

JACOB'S TROUBLE

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it:
it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts,
that I will break [Nebuchadrezzar's] yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds,
and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:
but they shall serve the LORD their God,
and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

- Jeremiah 30: 7, 8 -

Scripture references are to the King James Authorised version

PART TWO

Preamble

Part One summarised the circumstances of the Israel-Gaza conflict and offered a brief history of the role Britain filled by protecting the Jews in the early years of their return to Palestine, in the Diaspora of the 19th and mid-20th centuries. This closing instalment will expand the theme and flesh out the depth of the relationship between Israel and the United States. Israel seems to be at a crossroad with respect to the Gaza Strip; her prosecution of this operation may decide her future negatively.

The deployment of two U.S. carrier strike groups and concomitant ground forces has raised concern in some quarters of the Pentagon. The possibility of a clash with Iran and its allies or with Russia and/or Syria cannot be ruled out. However, although we are, so to speak, in the geographical vicinity, it does not appear we are yet knocking at the door of Revelation 16: 16: 'And he [Jehovah] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.'

One may assume that none of the Western-aligned states will call for a cease-fire or a diplomatic solution to the conflict, all of them subscribing to the White House's narrative.

* * *

IN THE LATE nineteenth century most Jews lived in imperial Russia. Beginning around 1881 government-sanctioned pogroms (massacres) forced large numbers to flee the country, many seeking refuge in Palestine. This was no accident of history. As prophesied by Jeremiah, God had sent 'fishers and hunters' in the shape of Zionism and the 'tough love' of persecution to nudge them home to their Promised Land (Jer. 16: 14-16).

The First World War (1914-18) was prophetically linked with this migration. Viewed solely through the lens of secular history, the conflict, featuring trench warfare, was a disaster for all involved, a potentially terminal assault on European civilisation. But, from the divine standpoint, an important aim of the war was to prepare conditions conducive to the settlement of the Jewish people in their land of promise. When the British General, Allenby, captured Jerusalem from the Ottoman Turks in 1917, a new phase of history began. During the 1920s and '30s large numbers of Jews quit Europe and made their 'return' (*aliyah*) to Palestine, which had by then become a British protectorate.

Palestine

In 1923 the League of Nations – forerunner to the United Nations – awarded a mandate (a commission to administer) over Palestine to Great Britain. This proved to be a poisoned chalice for the British Foreign Office, now responsible also for accommodating the Arab majority who already occupied the land and were naturally resentful of the ‘newcomers’ returning to re-inhabit their ‘promised land’. At length, British governance – which favoured the Arabs – was hoist on its own petard, being met with hostility from both quarters. The onset of war with Germany in 1939 further complicated matters for Britain – the Arabs generally siding with Germany, the Jews with Britain and, indeed, forming the Jewish Infantry Brigade of the British Army. When the war ended, the Jews, now agitating for independence, reversed tactics, carrying out a number of attacks on British troops and interests.[fn1,fn2]

Aftermath

Following the SWW a blend of pity, guilt and horror at what had been done to the Jewish people by Hitler’s minions caused some nations – who might otherwise have not been kindly disposed towards the Jews – to endorse the nascent Jewish state. As the principal architect of their sufferings, Germany was obliged to pay reparations (*Shilumim*, tribute).

In his book, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, historian Benny Morris writes:

. . . Palestine was ambiguously omitted from the future Arab domain (in the letter of 24 October 1915 from Henry McMahon, Britain’s high commissioner in Egypt, to the Hashemite sharif of Mecca, Hussein ibn Ali). Instead, it was alternatively vouchsafed for future Anglo-French condominium (in the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 3 January 1916) and, more vaguely, as a Jewish ‘national home’ (in the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917). That one-sentence declaration by the British foreign secretary, Arthur James Balfour – ‘His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that *nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine* [italics supplied] or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country’ – was to be seen by the Zionist movement, which had vigorously lobbied for it, as a historic breakthrough and a basis for its future sovereignty over Palestine. And indeed, the British, including Balfour, and despite the avoidance of the word *state*, regarded the embodied promise as necessarily leading to self-determination. ‘My personal hope is that the Jews will make good in Palestine and eventually found a Jewish State. It is up to them now; we have given them their opportunity,’ Balfour was to say three months later. The Arabs, who greeted the declaration with ‘bewilderment and dismay,’ came to regard it as a (negative) milestone, an act of betrayal. Thereafter, no matter what the British did to the contrary, the Arab world was to regard London as the protector and facilitator of Zionism.

The British had been driven by Zionist lobbying, spearheaded by the able, charming Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Jewish chemist who had made Britain his home. But Weizmann had been preaching to the converted to the extent that many in the imperial cabinet, including Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Balfour himself, had long been philo-Zionists, for Protestant religious and humanitarian reasons. To be sure, there had also been imperial concerns: a British-created Jewish state might help guard the eastern approaches to that vital waterway, the Suez Canal, only recently imperilled by the Turks. And empowering the Jews in Palestine might reap rewards among the Jews of the United States and Russia, whose goodwill the British wanted, against the backdrop of World War I, either to acquire or sustain. – Yale University Press; 2008, pp. 9, 10.

For the USSR, the establishment of Israel and its communal-based society (*kibbutz*) offered a tantalizing prospect of a friendly socialist outpost at the heart of the oil-rich Middle East, the stamping ground of Anglo-American interests since the Second World War. But the Russians were to be disappointed in this regard; Israel proved to be more akin to a *western democracy, in many ways quite at odds in philosophy, religion and national politics with the Arab territories that surrounded it.* [fn3]

The British Mandate had provided the scaffold for Jewish independence. Agricultural co-operatives dating back to the early 1900s (*kevutzah* [pre-state Israel]), managed and run by Jewish settlers eventually more or less made the desert bloom as the rose. The formal establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 was thus the culmination of about 70 years of effort involving big-power politics, religious and secular Zionism, two world wars, and Hitler's satanic brutality towards the Jews in the Holocaust.

Many of the countries that now comprise the United Nations give lip-support to the 'notion' of Israel and many have enacted laws against blatant acts of anti-Semitism. However, should Israel proceed with its declared objective to obliterate Gaza, we may expect that diplomacy in various capitals, triggered by massive street protests from Muslim and non-Muslim populations, will lurch to open hostility against Jewish people in general, and national Israel in particular. Israel will be as 'a burdensome stone' (Zech. 12: 3). Fidelity by the West to Tel Aviv, shallow as it is, will evaporate. Israel will come to be loathed – her 'lovers' will desert her (Jer. 30: 14; *comp.* v. 15). Should she assault Gaza with a level of genocidal violence that prompts revulsion in the wider world, Israel may find the 'two-state solution' imposed against her will. [fn4]

1945: America Steps Up

The United States has long since set aside the advice of President George Washington, who in his Farewell Address of 1796 warned against 'interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangl[ing] our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice'. But standing at the portal of the Nuclear Age this nascent American empire would embark on a permanent rivalry with any and all foreign powers deemed inimical to its own national interests and ambitions, forming alliances to suit the imperatives of the time, eventually spanning the globe with military bases, operated in tandem with host countries willing to yield some degree of sovereignty to the U.S.

From the early 1950s the United States became a shadow European power, *more influential in north and west Europe than the European states themselves*. This trend reshaped post-war Europe and influenced the development of social policies and cultural trends across the Continent by way of its embassies and, especially, by U.S. private corporations. Through its programmes of financial aid, the U.S. helped European states rebuild their infrastructure and heavy industry. The new world and the old merged, locked in a common destiny. Israel was seen as a natural ally, even for Germany. Though far removed by geography, Israel would identify itself as a western power, becoming an outpost of the United States in particular, from which arise the knotty complexities that now present themselves in the Gaza question. When the American government says they 'have Israel's back' they mean it.

A Conundrum: The Israel/Gentile Alliance

Though modern Israel is by rights a sovereign, independent nation, she is not free to act as she

might. *She is circumscribed by the Gentile pre-eminence in world affairs*, particularly by the role of an imperial United States, which may exert political, diplomatic and economic pressures against her to comply *with its own national interests*. Indeed, since 1948 the U.S. has subsidised Israel with weaponry and billions of dollars in aid annually. Despite her regional dominance *Israel is still the tail and not the head* (Deut. 28: 13; Ezra 9: 1, 2). *And so long as Israel draws strength from a Gentile power she is compromised.* [fn5] Complete liberation for the Jewish nation will not come until the nations of this world complete the ransacking of their own institutions, after which they will turn on her.

Concluding Remarks

At the middle of the 20th century, the destiny of a newly-born Israel and a brash U.S. – the latter battle-hardened and as rich as Croesus – coincided, as if scripted by Fate. These two, one the upper, the other the nether stone, will, in the fulness of prophetic time, serve as the fulcrum of world-wide distress that will grind the social order to bits, scattering it to the winds of revolution and anarchy. For Israel, however, the afterglow betokens deliverance. Following its chastisement at the Divine hand, through Jacob's Trouble, a converted, redeemed Israel will rise above the nations of the earth and fill the role predicted for it by the Most High (Isa. 2: 1-3):

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people 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.

Notes

[fn1] After Britain relinquished her role of midwife to Israel's re-birth she effectively sealed her own demise. The U.S. would henceforth occupy the office which Britain vacated. Referring to *Pax Britannica* and her prior history of involvement in the Near (Middle) and Far East, one American general is reported to have said 'it's now our turn to bat in Asia'. He probably did not have cricket in mind.

[fn2] Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army With Two Masters 1944-45*, Spellmount (publisher); 2009, ISBN-978-1-86227-423-5

[fn3] This fact goes some way to explain the predicament Israel faces, especially with regard to their neighbours in the Middle East. The cultural and religious differences contribute in no small part to the friction between them. These can be overcome with good will, but Israel got off to a bad start, as noted above. What is hard to digest for her neighbours is the unique nature of Judaism and its (proper) insistence that Jews are the chosen people in a land bequeathed to them by the Most High from ancient times. Perhaps Palestinian Christians also stumble at this assertion. For this group their lot is doubly difficult when their own families are split over religion. How can such a one love a Jewish soldier who threatens your life?

[fn4] Since the beginning of the US-Russia war, centred in Ukraine, the European powers have been in economic, industrial and social decline. Clients of the U.S. and too weak to act independently of their patron, they find themselves steered by Washington. Amongst their humiliations was the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipeline in September 2022. As investigative journalist and Seymour Hersh has revealed, the U.S. was the culprit. Nonetheless, the German government is unwilling or afraid to acknowledge what happened –

though President Biden inadvertently signalled in advance that this sabotage would be done. It remains to be seen how much longer European unity can hold, especially if the Israel-Hamas war unleashes further economic distress.

[fn5] The Israeli Air Force (IAF) has been joined with the U.S. for some years, waging war on Syria. U.S. forces, numbering at least 2,000, currently squat illegally on Syrian land in the North East, extracting oil and exporting it.

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