
FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE CONFLICT:

REBUILDING THE FUTURE. GAZA GROUND ZERO.

John Ennis, 30 November 2023

for Ilan Pappé

Sometimes from despair, and a people or peoples traumatized, as are Gazans and Israelis presently, can real hope dawn. A cliché, maybe, but a future where in the words of a Nobel Laureate, hope and history can rhyme. And be seen to rhyme. Certainly it is better to light the candle than wrestle the present darkness.

Might such hope be possible, not only for Gaza now, but the whole of the Promised Land of mythical antiquity, the land that stretches historically between the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea beyond Gaza?

Talk has turned again toward a two-state solution for the majority Semitic populations of Palestinians, and Israelis, with others, living on that stretch of land. But where is the Solomon, who can divide this stretch of land to the equal satisfaction, and security, of either population?

First, for me, it's best to start with a definition of the terms "Semitic" and "Semite". My Concise Oxford Dictionary (page 1151) offers: "Semite (Member) of any of the races supposed to be descended from Shem (Gen. X 21 foll.) including esp. the Hebrews, Arameans, Phoenicians, Arabs and Assyrians . . .Gk. Séμ, Shem, -ite.

A good start, maybe half the battle. Why not share The Promised Land between Arabs (Palestinians) and Hebrews (Israelis), with others, who want to live there together in peace? Where tanks and bomber jets are beaten into ploughshares. An equally shared land of harvests and waste places suitable for building on, shared languages given equal status, sign posts in both Hebrew and Arabic, cities and towns with dual names, as in present-day Northern Ireland until recently a place of strife and division, where, say, Derry City is a place name for some, Londonderry for his or her neighbour, Doire for Gaelic speakers? The new Promised Land for future generations with agreed civic structures and governance for all, where people eschew violence, or threat of violence, as a means to settle differences, violence not only of arms, but that directed towards property appropriation or dwellings, with a freeing of political prisoners. An accepted police force (as in Northern Ireland) to assist with civic order, and the withdrawal from daily life of the military. A place where all apartheid practices cease, and dividing walls as in old Berlin, come tumbling down.

Where aircraft from abroad can touch down at Tel Aviv to dual alternating greetings in Arabic and Hebrew: Welcome to Israel, Welcome to Palestine. As one is greeted touching down in Canada in both English and French.

Is such possible in the "Promised Land" for future generations? It had better be or have both present-day and future generations face a future of shared barbarous violence rather than a

deserved accord. Populations sick of being sick with their addiction to force as a means of settling differences. The Hydra heads that will inevitably sprout from settlements by violence.

I touched on such sentiments in the poems comprising *Gaza Ground Zero* (2015) and in the Introduction to *Turangalila-Palestine* (2019).

Such thoughts struck me again a few days ago when I saw a social media post of two young Israelis saying they wished to live in a future Gaza. Why not? Why should young Palestinians not feel free to live and worship or not and come and go also, say, in any part of present-day Israel, say Jerusalem, the Arabic Quds, or Galilee or any other of the Semitic lands familiar to readers of the Bible?

Pragmatically, any peace solution must have workable and attractive dimensions to all to grab the attention, and win the confidence and assent of present warring parties. A solution that is built on the better instincts of all. A win-win situation for both Palestinians and Israelis. And one founded on a shared bedrock of wisdom and mutual accord.