

# Book Reviews

Edited by  
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*The Claim of Dispossession: Jewish Land Settlement and the Arabs, 1878-1948*, by Arie L. Avneri, Transaction Books, Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, New Jersey (1984), 284 pp. \$9.95 (paper) Translated by the K'far Blum Translation Group.

This brief, well-written and superbly documented study of Jewish settlement prior to the establishment of the State of Israel should be required reading for anyone seriously concerned with the Palestinian problem. In *The Claim of Dispossession*, Arie L. Avneri, a member of the research staff of the respected Tabenkin Institute and the daily newspapers, *Lamerhav* and *Davar*, presents a factual history that clearly dispels the big lie of Arab dispossession.

Avneri traces the origins and development of Jewish settlements in Palestine from the 1880's to 1948 and meticulously documents the geographic and demographic changes that occurred in this area in the seventy years before Israel declared her statehood.

Through Avneri's research, it becomes clear to the reader that the land which the Jews bought from the Arabs in the 1800's was often swamp, infested with mosquitos. The Kinrot Valley around the Sea of Galilee, as well as the Genosar Valley to the north and the Jordan Valley to the south, were in a state of desolation. In 1882, on Mount Carmel, there were seventeen abandoned Arab villages and only sixteen remaining Arab families. The Arabs ate grass, along with their goats, and were so primitive that they knew only

blood-letting as a "treatment" for malaria. In 1874, the Sharon Valley was all wasteland, with nothing plowed or planted. In 1922, the Sharon Plain had only high grass and sand. In 1905, the Jordan Valley was still devoid of a single Village and the land had no irrigation and no cultivation. At the time, Naguib A-Zouri, an Arab who was a government official in the Jerusalem District, wrote:

Although I have traversed this wonderful valley (Jordan) from north to south, I have not found a single village, nor as many as five dunams of cultivated land, nor a single meter of irrigation ditch.

Mr. Avneri describes how the concentration of large land holdings in the hands of a few Arabs peaked in the early twentieth century. For these landowners, the desolated land lost its value as a source of income and became merchandise for sale. The Jews happily bought it through the Palestine Office of the organized Zionist movement whose two major land-purchasing executive arms were the Jewish National Fund, founded in 1901 for the purpose of buying land for national ownership, and the Palestine Land Development Company.

Avneri's research dispels the myth that the Palestinians were evicted from their homes before 1948. Meticulously researched statistics obtained from tax lists in the late 1800's show the number of Moslems, Christians and Jews in 1800, in 1890, etc. Just as the growth of the Moslem Arab population was due in large part to illegal immigration, i.e., these immigrants were working people who found jobs in

Palestine and stayed, so was the increase in the Christian Arab population the result of illegal immigration, i.e., these immigrants were wealthy entrepreneurs and merchants who found Palestine's economy ripe for business and profit. In the period from 1935 to 1945, 490 legal Arab immigrants entered Palestine; 662 Arab travelers remained illegally and 902 Arab travelers were tried but not deported and remained illegally.

After 1948, wealthy Palestinian Arab refugees and those with education were absorbed in various Arab countries. Some went to Jordan, where they received full civil rights. Others returned to Israel, reflecting the Israeli policy of reuniting families. The Israeli government spent \$120 million on the absorption and housing of Arab refugees who lived in the area taken by Israel in 1967. Arab states have spent nothing to absorb their refugees. Jewish refugees from Arab countries were also absorbed by Israel. The Arab nations, from which these Jews were expelled, denied them any compensation for their confiscated homes, property and possessions: Israel took full responsibility for absorbing these Jews. From 1948 to 1972, Israel absorbed 586,070 Jewish immigrants from Arab countries.

*The Claim of Dispossession* is an important record which painstakingly explores the Arab fabrication of 1300 years of uninterrupted possession of Palestine, the rise of Arab landowners, the origins of Jewish settlements, the Jewish purchase of private lands through the Jewish National Fund and private buyers, the immigration to Israel and the Arab-Israeli wars and their effects on the economy, policies and society of Israel. Mr. Avneri leaves no doubt that the poor Palestinian refugees are the handiwork of Arab nations that warned against Israel. The unfortunate situation of these refugees was created by and is still perpetuated by those Arab

countries that encouraged the Palestinians to leave their homes in 1948 and then refused them citizenship after Israel's War of Independence was over.

Two extremely important realities come into clear focus as a result of this careful examination of extensive historical material: (1) There is no historical evidence for the eviction of Palestinians from Israel prior to the founding of the State, and (2) Most of the Arabs who left Israel afterwards did so of their own volition. The historical facts presented are indisputable.

Avneri also demonstrates that, contrary to claims by extreme Palestinians, the century old Zionist settlement movement (i.e. the buying and reclaiming of land for the settlement of Jews in Palestine, then Israel) was in no way motivated by anti-Arab sentiments. On the contrary, the Zionist motivation to transform a barren desolate land into a fertile productive land was a modern expression of ancient Jewish covenants and prophecies.

The transformation of the desert that was Palestine into a fertile Israel has been the dream of Zionism: Jewish settlements are the concrete realization of that dream. *The Claim of Dispossession* speaks to people of all political persuasions who seek the truth about the Middle East. Mr. Avneri concludes his research on a hopeful note:

Zionism as a movement for the renaissance and liberation of the Jewish people sought to achieve its goals by constructive deeds. As a matter of last resort, the Jews took to arms to defend their very lives. It may not be too late for the model of constructive deeds to serve as a guide to a better life for the two peoples fated to live on one land.

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David Fanshel, Helen R. Beiser, Joseph G. Kepecs and the Jewish Children's Bureau Staff, editors. *The Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago: Papers from the 90th Anniversary Child Welfare Conference*, 1983.

This collection of papers delivered at the 90th Anniversary Celebration of the Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago is noteworthy for two reasons:

1. David Fanshel's lecture "To Secure Families and Children Better: Seeking Wisdom in the Face of Uncertainty" raises a number of significant issues and difficult points of view concerning natural parents and foster children that provide the reader with a comprehensive background of information necessary in making appropriate treatment decisions.

2. The auxiliary presentations by Jewish Children's bureau staff are not only an excellent collection of papers on a variety of treatment issues ranging from intergenerational aspects of illness and the over-extended family to treating child care workers to cope, but in all instances, the authors offer examples of their work allowing the reader to accept or reject the material presented based on an analysis of the provider.

This collection of presentations is well worth the investment of time by everyone in the child welfare field.

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Morris W. Stroud III, Sidney Katz, & Sister Barbara Anne Gooding, *Rehabilitation of the Elderly: A Tale of Two Hospitals*. Michigan State University Press, 1985.

Vastly improved medical treatment and the decrease in acute diseases leave no doubt that many persons with chronic disabilities are and will continue to be elderly. This extremely important

volume includes a fine in-depth longitudinal study of the chronically disabled and deals with the medical rehabilitation of all persons with chronic disabilities.

The book includes two studies, each clearly delineating the research conducted within a rehabilitation hospital setting. The studies were done 15 years apart, one in the pre-Medicare era, the other post-Medicare. The rehabilitation hospital, as distinguished from the general or acute care hospital, is a relatively new phenomenon. By means of tables, charts, case histories, and a very readable narrative, the authors describe what happened to patients from evaluation through follow-up in each hospital.

The first study conducted in 1960 utilized a sample of 208 patients. The second conducted from 1974-1977 included 1,963 patients. There were several demographic and sociological differences between the two groups as well. To their credit, the authors attempted to reduce the vast difference between samples by "limiting comparisons to matched groups of patients." Data collection was standardized and the principal investigator was the same in both studies.

Some universal problems in setting up any new program are candidly discussed: lay board priorities, financial needs, power struggles over turf, etc. Lack of communication, lack of coordination between disciplines, and fragmentation of services are detailed at length. The methods used to improve these and other problems are described in the second study. Emphasis was placed on early assessment, team approach, common language, inclusion of patients and families in decision-making, and early and effective discharge planning. Recommendations in the first study from architectural design to the type and length of follow-up led to considerable improvement in the quality of care for the disabled and their ability to return to optimal functioning.

While much reference is made to the psychosocial aspects of recovery, they are

often glossed over or treated simplistically. Hopefully, future works will include a deeper look at the psychological and behavioral factors which influence successful rehabilitation. Since the findings in this text clearly indicate the positive results of returning patients to their homes as early as possible, it was also disappointing not to find any suggestions on the need for home health care.

These ambitious studies and the well-documented improvements that took place from study I to study II are important in continuing to deal effectively with the increasing frequency of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, arthritis, fractures, diabetes, and similar disabling illnesses.

Among the more compelling issues which persist are adverse side effects that are due to increased use of medication and varying effects of overmedication, particularly on the elderly. Both lay persons and medical professionals who read this book will find persuasive reasons for paying close attention to this disconcerting information.

This book's findings clearly suggest that the authors, two physicians and a nurse, were not afraid to scrutinize their own work and their own professions. They openly discuss all those areas which continue to require re-examination and improvement. The book is cogently written and sets a framework for continued improvement in "the quality of care and life for the chronically disabled in the future."

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Abraham J. Heschel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism*. Edited by Samuel H. Dresner. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1985.

I remember the warm Sunday afternoons at the Seminary thirty years ago

when Abraham Joshua Heschel, healthy, shaven, young, would sing the praises of the Jewish religion. Cigar in hand, he would effortlessly loft quintessential poetry whose magic those students taking notes inevitably missed. The assignment was reading the first 176 pages of his newly published *Man is Not Alone*.

In the '60's, Abraham Joshua Heschel personified the incredible empathy Jews had for the great causes of America: Heschel locked arm in arm with Martin Luther King, Jr.; the ailing, fragile Heschel waiting for the arch anti-Vietnam protesters Daniel and Philip Berrigan to be released from prison. Heschel always seamlessly wove his *gemilut basadim* and his scholarship into one spirit. Before he died, Heschel, the great scion of the Hasidic dynasty of Apt, was at work on the life and thought of Hasidism's founder, the Baal Shem Tov, beginning with a study of the four most important members of the Besht's circle of colleagues. Heschel realized that Hasidism was a denigrated way of Jewish life which had immediately been attacked by the leading Talmudists of eighteenth century Poland and Lithuania led by the Vilna Gaon as rank, dangerous superstition. Later historians considered Hasidism to be a sectarian departure from the scholarship and rational piety which for them was the continuing essence of Judaism.

Heschel believed that the more recent portrayals of Hasidism by Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem had been passed through the filter of their own philosophies. Buber's tales supported his existentialism and Scholem's analysis bolstered his view of the importance of radical messianism in Judaism.

Heschel wanted to place Hasidism in a respectable and authentic historical setting and situate it in the mainstream of Jewish religious traditions. His methodology is evident in his portraits of the Hasidic rebbes who were part of the original circle of the Baal Shem Tov. Heschel was a master in dealing with the recalled stories

that were orally transmitted, private letters, manuscripts, and printed sermons, moral teachings, and commentaries. Readers may well prefer the versions of Buber and Wiesel which are refined, almost hagiographical, tales of Hasidism. For readers who wonder whether these stories are true, the rebbes real, or their influence so potent, Heschel is indispensable.

In this volume, Heschel's student, Samuel H. Dresner, whose own study of the Hasidic Zaddik, R. Jacob Joseph of Pollonnoye, is a rare blend of erudition and elegance, has collected four essays by Heschel on Hasidic masters that were unavailable to the English reader until now. Heschel's essay on Rabbi Pinhas of Korzec appeared in Yiddish in 1949. His studies of Rabbi Gershon Kutover (1951), Rabbi Nahman of Kosow (1965) and Rabbi Isaac of Drohobycz (1957) were originally published in Hebrew.

Heschel neither glorifies nor apologizes for the scholars, preachers, mystics, and alleged miracle workers who founded Hasidism; he invaluable describes them.

The rebbes emerge dangerously human: wise, angry, saintly, wrongheaded, astute, foolish, humble, arrogant, pleading with the Almighty on behalf of Israel and letting their disciples know they did, believing that they accomplished wonders and reminding each other of them.

The rebbes did have power over life and death. Their hold on a follower's psychic being was so powerful that they could, in that sense, bring healing to the sick. The aura of infallibility which surrounded or which was ascribed to them by their followers allowed the rebbes to make pronouncements that affected thousands; for example, whether to abandon their homes and flee from a pogrom or stay or hide in the forests. When the rebbes disagreed, lives hung in the balance.

R. Raphael, the disciple of R. Pinhas of Korzec, revealed part of their power. "If, after the prayer [of R. Pinhas], we still suffer so much from that nation [the Russians], imagine what it would have

been like without his prayer."

Or the way R. Isaac of Drohobycz enforced the law. To calm down a litigant who was afraid that his antagonist would swear a false oath to support a false claim, R. Isaac said: "With me, anyone who lies will suffer one of his progeny to die."

The stories that Heschel unapologetically quotes from their sources are sometimes more fantastic than Bashevis Singer's creations. After the same R. Isaac had died, he was believed to have intervened on behalf of his son, R. Mekhele, when it was decreed that R. Mekhele would have to die for having scolded the saintly R. Zusya of Hanipol (known to have said, "The Master of the Universe will not ask me why I was not like anyone else, but why I was not like Zusya"). R. Zusya had assumed the physical penance for the transgressions of a sinner to assure him a place in the world to come and R. Mekhele had rebuked R. Zusya for so endangering his own life. To avert R. Mekhele's death, R. Isaac descended from heaven and asked R. Zusya to forgive his son. The request was granted. Later, R. Isaac appeared to his son and cautioned him to beware of upsetting R. Zusya, "for great was his station in Heaven."

Perhaps the more recent retellers of Hasidic tales have been kind in distilling the lessons of Hasidism for today's Jews to choose from, including R. Pinhas of Korzec's comment on "those who always prayed with excessive energy and a loud voice," and his warning "not to be severely meticulous of the law, for through this we extend the exile, Heaven forbid."

On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that heavenly intervention, divine judgment on great nations, healing by faith, and vicarious atonement are absent from Jewish beliefs today. Or that rabbinic pronouncements on the religious, national, and political destiny of the Jewish people are not persuasive in Israel and America in our own time.

Were Heschel alive today, I wonder what would he say about them.

L. S.