"The Joy of Moral Preaching", Review of: Jacqueline Rose, <u>The Question of Zion</u>, Hebrew translation by Oded Wolkstein, Resling, Tel Aviv 2007, in <u>Katharsis: A Critical Review in the Humanities and Social Sciences</u> 9 (2008), pp. 18 – 50.(in Hebrew)

### 1. Zionism on Freud's Couch

The focus of this book is a critique of Zionism and of the State of Israel as a product of the Zionist movement that has inherited its attitudes and behavior patterns. The first chapter presents Zionism as a modern political expression of Jewish messianism, with an emphasis on an analogy with of Shabtai Zvi's movement. The second chapter is an examination of Zionism's founders and their ideas, making use of psychological and psychoanalytical tools. The third chapter analyzes Zionist and Israeli policy, first and foremost in relation to the Palestinians, in light of the findings of the first two chapters. It presents this policy as shaped, in large measure, by the trauma of Jewish weakness and vulnerability, which culminated in the Holocaust, and by the Zionist attempt to heal this trauma through a hyperbolic and distorted – according to the author – empowerment of the Jewish people.

The author's stated attitude to Zionism is somewhat ambivalent. She stresses her unwillingness "to treat Zionism as an insult. A dirty word" (11)<sup>1</sup>, and refuses to join the chorus of "simple dismissal of Zionism" (13). On the other hand, the Zionist idea in and of itself, at its core, contains, according to the author, the seeds of disaster. She is not content to reject particular aspects of Israel's policies or Israeli realities—such as the post-1967 occupation — but rather directs the crux of her criticism at the very foundations and core principles of the Zionist movement. Bridging these two positions is the author's sympathy for the minority strand within the Zionist movement that espoused, as a matter of principle, the idea of a binational state. In this context, she often refers to and relies heavily on Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt.

While the author acknowledges that Zionism "was from the outset creatively driven by internal dissent" (Preface to the Hebrew edition, 11)<sup>2</sup>, she explains,

My focus is on the Zionist vision which slowly but surely became the new nation's official or dominant view of itself – a vision which today sees Israel as a permanently beleagured nation that is never the agent of its own violence. Zionism is not the sole cause of every stage of the conflict throughout its history. It is also inseparable as a movement from the historical pressures, the persecution and finally the genocide, that drove the Jewish people's desire for self-determination in a national home. But I do consider that Zionism, as a collective movement, has been shaped by vocabularies whose very power have often blinded it to the potential outcomes of its own desires and actions outcomes whose bleakness for Israel as a nation and injustice for the Palestinians grow more and more visible by the day.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> All references are from, Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, New Jersey: Princeton Press, 2005, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Tel Aviv: Resling, 2007. The preface is the original English supplied by the author.

To understand this fully, I believe we need psychoanalysis which has always been for me a crucial part of critical thought (Hebrew Preface, 11).

Nevertheless, the author stresses that *The Question of Zion* is not "a psychoanalysis of Zionism," an accusation she says has been brought unjustly against her by those who attributed to her book (after the publication of the original English edition) the claim that Zionism "suffers from a unique pathology." "But to try and understand the specific psychic components or fantasies that play their part in one group or identity is neither to accuse, insult nor degrade it. The founding principle of psychoanalysis is that no one is -ever – demeaned by the unconscious. Restoring the 'dignity' – die  $W\ddot{u}rde$  – of the psyche was Freud's stated aim in interpreting dreams" (Hebrew Preface, 12).

When a disciple of Dr. Freud announces that she is not attempting a psychoanalysis of a phenomenon which she is analyzing by resorting to psychoanalytic tools, we are forewarned that we may be confronted with a denial or a repression of reality. Jacqueline Rose's book is indeed a mixture of a psychoanalytic – and at times a psychiatric – analysis of Zionism and a politico-ideological critique of it. "Since I believe that Israel today is the inheritor of problems planted in its first, tentative moments, that the lines must be run both catastrophically but also more hopefully from then to now and back again, this book does not follow strict chronological time" (xv).

Indeed, the book follows neither a strict chronological nor a strict thematic order: it drifts between the past and the present and back again, skipping between subjects, moving from generalizations to details and from details to broad, sweeping generalizations, from the margins of the studied phenomenon to its core (without drawing a distinction between the two), from quoting a right-wing extremist to passing judgment on the essence of Zionism and the fundamental flaws of Israeli society – and everywhere it finds severe disorders and pathologies. The underlying message of the book is clearly, and despite the author's denial, that Zionism does indeed "suffer from a unique pathology"; the text of the book simply does not allow for any other conclusion. The psyche of Zionism – and therefore of Israeli society as well – as it is portrayed in the book reveals a deep-set pathology, or more correctly, a host of pathologies. "The patient" presents a danger to himself and his environment and is beyond cure –at least in the patient's present form as a Jewish nation-state; hope lies in adopting binationalism.

The character of mainstream Zionism as a delusional messianic hallucination found its earliest expression in the fact that, according to the author, its founding fathers were on the border of pathologic neurosis and, in the case of Herzl, had clearly crossed the threshold (29-31, 64-65). This diagnosis is based on significant evidence: Herzl, whose striking similarities to Shabtai Zvi included "a creative mania that is at the core of their inspiration," saw himself as the redeemer of the Jews, though "by the end of his life . . . [he] had become more cautious" about his messianic status (29, 31). "By his own account, Herzl wrote *Der Judenstaat* in a state of mental intoxication. He felt he was losing his mind...To a man who encountered him in the street during its composition, he apparently looked like someone suffering a psychotic shock or risen from a terrible disease" (64). "The depression of Zionism is not, however, confined to

the creative mania of Herzl alone." Weizmann wrote to Leo Motzkin that the doctor had diagnosed him with "neurasthenia and weakness of the respiratory organs" (65). He had also written to his fiancée at an earlier time of his disappointment with the floundering of the Zionist movement which he attributed to the fact that "we are nervous, unstrung, flabby, unfit for the Jewish cause" (65). These and similar testimonies are meant to convince the reader that this was a company of mentally unstable individuals. It is no wonder, therefore, that their cause was equally unsound and delusional: "Zionism always involved a form of 'insubordination' against reality and the demands of reason" (67). The reader might wonder here how rare it is for a revolutionary movement to involve a degree of "insubordination against reality" (or for a man to write a book containing a revolutionary idea in a state of mental intoxication). Yet it is clear that Zionist insubordination is of a particularly wild and dangerous kind:

"Zionism presents us with a political movement that appears to be at once unanswerable and unreal. Freud's (or Jung's) patient does not know he is deluded. But Zionism, as we will see, is a violation of reality that knows its own delusion. And runs with it" (16). "Like Weizmann, Ben-Gurion acknowledges Zionism as a magnificent violation of the reality of the world. Given the unreason of the project... only messianism would do" (46). Indeed, the extensive personal similarity between Herzl and Shabtai Zvi represents a broader and more profound phenomenon: "messianism colors Zionism, including secular Zionism, at every turn" (28). Many have discussed Zionism and messianism; in Jacqueline Rose's view, messianic Zionism denotes the conscious renunciation of rationalism, "because it always knew somewhere that what it was doing was not feasible, Zionism also knew – indeed proclaims – that it would, if need be, defy the will of the world, be not just forceful but omnipotent" (118).

Delusional? Unfeasible? But the dream has been realized, the Jewish state came into being and has been standing for 60 years; its citizens, millions of them, speak Hebrew - an accomplishment that even Herzl famously did not believe was possible. The author's book was published in Hebrew in this reality-defying state of Israel. Unless the author herself is willing to believe in miracles – or worse, in the "omnipotence" of the Jewish national movement – she has to admit that Zionism could not have achieved this much by "defying the will of the world" and disconnecting from political reality. After all, Zionism's ability – beginning with Herzl – to enlist the support of powerful international forces—namely, forces which played a central role in the very same world which Zionism was supposedly defying – is a well-known fact. This fact did not escape the author, who bemoans American support of Israel's policy. In fact, she is not far from claiming that Israel shapes the Bush administration's policies in the entire region rather than being a tool at the hands of the United States (182, note 65) - an echo, indeed, of the belief in the "omnipotence" of the Jews.

What can be more fanciful and divorced from reality than portraying Ben-Gurion as a man who acted in defiance of the dictates of political rationalism, relying "only" on messianic hopes? Furthermore, the author believes that Israel is a regional great power whose claims as to the threats it faces are greatly exaggerated; she does not accept Israel's claim to be under an existential threat (xiii). As we shall see later, the author believes that Israel never faced a genuine existential threat. Is so, it is all the more absurd to claim that Zionism *consciously* cultivated goals that were

unfeasible and unattainable – though one can, of course, mourn the fact that it succeeded in realizing its goals.

# 2. An irrational penchant for the use of force

The neurosis of Zionism, which is at the focus of the author's attention throughout the book, is described as a persecution complex channeled into aggression – a "dominant view of itself – a vision which today sees Israel as a permanently beleaguered nation that is never the agent of its own violence" (Hebrew preface, 11). "But although it is one of the most powerful military nations in the world today, Israel still chooses to present itself as eternally on the defensive, as though weakness were a weapon, and vulnerability its greatest strength" (xiii). This, argues the author, is the cause of Israel's self-righteousness, her inability to acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinians, and her incessant tendency to rely disproportionately on military strength. This distortion developed from Zionism's (understandable, according to the author) aspiration to empower the stateless Jewish people in order to overcome their weakness and humiliation.

Obviously, each side in a national conflict often tends to dwell on, and exaggerate, the dangers posed to it by the other side and the injuries inflicted by it, to underestimate its own contribution to the conflict and to ignore the suffering of the other side. This natural tendency is present in every violent national conflict, and in fact in every kind of conflict between human beings. Making this rather trivial point hardly requires disturbing Freud's rest. It is of course legitimate to examine the manifestations of this human phenomenon in the Zionist movement and in the Israeli reality. It is also legitimate to claim that this tendency is unusually strong among Zionists and Israelis. However, in order to argue this point seriously, what is required is a serious attempt to assess the extent and gravity of the actual threats faced by the Jewish side in the conflict. Without gauging the threat, how is it possible to determine whether the response to it is an "overreaction"? This is true quite regardless of which side's cause deserves to be seen as the just - or the more just - one. A soldier in the armed forced of Nazi Germany is not usually accused of "disproportionate" violence merely because he was fighting those who were fighting him; at any rate, his behavior in this case is not viewed as testifying to a mental disturbance. One can regret the fact that he was not killed, but there is nothing neurotic about his unwillingness to be killed. Of course, this soldier can be condemned for serving the ultimate evil; but it should be noted that the author does not describe the Zionist project in such terms:

Nothing that has been said here takes away from the legitimacy of the Jewish people's desire for a homeland, nor from the felt strength of their conviction, however dangerous for the future and unjust toward the indigenous peoples, that they were entitled to build it in Palestine... That the Arabs played their part in rendering such coexistence impossible is not in dispute, although their opposition to the settlement of their land needs...to be understood (146-147).

Zionism's aspiration for a homeland was thus legitimate in the author's opinion, but the Arab Palestinian opposition to Zionism was legitimate as well - in fact, more legitimate. At no point in the book does the author try to explain why only a binational state, and not partition into two nation-states, accepted in 1947 by mainstream Zionism, should be considered as the appropriate solution for this dilemma of a clash between two just claims. In any case, if the Zionist project enjoys

some – even if partial and qualified – legitimacy, and if nobody denies that it encountered violent opposition (understandable though it may be), the question needs to be put all the more forcefully: how can one claim that Zionism, from its very outset, systematically used disproportionate force against its Arab opponents, without giving an honest and realistic account of the force and the threats of force used by its Arab opponents against the Zionist movement? An overreaction can only be defined in relation to the magnitude of the threat – unless it is argued that the threat was wholly imaginary, something that the authors is careful to stress that she is not alleging (10).

The charge of overreaction – even in the face of a severe threat – is always legitimate and worthy of serious examination, irrespective of the question who is thought to bear the brunt of responsibility for the conflict. However, such a claim is devoid of any moral or analytic value if it does not include a realistic assessment of the threat itself with at least an implied suggestion as to how the threat could have been dealt with appropriately and without an overreaction. Nowhere in the *Question of Zion* is there a serious discussion of this question; and in the small number of cases where it touches on this issue, the discussion is thoroughly unserious, as we shall see later. Once the use of force by the Zionist and Israeli side is diagnosed as an expression of some pathology, there is no longer any need to address the patient's specific claims. They only serve to prove the severity of his condition.

Since it is to Zionist ideology, rather than to the ordinary and expected dynamics of a national conflict, that the author ascribes the alleged Zionist/Israeli tendency to exaggerate the severity of Arab threats, it seems worthwhile to ask what has been the likely impact of Zionist ideology in this matter. On the face of it, at least, Zionism's fundamental interest – and hence, its conscious or unconscious tendency– has always been to emphasize the dangers facing Jews in the Diaspora and to downplay the dangers threatening Jews in the land of Israel. Zionism's goal has been to convince Jews to come to the land of Israel and to remain there; this is not to be achieved by overemphasizing the dangers that confront the newcomers. It is not an accident that the critics of Zionism like to stress the fact that Israel is a relatively dangerous place for Jews to live in, and has therefore failed to deliver on the promise of the Zionist movement to provide the Jewish people with a "safe haven." From the very beginning, Zionist leaders starting with Herzl had warned Jews that a great catastrophe would befall them if they did not leave Europe. Some of these warnings may seem to have forewarned the Holocaust – but only in retrospect: the future that awaited European Jewry was beyond the imagination of any of the predictors of disaster. Many European Jews must have viewed these warnings as a manipulation aimed to sow paranoia and panic. And indeed, there is no reason to doubt that Zionist propaganda in this regard suffered from the usual flaws of all propaganda. And yet reality would eventually outdo the propaganda; as it turns out, not only is it sometimes true that a paranoid person is being pursued, sometimes he is pursued more than he could ever have possibly imagined at the height of his paranoia. The emphasis on threats facing the Jewish Diaspora, intrinsic to Zionist ideology, was accompanied by an equally great natural tendency to stress, and sometimes exaggerate, all the good that awaited the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland. Overstating the gravity of the danger that the Arab neighbors presented to the new immigrants would have been contrary to the Zionist interest and instinct. Thus, the critics of Zionism blame Herzl for his failure or unwillingness to anticipate the fact that Jewish immigration to Palestine was bound to arouse fierce opposition on the part of the Arab population,

and for his idyllic depiction of Jewish-Arab relations in the future Jewish homeland in *Altneuland*. Jacqueline Rose, too, criticizes him for that (61-63).

It seems, therefore, that when a Zionist leader, or simply a Zionist, overestimates the gravity of the Arab threat, the assumption should be that he or she is acting within the usual logic of a national conflict, adopting an attitude towards the other side which does not differ from the way Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, for example, see each other. On the other hand, if we wish to suspect such a Zionist of being influenced by Zionist ideology, this suspicion would be more appropriate if he or she tends to overlook or underestimate the threats and dangers generated by the conflict. A Zionist, as such, should thus be suspected of harboring a natural tendency to suppress the dangers present in the conflict to which Jewish national claims - in any form and shape – were bound to give rise in a land with an Arab-Muslim majority at the heart of the Middle East. The Zionist Labour movement can be plausibly charged with minimizing the gravity of the conflict at its early stages, when in was fashionable in its ranks to claim that Arab opposition to Zionism originated in "Efendi incitement" -thereby implying that the Arab people in Palestine (as opposed to its "reactionary" elite) did not truly oppose the Zionist project. Above all, the Zionist supporters of the binational idea - the author's favored Zionists - are open to criticism on this score. These advocated a Jewish national homeland of a certain kind in an undivided Land of Israel, believing that this goal could be attained without sovereignty or reliance on military force. They criticized mainstream Zionists (including those who accepted partition) for expecting the Arabs to give up even a part of Arab Palestine for the sake of a Jewish state; they did not, apparently, often ask themselves how likely it was that Palestinian Arabs would be wiling to give up the pronounced Arab character of Palestine as a whole in favour of a binational state shared by them and the Zionist "foreign intruders."

The author quotes criticisms raised by Zionist advocates of a binational state against the Zionist leadership for refusing to consider seriously the binational option and even for missing potential opportunities (75-76). However, when a radical minority within a political movement criticizes its leadership, its claims do not necessarily tell us anything about the attitude of this movement's external enemies. That Buber or Magnes criticized Ben-Gurion for rejecting the binational idea (as did also the members of "Hashomer Hatzair," though they "balanced" their support for a binational state with a demand for unrestricted Jewish immigration), still does not make the Mufti of Jerusalem an advocate (even a potential one) of a binational state. In fact, the binational option was rejected by all significant groups in the Palestinian Arab society. Even Arab communists, a tiny minority advocating the least nationalist positions in Palestinian society, refused to take up the binational idea alongside their Jewish comrades who adopted it during early 1940s. This question was one of the causes of the split in the ranks of the communist movement in Palestine: the Arab National Liberation League demanded an Arab state in the whole of Palestine that would respect the rights of Jews as a national minority. This position was radically anti-nationalist in terms of the Palestinian society and the Arab world, but it nevertheless remained within the purview of the consensus among the Arab Left – a consensus that, throughout this world, espouses and has always espoused an Arab state, not a binational one. The Soviet Union's shift in 1947 and its support for partition eventually united the ranks of Arab and Jewish Communists behind the twostate solution. But we are talking about a small minority. The Arab Palestinian leadership opposed, and made clear it would fight, both partition and a binational state (a Jewish-Arab Federation) proposed in a minority report by several members of UNSCOP – the UN special committee that investigated the situation in Palestine and whose majority recommendation was in favor of partition. Had the Palestinians and the Arab states accepted the minority proposal, and not rendered the partition plan the only solution that was up for vote in the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947, it is doubtful whether the required majority of two would have been secured for accepting the Partition Plan. The greatest advantage of the idea of a binational state in the opinion of its Zionist proponents was that it supposedly removed the need for the use of force. But the truth is that this idea, just like the idea of establishing a Jewish state (if only on a portion of the land), could not have been realized without war – due to the unwavering opposition of the entire Arab world.

True, it would be unfair to judge the Zionist proponents of the binational solution during the British Mandate in light of what is known to us today, decades later, about the character of contemporary Arab nationalism (quite apart from the Arab- Israeli conflict), the frequency of binational arrangements in the region and the common treatment of non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities in it (even when they are not "foreign intruders from Poland'). Furthermore, the binational discourse within the Zionist movement peaked when the British Empire was at its peak. At that time it could perhaps seem possible to envisage a binational solution in Mandatory Palestine under British auspices in the belief that even if the Empire were to relinquish direct control, it would still exercise enough influence to intervene and maintain peace between the two national communities, should they prove to be unable to get along with each other without the Empire's help. The international peacekeeping arrangements currently exercised in Bosnia under the auspices of NATO forces stationed in the area and "mediating" between rival ethnic communities on behalf of Western powers bear some similarity to such an option. It would be uncharitable to the Zionist advocates of the binational state under the Mandate to assume that they were capable of believing that a binational Jewish-Arab arrangement - making Palestine the only Arab-majority country in the area which is not officially Arab and part of the Arab world - would have been possible at the heart of a postcolonial Middle East ruled by Arab nationalism, as it is known to us today.

One more fact is known to us today that was not known during the 1920s and 1930s to the advocates of the binational solution such as Brit Shalom: they could not have known the full humanitarian cost of their readiness to forgo, for the sake of advancing a compromise agreement with Palestinian Arabs, the mainstream Zionism's demand for mass Jewish immigration. They regarded this readiness on their part as a concession in terms of Jewish national demands. Since there was nothing which the Arabs opposed more categorically than Jewish mass immigration to Palestine, the Zionist advocates of binationalism hoped that the Arab majority would acquiesce in the idea of a binational state if it could be assured that it would continue to be the majority in it. In retrospect, it is clear that such a stance, had it been adopted by the Zionist movement, would not have secured the support of the Arab leadership for a binational state; but it would certainly have sealed the fate of many tens of thousands of people whose lives were eventually saved because they managed to come to Palestine in time. This could not have been known then. Nevertheless, even if the facts are analyzed according to what was known in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, these advocates of binationalism, with all due respect for their laudable motives, should be

placed high on the list of those Zionists who were blinded by ideology – or more precisely, by a combination of their two ideologies: the Zionist and the liberal-humanistic one. However strongly one may identify with these two ideologies, this case clearly demonstrates the dangers of allowing any ideology to eclipse common sense. In stark opposition to this approach stands Ben-Gurion's version of Zionism – the epitome of pragmatism, both in its more moderate and compromising aspect of a readiness for far-reaching political compromises and in its more "hawkish" aspect of a willingness to use force when necessary. One can, of course, denounce this brand of Zionism on moral grounds, if one rejects the legitimacy of the Jewish aspiration for independence (even if it is accompanied by an acceptance of partition); but no psychoanalysis is required to understand its inner logic.

Furthermore, even those who, like the author, hold that in principle, the Jewish people had a moral claim only to a national home as part of a binational state, and not to an independent nation-state, still need to ask themselves how, given the Palestinian and regional Arab attitudes, could any Jewish national presence in Mandatory Palestine have been established and maintained except with the help of a sovereign Jewish state capable of defending itself. Even had a genuinely binational entity been established, it is should still be asked whether its binational character would have been preserved over time in a country with an Arab-Muslim majority in the midst of the Arab-Muslim world, bearing in mind that the non-Arab party in this binational arrangement is regarded by the Arab majority in the country and in the region as a "foreign intruder." Moreover, even those who, unlike the author, hold that the Jewish people had originally no legitimate national claims at all in this land, and that Jews should never have immigrated en masse to Palestine, are still not exempt from facing the question of whether there was any practical way to ensure the physical safety of the Jewish collective in Palestine, once it had been formed, without a Jewish nationstate. At any rate, the representatives of the Palestinian Arab Higher Committee refused to undertake, in unofficial talks with members of the UN special committee (which they boycotted officially), that if their demands for an Arab state in all of Palestine were met, they would allow all of the Jews already present in the land to continue living there and would respect their rights.

One might argue that from the moment the Jewish presence in Mandatory Palestine had reached a critical mass, the question of the Jewish state ceased to be an ideological issue. From that moment on, in can be argued, a Jewish state became a humanitarian necessity for the protection of the country's Jews - even if we ignore the fate of the Jewish people outside of its borders (a far from obviously right thing to do, from the humanitarian point of view). These considerations are not at all dependent on an ideological acceptance of Zionism – even in Jacqueline Rose's minimalist version. On the other hand, one might argue that there were other, alternatives courses for action, either actually or in potentially. But in order to put forward such an argument seriously, it is not enough to limit oneself to lecturing the Jewish side and analyzing its psychological setup. One would need to examine and analyze the Arab Palestinian national movement, with its various leaders and strands, their views on the possibility of a compromise with the Jews and their attitudes to the use of force; all these questions would need to be analyzed in a regional context as well. The Question of Zion contains no such discussion. The author assumes that had mainstream Zionism heeded the advice of the advocates of Brit Shalom and similar organizations, "Zionism might have created a form of nationhood that would slash away politics, face its own dark beast, make room for the foreigner in its midst (or, even more radically perhaps, see itself as the stranger for the Arabs in Palestine)" (86). The

author, however, is not interested in trying to assess the degree Palestinian Arabs' willingness to regard themselves as "foreigners in the midst" of the refined, unarmed Zionism for which she is willing to find a moral justification, or to allow a sufficiently massive immigration of Zionist "foreigners" into Palestine in order to turn it from an Arab country into a binational state.

Indeed, the author expressly states her intention to focus on only one of the rival sides - the Jewish one. She refers to participants in a Princeton seminar dedicated to a discussion of the topics of her book who "repeatedly asked for a critique of Arab nationalism, or more simply for greater stress on the hostility and aggression toward Israel within the Arab world. All this can be recognized without affecting my purpose here... Focusing on one side of this historic drama, the pages that follow take their cue from the psychoanalytic insight that the path to transformation lies first and foremost in knowing yourself" (xix-xx). She prefaces her statement with the claim that "to require a nation to take responsibility for its own actions is not the same thing as arguing that everything is that nation's fault" (xix). But however banal this may sound, it has to be reiterated that a conflict is, by definition, an interaction of sorts between the parties involved in it. Neither analyzing the behavior of one of the two sides nor passing a moral judgment on it is possible without taking into account the behavior of the other side. Of course, Jacqueline Rose is hardly the first to analyze the Israeli-Arab conflict in this fashion; her book is simply an extreme example of an entire genre. Anyone who "focus[es] on one side of [a] historic drama" cannot but present a blatantly distorted picture of this drama, and can say nothing of value about the behavior of that side which he or she is specifically interested in improving through criticism. Imagine screening a film that documents a fight between two persons, which is edited in such a way that anything showing the actions of one of them is removed. How could the other guy, whose violent, disorderly and incomprehensible movements are documented, "know himself" if forced to watch such a film? Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that this person did in fact go far beyond what was reasonable during the quarrel; is the method just described the most appropriate educational tool for convincing him of that? Certainly, the fact – freely admitted by the author – that the Arab side contributed to the conflict and the escalation of violence, does not mean that there is no room for examining the Jewish side's share of responsibility. But there is simply no way to determine what this share was while "focusing on one side of this historic drama."

According to the author, "Zionism has always felt itself under threat and often for good reason – the Arabs did not want, and many still do not want, a Jewish state in their midst. But things become more complicated if disaster is not only feared but also anticipated as part of God's plan. In the messianic view of world history, it is part of the cosmic order of things that the nation must live on a knife's edge" (11). Certainly, the mere fact that X seeks to kill Y (justly or unjustly), does not necessarily negate the possibility that Y, being immersed in a destructive messianic ideology, secretly yearns for contact with the knife or the bullet instead of fearing the tragic consequences of this contact. But before we allow things to get out of hand by delving into a discussion on the cosmic world-order and divine plans, it still makes sense to enquire whether, when, and to what extent the Arab opposition to the Jewish state went beyond mere "reluctance" and assumed more active forms that contributed to the dynamic of the conflict – perhaps no less so than Zionism's messianic visions and obsessions. However, what interests the author is the tormented soul of the Zionists,

rather than in their physical safety and threats to it. For this reason, on the few occasions when she discusses these threats – always off-hand – she does so in a thoroughly unserious manner.

### 3. What are all the weapons for?

The author quotes at length from an article published by Martin Buber on May 27, 1948, during the fiercest phase of fighting that took place immediately after the proclamation of Israel's independence, with the invasion of the Arab armies and before the first cease-fire. In this article, Buber claims that, "Zionism should not have created, or tried to create a normal nation" (71) - i.e., it should not have created a sovereign state with armed forces at its disposal - and warns that the violent norms that took hold due to the conflict with the Arabs would eventually penetrate Jewish society itself (70-71). The author is impressed with Buber's foresight, noting that he anticipated the future "almost before the first shot was fired in 1948" (71). "Almost before the first shot was fired"? In late May of 1948? The author clearly knows nothing about the course of the war. This refers to a date about two weeks after the invasion of the regular Arab armies that followed the proclamation of the state. That was the most critical stage of Israel's war of independence - the stage that Yigael Yadin (the acting Chief of Staff) referred to when he famously told the Zionist leaders who were debating whether or not to go ahead with declaring independence, that in case of such an invasion, the Yishuv's chances were fifty-fifty at best. It is also clear that she is unaware of the fierce fighting that was raging throughout Mandatory Palestine between the Jewish and Arab armed militias for months before the 15th of May (since the adoption of the UN Partition Plan in late November 1947). By her account, all this happened "almost before the first shot was fired." And indeed, if the intention is to "focus on one side of the drama" - that is to say, to lecture one side of the drama – such details are of no particular significance. But what possible value can the author's attempt to analyze and judge the conduct of the Jewish side during those months have, when it is clear that she simply doesn't know, and is not interested in learning, what the object of her moralizing was going through at that time?

The author may feel justified in her refusal to pay serious attention to the severity of the threat faced by the Jewish side since, according to her, "it is now generally acknowledged that, although the war would be fiercely fought, there was no question in 1948 but that the new State of Israel would survive" (149). No reference is offered in support of this contention: apparently, the "acknowledgement" is so "general" that substantiating this claim would be superfluous. Immediately following the above statement, the author quotes from a long list of weapons acquisitions that appears in Ben-Gurion's war log: "we purchased... 416 artillery pieces, 24 heavy mortars, 158 heavy machine guns..." etc., etc. – the list goes on for nearly half a page. The author does not explain what, actually, is wrong with this list, but her reader is clearly expected to by appalled by the obsessive interest in purchasing weapons that the founder of the Jewish state displayed during Israel's War of Independence. The list goes on and on: mortars, shells and bullets, and more ammunition, and even tanks - for God's sake, haven't we just been told that this state was in no real danger? How dreadful. True, countries occasionally procure weapons merely for the purpose of waging a 'fiercely fought war", even when it does not threaten their very existence. One might even find a positive side to Ben-Gurion's obsessive interest in weapons procurement – it rather seems to clear him of the charge of relying exclusively on

messianic fantasies, and regarding the Zionist project was "a magnificent violation of the reality of the world" (46). But since we have already mentioned Martin Buber's opinion that the Jews should never have attempted to become a normal nation, this whole sordid business of buying weapons in the midst of a war is clearly a case of pathological neurosis.

In fact, however, it is not in the least true that all historians agree with the author on these two crucial points: that there is no need to examine the actions of the Arab side of the conflict in order to understand and judge the actions of the Jewish side, and that the 1948 war did not present an acute threat to Israel's survival. Benny Morris, for example, is certainly an historian well capable of criticizing the Zionist/Israeli side in the conflict. His contribution to the debate on the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem is well-known to the author (184, n. 101). The following is Morris' account of the circumstances surrounding the adoption of Plan D, in pursuance of which the Haganah began conquering Palestinian villages and demolishing some of them in March, 1948.

The Yishuv looked to the end of March with grim foreboding: it was a community with its back to the wall in almost every sense... Militarily, the Arab campaign along the roads, which was interdicting Jewish traffic, was slowly strangling the Jewish towns and threatening the existence of the outlying, rural settlements. Most Jewish settlements had Arab neighbors; Arab villages and towns sat astride the roads between the Jewish settlements. Some clusters of Jewish settlements were in particular jeopardy... To the south, the 100,000 Jews of Jerusalem were almost completely besieged and running low on ammunition and food... The British evacuation, which would remove the last vestige of law and order in the cities and on the roads, was only weeks away, and the neighboring Arab states were openly threatening to intervene and invade Palestine. The Yishuv was struggling for its life; an invasion by the Arab states... could deliver the *coup de grâce*.

It was with this situation and prospect in mind that the Haganah chiefs, in early March, produced "Tochnit Dalet" (Plan D), a blueprint for securing the emergent Jewish state... The battle against the local and foreign irregulars had to be won first if there was to be a chance of defeating the invading regular Arab armies. To win the battle of the roads, the Haganah had to pacify the Arab villages and towns that dominated them: pacification perforce meant either the surrender of the villages or their depopulation and destruction. The essence of the plan was the clearing of hostile and potentially hostile forces out of the interior of the prospective territory of the Jewish State, establishing territorial continuity between the major concentrations of Jewish population and securing the Jewish State's future borders before, and in anticipation of, the Arab invasion. As the Arab irregulars were based and quartered in the villages, and as the militias of many villages were participating in the anti-Yishuv hostilities, the Haganah regarded most of the villages as actively or potentially hostile...

Plan D was not a political blueprint for the expulsion of Palestine's Arabs: it was governed by military considerations and was geared to achieving military ends. But, given the nature of the war and the admixture of the two populations, securing the interior of the Jewish State for the impending battle

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along its borders in practice meant the depopulation and destruction of villages that hosted hostile local militia and irregular forces."<sup>3</sup>

According to Morris, "from the beginning of April, there are clear traces of an expulsion policy on both national and local levels with respect to certain key strategic districts and localities" (Morris, 64). He notes that field commanders were authorized to exercise their own judgment in deciding in which cases there was a military justification for demolishing a village. The plan "was neither used nor regarded by the Haganah senior field officers as a blanket instruction for the expulsion of the country's civilian inhabitants." Furthermore, "during April-June relatively few Haganah commanders faced the dilemma of whether or not to carry out the expulsion clauses of Plan D. The Arab townspeople and villagers usually fled from their homes before or during battle; the Haganah commanders had rarely to decide about, or issue, expulsion orders (though they usually prevented inhabitants who had initially fled from returning home after the dust of battle had settled)" (Morris, 63).

Of course, one can dispute Benny Morris's historical account, as any other historian's account, and there are those who do so. But since the author pins the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees exclusively on Zionism's neuroses rather than on military constraints stemming from the war, one might have expected her to confront this historical account, or at least to state that she has adopted another, and more critical, historical account and interpretation of the Jewish side's conduct during those months, in order to prove her psychological thesis. The author sees no need to do so, perhaps because she does not feel that her psychological analysis requires any factual evidence or proof. Surprisingly, she accepts that Plan D was not "a blueprint for transfer" (136), probably on the basis of Benny Morris' thesis; nowhere in the book does she allege that such a blueprint was conceived later on. Some will say that the crucial point was neither the psychological state of the Zionists, nor the military exigencies faced by them, but their demographic considerations. But for this prosaic, non-psychoanalytic thesis, which features prominently in the discourse critical of Zionism, Jacqueline Rose has no use – perhaps because it attributes to the Jewish national movement a degree of rationality which she finds unacceptable.

Benny Morris himself, as is well-known, is far from underestimating the importance of the Zionist movement's demographic considerations. In the introduction to this book he claims at length that the concept of transfer which had originated in the need to secure the largest possible Jewish majority in the future Jewish state had been floating about in different circles of the Zionist movement for some time before the 1948 war. Further, he claims that this idea had created the emotional background for many of Israel's actions during that war (including the refusal to allow refugees to return after the fighting had ceased). Nevertheless, he claimed there was no blueprint for the expulsion of the Palestinians. While Morris attributes the early expulsions to pressing military constraints, he portrays a different picture of the later stages of the war and intermittently argues (in the *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* and even more so in later publications) that some expulsions were carried out without direct military justification. Various aspects of his thesis are hotly disputed by other historians – in particular, his claims on the place of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, 61-63.

the idea of transfer in Zionist thought prior to the war. However, on the basis of Morris's factual account of the course of the war, it cannot be said that the Zionist leadership utilized the first opportunity it had – namely the Palestinian rejection of the Partition Plan and the onset of military attacks against the Yishuv – to begin implementing the predilections he attributes to it in this field. According to this account, not only were there no expulsions during the early months of the war (though the mass flight of the Arab residents from the war-torn areas had already begun), but "the Haganah's policy during the early months of the conflict [tried] to restrict the scope of the violence" (Morris, 36). "The Haganah at first adopted a purely defensive strategy" (Morris, 31); later, as the Arab offensives intensified, the Haganah shifted toward retaliatory strikes, though, according to Morris, it did not abandon the its strategy of "restrict[ing] as far as possible the scope of the conflagration and...not strik[ing] in areas so far free of hostilities" until March 1948 (Morris, 33). Actions taken by local Haganah units which deviated from this course were subject to "severe criticism" by the Yishuv's political leadership and by Ben-Gurion himself (Morris, 33-34) for pushing into Mufti's arms those among Palestinian Arabs who wished to stay out of the fighting. Furthermore, "the General Staff, through December 1947 – March 1948, attempted to keep its units' fighting as 'clean' as possible. While coming to accept the general premise that retaliatory strikes against Arab traffic and villages would inevitably involve the death and injury of innocent people, general orders were repeatedly sent out to all Haganah units to avoid killing women, children and old people. In its specific orders for each operation, the General Staff almost always included instructions not to harm non-combatants, as happened, for example, in an attack on the village of Salama, outside Jaffa, in early January, when Galili specifically forbade the use of mortars because they might cause casualties among non-combatants" (Morris, 34).

Such conduct during an ethnic civil war, of the kind that was raging throughout Mandatory Palestine at that time, is not at all to be taken for granted either in the 1940s or anytime since then. One wonders whether the armed Arab Palestinians militias received similar guidelines from their leaders. In any case, Benny Morris notes that "the Arab Higher Committee strongly opposed... local peace initiatives and agreements" which the Yishuv's representatives and local Arab leaders had succeeded in securing in various places (Morris, 39). If one wishes to evaluate the character of the Zionist movement in its relation to dilemmas pertaining to the use of force during an armed conflict, what is needed is not a psychoanalytic study but rather a comparative historical account of how various sides involved in armed ethnic conflicts have acted in different parts of the world. For example, in neighboring Cyprus, a war took place in 1947 between the Turks and the Greeks, two communities involved in a long-standing national conflict. As a result of this war, which involved the invasion of the Turkish army, the Turkish part of the island was ethnically cleansed of its entire Greek population; the Greek part of the island lost its Turkish inhabitants (many of whom had left earlier). Hundreds of thousands of individuals became refugees. Surprisingly, the Turks and the Greeks appear to have acted without any inspiration from Shabtai Zvi. They managed to do without Herzl's mania, Weitzman's depression, Ben Gurion's unbridled messianism, or Zionist notions of cosmic order and interpretation of divine master plans.

The course of action adopted by the Jewish side during the first months of the conflict, as described by Morris, sheds light on the relative place demography played

within its overall system of considerations. Anyone who looked upon the exodus of the Arab inhabitants from the war-torn areas favorably (whether for demographic reasons, or for military ones, or for a combination of the two) – even if they did not actively contribute to it – could not fail to realize that restricting the scope of fighting and avoiding the intentional killing of non-combatants would result in decreasing the potential number of refugees very considerably. This does not at all mean that demographic considerations did not matter to the decision-makers. It does, however, show that other important considerations played their part as well. These included political and diplomatic considerations, an unwillingness to escalate and expand the conflict (a concern which demonstrates the fact that they did not necessarily regard the Jewish side as the stronger one – even vis-à-vis the local Palestinian Arabs alone), and even an unwillingness to kill innocent people - something that can by no means be taken for granted under the circumstances. Diplomatic efforts of the Zionist movement during this time also attest to the fact that it was far from regarding its eventual victory in the war as a forgone conclusion, as is claimed by some nowadays (as we have seen, Jacqueline Rose is content with claiming that the very survival of the state was never in question). Immediately after the adoption of the Partition Plan, the Jewish agency asked the UN Security Council to dispatch an international force to Palestine in order to enforce the decision and to implement the Partition Plan; this request was supported by the Soviet Union, but rejected by the Arab states with British support. The request was not simply declarative: Zionist diplomats actually approached the governments of the US and the Soviet Union requesting that they take part in such a force. Had this proposal been accepted, the Jew side would not have been able to conquer any territories beyond the borders demarcated by the Partition Plan, and the Palestinian refugee problem would never have been created. The fact that this proposal was made demonstrates that, at that point in time, the Zionist leadership viewed the Partition Plan as a landmark achievement that had to be defended, and was willing to entrench the partition in its proposed borders, foregoing any prospect of improving them. This proposal was rejected and the State came into being through war. One can either welcome or regret Israel's victory in that war; that the State was fighting for its life in that war cannot seriously be doubted. There was nothing obsessive or pathological about Ben-Gurion's interest in the acquisition of arms at that time.

### These War-Mongering Yekkes

One of the highlights of the book is, undoubtedly, a historical example from the 1930s which appears toward the beginning of the book, right after the preface. This example is intended to demonstrate one of the pathological neuroses that the author attributes to Zionism: its morbid attraction to violence and bloodshed. The example is no other than the mass immigration of Jews from Nazi Germany and anti-Semitic Poland to Mandatory Palestine, which coincided with the Arab Revolt during the late 1930s. The author interprets these events as evidence that the violence did not deter Zionists but attracted them (6; we shall return to this matter below)!

From a strictly rational point of view, as noted above, Zionism's fundamental interest was to play down rather than exaggerate the dangers threatening the Jews in the country; by the same token, it was interested in keeping the violent struggle with the Arabs dormant in an attempt to ensure peaceful and tranquil conditions, conducive to the development of the Jewish national home. Of course, those who view the massive Jewish immigration to Palestine for the purpose of establishing a Jewish

homeland in it as a foreign invasion warranting violent opposition – as the Palestinian Arabs did – will not be impressed with Zionists' desire for peace and quiet during the Mandate period: such a peace would have meant, in practice, Arab acquiescence with the Zionist project, carried out under the auspices of the British Mandate. On the other hand, the escalation of inter-communal violence caused the British to place increased restrictions, time and time again, on Jewish immigration and settlement in the country in an effort to pacify Arab resistance to the policy of the National Home and to the British Mandate. The need to avoid this adverse political outcome was the central concern that was argued internally in the Yishuv by the supporters of the official Zionist policy of "restraint" and avoidance of retaliation. During the Mandate period peace clearly served Zionism's political interests; the right-wing opposition within the Yishuv that rejected the policy of restraint (and whose armed groups acted against it) argued that this political consideration did not outweigh the need to curb and deter Arab violence. It might be claimed that during the founding days of the State there was a Zionist interest in provoking or escalating a military conflict in order to improve, from the Jewish point of view, the terms of the UN Partition Plan. However, the fact of the matter is that the Arab side rejected the Partition Plan and initiated a violent struggle (as its representatives explicitly 'promised" the UN General Assembly during the Partition debate). During the early months of this conflict, at least according to Benny Morris's account, the Jewish side actually sought to contain and reduce the scope of fighting.

Regarding the time period between the 1948 and 1967 wars, it might be argued that there was a Zionist interest in entering a military confrontation that would allow expansion beyond the "green line." For the first few years after 1948, there were indeed voices within the Israeli establishment that called for a "second round" arguing that the other side had not reconciled itself to the creation of Israel and was planning to launch a second attack, and Israel should initiate the first move to her advantage. Some of the advocates of this approach believed that a "second round" should result in the Israeli conquest of the West Bank. Ultimately, however, the war which may be considered as reflecting this "actively preemptive" approach – the 1956 Sinai War - was carried out against Egypt and not the in the West Bank and did not result in enlarging Israel's territory. What it led to was, instead, a relatively lengthy period of quiet along Israel's borders. The 1967 war broke out when Israel's government was led by Levi Eshkol – the last person to be suspect of aspiring for war for the purpose of conquering land. This war was clearly due to Arab threats rather than to Israel's expansionist wishes. The June 1967 war realized Israel's maximal territorial aspirations. From that moment on, Israeli hawks became supporters of the status quo and of avoiding war -which, in the absence of a political settlement, would have meant the Arab side accepting Israel's 1967 conquests. For this reason, anyone wishing to critique Israeli policy after 1967 on the basis of the assumption that, irrespective of the historical roots of the conflict, the appropriate solution now is "land for peace," should not ask whether Israel was or is interested in going to war with the Arabs. The right question is, rather, whether Israel is willing to put an end to the violent struggle by relinquishing the occupation. Conversely, the question that needs to be asked regarding the Arab states and the Palestinians is about their willingness to give up violent struggle once the occupation (of the areas conquered in 1967) is ended. Naturally, the author does not stop to deal with these questions, even for the purpose of a one-sided moralistic lecturing to Israel, since she is interested not in the 1967 occupation but in exposing the essentially violent and pathological character of the Jewish aspiration for statehood.

Thus, regarding the two periods which stand at the focus of the author's critique of Zionist and Israeli penchant for using force — the formative years of the Zionist project during the British Mandate and the period after 1967 - it is clear that violent conflict with the Arabs contradicted the fundamental interest of the Zionist-Israeli side. As for the Arab side, during the same time periods it had an interest in violently undermining the status quo (which it regarded intolerable and inherently "violent"). The most salient example of the Arab side successfully undermining of the status quo by violent means was the 1973 Yom Kippur War. On the other hand, the Israeli unpreparedness for this war (if seen as more than simply an intelligence blunder) stands for a policy of preserving the status quo and an illusion that the territories could be kept indefinitely without war. Of course, all this does not rule out the possibility that in certain (perhaps numerous) cases, the Israeli side stepped out of the bounds in its responses to Arab violence — provided that such a claim is substantiated and not presented as an axiom.

All of the above is based on the assumption that the Zionist movement and the State acted as a rule rationally in pursuit of Zionist and Israeli interests – as these were understood, sometimes differently (as can be seen in the argument on the "undivided land of Israel" vs. partition) by the various Zionist strands. The author, however, is interested in discussing Zionism's neuroses, and one of these is, apparently, the pathological death-wish which causes Zionists to be drawn to deadly struggles rather than being repelled by them. Therefore, after beginning her book with a lengthy, 3 page discussion of Shabtai Zvi and his life story, his whims and delusions, the author turns to her encounter, in 2002, with a couple from the West Bank settlement of Allon Shvut. They had moved to Israel 8 months earlier, and now related to her that their settler friends felt "invincible" ever since the eruption of the second *Intifada* and the mounting number of victims.

I found in their dialogue the same medley of comfort and horror (comfort *in* horror) that Scholem places at the heart of one strand of apocalyptic messianism. According to messianic legend, Israel — although it will ultimately be led through all tribulations to national redemption — will have to bear its share of suffering in the final cataclysm. Redemption will not be realized without ruin and dread....

[5 more lines in the same vein are followed by a new paragraph:]

This is horror in the service of national increase... In 1929 and 1936-39, the years of the worst Arab-Jewish confrontations in Palestine, the number of *olim*, or pioneers, among emigrants climbed, only to fall during periods of relative calm; the rate of emigration from Britain rose from 760 to 832 in the year after the Yom Kippur war, increased with the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, and continued to climb up to 2002 (although by 2003 immigration was at its lowest level since 1989) (5-6).

Here the story returns to the settler couple from Allon Shvut who are infused with courage and perseverance in the face of the dangers of the *intifada*: "Not quite exultant, certainly exhilarated. Danger, they acknowledged, was a pull" (6).

Of course, it is not unusual in national conflicts for "horror [to act] in the service of national increase." The phenomenon stems from the tendency to unite and rally around the flag – quite often, to become radicalized – during times of adversity and external danger. This tendency is particularly strong among ideologically-driven minorities (e. g., settlers), but is not limited to them. It has certainly been in evidence on the Arab and Palestinian side of the conflict over the past decades. In most cases, it has nothing to do with "apocalyptic messianism." Yet anyone studying the history of Jewish migration to and from Mandatory Palestine and Israel over the past hundred years, will easily discover that the violent conflict with the Arabs was, as expected, an obstacle rather than an advantage - with regard to its influence on Zionism's fundamental interest in ensuring mass immigration of Jews to the country and in avoiding emigration. Statistics on Jewish immigration from the late 1930s tell the same story, as we shall see presently. However, Jews did not decide during the past hundred years whether or not to immigrate to the land of Israel solely on the basis of their alleged attraction to horror and death, nor were they solely motivated by dedication to Zionist ideology. They were often influenced by another consideration: their condition in their countries of origin. This fact seems to have escaped the notice of the author in her critique of Zionism; and not only in relation to the 2000s has it escaped her, but, remarkably, also as regards the 1930s. As for the rise in British aliyah after the outbreak of the second Intifada, the author does not take into account the possibility that this phenomenon – assuming that far-reaching conclusions can been drawn from the actions of a few hundred individuals, most of whom probably had a higher level of religious and ideological commitment than the average oleh in mass immigrations - was the result, at least in part, of rising anti-Semitism in Britain at that time (a phenomenon that was recorded in a report prepared by a parliamentary committee and submitted to the British Parliament). In any case, the author herself notes the drastic decline in the number of British olim in 2003. Would it be farfetched to suggest that repeated suicide attacks that occurred in Israel's cities eventually had an adverse effect even on this ideologically-driven aliyah?

As for 1929, the author is simply wrong. That year did not see a peak in Jewish immigration to Palestine - despite the massacre of the Jewish community in Hebron, which, according to her analysis, should have drawn masses of Zionist Jews to the Land. The high point of Jewish immigration, up until that time, had been 1925 - a quiet and peaceful year in Palestine. This immigration wave was a result of the anti-Semitic economic policies of the Polish government, which brought 34,386 Polish-Jewish immigrants to the country ("the Grabski aliyah"). By 1929, their numbers had declined to 5,249. This brings us to the late 1930s, the years of the Arab Revolt and a sizable wave of Jewish aliyah. The author is unable to think of any cause for the wide-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine during those years, other than the Zionists' apocalyptic love of death and adoration of horror. If there was any "confounding variable" which caused Jewish immigration to peak specifically during those years, despite the violence, it escaped the author. The whole thesis is, of course, completely inane – even without the "confounding variable." The true historical peak year for Jewish aliyah, as the author herself notes, was actually 1935, prior to the outbreak of the Arab revolt. In 1935, 62,472 olim immigrated to Palestine, in 1936 – 29,595, in 1937 (while the Arab Revolt was still in full force) – less than 10,629, and in 1938 – 14,675; By 1939, after the Arab Revolt had died down, Jews surprisingly

renewed their interest in immigrating to Palestine and 31,195 of them arrived there in that year. Perhaps Europe of 1939 bored them.<sup>4</sup>

And who were these people, who, according to the author, displayed a perverse desire to flock to Palestine during the late 30s, of all times, pulled by the "exhilarating" danger? This attitude is attributed not to Zionist leaders or militants, but to tens of thousands of mostly German Jews whom the Nazis had robbed of Germany, the country that most of them had regarded as their home and never dreamed of leaving. What did they have in common with Shabtai Zvi? Even their cultural and ideological connection with the settlers in Allon Shvut is rather tenuous. The worldview of most of them was not at all molded by Zionist ideology, with all the neuroses and pathologies that the author attributes to it. The only thing connecting the Zionist ideology to those people is the fact that the Zionist movement understood the true condition of the Jewish people in Europe better than any other political strand at the time. These people, for many of whom their Jewish identity was a source of tragedy but not a help and a solace in adversity, people who at their greatest time of need, had been rejected by the United States, Western Europe and Australia which refused to increase their immigration quotas arguing, among other things, that increased Jewish immigration would result in a rise of anti-Semitism there - these are the people to whom Jacqueline Rose attributes an exhilarated, possibly subconscious, pull to deadly violence expressed in their immigration to Palestine. It is these people that she describes as individuals seeking "comfort in horror" in Mandatory Palestine, after having left Nazi Germany (or the anti-Semitic Poland of the time). And this comes from an author, who, as she informs the readers in her Preface to the Hebrew edition (p. 12 in the Hebrew edition), lost her grandmother's family in the Holocaust. The author, it should be stressed, does not intentionally seek to mislead her readers – the fact that she willingly discloses 1935 as the true peak year of Jewish immigration (which instantly demolishes of her "death-wish" thesis), attests to a certain bona fides, if not to a rigidly logical thinking. She is not deceitful - merely trapped in an ideological preconception, wholly unable to evaluate her own arguments with a critical eye.

## 4. Summary

Hate, as is well-known, is a bad counselor, but the desire to lecture and moralize can, apparently, be an even worse one. The author's hostility to Zionism and the State of Israel is surpassed by many; her urge to pontificate to them is extraordinary. On the psychological roots of this urge I do not venture to speculate: the book offers a sufficient warning on the dangers of mixing political polemic with a pseudo-psychological analysis. Having set the conceptual moralizing framework, the author does not allow mere facts to confuse her, nor does she attribute any particular importance to the knowledge of facts. We have already seen that she believes that almost no shot was fired in Israel's War of Independence until the end of May 1948. She must have heard that the State of Israel was established in the middle of that month, and apparently assumes that nothing substantial could have happened in the first two weeks after that event (all the more so since it is "generally agreed" that the State was not under any existential threat). She writes of the Jewish Bund, "the group

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Cf., (Based on data of the Mandate Government and the Jewish Agency, with miniscule differences between the two) Moshe Sicron, *Immigration to Israel 1948-1953*, Falk Project and Central Bureau of Statistics, Special Series No. 60, Jerusalem 1957, Table A.1.

of socialist Jews virulently opposed to Jewish nationalism" (123); she must have heard of a Jewish movement that opposed Zionism and concluded that it must therefore have opposed Jewish nationalism. The author relates that Herzl brought before the Pope a proposal to "initiate a mass movement for the 'free and honourable' conversion of the Jews" (110). The Pope's response is not mentioned. She must have heard that Herzl had mused about such things before he had formulated his Zionist idea and recorded these thoughts in his diary, and refers to the diary as if this were evidence that such a proposal was actually brought before the Pope. "When the Kaiser met the Sultan as part of his failed attempt, orchestrated by Herzl, to persuade the Ottoman ruler to allow the Jews into Palestine..." (111). Not only did Zionism believe in its own omnipotence, according to the author, but she herself apparently believes in it as well -hence Herzl's ability to "orchestrate" the German Kaiser. The editors of the Hebrew edition at the Resling publishing house attribute to Herzl, in their own note, an even more miraculous ability: they explain that "Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878) was born in Sarajevo, and had visited Jerusalem in his youth and was influenced by Kabbalistic circles in the vicinity of the city... his conception of Zionism was influenced by Herzl's political Zionism..." (Hebrew Edition, p. 176, n. 132). The author's concern with Zionism's unwillingness to follow the laws of nature becomes understandable: that Herzl was able to hand over his Zionist political conception, formed in the 1890s, to Yehuda Alkalai, who had been summoned to join the Heavenly Zionist Organization in 1878, must surely be regarded as a particularly grave instance of this worrying phenomenon.

"Seeing the Jews' predicament as expressive of eternal anti-Semitism, rather than as part and parcel of the political realities of the modern world, was, and continues to be, one of political Zionism's most fundamental mistakes" - states the author, with a reference to Hannah Arendt (134-135). Similarly, Herzl is described as one who believed that the Jewish people are "surrounded by eternal enemies" (106). "Eternal anti-Semitism"? Is it not the case that one of Herzl's mistakes was precisely his belief that with the establishment of the Jewish State the Jewish people would become "normal" and anti-Semitism would cease to exist? This was a naïve belief that has been refuted by history, but surely it is exactly the opposite of holding that anti-Semitism is an eternal and unchanging characteristic of the non-Jewish world ("Esau's hates Jacob"). The author notes that Herzl's Altneuland (62) is "open, secular, pluralist - also reads at times like a post-Zionist dream" (certainly a compliment, coming from her). Anyone who believed in "eternal anti-Semitism" could not have presented such an idyllic picture of Jewish-Arab coexistence in the future Jewish homeland, in which, as the author rightly points out, "there is no hostility between national groups" (61). Of course, Zionism is a broader phenomenon than the teachings of its founding father. But any generalized statement which ascribes to "political Zionism" as a whole an attitude that is the opposite of Herzl's views, and the views of many other Zionist leaders, cannot be regarded as a genuine critique. It is, once again, a piece of moralizing which absolves itself of taking mere facts into account.

"How ... did one of the most persecuted peoples of the world come to embody some of the worst cruelties of the modern nation-state?" asks the author (116). "Some of the worst cruelties" – in this said in earnest? It might be argued that in principle one has a perfect right to criticize Israel without resorting to comparisons—whether the comparisons be with its neighbors and their conduct during armed conflicts, or, for instance, with the conduct of the coalition forces in Iraq and

Afghanistan; not to mention more distant examples of cruelty perpetrated by modern nation-states. Yet the author manages to avoid comparing even as she makes on ostensibly comparative statement: "some of the worst cruelties of the modern nation-state." Is she serious about this claim? Perhaps these words are not after all meant to be taken as a comparative claim, or any kind of factual claim at all, despite their outward appearance: this is only one more instance of moralizing. On can sometimes benefit even from exaggerated and unjust criticism – but not when it is disconnected from reality to quite such an extent.

What the whole thing boils down to is that Zionism, in the author's view, should be rebuked because from the outset "too much was being demanded" by it (65). The use of force in the service of these allegedly excessive demands is thus summarily condemned, without any need to review the precise details of the case. At the same time, the author states her belief "that Zionism emerged out of the legitimate desire of a persecuted people for a homeland" (xii). At no point in the book does she deal with the obvious question: why should a persecuted people's aspiration to establish a national home in the shape of an independent state – an aspiration which is generally considered legitimate even when espoused by non-persecuted peoples – be regarded as "too much." Not that one cannot think of a possible answer to such a question: it is an essential part of the tragedy of a Diaspora people lacking a homeland (and not merely independence) that it cannot establish a homeland without going against the will of most of the inhabitants in the land which it regards as its historic and future homeland, but which has become the homeland of another people. Many believe that the two state solution is – and has always been - the most just answer to this dilemma. This opinion is debatable, as any other opinion - but the book makes no attempt to grapple with this question. Yet anyone attempting to take a stand in this dilemma against political Zionism must present an honest account of the circumstances of the case, and deal, on the moral level, with the practical implications of rejecting the Jewish demand for national independence in the 20th century. It is easier to moralize. This kind of moralizing precludes any serious consideration of the very real dilemmas that have arisen from the national conflict that resulted from the Jewish national aspirations and Arab opposition to them. No such consideration is possible if one is content with lecturing "one side of the drama" on morality while ignoring the conduct of the other side. As a result, the drama turns into a grotesque. Nothing useful can be learned from it.

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Translated by Sara Halper