

Hilda B. Silverman Memorial Lecture on Israel/Palestine

May 4, 2018

**"If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem":
The Use and Abuse of Jewish Memory**

Brian Klug

"... it is in Gaza where I am truly a Jew"

Sara Roy

Voice

Thank you, Sara, for inviting me to give this lecture – and for much else besides: for priceless conversations over the years, despite being on opposite shores of a rather large pond; for making sure that I, along with the other people on your email distribution list, never suffer from being ill-informed; and for your pioneering work on “de-development” in Gaza. If, as the title of my talk suggests, I focus on Jerusalem, it is with an eye to Gaza. Jerusalem and Gaza: heading for a head-on collision this month, with the US embassy move to Jerusalem officially happening on Yom Ha’atzmaut, May 14, and Gaza’s March of Return reaching a crescendo the following day, Naqba Day. Jerusalem and Gaza: both places that are more than just places: both represent something more general. With Gaza it is straightforward: Gaza stands for the dispossession of the Palestinians by the State of Israel. As for Jerusalem: the question of what it stands for is a mite more complex. Analysing this complexity, and the bearing it has on the theory and practice of political Zionism, will be at the heart of my talk.

Actually, Sara, you remind me of someone I never met but whom I am beginning to think I did, and certainly wish I had: Hilda Silverman. It was while I was preparing this talk that I began to get to know her, partly through things that other people say about her and partly through her own words. So much so, that I would like to take this opportunity – there might not be another – to address her directly. So, Hilda (if I may), I am going to quote from an op-ed you contributed to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* sixteen years ago. (I owe knowledge of this op-ed to Alice Rothchild’s eloquent tribute to you in the Jewish Women’s Archive.) “I am a Jew,” this is what you said, “with a profound consciousness of Jewish victimization through history.” “But for me,” you added straightaway, “victim and victimizer, oppressor and oppressed are not mutually exclusive categories.”¹ If I understand you correctly, your point is that these words denote different roles, not different groups. No group is essentially victim or victimizer, oppressor or oppressed: any group can, at different times, be the one or the other. The implication is this: the fact that Jews have been oppressed in the past does not mean that Jews cannot oppress others in the present. In the context of my talk, which is about the use and abuse of Jewish memory, this is what I hear you saying: “Remembering that Jews have been oppressed and acknowledging that Jews oppress others – specifically Palestinians – are not mutually exclusive.” Actually, I think you were saying rather more

¹ Alice Rothchild, “Hilda Silverman: Peace and Social Justice Activist, 1938-2008,” available on the website of the Jewish Women’s Archive at <https://jwa.org/weremember/silverman-hilda> (accessed April 14, 2018).

than this: they are mutually *inclusive*: remembering the one *must* mean acknowledging the other, for oppression is indivisible. Unless I am mistaken, this “must,” for you, is a human imperative; also a *Jewish* imperative. Precisely. You speak for me too. I rather wish you could *continue* to speak for me tonight: it would take a load off my shoulders and everyone here would love to hear from you. But, in the circumstances, I shall do my best to stand in for you.

In the extract I just read from her op-ed, Hilda spoke in the first person singular: “I am a Jew,” “But for *me*.” I shall follow suit. I shall speak in the same voice as she did: my own. And while Sara has already introduced me more than amply, there is a little bit that I want to add by way of introducing the voice in which I am speaking. I am neither Palestinian nor Israeli, but in speaking about my subject tonight I speak from the inside. The State of Israel is about to turn seventy and I am not far behind. I grew up with Israel and Zionism in my life. They were present in my childhood home, an observant household in a Jewish community in north-west London, and in the Orthodox Jewish school I attended from the age of 5 to 18. Palestine, in a sense, was also present; but the two names “Palestine” and “Israel” were interchangeable. The Joint Palestine Appeal (JPA) was a Zionist charity that raised money for Israel. Looking back I realize, with a shudder, what this signified: the total appropriation of Palestine by Israel as a Jewish state: something rendered invisible to me at the time by my environment. This, by the way, demonstrates a *positive* use of memory: recognizing, as adults, the habits of mind that are implanted in us in childhood, the convictions we imbibe by osmosis from parents, aunts, uncles and the whole host of grown-ups around us. Bringing these convictions to consciousness – articulating the collective unconscious (so to speak) of the group to which we belong: this is what we need to do in order to know our own minds: to know which convictions, if any, we own and which we disown. Only thus do we acquire a voice of our own.

To be fair, there are certain things we learn when we are young that can actually be helpful. Sometimes it is a matter of the order in which we learn them. So, the Hebrew that I learned to read and write as a young child – I learned it at the same time as I learned to read and write English – was *Classical* Hebrew. Not Ivrit. As a result, Jerusalem first entered my consciousness through the Tanakh or Hebrew Scriptures (also known as the Old Testament) and through Jewish liturgy. Jerusalem established itself there – in my mind – as a city of the book, before I read about it in newspapers. Admittedly, it could have worked out differently, as it has for many Jews with a somewhat similar background to mine: it has contributed to conflating poetic word with factual world. (What I mean by this will become clearer as my talk progresses.) But, in my case, my early Jewish education has given me a degree of critical distance, for which I am thankful; or, at least, it has in the long run. It has helped me to think about the rhetoric of political Zionism: about the very word “Zionism” and the difference made to “Zion” when it is turned into an ism. In essence, I see the adding of the “ism” as an act of violence against the word “Zion,” a kind of verbal omen of the physical violence that was to come in the name of Zion, bearing in mind that “Zion” in the Bible is another name for Jerusalem and, by extension, the whole of *eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel. Not that I shall expatiate on the scriptural dimension of this theme tonight; this is not, after all, a seminar on Judaism (as Sara gently reminded me when she invited me to give the lecture). I mention all this only in order, as I have said, to introduce the voice in which I am speaking: the same voice Hilda used in her op-ed: the first person singled out: I, as in “I am a Jew.”

In short, my talk is by way of being a personal reflection or meditation; and meditation is not a science. Like Socrates, I shall follow a thought wherever it might lead, even if it takes

me on a tangent.² I am not coming from the frontline of scholarly research to present the latest findings in my field. I don't really have a field. While I shall venture into the territory of history, politics and the Middle East, I am a rank amateur. I am not a historian, a political scientist or an expert on the Middle East. I am not an expert on anything. I am the opposite of an expert: I am a philosopher. As a philosopher, the only thing worth knowing that I know is that I know nothing worth knowing. I have, of course, lifted this paradox from the speech that Socrates made at his trial in Plato's *Apology*. It was the basic premise of his compelling defence against charges that portrayed him as a know-it-all. Not that the Athenians found his argument compelling; they showed their respect for logic by condemning Socrates to death. I hope to get off a little lighter this evening. They made him drink hemlock. I'll settle for a glass of Merlot.

Madness

The subject of my talk tonight is memory. It's funny how sometimes you take an interest in something only when you start to lose it. But what interests me about memory is not so much the mere having or losing of it as its use and abuse. "It is good for everyone to be able to forget," remarked Ernest Renan in his lecture on the nature of a nation.³ "Forgetting," he observed, "... is an essential factor in the creation of a nation".⁴ In a somewhat similar vein, Brian Friel, the late Irish dramatist, said: "To remember everything is a form of madness."⁵ I daresay that is true; it is one of the consolations of creeping oblivion as one gets older. But there is also a form of madness – for nations and for individuals – that comes with *selective* memory; for it is not only the past that can be forgotten. *A priori* amnesia, pre-selecting what we remember, filtering out what does not fit our template, can make us psychotic: out of touch with reality, oblivious to the here and now, blind to what is in front of our eyes. Which prompts the question: Can we remember the past without forgetting the present? Recalling Hilda's words: Can we, as Jews, remember "Jewish victimization through history" without forgetting the victimization of Palestinians today? The complicated relationship between Jewish memory and Jewish forgetfulness in the context of political Zionism: this is the subject of my talk.

When I speak about memory I mean this: how we inherit the past, how we internalise it, both individually and collectively. In the Jewish case, remembering is itself a significant item in the past that we inherit, as Harold Bloom reminds us in his Foreword to Yerushalmi's book *Zakhor: Jewish history and Jewish Memory*. Bloom explains that "*Zakhor* ... is the verb used throughout the Hebrew Bible whenever Israel is admonished: 'Remember!'"⁶ I do not need to remind us that "Israel" here is not the modern state but the ancient people, *am Yisrael*, "the people of Israel", the Israelites, whose career is narrated in successive books of the *Tanakh*. (Some people, however, most definitely *do* need to be reminded of this; their forgetting the difference is at the heart of the problem that is my subject.) In the Preface to the 1989 edition of his book, Yerushalmi explains his distinction between Jewish history and

² Compare Socrates' remark to Euthyphro when the latter leads him round the houses: "As it is, the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him" (Plato, *Euthyphro*, 14c).

³ Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" (lecture given at the Sorbonne, March 11, 1882), in Shlomo Sand and Ernest Renan, *On the Nation and the 'Jewish People'* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 56.

⁴ Sand and Renan, *On the Nation*, p. 45.

⁵ I am grateful to my partner Reva Klein for this quotation.

⁶ Harold Bloom, Foreword, in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), p.xiii.

Jewish memory. Roughly, history, for him, is “the actual recording and interpretation of historical events,” while memory is the “consciousness” we have of that history: how it inhabits the mind.⁷ The fact that the modern state bears the name “Israel” is evidence of how the biblical people inhabits the mind of the state: it signifies that the state has, in some sense, internalised the biblical narrative. Moreover, the state, as the political expression of Zionism, has nationalized Jewish memory, including the way we remember the injunction “Remember!”, “Don’t forget!” What happens to this injunction when it is nationalized? That is the subject of my talk.

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,” says Psalm 137, “let my right hand forget.” (This is what the Hebrew says literally though usually translations add “its cunning,” “its function,” “its skill,” or something of the sort.) But what does it mean to *not* forget Jerusalem? Or to put it differently: What is involved in not forgetting *this verse*, the verse in Psalm 137 that speaks about not forgetting Jerusalem? And not this verse alone but other verses in other psalms and other books in the *Tanakh* that place a premium on remembering – be it Zion, slavery in Egypt, the code of ethics on which the covenant at Sinai is based, or whatever? In particular, recalling what I was saying earlier about selective memory, I want to ask: Can we remember Jerusalem without forgetting Gaza? My response to this question can be expressed as an amendment to Psalm 137: “If I remember thee, O Jerusalem, but forget Gaza – Gaza in the here and now – then let my right hand forget” (etc.). Or more provocatively: “If I forget thee, O Gaza, then I forget Jerusalem.” This I firmly believe. This conviction, this way of not forgetting the verse in Psalm 137 – this way of remembering “Remember!” – underlies the whole of my talk, which, you might be relieved to know, I am now ready to begin in earnest.

Reality

To set the scene, I shall open with the tweet that Donald Trump tweeted last December on the subject of Jerusalem. To be frank, I am not an exponent of the art; to me, tweeting is strictly for the birds. I am told that in a tweet you have to condense a complex thought into a short text, something I’ve never been good at. I’m better at doing the opposite: taking a simple thought and making it into a whole *megillah*. (That’s one difference between me and Donald Trump. The other difference is that he is in astonishingly excellent health. He is the healthiest individual in history. God, how I wish I was him!) Anyway, this is what Trump tweeted on December 6: “I have determined that it is time to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.” He added: “I am also directing the State Department to begin preparation to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.”⁸ Later that same day, when he repeated this announcement in a speech at the White House, he remarked: “This is nothing more, or less, than a recognition of reality.”⁹ Really? *Recognition* of reality? Or a monstrous *distortion* of reality?

When someone makes a claim about reality, it helps to have a reality check. So, let us do that, going back to the British Mandate, which began in April 1920 and lasted until May 14, 1948, the day on which Israel declared its “independence.” Jerusalem, under the British,

⁷ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. xxx. Yerushalmi writes in a Postscript: “My purpose in *Zakhor* was to make a sharp distinction between collective memory and historiography” (p. 116).

⁸ Tweet available at <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/938517073508163584?lang=en> (accessed April 13, 2018).

⁹ Speech available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-jerusalem/> (accessed April 16, 2018).

was the capital of the mandated territory. But, as Bernard Wasserstein explains in his recent article for the Foreign Policy Research Institute, there were no embassies – only consulates – in the city, as Palestine was “under the control of the governing state” (Britain).¹⁰ In other words, Palestine was not a state in its own right: it was not a sovereign state. Resolution 181, adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947, envisaged two sovereign states, one Arab and one Jewish. But Jerusalem, in this plan, would be a part of neither the Arab nor the Jewish state nor both: it would be a *Corpus Separatum*, a separate body or entity, administered directly by the UN. Two years later, on December 9, 1949, the General Assembly voted to put this clause into effect, even though four days earlier Ben Gurion had made a preemptive strike by declaring it “null and void.”¹¹ As Wasserstein points out, the “international community never recognized the partition of Jerusalem.”¹² Nevertheless, in practice, after the dust had settled on the Arab-Israeli war, the city was bisected into West and East, and remained cut in two.

“Oh, East is East and West is West,” averred the English poet Rudyard Kipling, “and never the twain shall meet.”¹³ With Jerusalem, however, they did meet again: in 1967, at the end of the June War, when Israel captured the eastern sector and, on June 28, formally annexed it (though I believe the term used in the legal Ordinance was “unification” and not “annexation”).¹⁴ Not that this healed the physical division of the city between Arab and Jew. Nor did it alter the status of the city in the eyes of the rest of the world, especially since East Jerusalem is part of occupied Palestinian territory. Then, in 1980, the Knesset enacted the “Jerusalem Law,” stipulating that “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.”¹⁵ This drew the ire of the UN Security Council, which censured Israel by fourteen votes to zero (the US abstaining). Fast forward to January 2001, to Taba, where a “tentative agreement” was signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. In the section on Jerusalem, the dual significance of the city was acknowledged with these words: “Both sides accepted in principle the Clinton suggestion of having Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods and Israeli sovereignty over Jewish neighborhoods.”¹⁶ In the meantime, however, Ariel Sharon had gone walkabout on the Temple Mount, the Second Intifada had broken out, and Taba was dead in the water of Aqaba. Which just about completes the reality check.

Summing up, the reality is that since the end of the British Mandate both the legal and political status of Jerusalem have been contested; the international community has rejected Israel’s unilateral claim to the entire city as an integral part of its territory; neither the UN nor any other intergovernmental body (as far as I know) has accepted that East Jerusalem is within Israel’s borders; and Israel remains in illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, which

¹⁰ Bernard Wasserstein, “Trump’s Jerusalem Embassy Move: A Busted Flush?”, available on the website of the Foreign Policy Research Institute at <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/04/trumps-jerusalem-embassy-move-a-busted-flush/> (accessed April 17, 2018).

¹¹ “Statement of the Prime Minister on 5 December 1949,” available on the website of the Knesset at <https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/bengurion-jer.htm> (accessed April 17, 2018).

¹² Wasserstein, “Trump’s Jerusalem Embassy Move.”

¹³ In “The Ballad of East and West” (1889).

¹⁴ Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (London: HarperCollins, 1986), p. 403.

¹⁵ Complete text available on the website of the Knesset at https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic10_eng.htm (accessed April 17, 2018).

¹⁶ Complete text available at <http://www.multaga.org/pdfs/2000%20clinton%20parameter.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2018). The allusion is to the “Clinton Parameters,” which Bill Clinton proposed in December 2000, following the failure of the Camp David summit in July.

includes East Jerusalem. To which we might add this: as a “final status” issue, the Jerusalem question belongs squarely on the negotiating table. That, in short, is the stark reality.

When Trump claimed that his decision “to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel” was “nothing more, or less, than a recognition of reality,” which reality exactly did he mean? Clearly, not the one I have just outlined. He must have had an *alternative* reality in a parallel universe in mind. I don’t know where: Trumpland, Mar-a-Lago, wherever. In reality, his reality is no reality.

In itself, however, Trump’s announcement is all *too* real and has affected the political reality on the ground. Not the *legal* reality in the eyes of the international community: two weeks later, at an emergency special session, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution declaring “null and void” any “decisions and actions” which affect “the character, status or demographic composition” of Jerusalem, while fourteen out of the fifteen members of the Security Council voted in favour of a similar resolution.¹⁷ (I do not need to give the name of the fifteenth state, the one that torpedoed the motion by exercising its veto.) But, within Israel, Trump’s announcement has had a uniform impact across the political spectrum. At the AIPAC policy conference in Washington in March, Stav Shaffir, a Labour member of the Knesset, said: “The embassy move is something that every Israeli is happy about. There is no left and right distinction on that. For us, Jerusalem is our capital – it’s not something that is in doubt, it’s just a fact.”¹⁸ Thus, Trump’s announcement has reinforced the confidence with which Israel digs in its heels over the Jerusalem question. His reward here on earth will not be long in coming: Yisrael Katz, the Transportation Minister, announced that the new train station planned for Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter will be named after Trump.¹⁹ What awaits him in the hereafter is another matter.

When Shaffir says “it’s just a fact” that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, what she does with the word “fact” is reminiscent of what Trump does with the word “reality.” The word “fact” was bandied about quite a bit by Israeli and Jewish supporters of Trump’s decision. Danny Danon, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, said in December that the US had “simply stated a fact” in recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, adding: “Jerusalem is the holiest place on earth for the Jewish people. This is a fact that simply cannot be refuted ...”²⁰ Hold on there, Danny. One fact at a time, please. If the latter is a “fact” it is not exactly a fact in the same sense in which it is a fact that a city is or is not the capital of a country. For one thing, there are semantic or (better) conceptual issues about who is comprised in “the Jewish people” and what “holiest place on earth” means. Besides, what bearing does this “fact” have on the alleged “fact” about Jerusalem’s legal status? To be fair, I interrupted Danon. Here, without pausing for breath, is what he went on to explain: “... King David declared Jerusalem the capital of the Jewish people 3,000 years ago.” Is that a fact? Or does Daniel Carmon, Israel’s ambassador to India, get it right when he says, “It is a fact that Jerusalem has been the capital of the Jewish people for five thousand years.”²¹ Considering that, according to the Jewish calendar, it was only 778 years earlier that the world was created, that’s a truly astounding fact, as facts go. But which is it? 3,000 or 5,000? Well, let’s not quibble over a mere couple of millennia. The “fact” on which both Danon and Carmon

¹⁷JTA, December 21, 2017.

¹⁸ Mondoweiss, March 7, 2018.

¹⁹ Katz said that this was in recognition of the US President’s “brave and historic decision” (JTA, December 27, 2017).

²⁰ JTA, December 21, 2017.

²¹ *Indian Express*, December 17, 2017.

(and countless others) agree is this: Jerusalem is “the capital of the Jewish people” and has been for yonks.

But, in fact, this fact is no fact. I hesitate to use the expression, but it is a *fake* fact. (You can blame my partner Reva for that little quip.) If there were a fact lurking under the surface, it would be a fact about the content of certain biblical books – Samuel, Kings and Chronicles – where the saga of King David is told. Even then, the biblical story gives no succour to the idea that the united kingdom which David established lasted any length of time. After his grandson Rehoboam ascended the throne sixty or so years later (according to the biblical story), the kingdom split into two, north and south; and that was that. That was the end of David’s united kingdom from that day to this. In any case, biblical books are not historical works – not even if some historical events are reflected in them. And, even if they are, their bearing on the political status of Jerusalem today is, to put it mildly, dubious, as is the bearing of the Iliad on the political status of Hisarlik, once known as Ilium or Troy. But the disposition of these “factual” claims is even worse than this, for it makes no sense to speak about Jerusalem as “the capital of the Jewish people,” any more than it would make sense to speak of London or Boston or even New York as “the capital of the Jewish people.” Peoples don’t have capitals; states do. Unless, of course, naming the people is an elliptical way of naming the state. Conceivably, someone might say: Paris is the capital of the French people, meaning the people of France, meaning France. But, even granting, for the sake of argument, the contentious claim that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and has been since 1948, when the state came into existence, and even if we also grant, again for the sake of argument, the far more contentious claim that this state belongs to the Jewish people, Jerusalem cannot have been “the capital of the Jewish people” for longer than the seventy years of the state’s existence. The so-called fact is not just fake; it’s not just false; it is, quite literally, fantastic.

But, in the corridors of the Knesset (and not only there), Trump’s tweet on December 6, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, was heard as recognition of the “fact” that Jerusalem is “the capital of the Jewish people” and has been for 3,000 years (or up to 5,000). His intervention has reinforced the intransigence of the Israeli government (and of Israeli politicians generally) over the status of Jerusalem – but not only because he backed their hand by weighing in as the powerful US President. This much is obvious. This much is realpolitik: it takes place on the plane of everyday reality. The impact of what he said was much greater than this because the resonance went deeper than reality, deep into the fantastic depths where fantastic so-called facts, like the ones cited by Danon, Carmon et al, are fashioned. For it was not Haifa nor Tel Aviv nor Herzliya, but *Jerusalem*, that Trump recognised: Jerusalem or Zion, the submerged volcano that is perpetually erupting, whose fantastic “facts” come bubbling up to the surface and harden into the discourse of political Zionism. It is the *fantastic* dimension of these “facts” that takes me into the heart of my talk.

Poetry

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Why Jerusalem?” This is the title of a poem by Yehuda Amichai, the Israeli poet.²² Why, to put his question in a familiar form, is this city different from all other cities? “Why, of all places, Jerusalem?” he asks, with a hint of exasperation. “Why not New York/with her buildings on high and burrows down below/and tunnels and lower depths

²² In Robert Alter (ed), *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), pp 500-509. I am grateful to my friend David Nelken for drawing my attention to Amichai’s poems on Jerusalem.

from which to call out: /O Lord, out of the depths have I cried unto thee," a prospect so daft that I could not resist quoting it. And, of course, that is his point: what is pathos in Jerusalem is bathos in New York. As the poem progresses, he entertains other cities in his imagination, wondering: why not them? Why Jerusalem? Here is a sample: Why not "Petersburg with the mystery/of her white nights"? "Why not Rome with her catacombs," "Vancouver with her salmon," "London/with its gardens and palaces and towers and the chiming/from the top of Big Ben"? (I think that answers itself.) "Why not the sublime San Francisco?" he asks. "Why Jerusalem, why not Paris with her squares/and boulevards?" (Any Briton could explain *that*.) The questioning goes on in this vein for 28 stanzas and ends on a wing and a prayer, with a recollection of a moment in time (or out of time). He writes: "Once I stood at the Western Wall/when suddenly a flock of startled birds soared up,/shrieking and flapping their wings like bits of paper/with wishes scribbled on them, wishes/ that flew out from between the massive stones/and ascended on high." Closing with this vision of an event that is at once natural and supernatural, Amichai is either reminding us why he asks "Why Jerusalem?" or he is giving us the answer – "This is why Jerusalem" – or he is abandoning the question, swept off his feet by this unaccountable outburst of birds, as much as to say: "This is Jerusalem. Don't ask."

At the beginning of my talk I posed this question: Can we remember the past without forgetting the present? In particular, can we remember Jerusalem without forgetting Gaza? I seem to hear a voice in the room saying, impatiently, something along these lines: "You ask this question and then you start reciting poetry! You complain about the fantastic element in political Zionism and then you give us a flight of fancy! Don't get me wrong: I like poetry. I like it precisely because it helps me escape from reality, which we all need to do from time to time. But that's also the *problem* with poetry. Take the poem by Amichai that you just quoted. It *romanticizes* Jerusalem, and this prevents us from seeing reality: the *Palestinian* reality. The Palestinian reality has nothing to do with our feathered friends and an old ruin of a wall. It has to do with a different wall altogether, a new wall with a different name: "the Apartheid Wall," is what some people call it. How can we remember Gaza if our heads are filled with Amichai's birds? How can we think realistically? If it's reality that we want, poetry is a problem."

I want to thank this imaginary voice for her or his imaginary interruption. For it helps concentrate the mind. To this person I also wish to say: No, poetry *as such* is not a problem. It depends on the poem and it also depends on the use to which poetry is put by others. It depends on both these things. I, for one, do not find that this particular poem by Amichai dulls my senses. It tickles my fancy, yes, but, more than that, it lifts up my eyes to the hills, from whence I find inspiration precisely for dealing with reality on the ground. I see this poem as being in a poetic tradition that goes back to the psalmist and the Hebrew prophets. Jerusalem or Zion is the place of which Isaiah speaks when, proclaiming his vision of "the last days," he declares: "out of Zion shall go forth the Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. 2: 2-3). Isaiah speaks as a prophet and these place names are terms of his art. So too with the psalmist who conjures up the scene of lamentation "by the waters of Babylon" with which Psalm 137 begins. To be clear about what I am saying: the Jerusalem of the psalms and the prophets is not imaginary: it is a real place, raised by their imagination and their words to a higher power. Their Zion lies on the horizon where heaven and earth appear to meet. Amichai, in another of his poems, expresses it this way: "Jerusalem is a port city on the shore of eternity." Isaiah would not have been ashamed to have written this line. No, it is not poetry, as such, that is the problem. I do not say that a poem cannot occlude

our vision; in fact, shortly, I shall say just that, when I discuss another of Amichai's Jerusalem poems. But, in the discourse of political Zionism, it is not the odd poem that is the problem: It is the *petrification* of poetry into political ideology. *That* is the problem.

Let me illustrate the point by recalling the words of a former Prime Minister of Israel who was also once Jerusalem's mayor: At the 35th World Zionist Congress in June 2006, which met in Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert welcomed the delegates to the city, describing it thus: "Jerusalem, which is Zion, the beating heart, and the object of yearning and prayers of the Jewish people for generations." He went on to say that there was "a straight line" between Basel, where the first congress, convened by Herzl, met in 1897, and Jerusalem. He called that line "the line of political Zionism." And there you have it: *there* is the problem. What becomes of Zion, "the beating heart" of the Jewish people, when it becomes a possession and is no longer an "object of yearning"? When it is taken by military force? When Zion is transformed from poetic trope to capital city, "the capital city of the Jewish people"? In her book *Booking Passage*, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi raises and answers this question. She writes: "When this poetic image [Zion] denies its status as poetry, it makes such claims on the political imagination that the 'final status' of Jerusalem becomes non-negotiable."²³ Zion, the "beating heart" of the people, atrophies into a trophy, which must not, at any human cost to the Palestinian people or anyone else, be surrendered.

It is not poetry that is the problem. The problem is forgetting that poetry is poetry – and not political ideology written in flowery language. If we forget this, what becomes of our minds, our hearts? In the book of Exodus, the text says that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh against the people of Israel. But we don't need God: we harden our own hearts against the Palestinian people by forgetting that our poetic heritage is poetic. By forgetting it, in other words, even as we remember it: forgetting the very thing that we remember.

What I am saying can be put this way: political Zionism is a form of fundamentalism. But, if I put it this way, I need to elucidate what I mean and what I do not mean. First, let me clarify how I am using the expression "political Zionism." Better still, I shall let Ehud Olmert explain, for, in the address to the 35th World Zionist Congress from which I just quoted, he put it more succinctly than I can. He spoke of "the unification of the Jewish people with the State of Israel." This is the nub of political Zionism: the conflation of people with state and everything that this implies. It implies that Judaism in the broadest sense – not just in the sense of a religion – is folded into the state. Political Zionism is thus the *nationalization* of Jewish identity. Now, when I call political Zionism fundamentalist, I do *not* mean that it is religious as opposed to secular. I shall try to explain what I *do* mean by way of commenting on the verdict that the biblical scholar Henry Wansbrough gives in his book *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*. Wansbrough devotes a chapter to Zionism, in which he reaches this conclusion: "The abuse of the Bible lies in its use as a justification for a purely secular state of affairs, taking the promise made to Abraham in a fundamentalist way as the promise of a secular possession of land."²⁴ For Wansbrough, who is a Catholic priest and a Benedictine monk, the bible is "a series of books showing God's way of acting or interacting with human beings whom he created in his image to complete his work."²⁵ (There is an anecdote about

²³ Sidra DeKoven /Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 238. Jeremy Schonfield makes a similar argument in his illuminating work on Jewish liturgy.

²⁴ Henry Wansbrough, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible: A Brief History of Biblical Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 165-166.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Henry Wansbrough that I am tempted to tell at this point, but I shall save it for the end of my talk.) I see his point. But the difficulty I have is that Wansbrough operates with a sharp distinction between religious and secular. And, even though there are forms of Zionism that use this distinction to describe themselves, the distinction is not all that distinct. It never was, not with Zionism, except perhaps on the sterilized margins of the movement. Zionism was always haunted by the messianic hope – the hope of redemption and return – that is at the heart of the Hebrew scriptures. *Political Zionism* saw itself as secularizing that hope: wresting it away from heaven, taking it out of God’s hands and putting into human hands, Jewish hands. True, as Arthur Hertzberg points out, “modern Zionist ideology” set out to give a “radically new meaning” to the ancient rumour of the Messiah.²⁶ But, as Jacqueline Rose puts it in her book *The Question of Zion*, “messianism colors Zionism, including secular Zionism, at every turn.”²⁷ She calls it “the answer to a secular prayer.”²⁸ In a similar vein, David Grossman, speaking at the memorial for Yitzchak Rabin in 2006, said: “I am totally secular, and yet in my eyes the establishment and the very existence of the State of Israel is a miracle of sorts.”²⁹ A miracle of sorts in answer to a prayer of sorts: this is the hold of political Zionism over the hearts of its adherents, whether they remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Ex: 20:8), or eat bacon butty sandwiches on Yom Kippur. Hertzberg himself observes: “The very name of the movement evoked the dream of an end of days, of an ultimate release from the exile and a coming to rest in the land of Jewry’s heroic age.”³⁰ Likewise, as Rose remarks, with “the very name of the nation”: Israel.³¹

Not names alone. The political vocabulary of Zionism reverberates with sounds from Jewish liturgy. So, for example, Ben-Gurion declared in 1944: The “goal of our revolution is the complete ingathering of the exiles into a socialist Jewish state.”³² You could almost hear “revelation” for “revolution.” The distinction between the two words is not distinct because it dissolves with the messianic phrase “ingathering of the exiles.” Five years later, speaking now as Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion wrote psalm 137 into the Zionist script of the state: “A nation which, for two thousand and five hundred years, has faithfully adhered to the vow made by the first exiles by the waters of Babylon not to forget Jerusalem, will never agree to be separated from Jerusalem.”³³ A week later he averred that “for the State of Israel there has always been and there always will be one capital only – Jerusalem the Eternal. Thus it was 3,000 years ago – and thus it will be, we believe, until the end of time.”³⁴ Thus spake Ben-Gurion in 1949, and, to this day, a disembodied voice continues to intone the same mantra, on the left, on the right, uniting the ungodly and the pious. “Jerusalem the Eternal,” “until the end of time”: who speaks like this outside the enchanted haven of poetry? It is not

²⁶ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical analysis and Reader* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), p. 17.

²⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁹ “David Grossman’s Speech at the Rabin Memorial,” *Haaretz*, November 6, 2006. Available on the website of the International Middle East Media Center at <http://imemc.org/article/22482/> (accessed April 30, 21018).

³⁰ Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, p. 16.

³¹ Rose, *The Question of Zion*, p. 34.

³² David Ben-Gurion, “The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution,” in Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, p. 618 (emphasis in the original). The final, brutal, verse of Psalm 137 ominously illustrates the dangers of a fundamentalist reading.

³³ December 5, 1949. Full statement available on the website of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs at <http://www.jcpa.org/art/knesset4.htm> (accessed April 27, 2018).

³⁴ December 13, 1949. Full statement available on the website of the Jewish Virtual Library at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/prime-minister-ben-gurion-on-jerusalem> (viewed April 27, 2018).

exactly the vernacular of the secular. It is a hybrid language in which poetry is stretched on the rack of ideology and ironed out. Flattened. I call this flattening fundamentalist. I see it as a mean trick of memory played on Jerusalem, “the beating heart” of the Jewish people. But it is the *Palestinian* people who are the butt end of the joke. Some joke!

What is Jerusalem? Where is Jerusalem? “A port city on the shore of eternity.” What sort of politics results from remembering a place that is at once terrestrial and celestial? There is more than one possible answer to this question. But the answer given in political Zionism, the answer that is embodied in the institutions and practices of the State of Israel, is this: the politics of Jewish prerogative, the practice of domination and dispossession. If this answer goes back to 1948, it was massively reaffirmed less than twenty years later. I turn now to 1967.

1967

In another of his Jerusalem poems, Amichai calls 1967 “the Year of Forgetting”.³⁵ Why, I am not sure. Was he being ironic? Maybe. I don’t know. But, given the way I read this poem, I find it, ironically, apropos.

The poet tells of a stroll to “the Old City of Jerusalem,” on Yom Kippur. He was, he says, dressed in “my dark holiday clothes.” “For a long time,” he tells us, “I stood in front of an Arab’s hole-in-the-wall shop, not far from the Damascus Gate, a shop with/buttons and zippers and spools of thread/in every color and snaps and buckles./A rare light and many colors, like an open Ark” (meaning the cabinet in a synagogue where the Torah scrolls are housed, and which is kept open only for certain periods during services). “I told him in my heart,” Amichai writes, “that my father too had a shop like this, with thread and buttons.” “I explained to him in my heart,” he continues, “about all the decades/and the causes and the events, why I am now here/and my father’s shop was buried there and he is buried here.” These words spoken in his heart: Are they intimations of atonement? Of expiation of guilt? Of seeking reconciliation? But how? By words pronounced in the heart? This sounds more like a soliloquy than a dialogue, and without dialogue there can be no reconciliation. “When I was finished,” he concludes, “it was time for the Closing of the Gates prayer,” meaning *Neilah*, the final portion of the Yom Kippur service: the closing of the gates of heaven. “He too lowered the shutters and locked the gate,” Amichai writes, “and I returned, with all the worshipers, home.” That is how the poem ends. The two gates seem to be closing in synch with each other. But this is just a poetic conceit. “When *I* was finished,” says Amichai, not “when *we* were finished.” No business is finished between them because none was being transacted. The “Arab” is just an object in the poet’s soliloquy. He has no voice. And you wonder: In this “year of forgetting,” 1967, has Amichai – even Amichai with all his poetic sensibility and warmth of humanity – forgotten something? Or someone – even as he seems to himself to remember him?

On this question I wish to summon the testimony of Mahmoud Darwish. I think it is fair to say that, as a poet, Darwish is to Palestine what Amichai is to Israel. Both are *great* poets. Darwish called the Israeli-Palestinian conflict “a struggle between two memories.”³⁶ If so, then the struggle is as uneven as the conflict, which is between a state and a stateless

³⁵ Robert Alter (ed), *The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, p. 83. Translated by Stephen Mitchell.

³⁶ Maya Jaggi, “Poet of the Arab World,” *Guardian*, June 7, 2002, available on the *Guardian* website at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jun/08/featuresreviews.guardianreview19> (accessed April 30, 2018).

people. Darwish saw himself and Amichai, whose poetry he admired, as waging this struggle in their poetry. Amichai, he said, “put a challenge to me, because we write about the same place.” He continued: “He [Amichai] wants to use the landscape and history for his own benefit, based on my destroyed identity. So we have a competition: who is the owner of the language of this land? Who loves it more? Who writes it better?”³⁷ Beautifully put; but it is an odd competition, where the competitors are not playing the same game exactly. For, if the place they write about is “the same,” the way each of them is placed in relation to this place could hardly be more different. The difference can be measured by the incalculable distance between two words: “here” and “there.” This makes *all* the difference to what the “struggle between two memories” means.

Consider: when Amichai spoke “in his heart” to the “Arab,” he explained to him “why I am now here/and my father’s shop was buried there and he is buried here.” Where is there and where is here in this poem? I take it that the “there” where Amichai’s father’s shop is buried is Europe; specifically, Germany, which is where he and his family came from in 1936, escaping the Nazis. So, his “here” is Palestine – but Palestine renamed: Palestine reclaimed as the Jewish homeland and reconstituted as the State of Israel. The place that was once located “there,” far away from the country of Amichai’s birth, has become “here.” With Darwish, who was born in a village in the Western Galilee but became an exile, it is the other way around. Palestine, once his “here,” is now “there.” “I Come From There,” is the title of one of his poems, which could almost be a direct response to Amichai.³⁸ “I come from there and I have memories/Born as mortals are, I have a mother/And a house with many windows ...” “I come from there,” he repeats. There: in the place that Amichai calls “here.” Both poems end with almost the identical word, the identical name for “the same place”: in Amichai’s poem, the word is “home,” in Darwish’s, it is “Homeland.” But with this difference: the “here” that is Amichai’s newfound home is the “there” that is Darwish’s newly lost homeland. They “write about the same place,” yes, but one writes as possessor and the other as dispossessed. Amichai’s “here” is a mythical Jewish homeland that became his actual home, whereas Darwish’s “there” is his actual homeland from which he and his family had to flee as the Israel Defence Forces advanced in June 1948. *Even the “Arab” with the shop lives “there,” not “here,”* for he is an alien in his own land. That is the point. This is the depth of the unevenness in the “struggle between two memories.” This depth: this is what is missing or glossed over, or hinted at and then eclipsed, in Amichai’s mesmerizing poem about Yom Kippur in Jerusalem in 1967.

1967. If this was, as Amichai says, “the year of forgetting,” it is because it was the year of remembering with a vengeance. It was the year when the floodgates of Jewish memory opened and a torrent from the past poured through, drowning the present, like the Red Sea after the Children of Israel had passed safely through. It was the year when East Jerusalem with the Temple Mount fell into Israeli hands, and old biblical names – Judea, Samaria, Hebron, Shechem – sprang from ecstatic lips. I remember it well, for I too was caught up for a while in the mass euphoria, a kind of collective high. I forgot myself. I am happy to report that in time I made a reasonable recovery. I only wish I could say the same for my people as a whole. In her epic book on Jerusalem, Karen Armstrong brings that intoxicating moment vividly to mind. Reading her account, I was reminded of the moment when all of Jewry seemed to link arms and dance the *hora* together. “Religious Jews,” she writes, “... were

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Translated by Marjolijn De Jager. I am grateful to Sara Roy for circulating this poem on her email distribution list.

convinced that the Redemption had begun.”³⁹ Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook “announced that ‘under heavenly command’ the Jewish people ‘have just returned home in the elevations of holiness and our own holy city’,” while Moshe Dayan, “an avowed secularist,” stood before the Western Wall and declared, “We have returned to our most holy places; we have returned and we shall never leave them.”⁴⁰ Even the urbane Abba Eban, Israel’s delegate to the UN, waxed prophetic: Jerusalem, he said, “lies beyond and above, before and after, all political and secular considerations.”⁴¹ As if he were talking about the transcendent itself, *e/elyon*, God on high! Levi Eshkol, the Prime Minister, announced that Jerusalem was “the eternal capital of Israel.” And on the night of Saturday June 10, in this “holy city” that “lies beyond and above” the mundane, “the 619 inhabitants of the Maghribi Quarter were given three hours to evacuate their homes.” Then the mechanical caterpillars moved in, reducing the district to rubble.⁴² This was done to create a plaza to accommodate Jewish pilgrims to the Western Wall. That was the official reason. But if you looked closely you could see the Messiah entering Jerusalem, riding on the back of a bulldozer rather than the donkey in the vision of the prophet Zechariah (9:9). We live in the end time, when the bulldozers, “under heavenly command,” do not cease from doing their divine work: manufacturing rubble from Palestinian homes.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem.” When I look back at 1967, and when I look around me today, I wonder whether an entire people – *my* people – have not fallen victim to the dreaded Jerusalem Syndrome, that mysterious condition which attacks the nervous system of the sanest of people, depriving them of their grip on reality: people who previously were sound of mind and spoke politely and wanted a better world for all, a world where children did not fear the screams of overhead jets, where one day a wolf and a lamb might dwell together, and a little child from Gaza will lead by example – by feeling safe.⁴³ Poor Isaiah! How he must be turning in his grave! The psalmist, I fancy, would relish the chance to rewrite that line in Psalm 137, bringing it up to date: “If only we could forget you, O Jerusalem; if only. Then maybe we might be able to remember you.”

Otherness

What might remembering Jerusalem mean? What form might it take if it did not take the form of Jewish exceptionalism, the form it takes today? I believe it would mean what I take Isaiah’s vision to imply: inclusiveness: inclusiveness of a kind that is conducive to peace. Which means sharing the land somehow and also sharing words: the words that mean so much to *us* – words like “return” and “home” – and which mean as much to *them*; as much or more, much more, given the circumstances today. Let us suppose that Darwish did read Amichai’s poem about Yom Kippur in Jerusalem in 1967: how would he have been affected by the final line: “and I returned, with all the worshipers, home”? Home. Returned. What heartache he would have felt as he read those comforting words! These are also the words that the protestors from Gaza have been using on their weekly March of Return, which

³⁹ Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, p. 400.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁴³ The allusion is to the vision in Is. 11:6.

began six weeks ago and originally was scheduled to end today, Friday, May 4.⁴⁴ They have been chanting not a psalm but a lullaby by the late Palestinian poet, Ibrahim Mohammed Saleh (Abu Arab): “I will return to my country. To the green land, I will return.”⁴⁵ Return where? There. Transforming “there” into “here”: this is what remembering Jerusalem might mean.

There is only one way this can be done: by changing “Them” into “Us” – not changing *who they are* but changing their *status*, so that they are no longer the negative to the Jewish positive. So that the first person plural “Us” becomes inclusive. What was that harsh thing that Darwish said about Amichai? “He wants to use the landscape and history for his own benefit, based on my destroyed identity.” Whether this is entirely fair to Amichai, it is the brutal truth (notwithstanding any pious or liberal caveats) about political Zionism. Political Zionism is essentially a supersessionary project. It seeks to take the land away from one people and replace them with another. Israel, you might say, is the *negation* of Palestine. Defining itself as “the Jewish state,” It defines itself as *not* Palestine.

This method of definition – defining your group by negating another – ought to ring a bell in Jewish ears: an alarm bell. It is the essence of the Othering of the Jews of Europe down the centuries. *Ab initio*, the Church announced to the world that it was precisely *not* the Synagogue; and the die was cast. What began in antiquity became an inveterate habit written into Europe’s cultural DNA. At first the foil to Christianity, the Jew became the foil to humanity in the universalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and then the foil to the ethnic nation in the two centuries that followed; a saga that culminated in the Shoah, the Shoah, which led inexorably to the Naqba. “I am a Jew,” to recall Hilda’s words, “with a profound consciousness of Jewish victimization through history.” “But for me,” she might have gone on to say, “to remember the Shoah but forget the Naqba is inconceivable.” It is certainly unconscionable, as the two events are inextricably linked. The Jewish pariah of Europe has metamorphosed into the Palestinian pariah of Israel. “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 23:9). According to a *baraita* (a late tradition) in the Talmud, the Torah repeats this injunction (or words to similar effect) between thirty-six and forty-six times, depending on how you count.⁴⁶ How many times does it need to be said? And how hard is it to translate into an injunction that applies to a people which identifies with the people to whom that injunction in the book is addressed? It’s not that difficult. Let me try my hand at doing the translation: “You shall not turn another people into the Other, for you know the feelings of the Other, having yourselves been Othered in the land of Europe.”

The memory of otherness: this is the rock on which Judaism is built. A state that does not remember this but calls itself Jewish forgets itself. When I contemplate this collective self-forgetting, a people that that has forgotten its soul, then I am transported back in time (2,500 years “in fact”), sitting with the psalmist, weeping by the waters of Babylon.

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⁴⁴ “Palestinians say over a dozen killed in Gaza border protest,” *Guardian*, March 31, 2018, available on line at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/30/palestinians-march-to-gaza-border-for-start-of-six-week-protest-israel> (accessed May 2, 2018).

⁴⁵ Quoted in Rawan Yaghi, “Gaza Screams for Life,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2018. Available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/03/opinion/gaza-palestine-israel-protests.html> (accessed May 2, 2018).

⁴⁶ Norman Solomon (ed.), *The Talmud: A Selection* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 472.

In a way, everything I have said is just a preamble to the 64 dollar question: What kind of political future for Palestine and Israel does the principle of inclusiveness imply?⁴⁷ I owe you an answer to this question. Unfortunately (do I really mean that?) I am out of time. We can, if people want, broach the question in the discussion period. In the meantime, in place of an answer, I have an anecdote: the anecdote with which earlier I said I would close.

Oxford is overwhelmingly Anglican, but St Benet's Hall is Catholic and, until recently, it was always headed by a monk from Ampleforth Abbey. How come a nice Jewish boy like me ends up at such a place? Since you ask, I'll tell you. The year was 1998. I had just finished a six-year stint as head of the department of philosophy at Saint Xavier University, Chicago, which was founded by the Sisters of Mercy, an order of Catholic nuns. I was due one year's sabbatical leave. After consulting a colleague at Oxford, I wrote to St Benet's: Did they have a vacancy for a residential Visiting Fellow? My enquiry was addressed to the Master, who, at the time, was Fr Henry Wansbrough, the afore-mentioned author of the book, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*. In his reply, Fr Henry thoughtfully explained what I was getting into. "Basically," he wrote, "it is a Benedictine house, and we live as a monastic community." He went on to say cordially that I would be "most welcome" to come and live with them for a year.

I read this reply with a mixture of relief and anxiety. On the one hand, this was what I was hoping he would say. On the other hand, how come he said it? Probably (I thought), Fr Henry, seeing that I am at Saint Xavier, has assumed I am Catholic. I did not want to accept his offer on false pretences, but nor did I wish to lose it. So, feeling as if I were treading on eggshells, I wrote back as follows: Dear Fr Henry: "Since my own upbringing and education ... was religious, I am accustomed to an environment that combines the academic with the devotional. However," I added, taking a deep breath and breaking the news as gently as I could, "my affiliation is not Catholic, nor even Christian, but Jewish." I then pointed out what that implied: "Consequently, I suppose I will not be able to participate fully in all the rituals that are part of the life of the community at St Benet's." I quickly added: "While this does not pose a problem for me, I do see that this might not be what the Hall has in mind for a Visiting Fellow, especially one who is living on the premises."

To this ponderous, not to say convoluted, message, I received the following response. (Bear in mind that Fr Henry is not only a monk and a priest but also editor of the Catholic *New Jerusalem Bible* and, at the time, was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.) He wrote: "[M]y mother was Jewish ... I have an array of Jewish cousins, and value highly the Jewish tradition. I love all things Jewish ..." and then he qualified this, pointedly, but with British understatement: "(with certain limitations about Netanyahu)." Had it not been for the limitations about Netanyahu, I might have thought twice about his offer. As it was, I did need to think *once*. I accepted. I came. And he and I became friends. During that first year, at several late-night assignations lubricated by an ecumenical bottle of single malt Scotch, I learned that there was more to Henry's Jewishness than just his mother and his cousins. He did not (and does not) see his Jewish identity as superseded. He was fond of saying that he

⁴⁷ I am sympathetic to the general way in which this question is approached in two recent articles: Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: Disruptive Empathy and Binationalism in Israel/Palestine," *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol 16, no 1 (2014), and Leila Farsakh, "The 'Right to Have Rights': Partition and Palestinian Self-Determination," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, autumn 2017. The four of us were part of a project on Arab-and-Jewish engagement that met in Vienna over three years under the auspices of the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue. Essays by participants are included in the forthcoming book: Bashir Bashir and Leila Farsakh (eds), *Contemporary Engagements with Arab and Jewish Questions: Interrogating National Identity and Political Sovereignty* (NY: Columbia University Press).

and I were “the only two Jews in the Hall.” As I got to know him better I discovered that this was not a throwaway line – any more than his Jewishness was a throwaway identity.

Which prompts, in closing, the following thought. Catholic and Jewish: two identities that seem mutually incompatible: a relationship fraught with conflict and pain, a deeply troubled history that has gone on for so long that it makes friction between Arab and Jew seem like a blip in time. If these two identities can meet in one person and peacefully co-exist; if Henry can be the one without forgetting he is (so to speak) the other: then there is hope yet for Jerusalem.

Brian Klug
St Benet’s Hall
University of Oxford