



RZ and HZ: A Contrast of Two Visions

It is imperative that we contrast two starkly different visions for “Israel”—each of which entails a dramatically different way forward. Rarely are the two visions articulated. The distinction between the two is vast, yet we rarely acknowledge that they both exist. Each vision represents a different value system. It is therefore necessary to understand each alternative in order to determine which way forward shall be chosen. Revisionist (i.e. right-wing) Zionism is a tribalistic version of Zionism. Humanitarian Zionism is a cosmopolitan version of Zionism. The distinction must be recognized if we are to diagnose the problems in the Middle East that currently afflict us.

RZ is based on dogma (i.e. on the folklore of a particular clan) while HZ is based on universal principles (i.e. a basis that categorically transcends tribal divisions). Elucidating this fundamental difference is key to understanding present problems (reasons for the current conflict) and the best way forward (the way such conflicts may be resolved morally).

“The world is my country; to do good is my religion,” stated Thomas Paine, expressing the concept of species being that would later be coined by Marx. It is a Zionism of cosmopolitanism that those of Jewish ethnicity need, not the tribalism of “chosen people” based claims.

1947 involved a magnanimous—if not entirely endorsed—compromise by the indigenous population. Though not everyone concurred, the U.N. voted for it, as consolation for the horrible tribulations the Jews had recently endured. But that beneficent gesture from the world community wasn’t enough for some.

The 1967 borders were an even further encroachment on indigenous land, and so a further concession to the Jews. Since the 6 Days War, the Revisionist Zionists movement has sought to take yet EVEN MORE land while viciously oppressing the indigenous Palestinian population.

The 1947 partition of Palestine was fair—a reasonable division of the land effected to accommodate the influx of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution. The patrician afforded hundreds of thousands adequate real estate for a safe refuge in a location

their heritage deemed symbolic and sacred. What they didn't realize, however, is that theirs wasn't the only heritage that matters. They demanded more—and the 1967 borders were a further concession. To then demand EVEN MORE is patently ridiculous. To do so based on claims of divine Providence and being “the chosen people” is utterly perverse.

The parallels between RZ and Nazism have been discussed elsewhere, and need not be repeated. (The fascist elements of the Likud Party couldn't be more glaring.) Meanwhile, the probity of HZ has been articulated in several other essays. What I aim to do here is to juxtapose the two divergent approaches for protecting Jews from persecution and oppression. This juxtaposition is done in the hope that the contrast will help us discern what must be done vis a vis what must not be done. After all, the first step toward a proper prescription is a proper diagnosis.

HZ is based on the categorical imperative—putting no group of people above any other group of people at any time, anywhere. Here, all humans are treated as humans. Thus, to protect one group from persecution / oppression by persecuting / oppressing another group is an unacceptable move. This is what consistent application of principles entails. As universal principles categorically transcend any given group's agenda / doctrine, and are not grounded in dogma, such a consistent application only stands to reason.

RZ, on the other hand, is a form of tribalism. Tribal honor is a poor substitute for probity. False pride, chauvinism, and hubris often masquerade as noble virtues—even as they prove extremely seductive to those who lack rectitude. And so it goes—whenever something like RZ takes hold. There are those who MATTER, and those who DO NOT matter. It's that simple. The aggrandizement of the former is an end in itself, while the latter are expendable insofar as they pose as a burden. When the subaltern population proves inconvenient toward that final end, they will be summarily vilified, then erased from the equation in the name of protection / security of the in-group. This formula has been used before, many times in history, in various places. RZ is one of the most recent instances.

These are two different visions of Zionism. We must choose which one is to be supported. Each choice entails drastically divergent courses of action in “resolving” the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Each is based on fundamentally different value systems. If we fail to grasp the dysfunction of RZ and the virtues of HZ, a moral resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem will remain out of reach.



R.Z. vs. H.Z.:

Someday, someone should ask Bill Kristol or Benjamin Netanyahu the simple question: “Do you care about the life of an innocent Palestinian civilian as much as you care about the life of an innocent Israeli civilian?” If he answers in the affirmative, he should promptly be reminded that actions speak louder than words.

The Emergency Committee for Israel, an R.Z. propaganda factory launched by Bill Kristol and other neoconservative ideologues, represents the degree to which R.Z. has gone from absurd (i.e. AIPAC) to completely preposterous. That is, R.Z. has shifted rightward, from obstinate ideology to outright pathology, while maintaining its air of self-righteousness. In fact, R.Z. has shifted SO FAR to the right that moderately right-wing organizations like J-Street have come to appear “left” by comparison. Here is the Overton Window applied to Israeli Policy—having shifted so far to the right that humanism is now completely off the chart.

When the Overton Window is positioned so radically to the right, Humanitarian Zionism seems downright anti-Semitic...which is PRECISELY the goal of R.Z. propaganda. Eliminate it by stigmatizing it. The outcome of this process: The range of debate spans from fanatical support for I.G. policy to slightly tempered support for I.G. policy. J-Street, then, is nothing more—and nothing less—than watered-down R.Z.—masquerading as THE ONLY viable alternative to full-fledged R.Z.

In reality, J-Street has done little to broaden the drastically-constricted U.S. debate over Israel/Palestine. Consequently, to position oneself less to the right than J-Street is to essentially commit heresy—and thus to court pogroms. In this scheme, humanism becomes utterly taboo. Noble organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace are no longer even on the map. Demands that Zionists withdraw illegal settlements from occupied territory (any place beyond the 1967 borders)—completely reasonable—have become unheard of in MSM.

Meanwhile, few people have the integrity to openly and candidly call the Likud Party a racist organization—the leaders of which are guilty of crimes against humanity. One wonders: How is this state of affairs possible? ANY other instance of such flagrant persecution, wanton slaughter, relentless oppression and brutal occupation would be a scandal of massive proportions. In other cases of the same phenomenon, we’d hear strident protest. Of any hostile retaliations undertaken by the oppressed and persecuted people, most impartial observers would say, “Though two wrongs don’t make a right, it’s NO WONDER they’re fighting back. They’re desperate, they’re

dying, and they have no other recourse.”But the moment we see such a phenomenon involving the I.G. as perpetrator, such a common-sense view is often abandoned.Impartiality suddenly becomes anathema...as if a magical spell has been cast.

Listening to Israeli human rights group B’Tselem or the U.N. rapporteur on human rights has become something WEIRD to do.Israeli impunity for violations of international law is thus given free reign.In a civil society that claims to value democratic ideals, this is patently unacceptable.Once we look at the scenario from a Rawlsian O.P. (with a “veil of ignorance”), and apply Kant’s categorical imperative, we see that R.Z. becomes utterly untenable.Meanwhile, H.Z. addresses any legitimate concerns that those of Jewish ethnicity may have—all while stopping the destruction of human life in Palestine.

The only hope for Palestinians AND Jews remains a better articulation of the alternative to R.Z.: Humanitarian Zionism.This is the only morally-informed approach to the problems that have gone on for too long in the region.The more that people become aware of H.Z., the sooner the problems will be solved.

H.Z. is universal.Its position transcends all racial distinction.It says that Jews are perfectly entitled to their own “Zion”, but so are Arabs and blacks and any other group that has been viciously persecuted and oppressed in the past.If the blacks in South Africa started putting whites in Bantustans, we would stand up and say, “Just because someone once did it to you doesn’t give you the right to now do it to someone else.”Yet. R.Z. are putting Palestinians in Goyem Ghettos—the EXACT ANALOGUE of the places Jews were once forced to endure.If it was wrong for it to be done to the Jews, it is just as wrong for the Jews to do it to someone else.

We should recall that the so-called Golden Rule originated in Hebrew scripture, not in the New Testament.R.Z. should be reminded of this the next time they invoke their sacred texts.

The categorical imperative must be applied to ALL disputes—regardless of the identities of the parties involved.When the Jews in the ghettos fought back, in desperation, with violence, they were not accused of racism against goyem.This was for good reason.Why, then, do R.Z. use a different standard now that THEY have the upper hand in a conflict?

Understanding these points, we can evaluate the common excuse put forward by R.Z. apologists here in the U.S.: “Israel is our ally.”

There are two simple points to make about this ubiquitous statement:

First: Our ally for WHAT, exactly? The I.G. is a strategic military ally, for obvious reasons (geographical location). That Israel is situated in the Middle East, in proximity to oil lands on which we depend economically, renders the country important with respect to THAT matter. But above and beyond this, in what sense is the I.G. the ally of the U.S.? Based on what foreign policy principles that exist independently of economic / military interests?

Do we put pragmatism above principle? Do what degree? At who's expense? Do we put economic interests over human rights? Do what degree? At who's expense? Anything goes, it seems, in the name of ally-hood.

Second: This seems to insinuate / imply: "Our ally, right or wrong." That is to say: "It is a regime which must be automatically supported simply by dint of the fact that it is OUR strategic ally." In other words: By virtue of being our ALLY, whatever it does is BY DEFINITION legitimate. If this means compromising human rights, or jettisoning the categorical imperative, then so be it. Why? Because they are our ALLY...and allies are USEFUL.

Both points reveal how this common invocation is highly problematic. "Israel is our ally" becomes a moot point in any honest assessment of moral credence. The point is patently irrelevant, as it begs the question. We can always respond: "To what end? At what cost?" What, exactly, are we willing to compromise / sacrifice in the name of ally-hood? Underlying moral principles can be distilled once we elucidate what, exactly, is going on behind this lofty proclamation.

With Humanitarian Zionism, who is who's "ally" becomes a moot point. Moral principles aren't utilitarian / pragmatic in nature. Thus, ally-hood provides no action with any more or any less credence. Saddam Hussein was the U.S. government's "ally" throughout the 80's with regard to our economic agenda. What has this to do with the moral credence of Hussein's deeds? As we've seen far too many times, a regime can be a fantastically wonderful military / economic ally while at the same time being an utterly iniquitous regime.

In a twist of irony, it may be prudent to invoke Reagan's words: Humanism is "the last best hope of man on earth". It is the terms in which we can talk to Palestinian and Israeli alike, as they are both fellow human beings. This isn't about one or the



other camp in an ideological feud “winning”; this is a matter of what the Greek’s called agape. It’s a matter of doing what’s RIGHT, not picking sides—as if one tribe or the other had the monopoly on Truth.

A Palestinian life and an Israeli life are worth the same. ALL lives matter. Until the established order in the region reflects this truism, there will continue to be grave problems. As Reagan once said as President, “The success story of America is neighbor helping neighbor.” REALLY? Let’s put our money where our mouth is.

Humanist principles are the only answer to the predicaments we encounter in the Middle East. Neighbors aren’t defined by their ethnicity; they have their moral status as fellow human beings. Any policy not based on our shared humanity, that distinguishes between US and THEM based on race, forfeits its right to be taken seriously.

That J-Street is essentially just diluted R.Z. means that the furthest left any debate about the Middle East is allowed to go is significantly to the right of humanism. Humanism is thereby completely off the map—and thus off-limits in public discourse. It’s like limiting the debate about Civil Rights to a range of opinion spanning from the KKK (on the right end) to the Tea Party (on the left end). Certainly, we can do better.