

Poor Paris

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

“Israel is the greatest threat to peace in the world.”

[A Flash Eurobarometer survey carried out in October 2003 for the European Commission](#) in the fifteen member states of the EU found that nearly 60% of European citizens believe Israel poses the biggest threat to world peace. The survey was carried out by EOS Gallup Europe. “The one socio-demographic characteristic that stands out is education – the more highly educated respondents (66%) are more likely to perceive Israel as a threat to world peace than those who ceased their studies at an earlier age (“16-20”: 59% and “15 and younger”: 50%).”

After Paris you might think there would be some soul searching as to why such opinions are so prevalent in Europe and increasingly in the USA and why other much more murderous and dysfunctional people, countries, and religions are not considered to be so dangerous. But of course you and I know there will not. Because any attempt to send hate preachers, or undesirables back home will be blocked, as they have been in the UK by protracted legal disputes and the European Court of Human Rights. So we will have a few clichés, a token closing of the border, some arrests, and then back to blaming Israel again (as indeed Sweden’s foreign minister already has).

Let us take it as read (for argument’s sake, of course, because neither I nor the facts agree with the following) that there were never any Jews or Israelites living in the Middle East before the rise of Islam. That the only reason Jews feel any connection to Israel is because of Zionism. That the only reason Jews are in Israel is because the imperialist crusading powers foisted the Balfour Declaration on them. The only reason Israel is in the Middle East is because the Holocaust gave the West such a guilty conscience that it tried to salve it by foisting this alien population on the Arab world. There were no Jewish Arabs, no Jewish communities living in the Middle East ever in the past who had nothing to do with the Holocaust, and they had all left Arab lands voluntarily and without coercion. All the wars and all the occupations were caused exclusively by Israel. Israel never voluntarily withdrew from any Arab territory and were never interested in or willing to make peace. Let us accept Israel is the one and only source of all the evil, dysfunction, and mayhem that exists in the Middle East today. Finally, let us admit that without the United States support Israel would have disappeared ages ago and that the United States is the evil Satan above all others whose wars have killed more Muslims than Muslims themselves have. All this is the narrative that political opponents of Israel believe.

Even so, all this alone cannot explain why Israel is so hated. You may legitimately wonder why Israel has been picked on so exclusively for condemnation. Sixty percent of all motions passed in the United Nations agencies are reserved for Israel, and no other country receives more than 2% negative motions. I have no argument with labelling produce from occupied

territory. But why is Israel's reluctant occupation the only one anywhere in the world that is selected for specific export labelling, not China over Tibet, Russia over Crimea, Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara, India over Kashmir, or indeed Spain over Catalonia (to give just a few examples).

The answer is obvious. There are four good reasons. There are over 1.5 billion Muslims and only 14 million Jews. From almost every economic, political, and logical point of view, it makes sense to side with such a powerful, wealthy body of opinion.

Secondly, at least half the western world inclines to a left-wing political and intellectual viewpoint. Marxism has always been opposed to religion, and when it suits them they can condemn Israel as a religious state (as if all the other religious states did not exist).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is no other worldwide political cause to rally round than that of anti-Israelism. The first and second reasons combine in the third factor. Marxism has always preached taking advantage of alliances, even with ones most bitter foes, in order to achieve power. Just recall Stalin's pact with Hitler. In much of Europe today the demographics of anti-Israelism means that socialist parties wishing to achieve power as in Belgium (the favorite bolt hole and source of arms of terrorists in Europe), ally themselves with fundamentalist Islam, which stands for everything they despise: free speech, separation of state and religion, gay rights, women rights, and equal rights of other religions. Not only, but if the State of Israel advocates such causes, the Left argues it is only to deflect criticism, not out of genuine conviction.

Fourth is the long history of right-wing fascist anti-Semitism and prejudice illustrated by the Ku-Klux-Klan-like websites on Google or letters to the press excoriating Jewish control of the world.

Finally, the pervasive religious based anti-Semitism. Despite all the efforts of churches and governments to proscribe, it still flourishes. Much of the Christian world adopts an anti-Israel narrative, seeing Palestinians as innocents and Jews as guilty. Jesus was a Palestinian is their narrative. But of course there are other Christians, notably the Evangelicals, whose support for Israel balances the one-sided biases of most Episcopalians and Quakers.

Since such opposition is not based on logic or fact, it must rely essentially on irrational prejudice stoked by a pervasive black-versus-white narrative. If you are a student at a university where most of your contemporaries are apathetic or focused on careers and the active political groups and academics are solidly anti-Israel, or you are drinking in a pub with friends, or at business dinner where anti-Semitic or anti-Israel remarks are the norm, you will either fade into the background or join the rabble. Europe's tragedy is that it will not differentiate between those who wish to immigrate and settle in order to be part of its grand, idealistic vision and those who actively want to undermine and replace it.

But whatever tragedy happens, it changes nothing. [Here is Niall Ferguson](#), the Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard, a Senior Fellow of the

Hoover Institution, Stanford:

"It is doubtless true to say that the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Europe are not violent. But it is also true that the majority hold views not easily reconciled with the principles of our liberal democracies, including our novel notions about sexual equality and tolerance not merely of religious diversity but of nearly all sexual proclivities. And it is thus remarkably easy for a violent minority to acquire their weapons and prepare their assaults on civilization within these avowedly peace-loving communities.

"I do know that 21st-century Europe has itself to blame for the mess it is now in. When I went up to Oxford ...We learnt a lot of nonsense to the effect that nationalism was a bad thing, nation states worse and empires the worst things of all. 'Romans before the fall', wrote Ward-Perkins, 'were as certain as we are today that their world would continue for ever substantially unchanged. They were wrong. We would be wise not to repeat their complacency.'

"Poor, poor Paris. Killed by complacency."

So if you listen to the French media today, after the Paris massacres, you will still hear it said that the chaos in the Middle East is all Israel's fault. The Hamas websites, of course, claim the Paris massacres are the work of Mossad. And Russia supports them. The Swedish foreign minister says it is only because of the way Israel treats the Palestinians. What the heck is wrong with these people? Anything but look into their own failures. Are they really suicidal or just mentally challenged? As if Israel were the cause of the Sunni-Shia rift or the Turkish oppression of the Kurds or the Muslim massacres of Christians. It is so easy to find a scapegoat. They have been doing it for 50 years, why would they want to stop now?

Prejudice is not logical. Anti-Israelism is not logical. The crude visceral hatred, the screaming interruptions on college campuses or cultural events that do not want to hear another point of view are the symptoms of a destructive virus that every now and again infects huge swathes of otherwise normal, fair, and balanced human beings. And sadly I accept we have our own screaming horis and fanatics of the right. Action and reaction again.

So, no, I do not think Paris will change anything. Security forces will share information, try their best to avoid new disasters but the culture of Europe will not, seemingly cannot change. Europe is condemned to reap the whirlwind of its own blindness. The virus is too deeply embedded. No one whose ideas were formed by prejudice will change their views any more than most genocidal murders really know how to express regret.

The story goes that God gave up trying to change the world after Noah's

flood. But we were left with the rainbow to remind us to look and connect. Perhaps that is why humanity is such a mess—not because it repeats the wrong things but because it forgets.