

BAT YE'OR

**DHIMMI PEOPLES:  
OPPRESSED NATIONS**



Front cover photograph :

## YEMENITE JEWS AT SAN'A early 20th century

The imam Said Yahya Ibn Muhammed, religious and political leader of the Yemen, wrote with his own hand the edict which follows. In 1905, the imam gave it to the Jews and promised to protect them "if they remained in their former status". In 1921, the ancient law requiring the forced conversion of Jewish orphans was renewed and rendered more severe in 1925. It remained in force until the departure of the Jews for Israel in 1948-50.

1905

Edict promulgated in the Yemen by the imam Yahya

*In the name of Allah, the all merciful and clement.*

*This is the regulation which I ordain for all the Jews who must remain subjected to my laws and pay the [poll] tax without any change.*

*I recall to mind the ancient words and their meaning; I recall to mind the obligations which the Turks have forgotten and which were observed in the time of the pious imams, before the triumph of people ignorant of the law.*

*The Jews can remain untroubled and be assured of their existence if they pay regularly the gizya.*

*Every male having reached the age of thirteen years is subject to this tax [...] and by this their life will be preserved under our domination.*

*No one can avoid paying this tax before the end of the year [...] as it is written in the Koran, the book received from Allah[...]*

*The Jews must not :*

- 1) *Raise their voices in front of Muslims,*
- 2) *Build houses higher than the houses of Muslims.*
- 3) *Brush against Muslims whilst passing them in the street,*
- 4) *Carry on the same trade as the Arabs,*
- 5) *Say that Muslim law can have a defect,*
- 6) *Insult the prophets,*
- 7) *Discuss religion with Muslims,*
- 8) *Ride animals astraddle,*
- 9) *Screw up their eyes in perceiving the nudity of Muslims,*
- 10) *Carry on their religious devotions outside their places of worship,*
- 11) *Raise their voices during prayers,*
- 12) *Sound the shofar with much noise,*
- 13) *Lend money at interest, which can bring about the destruction of the world,*
- 14) *They must always rise in front of Muslims and honour them in all circumstances.*

Y. Sémach, *Une Mission de l'Alliance au Yémen*, Paris 1910, pp. 38-40.

The three photographs representing dhimmis are from Yemen and Morocco. These two countries, closed to European influence, retained their traditions and consequently the dhimmi statute into the 20th century.

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# DHIMMI PEOPLES : OPPRESSED NATIONS

by

BAT YE'OR

## INTRODUCTION

*Loose the bands of wickedness,  
Undo the heavy burdens,  
Let the oppressed go free,  
And that ye break every yoke.*  
Isaiah ch.58, v. 6

There are peoples roaming the earth who no longer have a soul. Flight and exile have enfeebled their memories, dimmed their sight and stifled their speech. In glancing through history textbooks, they smile in melancholy : to-day their nations no longer exist. Vainquished peoples, they have been rejected by history and have joined the anonymous mass of exploited peoples, whose blood, tears and sweat have helped to build the civilisation of their oppressors. Thus they wander through the world, with neither roots nor memories, strangers, forgotten by time, atomised . . . bearing their nostalgia like a shackle.

When the historian, peering into history through the conqueror's eyeglass, meets them at the turn of every century, eloquent in their gloomy silence, he deems "tolerant" the genocide which decimated them, forgetting that the silence of nations is the same as that of the *gulag*. Some have survived, emaciated : these are the Samaritans. Others resist and when their struggle explodes into violence, the world remembers the meaning of bravery : these are the Maronites. Others fight alone in the name of independence : these are the Kurds. Others despair in exile : these are the Armenians and the Assyrian Christians. Some are resigned to their fate : these are the Copts. And others dig up, from their liberated land, the ruins of their ancient culture destroyed by the occupant : these are the Israelis. So numerous and diverse, all these nations have shared a common destiny : for thirteen centuries they have resisted to the limits of human endurance in order to survive.

In this year, dedicated to the fight against racialism, oppression, imperialism and colonialism, we wish to remember them. And bearing in mind the appeal of the American Indians at the United Nations\*, we wondered whether a martyrdom endured for thirteen centuries does not justify *at last* the recognition of the national rights and the human rights of dhimmi peoples, heirs to the national and cultural values of the most ancient civilisations.

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\* International NGO Conference on discrimination against indigenous populations - 1977 in the Americas, held at the U. N., Geneva, 21-23 September 1977:

The following articles which appeared in *Rond-Point* (Brussels) in January, May and October and in *Centrale* (Brussels) in June 1977 are published here in a revised version.

## JEW IN DHIMMI CLOTHES (DEBDOU, MOROCCO)



(Schulmann 1955)

*"They [the Jews] first obtained the usage of this scarf in Morocco [Marrakesh] and Mequinez, as a mean of covering their ears. They really wanted to elude the customary insult of Moorish children, who delighted in knocking off their bonnets which were a sign of servitude. They are not allowed to fasten the scarf with a double knot below the chin. This knot must be a simple one and the scarf removed in the presence of Muslim dignitaries... They are obliged always to wear the black or dark blue cloak (ya'lak); it is only by toleration that they wear the white slam, a small coat, useful against the hot sun. The coat's hood, made of blue cloth, must not fold over the head, lest the Jew be mistaken from afar for a Moor; for the Moor sometimes wears a hood of the same colour, except with a different rim.*

*Moreover the black bonnet must always be visible. Furthermore, the coat must have a little opening on the right, and the hood must fall over the left shoulder in order to trouble the movement of the arm as another sign of servitude."*

Abbé Godard, *Le Maroc, note d'un voyageur, 1858-59*, Algiers 1860, p. 35, in J. Goulven, *Les Mellahs de Rabat-Salé*, Paris 1927, pp. 27-28.

## THE DHIMMI

*The fundamental evil in alienation is forgetfulness* – Robert Misrahi

In this article, it is impossible to go far beyond general propositions. These will be best appreciated, however, after the reader has been provided with the basic historical framework. This is why it has seemed useful to specify briefly the socio-economic background in which the dhimmi nations evolved, while abstaining, for reasons of clarity and space, from analysing the historical context in any depth.

After the Arab conquest, the expression “dhimmi” designated the indigenous non-Arab and non-Muslim peoples – Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians (Persians) – whose territories came under Arab-Muslim domination. It signifies protected because these populations – in theory, if not always in practice – were protected from pillage, slavery, exile and massacre by the specific conditions of an agreed covenant between the victors and the vanquished. In return for such protection, the dhimmis were obliged to submit to a code or covenant (commonly referred to as the *Covenant of ‘Umar*) a summary of which is given below. The need to control these foreign peoples naturally obliged the conquering Arab minority to adopt an oppressive political attitude which became more and more severe over the years. In order to justify their oppression, the rulers based themselves on certain religious values to the exclusion of other Koranic verses recommending charity and fraternity. Thus a common geo-political event – the conquest of foreign lands and the subjection of conquered peoples – was linked to a religious concept, the *djihad*, or holy war, which has as its inevitable consequence the oppression of the infidel. So, although the condition of the dhimmi is typical of religious intolerance – hardly exceptional in human history – only its political aspect, the spoliation and subjection of native inhabitants, will be examined here.

A dhimmi civilisation is characterised by a language, a history and a culture as well as specific political and juridical institutions developed in the national homeland before its annexation by the Arab conquerors. The expression “dhimmi civilisation” or “dhimmi people” refers to a nation, the ethnic origin of which is associated with a particular geographical area regardless of that nation’s present dispersion. People who belong to a dhimmi civilisation are individuals who have continued to transmit to their progeny their specific heritage, without regard to their wanderings and their present domiciles which have resulted from loss of their national independence through occupation, oppression and exile. Thus, whether he is a Westerner or an Oriental, a Jew is a part of a dhimmi civilisation if he willingly perpetuates and accepts the national and cultural values of Israel. It is the same thing with the Armenians, the Assyrians and the Maronites as well as other peoples who, after the conquest of their homeland, were subjected to a legislation which either decimated them or forced them to live in exile.

### Economic exploitation

A tax (the *kharadj*) was levied on the lands left to the indigenous dhimmis. This tax symbolised the Arabisation of the land of the dhimmis, i.e. its addition to the patrimony of the Arab-Islamic community. In the early period of colonisation, lands given in fief were exonerated from the *kharadj*.

Each male dhimmi, with the theoretical exceptions of the aged, invalids and slaves, had to pay a poll-tax (the *gizya*) which symbolized the subjection and humiliation of the vanquished.

The dhimmis also paid double the taxes of the Muslims. In addition, ransoms (*avaries*) were frequently extorted from the local Jewish and Christian communities under threat of collective sanctions, including torture and death.

### Politico-economic discriminations

It was forbidden for the dhimmi on pain of death :

- to carry or possess weapons,
- to raise a hand against a Muslim, even against an aggressor unjustly determined to kill him,
- to ally himself with the enemies of the Arabs,
- to criticize Islam, the Prophet or the Angels,
- to convert to any religion other than Islam, and having converted to Islam to revert to one's original religion,
- to be linked by marriage or concubinage to a Muslim woman,
- to hold a position giving him authority over a Muslim,

The dhimmis were obliged :

- to live separated from Muslims, in special quarters of a town, the gates of which were closed every evening; or, as in Yemen, outside the limits of towns inhabited by Muslims,
- to have lower houses than those of Muslims,
- to practise their religion secretly and in silence,
- to bury their dead hastily,
- to refrain from showing in public religious objects, such as crosses, banners or sacred texts,
- to distinguish themselves from Muslims by their exterior aspect,
- to wear clothes distinguished not only by shape (length, style of sleeves, etc.) but also by specific colours assigned to each group of dhimmis : i.e. for Jews, Christians and Samaritans,
- to have different types of tombs from those of Muslims.

It was forbidden for the dhimmis :

- to go near mosques or to enter certain venerated towns which would thereby be polluted,
- to have head-dresses, belts, shoes, ornate saddles or similar saddles to those of Muslims – all elements of their exterior appearance being intended to emphasise their humble and abject status.

They were forbidden to ride horses or camels, since these animals were considered too noble for them. Donkeys were permitted, but they could only ride them outside towns and they had to dismount on sight of a Muslim. In certain periods they were forced to wear distinctive badges in the public baths, and in certain regions were even forbidden to enter them at all.

The dhimmis were obliged :

- to make haste in the streets, always passing to the left (impure) side of a Muslim, who was advised to push them to the wall,
- to walk humbly with lowered eyes,
- to accept insults without replying,
- to remain standing in a humble and respectful attitude in the presence of a Muslim,
- to leave Muslims the best places,
- never to speak to Muslims except to reply.

Any litigation between a dhimmi and a Muslim was brought before an Islamic tribunal where the dhimmi's testimony was unacceptable.

In North Africa and Yemen, the most repugnant duties, such as executioner, grave-digger, cleaner of the public latrines, etc. were forced on Jews; even on Saturdays and Holy days. Contempt for the dhimmi's life was expressed through inequality of punishments for the same offences. The penalty for murder was much lighter if the victim was a dhimmi. The murderer of a dhimmi was rarely punished as he could justify his act by accusing his victim of blasphemy against Islam or of having assaulted a Muslim.

Muslims were strongly advised against social intercourse with dhimmis, but if contact with them could not be avoided it was recommended that they limit relations to the strictest necessities, always showing contempt.

This brief summary provides only an outline of the rules which governed a whole system of oppression, which increased or decreased according to the specific circumstances of each region. In exchange for these obligations inflicted upon the dhimmis, their existence was tolerated on their land which was now Arabised. This tolerance was not final. It could be abrogated in two ways : the unilateral decision of the ruler to exile the dhimmis, and infraction by the dhimmis of the regulations. The latter case permitted individual or collective reprisals against the dhimmi communities, ending in pillage or massacre.

The enforcement or alleviation of the rules depended on the political circumstances and the good will of the rulers. Some orientalist have considered them "tolerant", and this was evidently the opinion of those who benefitted from them. But it is obviously not the point of view of the victims. For, how can oppression be justified or esteemed "tolerant" otherwise than by denying the humanity of those subjugated by it? Every colonising power maintains that men are not equal and considers that its yoke is benevolent and tolerant. Nor did the Arab invent this legislation. The Byzantine clergy first elaborated it – thereby giving an ideological arm to the imperial power – in order to destroy

Israel in its homeland and in the diaspora. The Arabian conquerors Islamised it, developing and using it to annihilate in their turn both Oriental and North African Judaism and Christianity in the political, economic, religious and cultural spheres.

The situation of the Christian dhimmi was alleviated following Western European pressure to protect Oriental Christians, pilgrimages to the Holy Land and commerce with the Orient. In the second half of the 19th century, European Jewish organisations, aided by European consuls, were able to improve the condition of the Jewish dhimmi. It was only with European colonisation, which proclaimed *de facto* equality between Muslim, Christian and Jew, that the dhimmis, now liberated from discrimination, could feel free and even achieve some economic progress.

After European decolonisation, Arab governments adopted a policy of intensive Arabisation. Wiping out the sequels of European colonisation meant, amongst other things, as far as the indigenous national minorities were concerned, the re-establishment of political, economic, social and cultural discrimination with the aim of limiting those liberties which had been enjoyed during the colonial period. This discrimination was adjusted to new ideological formulae and was manifested in strong emphasis on the Arab-Muslim element to the detriment of the pre-Islamic ethnic cultures and nationalisms. The latter were either attacked, as in the case of the national movements of the Assyrians, Kurds, Zionists and Maronites, or paralysed like the Copts of Egypt. Thus was re-established the superiority and domination of the Arab-Muslim community over the ethnic Oriental nationalisms, whilst Panarabism reaffirmed its imperialist principle of universal domination, which had been at the root of Arab colonisation of the Near East and North Africa.

## DOCUMENT

1851

No justice for the dhimmi

*"It is my duty to report to Your Excellency that the Jews in Hebron have been greatly alarmed by threats of the Moslems there at the commencement of Ramadan. [...]"*

*The Jews having complained that a freed slave named Saad Allah was more obnoxious to them than any other person in Hebron and that Abderrahman had released him almost immediately after sentencing him to imprisonment, I applied to the Pasha to have Saad Allah brought to Jerusalem.*

*His Excellency gave an order that the offender should be examined by the Council in Hebron, and if convicted, be forwarded to Jerusalem for punishment.*

*Accordingly a Council was held there during five hours, and the result was that a report (Mazbata) was drawn up and signed by the Mufti and Kadi, declaring that none but Jewish witnesses had appeared, "and we do not receive the testimony of Jews". Saad Allah was therefore dismissed [...]"*

From a letter (15.7.1851) James Finn, British Consul, Jerusalem, to Sir Stratford Canning, British Ambassador, Constantinople. (F.O. 78/874, No 10)

A.M. Hyamson, *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in relation to the Jews of Palestine*, London, 1939, Part I, pp. 171.



## FROM DHIMMI TO DHIMMI STATE

*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it* – Georges Santayana

(Inscription on the gate of Dachau Museum)

Among the motivations which contributed to the elaboration of the dhimmi status, the victor-vanquished relationship in its political aspect appears as the predominant element. A distinction must be made, however, between the treatment meted out by the Arab-Muslim conquerors to non-Arab lands on the one hand, and to their inhabitants on the other. However the lands were conquered, they were permanently annexed by the Arab-Muslim collectivity, i.e. they were Arabised. The fate of their inhabitants depended on whether they had surrendered as a result of defeat in battle or according to treaty, but in either case an indigenous inhabitant who refused conversion to Islam was tolerated only if he accepted the dhimmi status. Arabisation of the conquered lands was marked by a land-tax (*kharadj*) which was levied only on dhimmi-owned land. The tax was paid to the Islamic collectivity, since both the dhimmis and the produce of their work were considered as belonging to the conquering community of Believers.

Arabisation was in fact synonymous with expropriation, for it implied the dissolution of the bond between the land and its former owner. Henceforth the dhimmi was to be "tolerated" on his own land by a foreigner who had obtained possession legally – for appropriation by force was considered legal.

### Exploitation of the dhimmi

Having legitimately dispossessed the conquered populations according to the law of battle, the conquerors tried to strengthen their hold by weakening the indigenous population through economic exploitation and inequitable laws. The decisive reason for the conqueror's tolerance of the dhimmi's existence was economic. They were sedentary peoples whose daily work both on the land and in the towns was productive and necessary. The empire expanded with the aid of a Bedouin army which benefitted from the spoils of war, whilst its maintenance was guaranteed by the exploitation of the dhimmis throughout the conquered territories. Henceforth the dhimmis became merely an exploitable human mass from which *corvées* were obtainable at will. At some periods they were tolerated with condescension and at others with animosity, according to the current economic and strategic needs of the empire.

### Submission of the dhimmi

The victor-vanquished relationship, being one of force, compelled the master to maintain the dhimmi in a permanent state of weakness, subordination and inferiority. The dhimmi was forbidden to carry arms or keep them at home. He could be condemned to death for raising his hand against a member of the conquering race, even in defense when criminally assaulted or attacked by a

child. In certain circumstances, however, the enrolment of dhimmi mercenaries was permitted; on such occasions the latter enjoyed the same rights as Muslims.

The expropriation and economic exploitation of the dhimmi peoples required a moral justification. In order to legitimise the conquerors' right over the person and property of the vanquished, the ruling power glorified the superiority of the chosen conquering race as well as the spiritual values which it upheld, contrasting them with the perversity of the vanquished dhimmis.

It was necessary for the dominating group to illustrate by its dignity, authority, and wealth the divine grace which rewarded the just cause of the conquerors in contrast to the humility, isolation and degradation of the vanquished. The conquerors endeavoured to debase the very soul of the dhimmi by imposing on him the outward signs of moral degradation. When the politico-military danger of a massive revolt on the part of the dhimmis had passed, it was this moral and social degradation of the human being, justified by the superiority of the master-race, which characterised the dhimmi condition. But even then the political implications of the victor-vanquished relationship would survive side by side with that of the dominator-dominated, oppressor-oppressed relationship.

The dominant power felt obliged to expose publicly the imputed depravity of the dhimmis, especially as their culture – as heirs to the ancient civilisations of the Orient – was incomparably more developed than that of the conquerors. According to the renowned sheikh Damanhūrī, the dhimmis *“must not imitate the garb of the men of learning and honor, or wear luxurious garb, silk, or, say, fine cloth. They must be distinguished from ourselves in attire, as the local custom of each area may have it, but without adornment, so that it indicates their humiliation, submission, and abasement. Their shoelaces must not be like ours. Where closed shoes are worn, not laced footwear, their shoes should be coarse, of unpleasant colour. The Companions [ of the Prophet ] agreed upon these points in order to demonstrate the abasement of the infidel and to protect the weak believer's faith.”*<sup>1</sup> (Egypt, 18th century)

### Debasement of the dhimmi

A code of rules (the Covenant of 'Umar) based on religious and juridical texts, enforced upon the already despoiled and subjugated dhimmi a moral debasement which reduced him to the outward appearance of complete contemptibility. He was deprived of all means of defence, either physical or legal, thus rendering him cowardly in comparison with the courage of his superior; he was obliged to grovel in a servile manner so that the victor would appear more generous; he was forced to live in fear of the morrow so that each day he was delivered from death would fill him with gratitude, stifling his will to revolt against his oppressor, who only spared him because of his productiveness. According to the Maghrebin theologian Sayh Muhammad al-Magilī, on the day set aside for collecting the poll-tax (*gizya*), the Jews were to be assembled in a public place, such as the bazaar, at the lowest and most debasing place.

The tax collectors were to stand above the Jews in a threatening position so that it should appear to everyone that the latter were to be humiliated and despoiled of their belongings. *"They will then realise what favour we bestow upon them in accepting the gizya and letting them off so easily. Then they should be dragged away, one by one... While paying, the dhimmi should be slapped in the face and pushed away so that he will consider that through this form of ransom he has escaped the sword."*<sup>2</sup> (Maghreb, 15th century)

Through isolation, infamy, vulnerability and poverty, the dhimmi became a social pariah. The game had been won, and from then on the plundering of this subhuman being, both his person and his possessions, was interpreted as a sign of the Divine Will rewarding the just cause of the victor. To claim that the goods and honours which certain dhimmis enjoyed were illegal and sinful was an easy next step, taken by the famous jurist, Ibn Taymiyya, who asserted that it was incumbent on rulers *"to humiliate and oppress them [the dhimmis] by compelling them to observe the commandments of 'Umar; they have the duty to withdraw them from the important posts they occupy and generally to prohibit them from access to Muslim affairs."*<sup>3</sup> (Egypt, 14th century)

Toleration of such a despicable creature was indeed a token of the victor's generosity, but it was not to go unpaid for. Thus, according to the same jurist, the dominant community should tighten the yoke on its *protégé* so that he may realise that to flee from this condition of infamy would be punished by reprisals: at every moment he was threatened with death or exile. He was to live in an atmosphere of permanent menace. The toleration which spared his life was not to be taken for granted, it was to be bought with gold and servility, and it could be unilaterally abolished since the punishment of the infidel was only temporarily held at bay. This reprieve, in order to be extended, demanded more gold and more humiliation, more work and more corruption.

Since the loyalty of the dhimmi to his religion was the cornerstone of his passive resistance to the conqueror, it was therefore necessary to debase it. The building of new religious edifices was prohibited, whereas those dating from the pre-Islamic period could be restored only under certain conditions, providing that no enlargement or embellishment should improve the original structure. In other words, any restoration merely maintained them in a constant state of disrepair. Religious objects were looked upon with scorn as symbols of contemptible practices and were frequently pillaged, burnt or profaned. Their debasement added to the degradation of the few dhimmi places of worship which had escaped destruction and confiscation.

These, then, were the political, economic and moral motivations which produced both the dhimmi status and the whole system of myths which justify the infernal cycle of debasement of man by man. Indeed, the dhimmi condition was by no means an historical exception. A number of discriminatory practices already existed in Eastern Christendom, and these were transmitted by Arabised converts and assimilated into the historical, political and religious values of the Arab conquerors.

## History forgotten

Nowadays, when trying to dig up the past of the dhimmi communities, the historian is overwhelmed by the silences of history which cover the deaths of nations. Standing out from the ashes of abandoned places, only ruined synagogues, churches and profaned cemeteries are to be found. Even the humiliation of the past, which symbolised the dhimmi's resistance against oppression, is forgotten, or rather denied, by his descendants – for they have been freed by the West and are eager to forget their ancestral humiliation – and by those who have deliberately falsified or concealed historical truth.

The silence which smothers the cries of past oppression and humiliation is symbolic of the dhimmi destiny. People without a past, they are also a people without rights; and in our time, when petty nationalisms spring up artificially within a decade, acquiring their national slogans at will, the rights of the dhimmis to national autonomy in their liberated homeland or equal rights with their oppressors are never mentioned. Remnants of nations – dead yet living peoples – preserved in spite of a thousand years of silence based on the principle that all criticism of the oppressor is blasphemy, they are the embodiment of silent suffering. In the victor-vanquished relationship, they are still today victims of a *totalist* policy : absolutely everything for the victor, absolutely nothing for the vanquished. The conqueror may glory in a triumphantly successful imperialism, in the lustre of pillaged civilisations, in the world's respect for strength and power. The vanquished must eke out a subordinate existence, affirming the grandeur of the masters and the contempt which history reserves for the weak, for the loser.

## Israel : Dhimmi State

Is it necessary, it may be asked, to convey a message which no longer resounds in the hearts of a posterity which denies its past ? For one who, herself a dhimmi, has in her quest for identity explored the abyss of oppression, the world to-day is full of dhimmis : for the system which produces them, not having been uncovered in our time, is still at work. The truth is that the dhimmi condition has reached the free world from the Orient, in the sense that the victims of the Arab economic boycott and of PLO-inspired international terrorism – banishing by death whomsoever blasphemes against Arabism – are also dhimmis. Worse, there is even a dhimmi state : Israel, existing yet denied. The system of values which produced the dhimmi today decrees that to harass, assassinate or mutilate the Israeli population and its sympathisers guilty of rebellion (Zionism), is legal and commendable. The same penalties were used to chastise the rebellious dhimmi, whose revolt was considered as blasphemy – contesting as it did the dogma of the victor's superiority and the inferiority of the vanquished. Racialism, imperialism, colonialism are the hateful cloth of contempt and derision thrown on the State of Israel in order to disarm and ostracise a country, whose population, largely composed of dhimmi refugees from Arab lands liberated by Zionism, struggles for survival.

But are not references to the past detrimental to any prospects of peace opening out in the Middle East, and should not such indictments be pushed into the background ? These two points are important. The first implies that the teaching of history must submit to the political expediencies of the present, a policy which would result not only in historical falsification, but also in the denial of history. If this is so, world peace will demand the destruction of all the history books of humanity which henceforth, deprived of its memory, experience, culture and intelligence, will revert to barbarism. Once the utility of human history has been admitted, to deny this principle to the dhimmi nations exclusively, on the pretext that their past is merely a denunciation of oppression, would raise a moral problem for history itself. Are persecuted and humiliated peoples to be rejected on the grounds that history is destined to become the narcissistic reflection of supermen and victors who boast unremorsefully of their glory, who are steeped in the blood and misery of the vanquished ?

It is my belief that an objective knowledge of the past, though not itself the fundamental condition in bringing about brotherly understanding among mankind, is nevertheless a necessary stepping-stone. To deny the objective data of history reflects the same mentality which once taught, in defiance of all evidence, that the sun orbits the earth.

And then... there is peace... and peace.

There is the *pax arabica* imposed by Khaled of Arabia in order to halt Communist progress in the Orient and to create the requisite conditions for the destruction of Israel : to isolate the Hebrew State, whilst arming its neighbours to the teeth during a "cold war" aimed at weakening it by the return to its territory of Palestinised Arabs. That kind of peace is no more than a tactical peace in a strategy of war.

There could be another kind of peace, however, the only real peace which makes sense in the geo-political history of the Orient. And this peace can only come about after a revolutionary recasting of the values of Arabism which will, for the first time, bring about a renunciation of totalist concepts and the acceptance of equal rights and national autonomy for dhimmi nations. But, one might object, is Israel – a part of whose population is of European extraction – really a dhimmi nation ? If the Hebrew people can resurrect on their ancestral soil the language, the institutions, the historical geography, the culture and the pre-Islamic national traditions characteristic of this land, then Israel is truly a dhimmi nation which has achieved its decolonisation. The dispersion of the Hebrew nation following an imperialist annexation of territory cannot be advanced as a justification for this annexation. In other words, the defects which the victim develops as a result of oppression cannot be used by the oppressor as a pretext for his oppression (dominator-dhimmi relationship). But it is in fact this dispersion, resulting from the expropriation of the land of the Jewish dhimmi, which is invoked in order to legitimise the Arabisation of the conquered territory.

Article 20 of the PLO's National Covenant claims that Jews do not form a real people and are no more than citizens of the states to which they belong. Article 1 explains the reasoning behind this attitude : "*Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation.*"<sup>4</sup> – which in modern terminology is the Arab empire.

The rebirth of a pre-Islamic Hebrew language and culture, in a land conquered and Arabised by force, constitutes a revolutionary defiance of the totalist mentality that has so long conditioned the dominator-dhimmi relationship. In Israel, the Hebrew language – the pre-Arabic national vernacular – enjoys equality with Arabic and is not considered an inferior or non-existent language, as is Kurdish, which is to-day struggling to survive, or Syriac, which has long since disappeared in Iraq and Syria. And Judaisation or re-Hebraisation of Arabised lands re-instates a dhimmi culture – exterminated in some parts, held in contempt in others, particularly in the Land of Israel in order to affirm and maintain its Arabisation – on an equal footing with the conqueror's culture.

Thus it can be seen that the recognition of Israel must be not merely a tactical toleration for a limited period. A true recognition would demand from Arabism – as a necessary prerequisite for peaceful coexistence between Arabs and dhimmi nations including respect for each other's rights – a total revision of the values which assured its expansion and domination. Such a critical revision of Panarabism as an ideological movement would bring to an end the historical perspective in which the dhimmi nations have been dehumanised for so long and would open the first breach in the totalist mentality.

Against the background of these historical and political motive forces, the territorial aspect of the Israelo-Arab conflict seems of secondary importance and will finally depend on the evolution of the mental attitudes elaborated in the Orient during centuries of Arabisation. In order that a process towards peace may last and bear fruit between Arabs and liberated dhimmi nations, it must take into account the sociological and cultural human substratum fashioned by history. To succeed in making peace – to work for a peace which is not a temporary expedient – one must know the dhimmi history.

## THE LIBERATION OF THE DHIMMI

*The day on which crime adorns itself with the effects of innocence, by a strange reversal... innocence is summoned to provide its own justification* – Albert Camus

During the sessions of the colloquium on Zionism which took place at the College de France (Paris, October 1976) the ideological attitudes of European Zionism were discussed by noted specialists. With the exception of Madame Bensimon-Donath, no one appeared to remark the absence of that forgotten representative, Oriental Jewry, still waiting for the doors of history to open. It is important, not perhaps numerically (it forms only a small part of the Jewish people) but by virtue of the lessons to be learned from its history. Leaving aside the political context and the misrepresentation of Zionism as Western imperialism, it serves the interests of scientific research as well as of the Jewish people to discover this other Zionism – the Zionism of fervour, backbone Zionism, which motivated the transplantation to Israel of entire Oriental communities. It is a Zionism of the humble which was never spoken about because it was as natural and as necessary to the Oriental masses as the air they breathed. And if Oriental Jews produced neither great theoretical debates nor organisational structures, the reason is, judging by their massive Return to Israel, that Zionist teaching would have been superfluous; and also because, in Arab lands, Zionism was often forced to operate clandestinely. Moreover, if the emigration of Oriental Jewry were not set in motion until 1948, it was because its leaders understood that the saving of European Jewry was a vital priority. Besides, Arab pressure reduced the possibilities of emigration.

Certainly, it would be as well for European Jewish intellectuals – particularly for the new generation overflowing with political generosity – to turn towards this venerable ancestor of Western Jewry in order to discover the greatness and nobility of its destiny. For Western Jewry, even though it represents the majority does not constitute the totality of the Jewish people, and its history, although interesting, does not cover that of all the people of Israel. Oriental Jewry, whose past is torn down and used unscrupulously by political opportunists, can and must make an indispensable moral and historical contribution to the history of Israel.

The history of Oriental Jewry is interesting from many points of view. First it gives us an insight into the significance and specific evolution of Arab-Jewish relations. Second, it explains the later development of the dhimmi nations, since the fate of the Jews of Arabia foreshadowed the fate of the dhimmis and was accepted as standard procedure throughout the period of Arab conquest. The Jewish condition in traditional Islam – similar to that of the Christian – was determined by the manner in which the Arabs in their expansion refused to recognize the national autonomy of the pre-Islamic cultures and civilisations whose lands they had usurped. But like all national histories, that of the dhimmi is not confined to a framework of cause and effect, i. e. a chain of facts and political and economical phases. It spills over into a specific spiritual universe,

the moral dimensions of which, forged in the course of thirteen centuries, are still noticeable in the reaction of peoples when confronted with history. And the cardinal historical event that changed Jewish life in the Orient was the massive Return to Israel in a period of less than two decades. So the traditional attitudes of the Jewish dhimmis show themselves in their return to Zion.

In the first place, this "Gathering in of the Exiles to Israel" is in keeping with the Messianic current which traversed and invigorated the history of dhimmi Jewry – and only this current can explain the collective determination to remain Jewish in the face of the persecution stemming from this determination. This hope of Return is expressed in a dual attitude, apparently contradictory : a collective faithfulness to a national past, paradoxically related to a futurist vision of a better society, for every Messianic expectation necessarily implies faith in the future. The massive transfer of Oriental Jews to Israel is in accordance with historic continuity; it is the fulfilment of their Messianic-national aspirations, cherished throughout their Exile.

In respect of their relations with the Arab world, Oriental Jews also perpetuate the traditional attitudes of the dhimmi towards the Muslim. Indeed in Islam the dhimmi has a very precise economic function which the builders of the Muslim Empire conferred upon him and which was subsequently confirmed in all the legislative texts which governed his status. The Caliph 'Umar, who is considered the founder of the Muslim Empire, had already commanded, during the conquest of Syria, that the indigenous peoples should not be shared out among the Arabs, but should be subjected to taxation so that the following generations of Muslims might benefit from their labour : "*Our children will live off them indefinitely for as long as they survive and these people will remain slaves to the adherents of Islam for as long as the latter endure. Therefore, strike them with the poll-tax...*"<sup>5</sup> The taxes imposed on dhimmis, writes the famous jurist al-Māwardī (ob. 1058) "*are two burdens imposed on the polytheists by Allah for the benefit of the Faithful.*" The dhimmis were thus a human mass which was to be tolerated as long as it could be exploited.

When the interests of Islam required it, the community of the Faithful were duty-bound to execute dhimmi males and reduce their women and children to slavery while taking possession of their belongings; or, as an alternative, they could be expelled and their property confiscated. Both measures were legal, and they were left to the whim of the ruler holding the religious and political authority. In modern times the second alternative was applied to Jews in many Arab countries.

It is true that Oriental Jews had *chosen* to return to Israel, but nonetheless they did not *depart* from Arab countries, in most cases, they were *expelled* under the most painful circumstances, forced to leave behind them all their belongings whilst suffering brutality and humiliation – for, it should be added, the humiliation and degradation of the dhimmi is also the legal prerogative of the community of the Faithful.



Hence, in the 20th century, Jews were treated as dhimmis – in conformity with tradition – by some Arab states which had just obtained their independence. And, curiously enough, the Jews reacted in exactly the traditional manner of dhimmis. As in the past, they resigned themselves to suffer massacre, rape and pillage, being disarmed in the face of violence and the law by the prohibition to carry arms and the lack of the right of appeal to the courts. Thus in modern times they silently accepted confiscation of the fruit of generations of dhimmi labour. For thirteen centuries, men's justice had relegated them to a condition which was in reality permanent injustice. Could justice imply for them anything else but nothingness or derision? Such ideas as vindicating their rights or even imagining that they had any rights were so revolutionary that they were inconceivable to the dhimmi mentality. Thus the dhimmis never even dreamed of complaining to international organisations. Neither did they organise themselves into terrorist gangs to kill innocent Arab civilians in order to take revenge on the governments which had exploited and robbed them. They never required the international community to provide for their needs. They never exploited the compassion of public opinion for destructive political aims. Conditioned to submissiveness, to humility and to silence by the moral after-effects of a prolonged condition of fear, injustice and oppression, heroically endured during thirteen centuries, the Jewish refugees from Arab countries were able to find within themselves the moral force necessary to overcome these ordeals. Because of this, the psychological and physical problems of social and economic integration affecting about two million Oriental Jews, including children, are today practically unknown to the world at large or even to Western Jewry.

How then did the modern dhimmis manage? Exactly as their forefathers when driven out, exiled and pillaged; they had to face adversity with nothing but their own resources. They returned to their economic function as dhimmis: that of tireless creative workers. But there was one difference: they had now broken the pact of servitude and were henceforth masters of their own destiny.

The Oriental Jews returned to Israel, cultivated the desert, built up border towns, elaborated the country's industrial infrastructure and participated in the war of national defence. And when the Arab nations, who had exploited, oppressed and robbed them, hired terrorists to kill their children and dynamite their new homes, they replied yet again as would dhimmis, with a peace offer – in other words, with a Messianic vision of the redemption of peoples, a Messianism which, as has been seen, was engendered by the determination to remain dhimmis in the hope that one day their servitude would come to an end.

The Oriental Jewish refugees who emigrated to Europe and America had to confront difficulties which were in no way less arduous. Without any help whatever they had to integrate themselves into a highly technical society and provide for their families and the education of their children. Today, when the Arab economic boycott again threatens the efforts of these refugees, the Jews of the Orient respond once more with a call for peace.

The study of the dhimmi condition is a rich source of instruction. It invites us to ponder on the destiny of the exploited and oppressed human being, not because of any fatality of his (race, colour, social clan) but as a result of *his* deliberate choice, renewed throughout the ages, to remain on a spiritual plane higher than that of his oppressors whatever the brand of infamy imposed upon him. In the oppressor-oppressed dialectic which ensued, one can see the typical profile of the dhimmi : a courage manifesting itself in silence rather than in words, a tragedy forever overcome because chosen, the humble nobility of daily heroism re-enacted time and again.

This is also the meaning of the extraordinary lesson in bravery given to the world by a handful of men ready to die, misunderstood, despised and forsaken : the Maronites of Lebanon.

#### DOCUMENT

1839

##### Jewish dhimmis of Jerusalem

*"Agreeably to Your Lordship's commands, I have the honour to report on the state of the Jews in Palestine, so far as I am able in the present state of the country, when owing to the Quarantines, our means of communication are very limited. [...]"*

*The spirit of toleration towards the Jew, is not yet known here to the same extent it is in Europe – though their being permitted to live in the Musulman Quarter, is some evidence that the fierce spirit of oppression is somewhat abated. It should however be named that they pay more than others do for the rent of their Houses, thus they may be considered in some measure to purchase toleration.*

*The Pacha\* has shewn much more consideration for the Jews than His people have. I have heard several acknowledge that they enjoy more peace and tranquillity under his Government, than ever they have enjoyed here before. Still, the Jew in Jerusalem is not estimated in value much above a dog – and scarcely a day passes that I do not hear of some act of Tyranny and oppression against a Jew – chiefly by the soldiers, who enter their Houses and borrow whatever they require without asking any permission – sometimes they return the article, but more frequently not. In two instances, I have succeeded in obtaining justice for Jews against Turks. But it is quite a new thing in the eyes of these people to claim justice for a Jew – and I have good reason to think that my endeavours to protect the Jews, have been – and may be for some little time to come, detrimental to my influence with other classes – Christians as well as Turks. [i.e. Muslims]*

*[...] another Despatch to Her Majesty's Agent, on the subject of a new Proclamation which has been issued here, forbidding the Jews from praying in their own Houses – and reporting a most barbarous punishment of a Jew and Jewess that took place in Jerusalem this week. [...]"*

*What the Jew has to endure, at all hands, is not to be told.*

*Like the miserable dog without an owner he is kicked by one because he crosses his path, and cuffed by another because he cries out – to seek redress he is afraid, lest it bring worse upon him; he thinks it better to endure than to live in the expectation of his complaint being revenged upon him. Brought up from infancy to look upon his civil disabilities everywhere as a mark of degradation, his heart becomes the cradle of fear and suspicion – he finds he is trusted by none – and therefore he lives himself without confidence in any. [...]"*

\* Ibrahim Pacha, son of Muhammed Ali, ruler of Egypt. He conquered and controlled Syria and Palestine from 1832-1840.

From a report (23.5.1839) W.T. Young, British Vice-Consul, Jerusalem to Viscount Palmerston, Foreign Minister, London (F.O. 78/368 No 13)

A.M. Hyamson, *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in relation to the Jews of Palestine*, London, 1939, Part I, pp. 4-7.

## RETROSPECTIVE ON DHIMMI LAND

### Judaea and Samaria

July. The light blazes in the silence. On every side : Judaea. There's a hillock.. hardly a hill, a tear-drop on the Judaeian land. It is Bethar, where once stood the fortress of the courageous Bar Kochba, the last stronghold of ancient Hebrew resistance. The stones testify in silence, for the earth cannot lie. It confides its message to whomsoever listens, without even the need to turn over the soil with a trowel. All is there, laid bare as in an open book, despite the ravages of conquerors. A square tower and a wall joining two bastions bear witness to the beauty and solidity of the typical Hebrew architecture of the First Temple period. Over there a wall and tower built by Herod more than half a millenium later. And crowning it all, Bar Kochba's fortification : a square tower faced with stones, semi-circular watch-towers and gates. Further away the traces of the Roman encampment can still be seen. Here, on the 9th of Ab in the year 135, the Hebrew resistance was annihilated by the Roman army.

Silence. We have taken cover in the shade of an olive tree. Instantly the children have nestled in the branches, listening solemnly to our guide. Somewhere a fig-tree perfumes the air... or is it merely the breeze of the Judaeian hills? Circular gesture by Ya'acov Meshorer, chief curator of archaeology at the Israel Museum, renowned numismatist and former supervisor of excavations in Judaea-Samaria.

"Excavations in Judaea have brought to light flourishing towns possessing numerous synagogues. The architecture as well as the ornamental patterns are typical of the attractive pre-Islamic Hebrew civilisation, represented in Galilee by the synagogues of Capernaum, Beth Shearim, Chorazim, Kefar Baram, Meron and other places. Between the years 70 A.D. and the Arab invasion and occupation in 640, these hills were dotted with Hebrew towns and villages where an intense national, religious and cultural life prospered. Deprived of its independence, the nation concentrated its genius by reflecting upon the richness of its national past. This is the period in which the Mishnah was elaborated and completed in the second century, shortly to be followed by the Talmud – monumental religious, legal and social compendia. Completed in about 400, this work was continued for another two centuries, keeping alive an intense Messianic fervour whose force was to be felt as far as Arabia.

The Arab occupation scarcely modified the Hebrew place-names, and the Jewish inhabitants, now considered as dhimmis, remained on their land. It was only later that the relentless mechanism typical of every colonisation gradually wiped out the indigenous population, thereby encouraging a progressive Arabisation of the soil."

In the former Jewish town of Bethar, there are now 1500 Arabs. They call the place where the Jewish vestiges stand Khirbet al-Yahud, the ruins of the Jews. Nevertheless, were the Israelis to return, the Arabs would not hesitate to

chase them away with indignation, referring to them as foreign intruders. Mystery of the Oriental mind or logic of the occupant? These Arabs, hardly interested in a past which is not theirs, ignore totally the history of the places where they live. Of course they know that the spot was inhabited formerly by Jews, as the name indicates, but these ruins, relating to a people dispossessed and driven out, are only of interest as a quarry conveniently providing stones which others have hewn. But the excited comments from the olive tree taught me that any Jewish child knows more about the history of this place than its Arab inhabitants.

In Eshtemoa, a biblical name Arabised by the occupants into Es-Samoa, the Arab inhabitants still live in houses built practically fifteen centuries earlier. The architectural elements and decorative designs, including the menorah, are all typical of pre-Islamic Hebrew art. It is common to find Arab villagers cooking on ancient mosaic floors. In the centre of the village was once a three-storied synagogue, of which only two ruined floors remain. The size of the synagogue suggests that there flourished here an important community. Like many other indigenous monuments, the synagogue was destroyed at the beginning of the Arab occupation. Its stones, particularly those decorated with bas-reliefs, were used by the Arabs and today adorn their door-posts.

At Yata, the biblical name of a Hebrew village, beautifully decorated Jewish ossuaries typical of the 1st and 2nd centuries are scattered around Arab houses and used as drinking-troughs for their cattle. Many troves of coins dating from the 2nd Temple and Hasmonean periods have been found in this area.

The discrepancy between history and population in Judaea and Samaria troubles the traveller constantly. It is true that the Hebrew place-names have been Arabised, that Jewish religious shrines have been Islamised – as in Hebron and elsewhere – and that Arabisation has succeeded in effacing all traces of Hebrew nationalism. It is also true that from afar the Arab villages seem picturesque. This is only a superficial impression, however, for if the traveller, endeavouring to account for his troubled spirit, were to look more closely he would often discover a mere heap of ruins. The neglect of the surrounding vegetation is so general that one is reminded not of a biblical landscape of wooded hillsides, but of the sandy wastes of Arabia. One is struck with pity, for people do not generally live in ruins, however poor they are. Ruins are seen everywhere, so much so that they are no longer noticed.

In 1864, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, the Dean of Westminster, remarked that Palestine, more than any other country, was a land of ruins. *"In Judaea it is hardly an exaggeration to say that whilst for miles and miles there is no appearance of present life or habitation, except the occasional goat-herd on the hillside, or gathering of women at the wells, there is yet hardly a hill-top of the many within sight which is not covered by the vestiges of some fortress or city of former ages. Sometimes they are fragments of ancient walls, sometimes mere foundations and piles of stone, but always enough to indicate signs of human habitation and civilisation."*<sup>6</sup>

The hillside terraces which in ancient times were planted with vineyards and olive trees are not the only aspect of destruction. What could be more distressing than these poor settlements without streets, houses — or rather dilapidated cubes — devoid of architecture, haphazardly propped up with sculptured blocks, broken columns and capitals ransacked from the monuments of previous civilisations. Banished or massacred, the indigenous dhimmis have completely disappeared. The nomads became sedentary, the colonists came. They camped in the houses of others, patching them up when necessary by destroying monuments which they had not built. Its past hardly interested them, strangers on this land taken from others : it was not theirs. And when the relentless torment of the Exile brought the indigenous inhabitants back to their land, the fear of this continual return and the prospect of having to share the land with the despoiled victims resulted in animosity and bloodshed. Historical evidence is not wanting, but it will suffice to quote one or two testimonies from the last century. In a report to Palmerston in 1836, Colonel Campbell, the British Consul-General in Egypt describes how *"their Mahomedan fellow-countrymen of Saffet took advantage of the disorderly state of the country, and fell, on the 16th June, on the innocent Jews of that town, robbed their property, violated their women, assassinated those who attempted resistance, and continued their lawless proceedings for thirty-three days."*<sup>7</sup> At about the same time in 1834, the American traveller John Lloyd Stephens, describes similar scenes perpetrated against the Jews of Hebron, who witnessed with their own eyes the rape of their wives and daughters.<sup>8</sup>

In 1872, the English traveller, Thomas Jenner, was deeply moved during a visit to Nablus by the distress of two Jews, *"the government having chased them from their homes and thrown them into the street with their belongings because they had need of their abode in order to quarter soldiers."*<sup>9</sup> Nothing exceptional about such a measure, for the lodging and maintenance of Muslim troops was often an obligation imposed by the conqueror on the native dhimmis. At times of rampant anarchy the invaders were encouraged by such a law to dispossess their predecessors "legally" — especially if it is remembered that the latter were completely unarmed and their sworn testimony refused. This is only an insignificant element alongside so many others in the long chain of events which transformed the dhimmi peoples from majorities to "tolerated" minorities in their own land.

But nowhere else is the tragedy of history so poignant as in Shomron-Sebastia in Samaria. Nowhere else is the devastation so sinister as in the ruins of this ancient capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel, founded about 880 B.C. Here, more than anywhere else perhaps, the contrast is striking between the present desolation and the magnificent vestiges of a flourishing and active population. There are the fortifications and palaces of Omri, Ahab and Jezebel, the granaries of Jeroboam II (787-749). Herod built here an avenue bordered with columns. A theatre, a stadium, a city wall with gates and towers testify to the solid, elegant, Hebrew architecture of this period.

Today, Shomron-Sebastia is nothing more than a miserable village where 1300 Arabs camp among the ruins. The church built by the Crusaders, in which

lie ancient tombs attributed to the Hebrew prophets Elisha and Obadiah, has become their mosque. Despite the rubble on the floor — due to an accumulation of centuries of neglect — the building remains impressive. Foreigners to this past, the present inhabitants ignore it and cover their misery in the ruins. These columns, these sculptured stones are merely used as material for repairing their poor hovels. Human distress and the cataclysms of history are brought together here to make of Shomron-Sebastia the symbol of the greatness and extermination of a people.

This people, victim of the world's longest-lasting genocide, is represented today by a remnant. 250 Samaritans, no more, "tolerated" by 44,000 Arabs in their former capital of Shechem-Neapolis, Arabised to Nablus. This is not the place to describe the massacres, confiscations and persecutions of all kinds which reduced this numerous population of farmers and skilled artisans to the size of a pathetic remnant. The interested reader can consult the article *Samaritan* in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), where mention is made of the threat of total extermination which, in 1842, would certainly have overcome this inoffensive and dying community of 142 souls had not another dhimmi community — the Jews of Jerusalem — come to their rescue at the last moment. Benyamin Tsedaka, a 125th generation descendant of Manasseh (son of the patriarch Joseph), explains that the reason for the numerical difference to-day between Jews and Samaritans is that his people refused to go into exile. "*Our principle was not to leave [the Land of] Israel.*" (International Herald Tribune, 8 March 1977). This is the simple explanation of the historical anomaly of a Samaria without Samaritans and a Judaea without Jews. Today, the magnificent ruins of Shomron-Sebastia are among the most moving monuments in Israel. Because they were a Jewish sect attached to the soil, the Samaritans suffered their "final solution" in the obscure and humble silence in which history has buried the dhimmis.

Today the dhimmi's spectre, shrouded in hatred, despoiled and despairing of all human justice since he has been rejected by it — so often described for those who know where to look — haunts the deserted hills of Judaea and Samaria where his destiny was embodied.

Today the populations of these regions are Muslims, with the exception of a few pockets of Arabised Christians, remnants of the Byzantine occupation or of Crusader times, who have survived thanks to the protection of European Christendom. The Samaritans have been reduced in their homeland to 470 survivors, of whom 250 still live in Nablus. Up until 1948, Jewish inhabitants of the region were massacred or expelled and the right to reside was prohibited them until 1967. The Arabisation of the region resulted in a *judenrein* Arab province, i.e. "cleaned" of all trace of its pre-Arab culture.

The indigenous peoples were replaced by Greeks, Arab-Bedouins, Persians, Druzes, Circassians, Turks and Slavs, who were thus able to benefit from the Arabised land of the dhimmis. Yet since 1967, these peaceful villagers, with unperturbed consciences, who justified their Arab rights established by the

martyrdom of the banished or annihilated native peoples, are now experiencing a nightmare. The Hebrew, exiled in the wake of successive waves of occupation and its sequels, or tolerated in his own homeland but in a state of subjection — this Hebrew now returns. And he comes back, no longer as a dhimmi — the sole status acceptable for a native — but as a citizen enjoying all the rights of a free man. It is true that however scandalous it may seem, such an occurrence is not unique. Several dhimmi peoples have recovered their independence : Sicilians, Spaniards, Greeks and Maronites, but not without leaving open wounds in the Panarabic consciousness. “*We intend to fight in order that our Palestinian homeland will not become a new Andalusia.*”, declared Abu Iyad, one of the principal leaders of the P.L.O. (Le Monde, 20-21 January 1974). Should one be surprised that certain Arab circles deplore the Hispanisation of Spain, the Lebanisation of Lebanon and the Hebraisation of Israel ?

Thus the Hebrew returns... With care he searches among the ruins and brings to light thousand-year-old documents bearing Hebrew inscriptions, meaningless to the villagers. The monuments and coins which he discovers confirm his history. The Hebrew, treated as a foreigner, reaches out to the soil which yields up its history. A perfectly harmonious dialogue in time and space is established between them.

The nightmare postponed for all these centuries by inhuman laws suddenly becomes a reality. There is no doubt about it, the native has returned. And what if he were to take back his land, restore the destroyed hill-terraces, rebuild his innumerable ruined synagogues ? What if it were possible to evaluate the suffering of thirteen centuries of forced exile ? If there was exile, then there must have been occupation — the two concepts are inseparable — and each knows his respective history. So a resistance is prepared against the gathering-in of the Exiles in an Arabised land.

But the Israeli is not interested in quibbling over the past, all he wants is to build a new future. Without chasing anyone away, all he wants is to return home. These Arabs born and bred on this soil are in no way responsible for a thousand-year-old imperialism, even if they are its heirs and benefactors. No one is to be a foreigner, thus the Israeli proposes a peaceful coexistence on the land of his history in the towns and villages which bear Hebrew names. He is ready to share with his Arab cousin, whose language is so similar to his own. It is all very simple : a discriminatory legislation, like that to which the dhimmi was submitted, does not exist in either the history or jurisdiction of Israel. Thus, from the Israeli point of view, there is nothing to impede a normal relationship of equality being established between the two parties.

The present Arab populations are faced with a choice : acceptance of peaceful coexistence and a relationship of equality between Arabs and Hebrews instead of the traditional dominator-dhimmi relationship; or a continuance of the traditional *Jihad* in massacring, exiling or dominating the legitimate heir in a renewed effort of total Arabisation. “*The civil war in Lebanon is not over*

and blood will continue to flow ! Our war in Lebanon will save the Arabisation of the Lebanon. I declare in the name of the Palestinian movement, and for the national leftwing Lebanese forces, that Lebanon will remain Arab", Arafat declared on 30 November 1975 in Damascus. This choice also concerns other Oriental peoples other than Israel. It opposes a tradition of Arab domination to a revolutionary liberation movement striving for the rights of other non-Arab Oriental peoples.

With these thoughts in my mind, I strolled through an Arab quarter on the outskirts of Jerusalem, hardly a hundred yards from Mount Zion. Suddenly a hail of stones welcomed me. A group of Arab adolescents shielding behind oil drums were hurling projectiles and curses at me whilst they screamed their loyalty to the P.L.O. The movement I made in order to protect myself took me back twenty years to the Jewish cemetery in Cairo where I had accompanied some elderly relatives, widows who were taking leave of their departed, for, as Jewesses, they were effectively being banished from Egypt. They were startled by a hail of stones thrown by a group of Arabs. Chased off by jeers, they fled as fast as they could, as vulnerable in their old age as the mortal remains which they were abandoning to probable depredations. And the gesture which we then made, they to protect themselves and I to shield them, was the same as I was now making under Arab projectiles in Jerusalem, city of David, King of Israel. A gesture repeated for a thousand years by the dhimmi burying his dead in secret and in haste or attacked and humiliated in the streets. Traditional gesture of the Arab, passed on from father to son with the same contemptuous hatred of the oppressor towards his victims.

In that same month of July 1977, the waves of bomb-attacks in Israel and the attempts to wipe out the Maronites in southern Lebanon reminded me that the spilling of dhimmi blood was still lawful...

#### NOTES

- 1) Ed. & tr. Moshe Perlmann, *Shaykh Damanhuri On the Churches of Cairo (1739)*, University of California 1975, p. 56.
- 2) Georges Vajda, *Un traité Maghrébin : "Adversus Judaeos" Akham Ahl Al-Dimma, du Sayh Muhammad b. 'Abd Al-Karim Al-Magili*, in *Etudes d'Orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévy-Provençal*, Tome II, Paris 1962, p. 811.
- 3) Martin Schreiner, *Contributions à l'Histoire des Juifs en Egypte*, in *Revue des Etudes Juives*, Tome XXXI, Paris 1895, p. 11.
- 4) Palestine National Covenant of the PLO, in Y. Harkabi, *Palestinians and Israel*, Keter, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 51-69.
- 5) Abou Yousof Ya'koub, *Le livre de l'Impôt Foncier (Kitâb el-Kharadj)*, tr. E. Fagnan, Paris 1921, pp. 217-218.
- 6) Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, London 1866, p. 117.
- 7) John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria, (addressed to Lord Palmerston and presented to both Houses of Parliament)*, London 1840, p. 129 (Reprinted Edition 1973 by Arno Press Inc.)
- 8) John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, New York 1837 (New edition, University of Oklahoma Press 1970, p. 32).
- 9) Thomas Jenner, *Palestine et Liban*, Paris et Neuchâtel 1883, p. 142.



## DOCUMENT

1884    Origin of the Palestinian Arab population : the example of the plain of Sharon

"[...] it is a singular fact that the strip of coast from Haifa to Caesarea seems to have become a centre of influx of colonists and strangers of the most diverse races. The new immigrants to Caesarea are Slavs. Some of them speak a little Turkish. Arabic is an unknown tongue to them, which they are learning. Their own language is a Slav dialect. When the troubles in the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina first broke out [1875], which led to the Russo-Turkish war, a howl of indignation went up from the philanthropists [...] When it [the agrarian question] was settled by handing over the provinces to Austria, the Slav-Moslem aristocracy, finding themselves in their turn persecuted by their former peasants and the Christian power which protected them, migrated to the more congenial rule of the sultan. So the curious spectacle is presented of a Slav population migrating from Austrian rule to Asia, in order to be under a Moslem government.

Close beside the new Bosnian colony there are planted in the plain of Sharon two or three colonies of Circassians. These are the people who committed the Bulgarian atrocities. The irony of fate has now placed them within three or four miles of colonists belonging to the very race they massacred. They, too, fleeing from government by Christians, have sought refuge under the sheltering wing of the sultan, where, I regret to say, as I described in a former letter, they still indulge in their predatory propensities. In immediate proximity to them are the black tents of a tribe of Turcomans. They belong to the old Seljuk stock, and the cradle of their tribe gave birth to the present rulers of the Turkish Empire. They have been here for about three hundred years, and have forgotten the Turkish language, but a few months ago a new migration arrived from the mountains of Mesopotamia. These nomads spoke nothing but Turkish, and hoped to find a warm welcome from their old tribesmen on the plain of Sharon. In this they were disappointed, and they have now, to my disgust, pitched their tents on some of the spurs of Carmel, where their great hairy camels and their own baggy breeches contrast curiously with the camels and costumes of the Bedouins with whom we are familiar [...]

"The Slav colonists, whose immigration I described in my last letter, are laying out broad streets right across the most interesting ruins, using the old foundations, appropriating the beautiful masonry, the white stones which formed the temple built by Herod, and the brown limestone blocks of the cathedral of the crusaders, quarrying into ancient buildings beneath the surface of the ground, levelling down the ruins at one place, levelling them up in another, and so utterly transforming the whole picturesque area that it will soon be no longer recognizable. [...]

They were the landed aristocracy of their own country, and have, therefore, brought a considerable amount of wealth with them. A large tract of the most fertile land of the plain of Sharon has been donated to them by the Turkish government [...]

The lower or peasant class of Bosnia and Herzegovina were not obliged, when the country was conquered by the Moslems, to change their religion, and they have continued Christians; while the descendants of their masters, who remained the proprietors of the soil, became bigoted Mussulmans. The consequence has been that now that the country has been handed over to the Austrians, the Christian peasantry have naturally found protection from the authorities against the oppression of their former masters, who, unable to endure the humiliations of seeing the tables turned, and their old servants enabled to defy them with impunity, have sold all their possessions and migrated to the dominions of the sultan, rather than endure the indignities to which they declare they were exposed from their new Christian rulers and their old Christian serfs [...] Whether they will agree with their Circassian neighbours remains yet to be seen. They form the avant-garde of a much larger migration which is to follow as soon as arrangements can be made to receive them."

Laurence Oliphant, *Haifa or Life in modern Palestine*, London 1887 (New edition, Jerusalem 1976, pp. 238-239/241-242)

## POSTSCRIPT

### President Sadat's Visit to Jerusalem

To know is to understand : those who know well the obsession of the dhimmi-Jew stereotype in the consciousness of the contemporary Arab – particularly of the Palestinian Arab – and its central polarising role in the Arab-Israel conflict, can understand the courage of President Sadat and the symbolic grandeur of his act. The historic meeting of Sadat and Begin and the warmth of their greetings express Sadat's will to refuse for the future the demonology of the dhimmi-Jew – transposed into that of the Zionist – in order to discover the human face of Israel. Those seventy per cent of psychological elements in the conflict, to which Sadat referred, are founded on the impurity and untouchability of the supposed dhimmi-Zionist with whom the Arab has up till now avoided all contact. Isolated in the heart of the Arab world, the Zionist became a symbol of derision, hate and aversion. But to talk to an Israeli, to shake his hand, to accept his presence, to communicate with him by language and reason – all eminently human privileges – is to see him as an equal.

Only a knowledge of history can help one understand that this gesture breaks with traditional attitudes of the past thirteen centuries. Of course, this does not mean that the Jew should feel a frenzied gratitude because he has been promoted from sub-humanity to humanity : he could as well deplore the thirteen centuries during which his humanity has been denied. What one should now admire in President Sadat is the act of a man who has attempted to surmount the prejudices of the past with all the heart-break and all the doubts which that implies. He is a man who, first among all his own people, has set foot on a new road. It is therefore in the particular context of Arabism, that Sadat has acquired the stature of a man of exceptional courage and intelligence.

What Israel awaits from President Sadat, from the Egyptian people and from the Arab peoples, is recognition of the link, depicted in history and the Koran, between the Hebrew people and the land of Israel – as well as the right to national sovereignty of the Jewish state in its own land. The courageous initiative of President Sadat must be warmly supported. It opens the way to the establishment of a just peace which respects the national rights of both Jews and Arabs.

Back cover photograph :

## THE RETURN OF THE DHIMMI about 1949

In 1881, the Jewish dhimmis of Yemen decided on a collective return to the Holy Land. Here is an account of an immigrant who arrived safely :

1) *"And they celebrated the festival [Succoth] with great rejoicing. And throughout the whole festival, day and night, men and women spoke only of the subject of Eretz Israel. And all the Jews who were in Sana'a and all the Jews of Yemen agreed together to sell all their houses and all their goods in order to use the money to journey to their country. And almost all of them neither slumbered nor slept at night, out of their longing and desire and the burning enthusiasm of their love for Eretz Israel. And so strongly did this love break out in their heart, that they cast away all their money, selling all their houses and possessions at an eighth of the value, in order to find money for the expenses of the journey by land and by sea."*

*The Exodus from Yemen*, Tel Aviv n.d.

2) *"... A first caravan [of Yemenites] was fortunate enough to arrive [at Jerusalem] ... This second caravan, and a third one recently arrived from Sanaa and its surrounding mountains, is blocked at Hodeida. The Turkish authorities have forbidden their departure for Jerusalem. This order is most iniquitous, for it was only after these poor people had sold to the Muslims the little which they possessed that the Governor General of Yemen decided to stop their departure."*

From a letter (29.11.1881), Alexandre Lucciana, French Vice-Consul in Hodeida, Yemen, to the President, Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris (Archives AIU, France VIII D 49).

3) *"... The Yemenite Jews headed westwards and reached the Red Sea. They travelled on sambouks to Jedda, Hodeida and Aden and from there aboard steamships to Egypt, Palestine and European Turkey. The last caravan which left Haïdan [!], one day's journey from Sa'dah, took three years to reach Jaffa. These wretched people reached the sea, and finding themselves without any means, struck out northwards on foot, crossing the land of Assyr. They rendered small services to the Arabs – the women doing needlework, the men making pieces of jewelry – and when they arrived at Jedda, they had accumulated enough money to pay their passage to Jaffa." [...]*

Y. Sémach, *Une Mission de l'Alliance au Yémen*, Paris 1910, p. 109.

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*O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.  
Behold, I will bring them from the north country,  
And gather them from the coasts of the earth,  
And with them the blind and the lame,  
The woman with child  
And her that travaileth with child together :  
A great company shall return thither.  
They shall come with weeping,  
And with supplications will I lead them :  
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters  
In a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble.*

Jeremiah, ch. 31, v. 7-10

