

RZ and HZ: A Crucial Distinction

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“To sin by silence, when they should protest, makes cowards of men.”

—Abraham Lincoln

“Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out.”

—Mohandas Gandhi

“Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence.”

—Leonardo da Vinci

“Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor.”

—Ginetta Sagan

“If I were to remain silent, I’d be guilty of complicity.”

—Albert Einstein

The promotion of Humanitarian Zionism (HZ) is predicated on the unequivocal and explicit rejection of Revisionist Zionism (RZ). Indeed, it is impossible to support humanism without denouncing anti-humanism. Put another way: One cannot fight for human rights without loudly and clearly protesting all crimes against humanity. We must always recognize that silence about injustice is tantamount to complicity in its perpetration. Therefore, part of promoting HZ is taking a firm, principled stand against anything based on RZ.

In order to champion HZ, it is crucial to point out not only THAT RZ is morally reprehensible, but WHY RZ is morally reprehensible. Only then can we fully recognize the virtue of HZ. I have articulated the distinction between the two visions / versions of “Zionism” elsewhere. Here, I want to review this distinction and elaborate on a few key points. As with medical doctors, it is first imperative to accurately diagnose the disease before one can prescribe the best remedy.

The fathers of RZ included Vladimir Jabotinsky and Benzion Netanyahu—men who subscribed to an ethnocentric worldview, indulged in anti-goyem bigotry, and engaged in sanctimonious calls for racial purity. These men failed to recognize that ethnic exceptionalism is a horrific thing—**regardless of who is doing it**. Those who have succumbed to the trappings of RZ have gone far beyond what would have been a perfectly legitimate cause (finding a place in the world where Jews would be safe from oppression and persecution), and have—instead—opted to engage in a despicable enterprise that shamelessly brokers routine crimes against humanity. As a matter of course, denizens of the RZ mindset now seek domination more than merely a safe refuge—thereby betraying the spirit of Zionism as originally conceived.

Zionism has undergone an extensive metamorphosis since it was first proposed by the Austro-Hungarian, Theodor Herzl, in 1897. We should recall that, initially, Zionism was a SECULAR movement. Herzl's vision was marginally flawed (as it was fixated on a particular piece of real estate based on Biblical folklore), but was nevertheless a legitimate endeavor—given the dire circumstances under which it was formulated.

Understandably, Herzl wanted to find refuge for a people that had endured persecution for centuries. This was an enterprise we should all endorse. The proposal involved an “Aliyah”—a strategic re-location of the persecuted group to an area in Canaan—a safe haven. It was an area that Jewish lore deemed to be a special tract of land. Alas, what may have otherwise been a noble cause (resisting anti-Semitism) was eventually transformed into something that committed many of the very crimes it (rightfully) indicted. This perverse irony is lost on RZ ideologues.

The postulation of HZ says that there is a respectable (pro-human) Zionism that is possible—an endeavor that should be endorsed by all decent people the world over. The endeavor is predicated NOT on the exceptionalism of a certain race or religious group, but on UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS. That is to say, HZ is in keeping with humanism—even as it happens to “focus” on a subset of the human race.

What RZ does not seem to grasp is that Jews don't matter any more or any less than any other ethnic group...and that the death or suffering of a goy is just as unacceptable (and tragic) as the death or suffering as a Jew. HZ offers a Zionism that recognizes these elementary moral truths. By stark contrast, RZ adamantly rejects these truths. RZ does this unapologetically...in favor of an agenda that disregards the value of the lives of those not in the anointed group. RZ strives to secure things to one group of people by denying those things to others. In other words, RZ commits many of the egregious moral transgressions it purports to be against.

Indeed, one can't call another group out for its demands for racial purity, then in the very next breath make the same demand oneself. Moreover, one can't indict another group for claiming itself to be uniquely privileged (“chosen by god”, and thus of a higher priority than anyone else)...then turn around and do the exact same thing. In sum: One can't make a morally repugnant formula noble by just filling in the blanks differently. The formula ITSELF must be categorically dismissed. (Aryan supremacy isn't wrong because it's ARYAN supremacy; it's wrong because it involves SUPREMACY. The Holocaust wasn't horrific because JEWS were exterminated; it was horrific because HUMANS were exterminated. It's those who make such issues about race that are the culprits—regardless of the race.)

For precisely this reason, the Likud Party, AIPAC, and other RZ organizations have forfeited their right to be taken seriously by any decent human being. A crime against humanity, a

humanitarian atrocity, a massacre of innocent civilians: such things are indefensible no matter whom the culprit might be and no matter whom the victims might be. RZ refuses to recognize this crucial fact...while HZ is based upon it. In all other contexts, this insight is a matter of common sense...yet too often we discard the insight the moment it proves inconvenient for our own (tribal) interests. The term for this is “hypocrisy”.

HZ is, in part, predicated on Kant’s Categorical Imperative. Unlike RZ, HZ says that ALL human beings matter—regardless of race or religion. On this matter, the text within EVERY holy book is completely beside the point. Consequently, HZ says to ALL parties: “Leave your religion at the door, for the present purpose, and, together, let’s formulate a solution that transcends all our differences.”

Ironically HZ is actually more wide-ranging than RZ. It is more in the interest of all Israelis, it is more conducive to the security and safety of all Jews, and it is better for everyone the world over.

In essence, HZ calls for a **global Israel**. “Zionism” (understandably) calls for a safe haven for those of Hebrew ethnic lineage—a place where Jews can embrace their heritage and be free from any oppression / persecution. ANY ethnic group should want this, and EVERY ethnic group has a right to get it. But no ethnic group should expect to get it at the expense of another ethnic group (i.e. by sacrificing another group’s entitlement to the exact same privilege).

A key point here is that such a refuge should not be limited to a certain place (i.e. a designated tract of land in Canaan). Rather, the safe haven should be everywhere. In other words: **The ENTIRE WORLD, in this sense, should be “Israel”**. But here’s the catch: Understood this way, “Israel” is not defined as a “Jewish State”.

Establishing “Jewish State” is entirely beside the point at hand. Such a thing is a myopic, divisive, racially-based conception of “Israel”—a conception that could only possibly create division, resentment, and enmity. (We’d say precisely the same thing about calls for an “Aryan Nation”...and do so **for the exact same reason**.) The world community is obligated to recognize a given nation as a sovereign nation, not as anything beyond that, regardless of its internal policies and mythologies.

Instead, “Israel” must be understood in the cosmopolitan sense: as a realm in which ALL humans are guaranteed sanctuary from social injustices. In a humanitarian-oriented Zion, every human being is seen (and thus treated) first and foremost AS A FELLOW HUMAN BEING. With HZ, it is our common humanity, not the disparate historical legacies, that trumps all else. The consequence of this is unavoidable: Only a pluralistic, cosmopolitan Israel is a legitimate Israel. No other conception is acceptable.

With all this in mind, it becomes quite obvious that HZ could not possibly have entertained the prospect of, say, an Operation Cast Lead—or any of the other atrocities that have been perpetrated in the name of “Israeli Security”. There is a better Zionism than a radical right-wing version. It is time that the global community—including all Arab nations—work to ensure that a pro-human Zionism prevails (prevails, that is, over the appalling policies that have dominated the IG since 1967).

“But wait!” might come a reply. “If Israel is for EVERYONE, then what does ‘Israel’ even mean?” In other words: What’s the point of Zionism if it’s just a synonym for cosmopolitanism / humanism? This is a valid concern for anyone searching to establish a worthwhile definition of “Israel”.

The crux of HZ is that a legitimate conception of Zionism is an ASPECT OF cosmopolitanism / humanism—namely: the aspect that pertains to those of Jewish heritage / decent. In other words, the point of Zion is to establish a domain—ideally, the entire globe—where those of a certain heritage (i.e. Jewish) can embrace that heritage without interference from anyone who is not part of that heritage (i.e. goyim). The “catch”, though, is that this is a two-way street. Goyim must be afforded the exact same privilege, for the exact same reasons. A humane conception of Zionism, then, must be compatible with cosmopolitanism / humanism. (RZ, it should be pointed out, insists that Zionism can only ever be mutually exclusive with universal human rights.)

“But hold on a minute,” the reply may persist. “How does a JEWISH nation/State fit into that model?” The answer is: It doesn’t. No respectable nation / State is to be defined by a particular ethnic group. “Ok, fine. Fair enough. But then where in the HZ vision does ‘Israel’ per se actually fit in?” This is an important question. The answer is relatively straight-forward.

A sovereign nation that is in keeping with human rights AND Jewish heritage does not necessarily have to be officially called “Israel”. In order for “Israel” (in the profound sense) to exist in a meaningful way, it exists within the context of a nation that goes beyond MERE Zionism (in the narrow sense). After all, “Israel” exists first and foremost as a noble ideal. Conceived of legitimately, Zion is an ideal that is compatible with the global community, Arabs and Hebrews alike...not to mention Christians, secularists, and any other homo sapiens.

With this vision, a so-called “bi-national” State could be called “Canaan”—a neutral term that has no undertones of tribal exceptionalism, no negative historical baggage, nor any hints of ethnic chauvinism. Canaan would be Zion / Israel for the Jewish citizens. Meanwhile, it would be Palestine insofar as the Arab / Muslim citizens were concerned. **Both perspectives can exist in harmony**...so long as universal human rights are recognized. This is not an intractable goal; it is not mere speculation. We know this because **this scenario has been seen before**. There is no reason it can’t exist again. HZ is the effort to bring this state of affairs about. There is absolutely nothing quixotic about making Zionism consummate with humanism.

In this way, anti-Semitism would be tolerated no more, and no less, than bigotry against goyim—no matter where one happened to be in Canaan, be it Tel Aviv or Gaza. The life of a Muslim / Arab would be just as important and sacrosanct as the life of a Jew. Such a model is so simple (and so obvious) that it is remarkable that it is not articulated more often in our public discourse.

“Even still...” one might continue to protest, “Don’t you think you’re over-simplifying things?” Au contraire, HZ is eschewing the self-righteous, simple-minded, Manichean worldview endemic to RZ. The standard “team A vs. team B, lionize one and vilify the other” approach has only led to disaster (mostly for innocent Palestinian civilians). Indeed, the “us vs. them” mentality is highly dysfunctional. Embracing HZ means recognizing that the best solutions are not always easy, that moral rectitude is often inconvenient, and that tribal interests must be subordinated to universal principles. NOBODY likes to hear this, of course, but it’s what most adults eventually come to understand. (This is, after all, the mark of maturity and probity.) Certain things transcend cultural

differences.

With all this in mind, an HZ movement would fight for the security of ALL people, Palestinian AND Israeli, Arab AND Hebrew, subscriber to Islam AND subscriber to Judaism alike. HZ would not deprive ANYONE of fundamental human rights. Therein lies the rub: Goy and Jew must live together as fellow human beings, not as members of two irreconcilable tribes. To fight for Palestinian security more than Israeli security is just as wrong as fighting for Israeli security more than Palestinian security—because either disparity is wrong FOR THE SAME REASON.

When HZ prevails, never would the crimes of certain members of a given group be held against the entire group. Never would someone be forced to incur penalties or deprivations simply because he was a member of the same racial / religious demographic as those who perpetrate iniquity. Collective punishment is the flip-side of collective privilege: one entails the other. Therefore, both are unfounded and indefensible.

The RZ refuses to admit that Jews are not any more important than goyim. Based on that fact alone, RZ must be repudiated as morally repugnant.

HZ would not for a moment allow a single person—no matter what their race / religion—to suffer or to be oppressed...or to be denied basic human dignity, safety, education, civil rights, potable water, freedom of movement, and access to rudimentary healthcare. HZ would operate on the following maxim: The freedom / security of one group of people must never come at the expense of the freedom / security of another group. **Civil rights know no tribal distinctions.** Therefore, a JUST Israel can't ever base policy on tribal distinctions.

Consequently, in order to promote HZ, it is necessary to speak up and take a stand against the reprehensible doctrines of RZ—even if taking such a stand goes against the powers that be. As Abraham Lincoln noted: "If there is anything that links the human to the divine, it is the courage to stand by a principle when everybody else rejects it." It is vital, then, that the distinction between RZ and HZ be elucidated and acknowledged...by all parties. Until such a distinction is made loud and clear, a moral solution in Canaan will continue to elude us.

To reiterate: None of this is unrealistic or "pie in the sky". It is all eminently reasonable and practicable. It just needs to be DONE. "You're being too idealistic" is—and has always been—the excuse of the moral and intellectual coward.

It is in order to conclude with the sage words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it." As the epigrams preceding this essay make clear, Lincoln, Gandhi, and Einstein would all agree.

ANCILLARY NOTE:

It must be recalled by ALL parties in the so-called Israel-Palestine conflict that freedom OF religion and freedom FROM religion are logical corollaries of one another. The former can't exist without the latter. In other words, MY freedom "of" religion is predicated on my freedom "from" YOUR religion...and vice versa. Insofar as I do not have complete freedom FROM your religion, I am deprived of my freedom OF religion. This is not rocket science; it is common sense.

In order to maintain an omni-symmetrical "freedom of conscience", the boundary conditions for any given person's prerogative must exist independently of any religion—not be a **function of**

religion. In other words, the boundary conditions are meta-religious in nature. The moment one person's religiosity impinges on another person's prerogative to conduct himself according to his own religiosity, that omni-symmetry is broken. The implications of this are quite clear: The only possible democratic State is a categorically meta-religious (i.e. secular) State. The moment a State privileges one religion (or race / ethnicity) above another, it ceases to be genuinely democratic.

There is a very important difference between RZ and HZ. We are all, in the end, forced to pick one or the other. In the immortal words of Elie Wiesel: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." We might ask: Who has—by far—been more systematically tormented in Canaan?

END NOTE:

A common complaint leveled against the HZ vision is that it too cavalierly requests that all parties "leave their religion at the door", even if just for a moment, in order to resolve the mess in Canaan. "It's just not that easy," religionists on either side protest.

Indeed, for many involved in the region, such a magnanimous gesture would most likely not be easy. But just because something is not easy doesn't mean that it shouldn't be done. Indeed, **there is simply no other way**. What should make it easier for ALL religionists is the knowledge that everyone else involved in the predicament is agreeing to do the same thing. ("When I do it, I can rest assured that all other parties have agreed to do it too, and it's not easy for them either.")

This gesture is vital for the "we're all in this together" approach to work. HZ requires that a resolution is NEITHER a function of the Koran NOR of the Torah (any more than it would be a function of Dianetics or the Book of Mormon). HZ can't possibly be predicated on either holy book, so it must proceed from neither.

The radicals on BOTH "sides" of the conflict refuse to recognize this fundamental fact. Such pathological obstinacy has sabotaged all efforts to formulate and implement an equitable resolution. (As usual, it's the radicals on BOTH sides that ruin things for everyone else.)

That said, as is often the case in conflicts, the culpability and responsibility are not symmetrical. Indeed, with Israel-Palestine, there is a gigantic disparity of transgression AS WELL AS a gigantic power asymmetry. Therefore, the onus is clearly on the side of the IG to take all necessary measures to rectify things. (This, of course, does not exempt Palestinians from the same moral responsibilities.)

Noble efforts to denounce RZ have come from +972 and other sources. Meanwhile, it is incumbent for Palestinian Rights activists to likewise denounce—loudly and clearly—ANYTHING that reeks of anti-Semitism within their own movement. Taking a stand against ALL forms of bigotry is pivotal, whether in one's own "camp" or in the other's. (One of the most significant ways the Palestinian Rights movement has shot itself in the foot is that it has often abdicated the moral high ground by tolerating Anti-Semitism...and not speaking out loudly enough against the Palestinian's share of terrorism. That it is—by far—the minority share doesn't make it any more valid.)

In the words of Frederick Douglass: "Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are people who want crops without plowing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a

moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” It’s time to start making demands. Anything less is complicity in systematic crimes against humanity.