), Jews and nowadays the Jewish state, are accused of gross and grotesque immorality.

Content-wise: examples, historically, of alleged gross immorality range from deicide to blood libel, well poisoning, conspiracy to take over the world, etc. You name it, Jews are alleged to have done it.

After World War II, the trauma of the Holocaust made open attack upon Jews, as Jews, less fashionable, especially in Europe – although this is now changing. However an alternative has emerged - the Jewish inhabitants and Government of the Jewish state, re-established in 1948.

ARE THERE MORE 'TECTONIC PLATES'?

Lots.

One ought to know about 'replacement theology'.

Replacement theology explains an almost permanent underlying historical hostility towards the Jewish people by some, but by no means all, elements in Christianity and Islam.

Quite simply, replacement theology expresses the idea that the new thinking of Christianity and Islam should *replace* the 'old' thinking of Judaism. Some people in the new religions believe that with the new revelations of Christianity and Islam, Jews are perverse to carry on as Jews.

Divine punishment, for all, not least Jews themselves, to witness, has been exile among the nations of the world. This has lasted over 1800 years: from CE 135 to CE 1948. In all this time, Jewish life has been characterised by assimilation and insecurity with Jews frequently pushed around from pillar to post.

The re-establishment of the Jewish state in CE 1948 can therefore be conceived as being against the run of Jewish history. Jews infer that, in some quarters, the existence of the Jewish state is regarded as a temporary aberration, an interruption to replacement theology.

Replacement theology is thus an important 'tectonic plate'. It underpins a great deal of on-the-surface anti-Jewish feeling.

Both religions, Christianity and Islam, have an axe to grind against each other. Remember the Crusades. But with Jews and their Jewish state 'on the up' so-to-speak, rivalry between Christianity and Islam has been (temporarily) suspended. Castigating and condemning the Jewish state for anything and everything they can has united many in the two daughter religions.

In the last decades, few Christian communities in the Middle East have fared well – except, paradoxically, those in the Jewish state. Catholic, Protestant and orthodox response to the decline of their communities in the Middle East seems to have been decidedly muted.

The Jewish state has, however, found firm friends in the Christian evangelical community. Evangelicals believe all Jews must return to their land before Jesus will return again. So, this support is not entirely altruistic. Nevertheless, evangelical support has been absolutely uncompromising. Consequently, it has been hailed and gratefully accepted.

IT ALL SEEMS TO BE ABOUT THE JEWS: WHAT ABOUT JUDAISM?

Both Christianity and Islam have enormous respect for the God-given universal moral law of the Jews as outlined in the Hebrew Bible.

For example: The verses of the famous acclamation of monotheism, the *shema* (Deut. 6, 4-5), "Hear Oh Israel, The Lord is our God, The Lord is One" and the verses after it, are reproduced word for word in the Gospel of St. Mark (see 12, 28-31).

The clarion call (Lev 19, 18) to "love your neighbour as yourself" is reproduced no less than *seven* times in the books of the Christian canon. (3).

There are surely other examples of the Hebrew Bible's influence.

None of this presents any problem to the Christian. The whole of the Hebrew Bible has been appropriated into the Christian canon. The Bible is as much the Christian's as the Jew's. The Gospels are seen as an addition to the Hebrew Bible; not a substitute.

AND ISLAM?

The Koran similarly owes much to Judaism. Charles C. Torrey's 'The Jewish Foundation of Islam' (1933) makes this clear.

Professor Khaleel Mohamed, assistant professor of religious studies at San Diego University, as at 2004, tells us (7) that the person most mentioned in the Quran is not Mohammed, but Moses, the great prophet of the Hebrew Bible and leader of the Israelites.

The professor goes on to say that the Quran presents Moses as "God's revolutionary" who "leads a people despised and tormented for no other reason than that they worshipped God, out of the land of bondage to the Promised Holy Land"

Indeed one verse, verse 21, in Sura 5 (The Table Spread) offers enormous potential comfort to any Jewish nationalist. Should its interpretation by Muslim scholars be uniformly agreed, the long-standing dispute about the Jewish state would be defused in one fell swoop. The verse refers to the story of the spies sent out to spy out the Promised Land. In the Hebrew Bible, the whole of chapter 13 of the Book of Numbers first tells the story.

The Quran says, as the professor notes:

21. O my people! Enter the Holy Land which Allah hath written for you, and do not turn tail, for surely ye turn back as losers.

Professor Mohammed specifically points out that the "Holy Land" is referred to as a place God has "written" for the Israelites, a term that conveys, in Jewish and Islamic understandings, a meaning of "finality, decisiveness and immutability".

"So, the simple fact is then", the professor is quoted as saying (7) "from a faith-based point of view: if God has 'written' Israel for the people of Moses, who can change this?"

He further claims: "medieval scholars, without any exception known to me, interpreted the Quran to recognize Israel as belonging to the Jews".

And finally, he laments that most Muslims do not read the Quran for themselves. They rely, he is quoted as saying, on imams and preachers to do the reading and interpreting for them.

These imams and preachers may have their own agendas or they may be under the orders of others with 'other fish to fry'.

Students should therefore question Muslim hostility to Jews and the Jewish state. This hostility may not genuinely be religion-based. It may actually be political – but masked, for the purposes of the masses, as religious.

'GALTIERI' SYNDROME

One powerful political tactic used by dictators to perpetuate themselves in power is to posit the existence of a foreign threat whose seriousness is so overriding that absolutely everything, particularly any challenge to their own position in power, must be suspended until the threat is seen off – if it ever is.

Such a tactic may be labelled 'Galtieri syndrome' after the Argentinean dictator who invaded the Falkland or Malvinas, as the Argentineans called them, islands in April 1982. His call to arms was largely regarded as an attempt to deflect attention from an ailing economy.

Galtieri syndrome is an effective diversionary political tactic. Daily demonstrations against Galtieri's junta were instantly transformed into the support of huge crowds. But instead of allowing the alleged injustice to fester, Galtieri actually went to war. This is only a good move if one wins. Galtieri lost. By June 1982, he was history.

Writing for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on the question: 'Can the (Syrian) Al-Asad Regime Make Peace with Israel?' J. Scott-Carpenter, a Fellow of the Institute, writes (8) "..... without Israel as an enemy, Syria's minority regime loses its sole rationale for retaining power".

Syria has maintained a 'Law of Emergency' since 1963 and has justified its continuing 'state of war' with Israel as its excuse to operate martial law. The fact that Syria has maintained a largely peaceful border with the Jewish state for over 35 years is irrelevant. The Jewish state's alleged and unassuaged 'threat' is sufficient to perpetuate the state of emergency.

Making peace with the Jewish state is therefore a very serious consideration. Staying in power may hinge on *not* making peace. President Arafat maintained his leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation for over 45 years never actually concluding final peace. One wonders what might have happened to him if he had.

Negotiations by Arafat in July 2000 at Camp David with Israel's Ehud Barak were thought to have been successful. They largely were. Territorial demands were 95% conceded – more even. Other accords, too, were agreed. Nevertheless, maybe peace *per se* with Israel was not the overriding rationale; maybe the overriding rationale was 'no-peace' with Israel at any cost. For this reason maybe, no counter-offer was proposed. Arafat launched his second *intifada*.

Arafat died in office. So also did Syria's President Hafez Al Assad (1930 – 2000). He was in power three full decades of 'no-peace'.

By far the longest serving of current Muslim leaders is Colonel Gaddafi of Libya who on September 1st 2009 will reach a full forty years in control.

Hostility to the Jewish state and support for the Palestinians are two sides of the same coin. One may be emphasised more than the other. Either serves equally as a diversionary focus away from domestic performance. Vital to the understanding of the Middle East is knowledge of politics and the very human stratagems at work. Many of these are as much political as religious.

NUCLEAR IRAN – ANOTHER TECTONIC SHIFT

Political observers have noted a 'softening' towards Israel by many Arab, particularly Sunni Arab, states.

In this 'softening', it is almost as if Israel is being recruited as a military ally.

Behind this lies a fear of hegemony by Shi'ite Iran. The possibility of the threat of Iranian hegemony increases as Iran becomes capable of nuclear power status. This is not a prospect which its neighbours welcome.

As at writing, April 2009, the Jewish state sees the Iranian President Ahmedinejad's threat to wipe Israel off the map as a statement worth taking very seriously. Its possible response is to pre-empt Iran's nuclear capability by attempting to take it out.

There has been no chorus of disapproval from the usual sources.

Another tectonic plate. This time, one that is shifting.

HAS JUDA-'ISM' ITSELF EVER COME UNDER FIRE?

Yes. The Nazis hated Juda-ism. Nazi Jew-hatred stemmed from contempt for the religion itself.

Nazi hatred of Judaism was a species of hatred all of its own.

Why?

Nazi philosophy abhorred moral integrity. It regarded it as slushy sentimentality. Nazis revered a philosophy based on Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 -1900). Nietzsche's idea was that everything should be subordinated to support the idea of the 'great man in History'. Great men should not be brought down by petty things, such as modern ideas of human rights and War Crimes Tribunals. Nietzsche, by the way, was not himself in any way anti-Jewish.

However Hitler, who was strongly anti-Jewish, cottoned on to the philosophy and cynically used it for his own ends.

Hitler is alleged (see note 5) to have said:

"It is true we are barbarians. That is an honoured title to us. I free humanity from the shackles of the soul, *from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and ethics* (our italics).

"The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind – circumcision on its body and conscience on its soul. They are Jewish inventions. The war for the domination of the world is waged only between the two of us, between these two camps alone – the Germans and the Jews. Everything else is but deception". (5).

This is an attack on Judaism. Hitler's view was: once a Jew, always a Jew. However integrated you feel you are, and whatever language you speak, you are always a Jew: "a man can change his language without any trouble – that is, he can use another language; but in his new language he will express the old ideas; his inner nature is not changed. This is best shown by the Jew who can speak a thousand languages and nevertheless remains a Jew. (6)

Hitler's anti-Jewishness reached its dreadful conclusion in death camps and holocaust. Millions of men, women and children were done to death for no other reason than that they were Jews. Millions of men, women and children were done to death for no other reason than that they were Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, disabled, physically and mentally. All these lives were sacrificed on the Nazi altar of physical and/or racial purity.

Hitler's perversion of Nietzsche's philosophy is another of the tectonic plates still working beneath the surface. Nazism is by no means a thing of the past.

WHAT IS 'ZIONISM' ?

Zionism is Jewish Nationalism. Whenever you see the words Zionism or Zionist, they can always be accurately replaced by the words Jewish Nationalism or Jewish nationalist.

Zion is a physical location, first mentioned in 11 Samuel 5, 7: "Now David took the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David".

The prophets conflated Jerusalem and Zion especially when wishing to stress spiritual ideas:

*"And many peoples shall go and say 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths' for out of **Zion** shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from **Jerusalem**.*

(Isaiah 2, 3).

With this pedigree, the term Zionism brilliantly conveyed the C19th dream of a political and spiritual national re-birth of the Jewish people in its original homeland.

Among Jews there was every form of Zionism: spiritual Zionists, political Zionists and anti-Zionists. Much of the time, they were at each others throats. They still are. Although, with the re-establishment in 1948 of the Jewish state, Herzl's political Zionism won out.

The re-establishment of the Jewish state terminated an exile lasting one thousand eight hundred and thirteen (1813) years. Exile commenced with the defeat of Bar Cochba in 135 CE. Some take the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE as the start, in which case add another 65 years to give 1878 years of exile. In contrast, the first exile lasted a mere seventy years 586- 516 BCE

Spiritual Zionists believe in a Jewish homeland established by a Messiah. The 200,000 strong Satmar Hasidic community are spiritual Zionists as is the less numerous Neturei Karta (Guardians of the City of Jerusalem) movement.

A lot of the running today is made by anti-Zionists. They fall into every which category: Jews themselves, together with non-Jews, who believe Jews are not a people; Jews, together with non-Jews, who believe Jews are a people but that they are not entitled to re-group in land occupied by others; plus many others of the left and the right with their own 'anti-Zionist' agendas.

Whatever views people have, it is possible to state that in the sixty years to date (March 2008) since the re-establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, despite numbers of Jews killed in battle, fewer Jews, the world over, have died from persecution and pogrom in this tranche of sixty years (1948 – 2008) than in any other sixty-year period since the second exile began in 135 CE. In the Jewish state itself, greatest loss of life has been due to road accidents.

The Jewish state took in a million Jews at the end of world war 11, unwanted in a devastated Europe; and a further million expelled by Arab states understandably angry at the Jewish state's survival following the war of 1948.

These days, Zionism and Zionist are often bandied around as terms of abuse – terms intended axiomatically to convey unspeakable evil; words used in sentences and slogans, where, if the words were transposed by the word Jewish nationalism (Zionism) or Jewish nationalist (Zionist), the sentence or slogan would sound self-evidently ridiculous or meaningless.

Many cannot bear themselves to utter the words the Jewish state or its name Israel. They refer instead to 'the Zionist entity'.

Of all the tectonic plates, Jewish Nationalism (Zionism) is one of the most seismic.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE JEWISH STATE

No where is the term Zionism more vilified than at the United Nations. No where is the Jewish state more demonised than at the United Nations.

Over 50% of all the Resolutions of the Security Council have been country-specific in their condemnation of the Jewish state; nearly 66% of all the Resolutions of the General Assembly have also been country-specific in their condemnation of the Jewish state.

As of January 2008, the Jewish state has been condemned 15 times in less than two years by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The UNHRC names and tries to shame no other state other than the Jewish state in this way.

The UNHRC has appointed a special 'Rapporteur' on the situation of human rights for Palestinians. The UNHRC Rapporteur is Richard Falk, an American Jew. Falk is on record (June 2007) of accusing the Jewish state of "slouching towards a Palestinian holocaust" and of comparing Gaza to the Warsaw ghetto. Although a Jew, and a distinguished professor of international law, Falk's accusations and tone have come over as irrational and offensive.

The Jewish state has become progressively less popular at the United Nations as more Muslim populations have gained independence. There are now nearly fifty Muslim states. They dominate the Human Rights Council and make international political life very difficult for the lone Jewish state.

Nine Muslim countries have, or have had, diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Muslim countries will not always be automatically antagonistic. Peace is perfectly possible.

Many people at the United Nations may not care very much for the Hebrew prophet Isaiah's idea of the Torah (the five books of Moses) going out from the dreaded **Zion** (Isaiah 2, 3 quoted above), or the Word of the Lord from **Jerusalem**, but, somewhat unbelievably, the words of Isaiah's *very next verse* have been carved into the wall of the United Nations HQ building at Flushing Meadow, New York and the words are still there:

*And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword unto nation
Neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah: 2.4)*

These words were written by Isaiah over 2,700 years ago (BCE 700) in Jerusalem, the capital city of the Jewish state - then and now. Once again, we see Judaism and its writings venerated, this time by the founders of the United Nations. Jews themselves, especially those Jews ensconced and re-established in their ancient homeland, enjoy a very different fate.

And yet the Jewish state has a lot to be grateful about with the United Nations. It is the only state to have been voted into existence (1947) by them!

WHY ALWAYS 'THE JEWISH STATE' AND NO MENTION OF 'ISRAEL'?

You will have noticed in this piece constant reference to 'the Jewish state' and little mention of Israel.

The reason is this. People have an *idea* about Jews. They live with Jews in their various countries. Many will *know* what Jews are like. They *know* how Jews behave. They know how Jews, generally speaking – *of course* there are exceptions) *don't* behave. And they will know that, on *balance*, there is no reason why Jews should behave outrageously in their own state. They *know* Jews are not Nazis. Trying to persuade people that they are just does not ring true.

If however, one claims that "**Israel**" did this and "**Israelis**" did that, then anything and everything becomes *believable* for the simple reason that many people do not make the association between Israel and the Jewish people. Many people either do not know, or, will believe what they're told. Many people believe Israel is the size of France or Spain! It's actually the size of Wales – if that. From the Mediterranean sea to the West Bank, the distance reduces down to a minimal, and consequently difficult to defend, nine, yes just nine, miles.

So we suggest that longwinded though it may be, try to refer to the Jewish state rather than Israel. Israel is the world's one and only **Jewish** state. The world's most intensive media concentration upon the Jewish state is for this one and only reason – that it is **Jewish**.

CONCLUSION

We have set out to outline some of what we have called the 'tectonic plates' that lie beneath the surface of Middle Eastern earthquake-type politics.

We hope we have provided food for thought and material you can use if you become involved.

References

1. Quoted in Prager, D. and Telushkin Y. 2003 Touchstone Edition. *Why The Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism* Simon & Schuster, New York.

2. Ibid. see p.8

3. Matthew 5, 43; 19, 19; 22, 39; Mark 22, 31; Romans 13, 9; Galatians 5, 14; James, 2, 8.

4. The Meaning of The Glorious Koran. *An explanatory Translation* by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall. Mentor Religious Classic, eighth printing, New York 1960.

5. Quoted by Dayan Y.Y. Rubinstein, *How Can We Believe in God after Auschwitz?* TRIBE publication p. 72 2005. Gt. Britain.

Note on this quote. It has been difficult to find the precise location of this quote in any of Hitler's writings, principally *Mein Kampf*, or his speeches. It seems to have come from Hermann Rauschning (1887-1982) author of *Hitler Speaks* (1940).

These words however undoubtedly represent Hitler's philosophy: "The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew". Hitler, Adolph *Mein Kampf* p. 272, translated by Ralph Manheim, 1974 edition, London etc. HUTCHINSON.

6. *Mein Kampf* ibid p.283.

7. Interview. Front Page magazine 2004

8. April 21st. 2009.