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# DeProgram Program

*From the Mind of Sha'i ben-Tekoa**Transcript*<http://www.deprogramprogram.com>*Date: June 9, 2015 / כג סיון תשע"ה**Parasha: Shlach / שלח**Title: Jews in a Bubble***Copyright: Sha'i ben-Tekoa 2015****www.deprogramprogram.com**

*Shalom laYehudim, Shalom laBnai Noach, Shalom laGoyim.* It's the evening of the 4th day, *kaf-gimmel beSivan, tav-shin-ayin-beh, Parashas Shlach*, the evening of the 3rd day, Tuesday, 9 June 2015, webcasting from bubble Israel, Israel ruled by post-Jews who live in a bubble.

In Hebrew we speak here of the Tel-Aviv bubble, shorthand for the disconnect between radically secular Tel-Avivians and the rest of the country whose population, while not classically religious, nonetheless in their majority call themselves "traditional," meaning, they observe Passover Seder night and lately many more the one-day holy day of Shavuos. Most fast on Yom Kippur. Many observe some level of kashrut. The cliché about the Moroccans is their Friday evening family meal with Kiddush, and davening the next day, then they're off in their cars to the sports stadium to watch their favorite soccer team play.

This may represent the middle 60% of Israeli Jews. Twenty percent are thought to be full-fledged Shomer Shabbos, kashrut and tefillin-laying/wearing Jews, with the remaining twenty per cent the hard core secular, and it is in this quintile one finds the leaders of Israel.

For sure, the history of Zionism shows us that its leaders were post-religious in imitation of Western Europe's intellectuals over the previous century who had more or less lost their religious faith.

Indeed, there is an historical connection, even a curiosity, that the Jews were given citizenship at this time in Europe in revolutionary France, whose revolution was two-pronged. One rebellion was against the degenerate, landed nobility who paid no

taxes and also against, the other prong, the Church whose prelates were the brothers of the landed nobility and themselves the largest landowners in France. The Church was seen as corrupt, it was vandalized, clergymen were mocked. One evening in Notre Dame de Paris, the famous Cathedral in Paris, revolutionaries burst in, hundreds of them, men and women, and rolled in a kind of 20-foot tall Statue of Liberty-type paper mache sculpture of a woman whom the revelers called the Goddess of Reason and to them they would pray, no longer to Jesus, they said.

It was in this period in history when Christianity was rejected in the U.S. by four of the first five American presidents, as it had been before the Revolution in France by Voltaire and other French *philosophes*, as they called themselves. No longer Christians, they called themselves “philosophers,” and in this atmosphere, the Jews were liberated from the eternal homicide charge of having killed Jesus. When European intellectuals stopped believing that he was divine, the homicide charge lost its charge and went out the window.

Many Jews of course reveled in the citizenship that they began to enjoy, but discovered soon enough other blocks in society. Many of the free professions were run like medieval guilds and required professions of faith in Christianity to join. Early in the same 18<sup>th</sup> century, Isaac Newton at Cambridge University had to ask for and did receive a waiver from the King of England to teach there because a full-fledged professor, no matter the subject, had to be an ordained minister in the C of E, the Church of England. Newton refused to receive ordination but, because he was such a genius, he was given that royal waiver

So even a hundred years later in Europe following the Napoleonic Wars which spread the Emancipation of the Jews across the Continent, it was still an uphill struggle to survive in a society where the average man was light years behind the intellectuals. For the common man, hatred of the Jews had been his culture for over a thousand years and he resisted the Emancipation in many ways.

And so, paradoxically, in Germany, as the intellectuals their shed their religious faith, the Jews ran to get baptized, not because they believed in Christianity but as a legal formality giving them a chance to become doctors, lawyers, accountants, professors, etc. They converted in droves.

A generation later, though, they were still hated. In 1848, there were rebellions all over the Austro-Hungarian Empire by peoples wanting independence from the emperor and the freedom to live in a self-governing liberal democracy. And as part of this nationalist surge, there was even more hatred of Jews as the alien people within; the anti-nation nation. As a result, over the following ten years, a quarter-million German Jews emigrated to the United States.

And as the 19<sup>th</sup> century wore on, the hatred of the emancipated Jews did not abate, though it did mutate and only got worse. No longer was it religiously possible to hate Jews and society was centuries beyond the Halloween-style culture of believing in Black Magic that the Jews were once believed to practice.

What surfaced was new. Learned theses began to appear proposing to explain the hatred of Jews in academic-sounding, pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-ethnological ways, and eventually a name was given to this body of ideas and it was called antisemitism.

As a topic of public debate, the *Judenfrage*/the Jewish Question was as much in the news in the 1870s as today the world weeps over the crucifixion of the Ancient Palestinians by racist Jews and what to do about that. The 1870s was the period in which antisemitism took off and people wanted to know what to do about the Jews then.

In Vienna at this time, at the law school, there was one fraternity at least that would today be categorized as really liberal for it accepted Jews as fraternity brothers. Only, in mid-decade, that fraternity was affected by the rising noise of the fashionable antisemitic theorizing and the fraternity voted then to reverse its policy and go back to normal. No longer would they accept Jews, but return to excluding them. The ones currently in the fraternity, they decided, would be allowed to remain and complete their studies, but no new Jews would be accepted.

And one of those fraternity members allowed to continue was Theodor Herzl. It is Zionist mythology that Herzl became a Zionist when fifteen years after this, as a journalist stationed Paris, he witnessed and reported on the humiliation and imprisonment of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus the French Jewish army officer charged with treason. Dreyfus was even more assimilated than Herzl, and that is when, Zionist mythology says, he jumped on the idea of the Jews imitating the smaller nations in Europe in their nationalism and working toward an independent state in their desolate, ancient homeland.

Not quite. Herzl had grown up with antisemitism; he did not need Dreyfus to open his eyes to it. He had protested it in plays that he wrote for the theater. The Dreyfus Affair less shocked Herzl than finally persuaded him that there was no hope, as he had hoped, for reform in Europe and an end to the hostility. The Dreyfus scandal took place a century and more after Jews had been given citizenship in France, so this trial just proved the massive hatred was still around.

The situation was the similar in Germany at this time, really over all Europe. The Emancipation had clearly failed to end the hatred and the discrimination. Reform was not going to happen, so there was no choice but to leave Europe.

Thus Herzl, who was born in the second generation of Reform Judaism that was a cousin of the rejection of Christianity by Christians. He and his collaborators were thus really post-religious Jews. Even Reform Judaism which stripped the Jews of their outward signs of identity in a bid to end the hostility did not help.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Zionists then became broadly identified with the leftist approach to Zionism. Herzl thought of himself as a socialist. After his death in 1904, he was succeeded by the Anglophile, world-class chemist Dr. Chaim Weizmann, and then came Ben-Gurion, vs. the rightest followers of Jabotinsky who broke away from

Weizmann's leadership. They were capitalists, not socialists, 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal democrats and urban professionals. Still, what both sides shared was a distance from classical religious life.

Which brings us to the news story on Monday during the annual gabfest by major players at the Herzlia Conference when brand new Deputy Foreign Ministress Tsipi Hotovely spoke against the two-state solution, and one major reason in her mind was the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion is the foundation of the Jewish people's claim to all the land west of the Jordan River at least. She said so, and then was challenged by Dan Meridor, a former minister in various ministries in recent Likud governments, former right-hand man to Menachem Begin, as his father in pre-state days had been a close Begin associate in the underground Irgun. Today, though, like Tsipi Livni, Dan Meridor thinks about the Arabs pretty much like Yossi Beilin.

He objected to her remarks for bringing religion into the conflict with the "Palestinians" as he calls them, even though, again unlike his father, his father never did. Meridor protested that religious terms were never used in Zionism. He said, "If we want to speak in terms of justice, we must not turn Zionism, which is the most just movement of all national movements...into a movement for which justice isn't important, or that formulates religious terms on a divine promise."

And by justice he had in mind justice for the Balestinian refugees. He said, "In the entire Israeli declaration of independence no reference to G-d or religious rights to the land of Israel are made. It cites history and not the religion that explains that we left the land because we sinned and were exiled from it."

And I submit that in his words we can find the core of our current plight in the world as once again we have become the outcast of the nations.

\* \* (Musical Interlude) \* \*

So when it comes to Dan Meridor, his family biography is symbolic of the trajectory of a Jewish identity without religion, which is characteristic of secular Zionism and Bundism and other forms of so-called Jewish identity without the religion.

Meridor's father was likely the son or grandson of a religious Jew but the chain was broken and he became a nationalist of the Jewish people in the European mold.

But then son Dan, who started out life thinking like his father, imitated him most of all in throwing off his father's beliefs. Both rejected what came before. His father (or grandfather) threw off the religion and Dan threw off his father's Zionism.

The father was a Whole Land of Israel Jabotinskyite and here his son, as he spoke at the Herzlia, was calling for a "Palestinian state based on the 1949 lines with changes." In this, he sounded just like the antisemitic Barack Obama and Jeffrey Goldberg and Thomas Freidman, etc. He called on the Netanyahu government to submit a plan to the UN to establish a "Palestinian" state west of the river, with nary a nod to the religion of the people he was born into.

First of all, Meridor is wrong that the Israeli Declaration of Independence does not refer to G-d or religions. Yes, it does, not directly, but it most certainly does indirectly. Here is the first paragraph with its three brief sentences. “The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.”

And I ask, how does that Book of Books cited here as functionally the title deed to the country begin? The answer is simple: “In the beginning G-d...”

And then, after eleven chapters we read of the first conversation between G-d and Abraham, when the Almighty says to him, “Get thee to a land that I will show you...”

The framers of the declaration, dominated by the Left, most certainly did not want any reference to G-d but there was no avoiding it. Hold high the Bible as evidence of your identity and right to this Land, and what you are doing, like it or not, is referencing G-d.

The record of the debate on May 14, 1948 that afternoon between the drafters most certainly deals with their argument over including or excluding any reference to G-d, which record makes clear the importance therefore, willy-nilly, of religion to this people’s national identity if only by trying to exclude it. And in the end, a poetic Biblical euphemism was inserted, a reference to the “Rock of Israel.”

What Dan Meridor and his fellow denizens of the bubble cannot accept is that the Jewish national identity is as unique among national identities as Jewish history is unique among national histories. There is no nation alive today with such a history. We are unique in having outlived every and all nations that we came in contact with. What other people once a week reads from a book written down over 3,300 years ago and even more importantly lives by what is written in it, its commandments, all 613 of them?

What Meridor wants is what Tsipi Livni and Yossi Beilin want. To live as a normal people, and no normal Frenchman or Russian declares G-d gave his people their country.

It is the bubble Jews for whom Zionism was about transforming the Jews into a non-religious people in order that they be treated as normal and no longer be subjected to lunatic, homicidal bursts of inquisitions and pogroms and final solutions.

For Meridor, as for Livni and Beilin, to get along Israel has to go along with the consensus of wisdom in the family of nations these days, especially among the Europeans according to which, as the Jews were once guilty of killing that Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, today they are criminals for having stolen Palestine from the Palestinians and must return at least some of it.

In this Meridor is like his former fellow Likud member Netanyahu who at Bar Ilan agreed that the Balestinian nation deserves a state west of the river.

The difference is that Bibi knows that to be an impossibility from the perspective of Israel and its security needs, and today Defense Minister Yaalon said as much at the Herzlia Conference when he said that he foresaw no such Balestinian state in his lifetime.

Versus Meridor who though once a Minister of Intelligence seems perfectly unintelligent when it comes to thinking outside the bubble of his wishful thinking. He

wants a Balestinian state in Judea and Samaria and sees it as the solution to the statelessness of five million Arabs today called Ancient Ones. What he does not consider is that there is simply no room in Judea and Samaria for another 5 million Arabs. Is his crazy?

Also typical of such dejudaized Israelis is this implicit belief that there are Balestinians who want a state and one no bigger than Judea and Samaria and of course “only” half of Jerusalem. In his universe, the enemy is no more religious than he and his fellow denizens in the bubble. He is utterly blind to the reality that the Arabs, this pathetic, miserable horde of heavily illiterate barbarians, look to Islam as the only positive thing in their lives because it is the One Truth Faith, as they call it. It is the “correct religion,” as an Egyptian physician once told me with great self-assurance.

The paradox or even irony here that is so powerful is the clash between secular Zionism, which wanted to turn Jews into a non-religious people and Islam, whose only frame of reference for regarding secular Zionism is religious.

Meridor and Tsipi and Yossi can strive to strip themselves of the Jews’ national identity as a religious people, but quite simply our 550 million Muslim neighbors refuse to regard us this way. Secular Zionism has failed to end deranged antiJew thinking among them as the Emancipation also failed.

Dan Meridor in his society of Enlightened ones can define themselves without G-d all they want, but the rest of the world, especially the Muslim world, pays them no mind.

\* \* (Musical Interlude) \* \*

Yes, Zionism has been the struggle not to save the Jewish people but turn this people into something they are not and can never be. The Jews have survived not only over thousands of years of history but a history of endless cruel, sadistic, homicidal and lately genocidal violence precisely because their identity as a nation is uniquely anchored in the most profound religious convictions about life. No other people defines itself by religion as we do.

The quest by the secular Zionists to shed the Jewish religion and become normal is rooted in a profound ignorance of not only this people as suggested before but of its immediate enemies. Israelis like Meridor have yet to, as we say in Yiddish, *kbap* / “get it” in English, that the Arabs here are not interested the state that Meridor imagines they want. Their heritage is one in which wealth is not created – they don’t want to build a state -- but steal one.

Their national character is also obsessed with issues of dominance and submission. Their religion’s very name is called in Arabic “submission.” The Two-State delusionists like Meridor misread the Arabs terribly in thinking they would be satisfied with a land-locked, mini-state in Judea and Samaria and then turn into smiling, cooperative neighbors eager for a win-win relationship of harmony and cooperation with Israel.

These Arabs -- take a look at Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Yemen -- cannot live in peace with fellow Arabs, but with us Jews they are ripe for that kind of comfy relationship?

This ignorance and hostility to religion, the DNA of Jewish identity, according to the Israeli Declaration of Independence in its first three sentences, citing religion in the Book of Books, are at the root of our plight today faced not only by our Muslim neighbors but the Europeans as well who, if in not in the same style as in centuries past, still hate us.

Maybe you've seen advertisements for a book by Tuvia Tennenbaum called *Catch the Jew*. His first book was passing as a normal German – he has lived there for the past 33 years though born in Israel -- in order to uncover the vast tapestry of still extant Jew-hatred in in hat country. And this second book is about a similar imposture that he pulled off in Judea and Samaria when meeting lots of big shots and small shots in the guise of a German journalist. And what he discovered blew him away. He discovered -- what I have surmised without having evidence – is that Judea and Samaria are crawling with Europeans working for all these NGOs funded by European governments, whose task is to smear Israel with guilt for the injustices Israel perpetrates on the innocent, ancient Palestinians.

The cause of the Ancient Ones has become the new blood libel for contemporary Europeans, only, of course, Israelis like Meridor and even Bibi to a degree look away and deny the severity of this invasion of Jew-haters representing official European countries.

This flight from our core identity as Jews, which is religious, also accounts for a Times of Israel piece posted yesterday that I found as shocking as the author himself, one Josh Wander. The title was “Our National Disgrace” and the heart of it was his discovery that last week some 50 graves, headstones in the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mt. of Olives, were trashed and smashed and vandalized. What he found amazing, as I do, is less the fact of this vandalism than the absence of any reference to this crime in the MSM here. Nobody reported on it. Imagine 50 Jewish graves in a major Jewish cemetery anywhere in Europe and for sure the MSM here would carry the story.

But this crime last week and the silence surrounding it from official Israel is part of this unhealthy and misconstrued Israeli attitude toward Jewishness, *i.e.* the Jewish religion.

This ancient cemetery is also home to the remains of Jews who have died but whose families risk serious injury just going to visit. The Ishmaelites in the vicinity are constantly throwing stones at Jews, with official Israel doing little or nothing about it

This is why I find Tsipi Hotovely and Ayelet Shaked so refreshing for they address the core of the conflict as it really is and has always been. It is the timeless war of Islam against Jews, whose religion they say is an insult to Islam. They say Judaism is the theft of Islam. In the Koran, there are numerous verses in which the Jews are accused of “changing words all around,” which reflect the Muslim belief that the Koran is the original and accurate text brought down Mt. Sinai by Moses that the Jews “changed all around.”

Over the last two centuries, there have been various efforts made by Jews to re-work and re-fashion Jewish identity. For my late Bundist grandparents, they treasured the novels and poems and plays penned in Yiddish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, secular works. They valued the artists and the painters of Jewish extraction. They called themselves Yiddishists because they loved the language, and some even established a network of Shalom Aleichem Schools where the language of instruction was Yiddish in order to pass along the language

to their children and grandchildren. These schools were as irreligious and scornful of religion as Shalom Aleichem himself, the author of the Tobias the Dairyman stories adapted for the Broadway theater in *Fiddler on the Roof*, which opts for romantic love between Jew and gentile over the tradition of marrying within in order keep this people alive.

\* \* (Musical Interlude) \* \*

Last item in a separate but related story to the foregoing: the U.S. Supreme Court just ruled that an American Jew born in Jerusalem could not have a passport imprinted with “Jerusalem, Israel” as the place of the bearer’s birth, which is what the government attorneys for Obama wanted on the grounds that it would recognize Israel’s sovereignty which America has never done. This, as the always excellent Antonin Scalia said, was a “leap worthy of the Mad Hatter.”

Listing a place of birth as “Jerusalem, Israel” simply does not recognize Israel’s right to be sovereign there, only the reality that it is or was at the time of birth of the bearer of the passport; that Jerusalem was under Israeli control.

Denying that is like Obama denying that Ft. Hood had anything to do with Israel. Imprinting “Jerusalem, Israel” no more recognizes Israel’s rights than it prohibits a future sovereign, G-d forbid, that is not Israel. It is nothing but affirming the reality at the time of the bearer’s birth.

And in keeping with the earlier segments, I say it was a foregone conclusion that the three justices of Jewish extraction on the Court would vote against the Jewish petitioners. The memory of Dreyfus and Jonathan Pollard and the implication of the Jews’ allegedly less than perfect loyalty to their host country is alive and well for these post-religious Americans of Jewish descent.

*Leila tov miEretz Yisrael.*