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LESSONS THE ARABS TAUGHT

A WELL-KNOWN preacher of the “guilty Israel” doctrine recently unburdened his soul in a lecture in Los Angeles. Mr. Amos Oz was the propounder some years ago of a chilling parallel between the Jewish people and the Palestinian Arabs.

The Jews of Israel, to whom he was referring, were on the one hand survivors of the Holocaust – whose root cause was the curse of *galut*, the absence of any Jewish sovereignty; and on the other hand, the three-quarters-of-a-million who were driven out or fled from the Arab states to the haven of Jewish statehood.

The Arabs he was referring to were those who left Palestine in 1948 at the behest of the leaders of the Arab states – who wanted a clear field for eliminating the Jewish population and preventing the establishment of the Jewish state.

When they failed in those purposes, they not only did not settle their Palestinian brothers in their own vast territories but kept as many as possible in refugee camps, with the declared intent of using them ultimately to destroy Israel from within.

Then there were those Arabs who, after the failure of a second attempt to destroy Israel in 1967, remained in their towns and villages in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, but came under Israeli rule.

Oz repeatedly painted a picture of these Jews and Arabs – the Jews, safe on a raft, denying its safety to Arabs floundering in the sea.

It was a picture most pleasing to all the bleeding hearts in the West who might previously have had a conscience over their government’s part, before and during World War II, in preventing Jews from escaping the Holocaust. They certainly were not interested in probing what relationship Oz’s description bore to the realities, nor why a Jewish writer should project so historic a mendacity.

Now Mr. Oz has told a Hillel Club audience of a new discovery: “I have been personally involved,” he said, “in private conversations with prominent Palestinians in Europe and the administered territories, and I have learned to my sorrow that often the same people who, in private conversation in English over a cup of coffee in London or Paris, talk sense – the very next day, in a speech to their own people repeat the wildest ideas of the PLO about the need to exterminate Israel.

“To my regret I have learned over the years that the statements they make in Arabic are a thousand times more important than what they are likely to whisper in the ears of people who are eager for peace.”

Oz confessed that the Palestinians’ obstinacy made it difficult for him to persist in his “dovish” views or to disseminate them (*Ha’aretz*, January 28, 1985).

His admirers will no doubt follow with interest his efforts to overcome this disability.

AN EARLIER CONFESSOR – also to a Los Angeles audience – was Mordechai Bar-On (like Oz, a Peace-Now propagandist). He unburdened himself last March during his much-publicized campaign to whitewash Muhammad Milhem, former mayor of Halhul and PLO front-man, who had been banished for his public incitement to violence against Jews and the State of Israel.

Mr. Bar-On, apparently in response to pressure from a lively audience – one of whose members tape-recorded the proceedings – confessed that, for all his friendship with Milhem, he was “very suspicious of what the Palestinians had in mind.”

“The indications of hope,” he said, “are very occasional.” The signs of change in the Palestine camp, and those not in the whole Palestinian camp, are doubtful, hazy, unclear.

“After all, the PLO came into existence in 1964, three years before the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and its objective meant the ‘liberation’ of Tel Aviv.”

Moreover, he added, “PLO materials spoke repeatedly, and some still do, in terms of the annihilation of Israel.”

To *his* dilemma, however, he had already found a solution. He assured his audience, in spite of what he had just said, that there *was* hope, and “it lay in people like Mr. Milhem.”

THE IMPORTANCE of Bar-On’s and Oz’s opinions – which they now presumably realize were based on false and dangerous assumptions – lies not so much in themselves but in that they represent a mood, indeed a mode of thought, that has coloured Jewish political action ever since the days of deep *galut*.

Among its main ingredients is wishful thinking, a recoil from harsh reality, a retreat into delusion.

In the 1930s, it was exemplified by the resistance of leaders and people in Eastern Europe to Jabotinsky’s urgent warning that there was no future for them in Europe; that their only hope of salvation lay in “evacuation.

Since 1947, it has found expression in the illusion that the Arabs are, in fact, interested in peace with an existent Jewish state, and that only the failure to find the formula for its size prevents such peace. Hence the acceptance of the grotesque partition proposal of 1947 and, ever since, the repeated offers of “compromise,” a giving-up here, a giving-in there, a giving back elsewhere. This spirit continues to influence relations with Egypt.

A new development has illumined once more the reality of the hoax of the peace treaty. Its hero is Abba Eban, a veteran practitioner in the sowing of illusions.

Last spring he visited Egypt for talks with President Hosni Mubarak and other leaders. From his own report, it emerged that he had had cozy talks with them about the prospect of a Likud defeat in the elections, and that they were looking forward to a Labour victory and to an abandonment of Israeli “obstinacies.” Eban manifestly did not discourage them in their hope.

He clearly did not spoil the friendly atmosphere even to mention Egypt’s failure from the outset to fulfill most of the terms of the peace treaty; that the 40-odd agreements arising out of the treaty, designed to promote the practical development of commercial, cultural and other day-to-day relations, had – by Egypt’s non-performance – remained a dead letter; that the campaign of vilification of Israel had never ceased (a flagrant breach of the treaty), signifying Cairo’s intention not to guide the public to thoughts of peace with Israel and rather to perpetuate attitudes of hatred and contempt – precisely as in pre-treaty days.

He also did not ask his hosts how it was that Egypt continued to make – or support – public proposals whose intent was, to put it diplomatically, not consistent with the continued existence of the State of Israel.

The interview he gave on his return (*Davar*, April 11, 1984) reflected deep satisfaction at the *rapport* which he felt he had established with the Egyptian leaders. Their reaction to his visit was not reported.

It was only nine months later that they found the opportunity to give expression to their reciprocal feelings for Mr. Eban, and then they went out of their way to show the degree of their respect for him.

At the international Book Fair in Cairo, they gave books by Abba Eban special treatment. They had them thrown out.

IN A RADIO INTERVIEW this week, Eban banteringly claimed that it was the Egyptians' loss: the books were good. No doubt; but does it not occur to him to analyse why the Egyptians are so nasty, why they behave with such contempt? Why they have emptied the peace treaty of most of its content (apart, that is, from accepting Sinai), and why they promote anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda. The "whys" are numerous.

Is it not time, after so much experience, and even if only under the inspiration of the personal affront offered him, that Eban and his fellow believers realize that behind Egyptian attitudes and behaviour lies the unchanging Arab-Moslem doctrine that no infidel, non-Arab national independence may be tolerated in the Arab-Moslem "world"; that peace and peaceful co-existence with Israel is not permissible; that a peace "treaty" may be signed only as a tactic to create a more favourable opening position for the next round of the struggle for her elimination; and that it be observed only to the minimum degree possible in the given circumstances.

As to the condescension and contempt repeatedly demonstrated by Egypt's leaders and media – it stems, after all, from traditional attitudes to non-Moslem, second-class citizens; and it is reinforced by uninvited gestures of friendship.

This is a lesson that should be learned not only by Mr. Eban. The Bar-Ons and the Ozes need it just as much.