

P A X   J U D A I C A

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The Israeli's government's active complicity in the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian people has gone a long way toward clarifying Israeli policy in the Middle East. Suddenly the discrepancy between Israel's announced purposes and the actual tendency of its actions has become too explicit to ignore. The Israeli Army invades West Beirut after the death of the leader of the Philangist party with the avowed intention of preventing "chaos and bloodshed." And how is this done? After encircling Palestinian camps, it projects Philangist militia into them less than a week after the assassination of their beloved leader. For over thirty-six hours the Israeli leadership lets events take their course. Even if one assumes another purpose behind this action--to "clean out" the last P.L.O. fighters in West Beirut--how could it advance Israeli "security" to aid in the murder of hundreds of Palestinian civilians? What could impel Israeli leadership to do something which is a scandal to the moral values said to undergird the Jewish state? so explicitly violates an agreement worked out with its closest ally? incurs a cascade of world-wide revulsion and criticism? deepens Israeli involvement in a war which is costly in itself and far from popular at home? endangers its peace treaty with Egypt and erodes support for Israel in the United States? Surely here is an action which simply cannot be interpreted in terms of the precious axioms of the political scientists: "strategic policy," "military tactics," "economic advantage," and "national self-interest."

There will be two general ways to account for this event; both will attempt to annul the strangeness of recent Israeli actions. For the most steadfast supporters of Israel, Israeli complicity in this massacre will be viewed as a "mistake," an "oversight," just "having gone (either 'a bit,' or 'a great deal') too far" in carrying out the essentially legitimate "mission" behind the Israeli invasion of Lebanon: to remove the PLO "terrorists" from a country bordering Israel so as to enhance Israel's "security." Others, unsympathetic to Israeli claims and purposes, will offer an ethically polarized explanation of events. Israel is the avowed enemy of the Palestinian people; this criminal massacre demonstrates that Israel and its expansionist Zionist policies are simply evil. Both these explanations are inadequate to recent events. The first because it refuses awareness of the many ways this massacre is fully compatible with the general design of Israeli policy; the second, because it treats Israel as a univocal virtual essence who cannot be different than her current policy makes her. The analysis which follows offers what I take to be the only way to account for that about this event which is uncanny, strange, bizarre... and yet all too familiar.

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Current Israeli policy is guided by three interrelated ideas about Israel and the historical moment it inhabits. The first two are often explicitly and consciously stated. The third idea comes quite logically out of the first two, but since it is a scandal to the ethical values of the Jewish state, its content remains largely unconscious to the very people whose behavior it determines. Here are the three axioms of current Israeli policy:

I. All of the past, and most especially the holocaust, as it dramatically summarizes the history of Jewish suffering, is present and true forever. The holocaust is the ground-base reality for shaping Israeli policy. It offers a detailed and compelling text for interpreting each new perception and devising a response to each event. Enormous energy is directed at keeping the memory of the holocaust alive in the present; and the holocaust is presumed to be always capable of erupting back into literal reality in any instant. This helps to explain the extensive efforts to find and punish old Nazis, and why every enunciation of present Israeli policy is cast in reference to the holocaust experience. The holocaust is the master scenario out of which all future historical roles must come.

II. 'Never again' will the Jewish people be victims as they were during the holocaust! If the first axiom of Israeli policy takes the holocaust as the indelible truth of Jewish experience, the second is intent upon preventing its exact repetition. It is this idea which guides Israel in its quest to win "security" for its people. Thus, we often hear it said that "security" is the one value and goal which unites all Israelis. And the Israeli desire for security has taken a particular form: the determination not to trust any other people (including Americans) on questions of security; mobilizing enormous energy, talent, and resources to build a military which will make "security" something Israel can control by itself; considering any military power held by a potential enemy--even the bomb shelters beneath refugee camps in Sidion--a threat to Israeli security which must be eliminated; exaggerating the perceived threat posed by an enemy because this will help insure "security;" taking any action--even anticipatory violence--if it is deemed necessary to protect Israel's right to security. Through this policy "security" is not something arrived at through negotiation and compromise with other peoples and nations; it is the possession of the State of Israel, a byproduct of her overwhelming might.

It is important to note that these two axioms of Israeli policy are in partial conflict with one another. The first assumes that the repetition of a holocaust is the inevitable horizon of Jewish experience; the second is determined not to occupy the position of victim in that holocaust. There is one obvious way to bring them into harmony. It produces a desire which is so hostile to the explicit values of the Jewish people that its content must remain unconscious.

III. Current Israeli policy is driven by a compulsion to repeat the holocaust, only this time, the roles will be reversed. In this new holocaust scenario, the Palestinians are the victims and the Israelis are the masters

of the instruments of victimization, whether these are the F-15's and F-16's upon their bombing runs, Philangists intent upon revenge, or an aggressive settlement policy. "As the masters of this historical moment, Israel will have the almost limitless power to dominate its victim once possessed by Nazi Germany.

Jews playing Nazis. This may seem grotesque, illogical, and ironic in extreme. But it is no more strange or perverse than the violence the United States directed against Vietnam in the name of defending them for "freedom." And Israel in Lebanon seems to obey one of the oldest economies of human exchange: revenge. But the word "revenge" may give us the false sense that we are on familiar ground. For if Israel has entered Lebanon intent on revenge, it is the Nazis not the Palestinians who are the cause and ultimate object of this revenge. How do we know this? Most obviously because Israel has already avenged itself many times over for the terrorism practiced by major Palestinian groups before 1977, and more recently carried out by individual Palestinian terrorists. For Israeli leadership the Palestinians are more than the troublesome contemporaries who share a legitimate claim to Palestine. They are the figures of the Nazis, whose death and dispersal after World War II had prevented the only kind of revenge that can be truly satisfying: a re-enactment of a whole historical scenario, so the master can be requited for his crimes by his victim.

What evidence is there that this bizarre historical reversal is shaping Israeli policy? There are three general patterns of behavior which indicate this. First, whenever the Israeli leadership justifies violence against Palestinians, it follows this rhetorical rule. The framework of the holocaust experience is solicited, and then the P.L.O. and the Nazis are not declared to be similar; they are equated. Thus Begin tells reporters that having the PLO trapped in Beirut feels like having Hitler trapped in his Berlin bunker. When the Pope grants Yasar Arafat an audience in the Vatican, Begin announces, in a radio broadcast,

"the church,  
which had stood by during the Holocaust and when Christians were  
being killed in Lebanon, is now prepared to meet the man who  
initiated the latter, and is trying to complete the Nazis'  
mission." (Time, 9/27/82)

Thus, the PLO has become a strange fantasmatic entity in Israeli discourse. Not only do Israeli public statements refuse to distinguish between the "rejection front" of Palestinian groups that would block any accommodation with Israel, and the much more moderate policies of the Al Fatah group headed by Arafat. They also conflate the PLO with Palestinian splinter groups who practice terrorism against PLO representatives deemed too "moderate." But beyond these willful misrepresentations, Israeli policy treats every Palestinian as either a PLO member or a potential PLO member. The people and the organization are treated as one, both rhetorically and by the form of military actions /indiscriminate bombing, internment of PLO "suspects," the eradication of Palestinian camps/. The logic here seems to be: since PLO "terrorists" will suffer if Palestinians are killed, then Palestinians may be killed in order to punish PLO "terrorists." This

is an instance of the primitive justice school children are taught to abhor-- where long ago whole families were punished for the crime of one individual. Most recently, this has been the kind of justice administered by Israeli fighter-bombers.

Secondly, for several years Israel has responded with military force which any reasonable and dispassionate third party would consider in excess of provocation, and far beyond the stated goal of guaranteeing Israeli security. Now this point is just the sort upon which it is most difficult to develop consensus. Israel's way of evaluating perceived threats to its existence is the most treacherous and tendentious region of her discourse. This is because any person or nation caught up in an intense rivalry, where one's whole existence seems to be at stake, is uniquely unfitted to make sound judgments as to the degree of threat posed by a mortal enemy. This is not just because the exaggeration of danger seems to be the safest way to insure one won't be caught by surprise and unprepared. It is also because in this situation, as René Girard has demonstrated, "the difference between a projection of one's own paranoia and an objective evaluation of circumstances has been worn away" (54: Violence and the Sacred) Israeli accounts of the threat posed by the PLO are a way of making its response to that threat (the invasion of Southern Lebanon) seem rational and just. But the perception of a threat, and the systematic exaggeration of that threat, serves another purpose: to hide the more fundamental and more subterranean impulses that are being given expression in this military campaign. But before considering these impulses, it is important to apprehend the excessiveness of Israeli actions by taking note of several aspects of the current Israeli campaign against "PLO terrorists" in Southern Lebanon. The assassination attempt against the Israeli ambassador to Britain, which offered the occasion for the Israeli invasion, was carried out by individuals evidently planning a similar attack upon PLO representatives. In spite of the existence of thousands of aggrieved Palestinians, whose lives have been shaped by Israeli possession of Palestine, and the presence of a Libya willing to sponsor any violence against Israel, terrorism against Israel has dropped off sharply since 1977. /How many victims of terrorism in 1979? 13 Jews, 10 Arabs--400 killed in car accidents./ After the cease-fire agreement in Lebanon in July 1981, the PLO vigorously observed the cease-fire, and responded only sparingly when Israeli attacks upon Beirut killed over 400 on April 21st and May 9th, 1982. Finally, as Senator Charles Percy remarked, in the days following the invasion, the very swiftness with which Israel conquered Southern Lebanon demonstrated an absence of any serious threat to Israel's security.

If the Israeli invasion of Lebanon is not really shaped to safeguard Israel's "security," then what is it intended to effect? Above all it opens a scene, where Israeli leadership can act out, and avenge the holocaust experience they seem compelled to repeat. Here the mythos of the new Israeli militarism has reached a crescendo. Israeli columns are guided into battle by the tough hero of the tank battles in the Sinai in '73. /Ariel Sharon/. Israeli victories on the land and in the air are so sweeping that the Israeli

armed forces are declared to be "the finest in the world," its espionage system "second to none," and a new mantle of invincibility descends upon Israeli forces. And since all these things were said about another army and another blitzkrieg--the German army's astoundingly swift defeat of the French and British forces in the Spring of 1940, why shouldn't current Israeli leadership believe the same thing German leadership believed then: that to every obstacle or "problem," there is a military solution; and that their own military predominance will last indefinitely. And throughout the invasion haven't the Israelis displayed just the kind of thoroughness and precision in the use of the instruments of force the Germans taught the world to respect over forty years ago? And in accomplishing their "mission" Israeli treatment of the PLO resembles Nazi attitudes toward and treatment of the Jews in the mid and late 30's. They are "dirt" of which a nation and society must be "cleansed"; they are a cancerous "element" which swift surgical action must cut away. This justifies rounding up thousands of "PLO suspects," questioning them with the aid of informers, marking the I.D. cards of those released, and sending those deemed guilty off to Israel so they may be concentrated in camps. Although they were captured in war, these men will be denied the rights given prisoners of war by the Geneva convention, because they are "terrorists" and criminals who must receive the full rigor of Israeli justice.

At the core of the holocaust experience is a crime of unrivaled proportions: a systematic policy of comprehensive genocide. And Israeli policy is certainly not shaped by the enormity of this kind of evil. And yet the Israeli invasion of Lebanon has brought actions whose tendency acts out the wish to wipe out all Palestinians. Thus, why engage in indiscriminate bombing of Palestinian neighborhoods and refugee camps? The sudden anonymous violence of a bomb fulfills the wish to translate Palestinian men and women into smoke. And why, when Israel had removed all PLO forces from the refugee camp in Sidion, why did it demand that all civilians leave, and then bulldoze flat the camp, so the only home for thousands of Palestinians would become uninhabitable? Officially it was explained that it was essential to "wipe out" the bomb shelters in the camp where PLO guerrillas could hide. But doesn't it also express the desire to remove every enduring trace of the Palestinian people from the earth? And this helps explain the massive bombing ordered upon after the PLO had agreed to leave Beirut, and had begun making plans to do so. This raid was not "to keep up the pressure on the terrorists" as was claimed; it expressed anger that negotiations had succeeded, and that the PLO would be able to leave Beirut rather than experience the total annihilation that had been planned for them. Given this pattern to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, should it be any surprise that Israel would send the Philangist militia, and the forces of Major Haddad, into two Palestinian refugee camps at the very moment when they would be most likely to play the role of the Nazi forces which murdered Jewish inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto? In massive bombing, in leveling the Sidion camp, in using surrogate forces to carry out a pogrom, we witness a violence which is imprecise and excessive in a calculated way. It acts out the deepest wish behind the Israeli

invasion of Lebanon; to avenge the death of six million Jews by sweeping the Nazi Palestinians from the earth, and leaving those Palestinians who remain so castrated and helpless and mastered that they would not so much as dare to tender a claim to the Palestine over which current Israel leadership is determined to exercise absolute dominion.

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The conclusions of the foregoing analysis will only seem scandalous or tendentious in the light of the ideas and representations about itself Israel has elaborated and disseminated since 1947. According to that perspective, the State of Israel, having risen out of the holocaust experience, is founded in a commitment to the human values which are fundamentally antithetical to the Nazis who committed genocide. But this self-concept has become a snare. If Israel is, by its very nature, wronged and righteous and good, then it is owed something (dominion over Palestine). And if people put themselves forward to contest that claim, and some of their members kill Jews to do so, then they are occupying the position of the Nazis. In responding to them as the belated avatars of the Nazis, and gratifying an as yet unsatisfied desire for revenge, Israeli actions can pass by a moral censor whose operation has been suspended. For those acting within this scenario, no counter-measure will be too severe, no form of violence too indiscriminate, no appropriation of authority too sweeping to be seen as brutal, excessive, or tyrannical. Thus the current Israeli leadership does not find that it has done anything unjust--not even with the "unfortunate" Beirut massacre. None of its actions could be unjust, because justice is no longer a fugitive and difficult to adjudicate property of a given act; it is an inalienable fundament of Israel, the very foundation stone of the state.

However, what has been true for the leadership of Israel, has not been true for all its people. Soon after the invasion of Lebanon, there were signs that some Israelis sensed that something strange and contradictory was unfolding in their history. On one of the several pages devoted to the war in Lebanon by the New York Times on June 14, 1982, a page which registered the broad military, diplomatic, and social effects of this war <"10,000 killed, 600,000 displaced, etc...">, there was a short article which recorded a smaller more "human" response to this war. It offers evidence of the ways some Israelis were finding to adjust themselves to the novel roles they found themselves playing in this war. The article is extremely short, minimalist in style, and anonymous: it contains no overt controlling opinion or point of view. For these reasons it seems to project all the more powerfully an authentic echo of Israeli public opinion. The headline proclaims the good intentions Israel feels toward Lebanon: Israelis Volunteer Help In Rebuilding Lebanon. Note the shift won by this headline: between "Israel" and "Lebanon" not the words "War" "Invasion," let alone "Destroy," but the resonant affirmation of the words "Volunteer"

## Israelis Volunteer Help In Rebuilding Lebanon

Special to The New York Times

1982 TEL AVIV, June 13 — A grass-roots Israeli volunteer movement to help repair the war ravages in neighboring Lebanon started today. Dozens of people telephoned the state radio station in Jerusalem to say that they wanted to cross the border to rebuild wrecked homes.

The callers were responding to a remark in a radio interview last night by Amnon Rubinstein, an opposition Member of Parliament, who said that for humanitarian, moral and political reasons, the Israeli Government should take the lead in organizing an international campaign to help Lebanese who had lost their homes in the war.

"They, too, are victims of terrorism," he said, "not less than Israelis."

Listeners began calling in, and a radio announcer said that women in Jerusalem and Rishon le Zion had formed local committees to collect clothing. Callers included a group of psychologists offering to work with Lebanese children.

Abie Nathan, a philanthropist who has devoted the profits from a radio station to international charities, announced that he had bought \$8,000 worth of chocolate from a local factory at a discount price for distribution to Lebanese children.

Your Money  
Saturday in Business Day  
The New York Times

(a free gift of) "Help" (desperately needed in) "Rebuilding" (that part of Lebanon just destroyed by Israeli armament.) The article that follows is worth reading carefully. It demonstrates how some Israelis worked in a most inauspicious context to find a ground for a humanitarian spirit of concern for the sufferings of others. The article begins by appealing to something more fundamentally humane than the political sphere. Destruction may be orchestrated by politicians who circulate abstract and inhuman ideas like national interest and "security," but everyday people are much closer to the earth, and can, with a spontaneous generosity, organize themselves into "grass-roots" movements in order to help nations, which like people, can be "neighboring." This bridge between peoples necessitates a bit of euphemism about the nature and origin of the destruction: the damage requiring aid is "wrecked homes" and the vague title given this task is "to help repair the war ravages" of Lebanon. The passive constructions leave the agents of destruction out of view. Notice that this article says that "dozens" have called to volunteer themselves; thus we are not dealing here with a few crank calls but numbers large enough to represent a general sentiment and form an authentic "movement." It is Amnon Rubinstein, "an opposition member of Parliament," who triggers calls to the radio station, when in an interview he delivers an ingenious formula which allows Israelis to reconcile their humane desire to help the victims of the war with the explicit military and political goal of the invasion. /"clean" the PLO out of Lebanon/. Rubinstein suggests that the Israeli government should "take the lead" in helping Lebanese "who had lost their

homes in the war" because "They, too, are victims of terrorism," he said "no less than Israelis." (my emphasis) This formula is brilliant for the way it links Israelis and Lebanese (as victims) and makes the "PLO terrorists" accept the responsibility (and guilt?) for Israeli violence necessary in cleansing Lebanon of the PLO. It is this

formula which led people to "begin to call in" and offer help for Lebanon.

The specific forms of help proffered only heighten one of the central motifs of this article: the irony occasioned by the contrast between the magnitude of destruction visited upon the victims in this war and the frail and inadequate means these callers find to offer help and express their compassion. Will the Lebanese who have lost their shelter for the winter, receive this gift of clothing graciously? And will the young girl on last night's TV news, with both legs amputated and a face disfigured with burns, will she be comforted by a box of Israeli chocolates that come, not just from the generous philanthropist Abie Natham, but the candy maker kind enough to sell this chocolate at a "discount price?" And finally, for the children whose whole lives have been permanently transformed by this cataclysm--who may have lost the place they played, the people they played with,...and the heart to play--will the Israeli psychologists who have volunteered their help manage to make it O.K. again, heal the wounds, and get these children to see the necessity of it all?

But there is more here than irony. There are two elements in this article which indicate that even here, in the midst of the enunciation of the best of intentions, the Israeli response is shaped by the exigencies of the holocaust. Throughout this article it is the "Lebanese" who are the focus of Israeli guilt and generosity. But what about the Palestinians? It is the Palestinian refugee camps, villages, and neighborhoods which have received the full force of Israeli shelling and bombardment in this war. Why don't they merit even the slightest generosity? Perhaps because even the good intentions of these volunteers is linked to the wish that the Palestinians would simply disappear from view; in this way, the violent goal of this war is inscribed in the very fabric of these callers' compassion. And why the special solicitude for Lebanese children? Surely there must be very many old people who were as innocent and helpless in the face of this massive violence. Perhaps because the "dozens" who called this station in Tel Aviv may be thinking about the power of memory. That just as the Palestinians have reaped the whirlwind of Jewish anger sown by the Nazis, so in the next generation, won't these children, whether Lebanese or Palestinian, be carrying a malignant seed of hatred planted in this moment of suffering and dispossession? It is this seed of memory which these callers hope these children will relinquish in return for clothing, chocolate, and some sessions with psychologists.

Though we have lingered before the ironies and hidden motives which overtake these impulses to gift giving, the mixed feelings of these callers offers a certain margin of hope. For in nations as well as individuals completely incompatible feelings of generosity and hatred very often coexist, at the same moment and in the same gesture. Insight into this process is developed in a passage of The Interpretation of Dreams where Freud contemplates the excess of pleasure one feels when someone you hate is punished for some wrong doing. This passage is worth quoting at length for a number of reasons: its covert subject, antisemitism, is one of the facts



which justify the Israeli vigilance about security this war evidences; Freud's analysis calls special attention to the excessive quantity of feeling as a key symptom of unconscious hatred for an adversary; it helps explain the self-righteous pleasure most Israelis seem to have derived from this war, before the Beirut massacre; and finally, this passage suggests a way Israel might be drawn out of, and draw itself out of the confining and destructive compulsion to repeat the holocaust experience.

#### Quotation from Freud

"Let us suppose the following case. There is a person of my acquaintance whom I hate, so that I have a lively inclination to feel glad if anything goes wrong with him. But the moral side of my nature will not give way to this impulse. I do not dare to express a wish that he should be unlucky, and if he meets with some undeserved misfortune, I suppress my satisfaction at it and force myself to manifestations and thoughts of regret. Everyone must have found himself in this situation at some time or other. What now happens, however, is that the hated person, by a piece of misconduct of his own, involves himself in some well-deserved unpleasantness; when that happens, I may give free rein to my satisfaction that he has met with a just punishment and in this I find myself in agreement with many other people who are impartial. I may observe, however, that my satisfaction seems more intense than that of these other people; it has received an accession from the source of my hatred, which till then has been prevented from producing its affect, but in the altered circumstances is no longer hindered from doing so. In social life this occurs in general wherever antipathetic people or members of an unpopular minority put themselves in the wrong. Their punishment does not as a rule correspond to their wrong-doing but to their wrong-doing plus the ill-feeling directed against them which has previously been without any consequences. It is no doubt true that those who inflict the punishment are committing an injustice in this; but they are prevented from perceiving it by the satisfaction resulting from the removal of a suppression which has long been maintained within them. In cases such as this the affect is justified in its quality but not in its amount; and self-criticism which is set at rest on the one point is only too apt to neglect examination of the second one. When once a door has been opened, it is easy for more people to push their way through it than there had originally been any intention of letting in." (The Interpretation of Dreams, 516-517)

In spite of the very different context of Freud's analysis, this passage offers a valuable perspective for rethinking Israeli relations with the Palestinian people. For Freud, to be a person will mean to live

within the impure cross-currents of conflicting desires (for love, for security, for righteousness, for strength, for predominance). Here, seeing clearly is problematic, and every judgment compromising. And here, for nations, as with individuals, acting with fairness and humanity toward another will often depend upon accepting an uneasy tension between feelings (like hatred) which may be arbitrary, private, and corrosive, and a more collective social spirit of fairness and justice which requires that one desists from acting out these feelings. In the discussion above I have indicated how the Israeli invasion of Lebanon has created a way to restage elements of the holocaust experience in reverse. By conflating the Nazis with the PLO, and the PLO with many and most Palestinians, the Palestinians have become an "antipathetic people" or an "unpopular minority"; by catching them in a military operation deemed "necessary" to "wipe out PLO terrorists," the war has enveloped Palestinians in Lebanon in an "unpleasantness" which appears "well deserved" because of support extended to the PLO by all too many Palestinians. In this way the war becomes, in the eyes of most Israelis, an objective event, like a storm, rather than an action saturated with artifice and intentionality. All of this creates a strange illusion: that fate has dealt the Palestinians losing cards; that they are condemned by the obscure forces of history to be victims. These are the unspoken premises of Israeli policy. Otherwise, how could it be appropriate to express nothing more than "regret" about many thousand Palestinians Israel has killed or disfigured? And it is this representational framework which allows hatred to pass the moral censor--feelings which I have tried to show have their origin in the holocaust experience, and the desire to avenge the Nazis upon the Palestinians. What is the sign that this war has unleashed unacknowledged unconscious emotions? Above all feelings of "satisfaction" with events (like "defeat" of the PLO) which are "more intense" than is appropriate to the "security advantages" won in the operation. Once these feelings are given full expression, they <like war> have a momentum all their own. They allow the "punishment" to be incommensurate with Palestinian "wrong-doings"; and with more (hostile) feelings pushing their way through to expression than had originally been intended "self criticism is set at rest" and there is a general failure to perceive the "injustice" being done to Palestinians. In this way Israeli policy has become unbalanced, and she has done things which few would have thought possible on her setting out.

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In the days following the Beirut massacre, there has been an outpouring of anger with the Begin government in Israel. This anger has an equivocal status. For some, this righteous indignation, a veritable orgy of morality, will be the vehicle for separating themselves and Israel from complicity in a local event--the Beirut massacre. This will enable many to stay blind to the fundamental continuity between the massacre and other forms of violence used in this war, between this war and efforts to dominate

Palestinians upon the West Bank. In this way moral anger at a particular "mistake" of the Begin government could simply end rearticulating Israel's national sense of righteousness. By this scenario Begin's own people may actually make him the scapegoat he has never stopped accusing the world of wanting to make him. For others this anger could lead to a more fundamental and more salutary shift in consciousness. Because the Beirut massacre has an uncanny resemblance to the forms of violence unleashed upon the Jewish people by the Nazis, and because Israeli complicity in this massacre is irrefutable, this event could trigger a probing re-evaluation and analysis. It would begin by asking how things could have gone so very wrong, when and where Israel lost her way. It would necessitate rethinking the idea of Israel's strength and "security"; and it would end in a risky and opened process of devising new forms of relationship with the Palestinian people.

Nothing has been more harmful for Israel than her sense of isolation. This is what has seemed to necessitate an exaggerated and grandiose concept of national security. And by losing touch with other versions of reality, Israel's reality has become the only reality for the current leadership. This allows an obsessive focus upon her own interests and perspectives. Enveloped in her own reality, Israel can act out a destructive private repetition of the holocaust experience at the expense of the Palestinians. What are the roots of this sense of isolation? Some might point to the religious idea that the Jewish people have been chosen by God for special favor and trial. And this feeling of separateness has certainly played its part in recent Israeli history. But the birth of Israel was greeted with enormous support from the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union; and Israel enjoyed excellent relations with many third world countries before the 1967 war. To this observer Israeli isolation does not seem inevitable. But there is a second area of causes for this isolation. From her inception Israel has been a scandal to many Arab nations because she is seen as a figure, a continuously present and ever more powerful figure of the Western imperialism which has played such a large and traumatic part in their own recent history. And this is to say that Arab countries, not having the same legitimate grievances as Palestinians have with Israel, have done to Israel what Israel has done to the Palestinians: made her the target of hatred and anger more properly directed at another country, in an earlier time. This symbolic use and abuse of Israel helps explain the double standard at work in the obsessive attention the UN gives to Israeli human rights violations--which are all too real--and the benign neglect accorded the equally real violations of human rights in Syria or Iraq.

Israel's dangerous isolation has been intensified by an unexpected factor. By a strange irony, the uncritical, unequivocal support the United States has extended to Israel throughout the years has deepened Israel's isolation: first, by shielding her from the fair-minded world criticism that has come from elsewhere /like Europe and Japan/; and secondly because unstinting American military and economic support has insulated Israel from the need to

reach an accommodation with her neighbors, when that appeared possible. This is the point where we encounter the full failure of American policy toward Israel. And this is why we too must assume a share of the blame for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Beirut massacre. To right our policy, our government and people must change the form of our relationship to Israel so that it incorporates the same kind of corrective criticism any coherent community of members must be capable of directing at each other. It is this contact with the outside, as the Freud passage above indicates, which allows a person or nation to see the gyroscope that should guide their action. The United States must be willing not just to speak but to act within a positive but fully critical relationship to Israel. We must show that America's vast material and diplomatic support for Israel is not inalienable; that our economic aid will be contingent upon a suspension of efforts to dominate and colonize the West Bank; that our military aid will be contingent upon desisting from the kind of excessive use of force witnessed in Lebanon; and that the continued generosity of American Jews, which has done so much to build the state of Israel, will unfold within an active critical dialogue about Israeli policy. This criticism, and the acts which give them force, should not be offered as punishment, intimidation, or blackmail--but in the way one would reproach the member of one's own community who has done things that were unjust in themselves and a threat to the social and moral fabric of that community. This policy should be guided by two familiar axioms: a fundamental support for Israel's basic but limited security needs; and a recognition that the Palestinian people, no less than Americans or Israelis, have those same legitimate rights to self-determination which Woodrow Wilson affirmed long ago, which current Israeli policy has sought to mortgage to her own security, but which it must be the aim of American policy to secure. This is the only visible pathway to peace.