



Parasha Ha'azinu

How can you Justify Living in Occupied Palestinian Territory?

Dear Rebbetzin Chana Bracha,

Although I connect with your Torah and spiritual views from a woman's perspective, I cannot condone that you live on Palestinian occupied territory on the West Bank. What gives you and your fellow settlers the right to grab land that belongs to the Palestinian people who have deep roots in their treasured homeland? Just because the Jews were persecuted during the holocaust, why do innocent Palestinians have to be driven from their home in order to provide a Jewish homeland?

Sincerely,

Anna Small (name changed)

Dear Anna,

Getting into a political discussion is always a touchy topic, with the risk of losing supporters. People seem to be set in their ways when it comes to politics, especially Middle Eastern politics. The world is greatly influenced by biased propaganda that has taken over the media, making it very difficult to view a different perspective. Emotions often take over and make it hard to really hear the facts. Therefore, I generally stay out of public political discussions, but I will nevertheless make an exception and do my best to answer your questions.

The 'West Bank' Invention

Let us start with discussing the expression, 'West Bank' where, according to your perspective, I live. This expression is a major linguistic error. The 'West Bank' refers to the Western bank of the Jordan River. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of a riverbank is "The ground at the edge of a river." Therefore, where I live, in Bat Ayin, Gush Etzion is not a riverbank, since the Jordan River is at least 60 Km away (over 32 miles). It would take more than 10 hours to walk from my home to the Jordan River. Gush Etzion is about in the middle of the Land of Israel with a similar distance to the Jordan River as to the Mediterranean Sea. So, we may as well be called the 'East Bank' of the Mediterranean Sea! Moreover, a riverbank is topographically on the lowland, whereas my region – the Judean hills – is about 950 meters above sea level. "Because the historical hills of Judea and Samaria never had any meaning to Arabs, they never had a name for them. The term 'West Bank' only came into significant use after the Six-Day War of 1967" (Sha'i ben Tekoa, *Phantom Nation* p. 8). It is sad that even Jews the world over, including Israelis, are influenced by the media to use the erroneous term: 'West Bank' rather than the proper Biblical names, Judea and Samaria, when referring to the areas of the Land of Israel that were liberated during the Six-Day War.

Provoked by a Non-People

I would also like to address the term 'Palestinian' which you use to describe certain Arabs that live in Israel or who fled Israel in the wake of the formation of the Jewish state. As Golda Meir states, "There were no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them.

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They did not exist” (*Sunday Times*, 15 June 1969). No Arabs claimed to be ‘Palestinian’ until the sixties. In 1947, the Arab Higher Committee wrote, “Politically, the Arabs of Palestine [were] not independent in the sense of forming a separate political identity.” This is only one example of the numerous examples Sha’i Ben Tekoa brings in his very informational book, *Phantom Nation*. Traditionally, the Arabs in Israel called themselves Arabs! Actually, it was the anti-religious Zionists who called themselves ‘Palestinians.’ For example, in Leon Uris’ *The Exodus*, the Sabra hero is routinely called a ‘Palestinian.’ The Arabs who lived in Israel, prior to 1948, were not a people with a separate identity from the rest of the Arab world, but rather a society of clans and tribes. Israel is constantly on the defense, targeted by a “non-people,” as Moshe prophesied in *Parashat Ha’azinu*:

ספר דברים פרק לב (כא) הם קנאוני בלא אל כעסוני בהבליהם ואני אקניאם בלא עם בגוי נבל אכעיסם:
 “They provoked Me with a non-god, angered Me with their vanities. Thus, I will provoke them with a non-people, with a foolish nation shall I anger them” (*Devarim* 32:21).

Actually, the Arabs, themselves, when their public-relation's guard was down, admitted that there is no such thing as a Palestinian people. Here is what Zahir Muhsein, Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee member, said in an interview in a Dutch paper: [“The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the State of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today, there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct ‘Palestinian people’ to oppose Zionism”](#) (Trouw March 31, 1977).

The Palestinian Refugee Myth

The so called ‘Palestinian refugees’ is a phenomenon invented by the Arab world. The media paints a picture of the poor, indigenous Palestinians, who have tilled their beloved homeland from time immemorial, being ousted by aggressive Western Zionist imperialists. Such apparent oppression is compared to what the British did to the colonies and the USA to the American Indians. This is what I believed as a high-school student in Denmark! Since I have an affinity for all native peoples, who have an inherent connection with their land, and who live in harmony with it, I naturally sided with the “poor” Palestinians who were treated so brutally by my own people. It didn’t occur to me that the Arabs in Israel chose with their own free will to desert the land that they had only recently learned to call their own. In 1947-1948 [thousands of wealthy Arabs left in anticipation of a war, thousands more responded to Arab leaders’ calls to get out of the way of the advancing armies, a handful were expelled, but most simply fled to avoid being caught in the cross fire of a battle.](#) “The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war” (General John Glubb, The British commander-in-chief of the Jordanian Army, London August 12, 1948). [Had the Arabs accepted the 1947 UN resolution, not a single Palestinian would have become a refugee and an independent Arab state would now exist beside Israel.](#) The leaders of the nascent Jewish state asked the Arabs in Palestine to stay and live as citizens in Israel. Instead, they chose to leave, either because they were unwilling to live with the Jews, or because they expected an Arab military victory, which would annihilate the Zionists. They thought they could leave temporarily and return at their leisure. Later, it was claimed that the Palestinians were ordered to leave, with radio broadcasts instructing them to quit their homes (Steven Glazer, 1980, *The Palestinian Exodus in 1948*, *J. Palestine Studies* 9(4), pp. 96–118). The Arabs themselves testify that

their brethren deserted Palestine with the following admonishment: “Those who abandon their houses and businesses and go to live elsewhere... At the first sign of trouble they take to their heels to escape sharing the burden of struggle” (As –Shaab, Arab newspaper, January 30, 1948). The first to leave were roughly 30,000 wealthy Arabs who anticipated the upcoming war and fled to neighboring Arab countries where they had family. Less affluent Arabs from the mixed cities of Palestine moved to all-Arab towns to stay with relatives or friends. By the end of January 1948, the exodus was so alarming, the Palestine Arab Higher Committee asked neighboring Arab countries to refuse visas to these refugees and to seal the borders against them. Meanwhile, Jewish leaders urged the Arabs to remain in Palestine and become citizens of Israel. The Assembly of Palestine Jewry issued this appeal on October 2, 1947: “We will do everything in our power to maintain peace, and establish a cooperation gainful to both [Jews and Arabs]. It is now, here and now, from Jerusalem itself that a call must go out to the Arab nations to join forces with Jewry and the destined Jewish State and work shoulder to shoulder for our common good, for the peace and progress of sovereign equals.”

Twisted Truth

There are so many more omissions and distortions of facts regarding the struggle between the Jews and Arabs for the Land of Israel. Why does no one mention the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to flee from Arab states before and after the creation of Israel? What about the demonization of the Israeli army who risk their lives to do anything it can to avoid killing civilians, whereas the Arab terrorists hide behind human shields- often women and children? Why does world opinion seem to be so ignorant of the historical facts of the Middle East conflict? “Rabbi Yehuda said: In the generation when the son of David comes... truth will be entirely lacking, as it is written, ‘Truth is lacking, and he who turns away from evil is considered mad’ (*Yeshu’ahu* 59:15). What is meant by ‘truth is lacking *ne’ederet*]’? – The Scholars of the School of Rav said: This teaches that it will split up into separate groups and depart” (*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 97a). The fact that the truth is twisted is part of the redemption process predicted by our Talmud. May we live to see Mashiach unravel the twisted media strips and set the world straight!