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## The Olive Trees



## Of Palestine

By Edward Dillon

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# About This Issue

This article reminded me of the story told of the axe that a woodcutter carried into the forest. Upon seeing it, one tree whispered to another, "Look, the handle is one of us."

Ed Dillon, our feature writer, has written two previous *Link* articles: one in 1983 on the plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons—at the time he had just spent 15 years work-



Edward J. Dillon

ing with prisoners in the Philadelphia area. His other article, in 2001, viewed the plight of the Palestinians as a modern-day reenactment of the stations of the cross.

Ed is a priest of the Catholic diocese of Rochester, N.Y. He holds a postgraduate degree in biblical studies from the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, where his studies included research in Jerusalem. In addition to his years of teaching scripture, he now helps at a parish in upstate New York, which includes five village churches and the state university of New York at Geneseo. He has conducted several AMEU-sponsored tours to the Holy Land and, since

2003, has been a member of our board of directors.

This issue of *The Link* is about olive trees and Palestinian farmers. It's also about buzz saws and Jewish settlers. Finally—and this is what reminded me of the story of the axe handle—it is about us, the U.S. taxpayers, who are underwriting those settlements and facilitating the purchase of their saws and backhoes and bulldozers. I can almost hear the taxpayer who knows all this whispering to another taxpayer: "Look, the criminals are us."

Our "Link's Links" interview on page 12 is with investigative journalist Philip Weiss, editor of the popular weblog Mondoweiss.

Page 13 lists current AMEU book selections. Page 14 lists books from our research library which, for space reasons, we need to reduce. Some of these books are out of print, some show their age, all are reduced in price. For most of them we have only one copy, so it will be first come, first served.

On page 15, in addition to our video selections, we invite readers to introduce others to *The Link* with a special \$20 gift subscription.

Page 16 carries two appeals that are vital to our work: One is the annual voluntary \$40 subscription, the other is a reminder that one way AMEU has been able to carry out its programs over the past 42 years is because supporters have remembered us in their wills.

**John F. Mahoney**  
Executive Director

# The Olive Trees of Palestine

By Edward Dillon

*...they shall come streaming to the Lord's blessings: the grain, the wine, and the oil...*

— Jeremiah 31:12

*You make...wine to cheer man's heart, oil, to make him glad, and bread to strengthen man's heart.*

— Psalm 104: 14-15

Let's single out that phrase: "oil, to make him glad..."

For starters, it is not a reference to black gold or Texas tea, the kind of oil that fuels our cars and our wars.

It refers to the fruit of the olive tree.

The gifts of the earth culminate in the grain, the wine, and the oil.

The people of the land would stream to Jerusalem during the three agricultural feasts: spring, summer, and fall.

In spring the first fruits of the grain are harvested; it is the feast of Passover and unleavened bread;

In summer comes the grain harvest and the feast of Weeks;

Then, in autumn, the "great feast" of Tabernacles: the grape and olive harvest.

The Christian Church has its roots in this agricultural tradition: Passover becomes Easter; Weeks is Pentecost (a week of weeks or 50 days); Tabernacles, the Sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and the eucharist.

The grain, the wine and the oil are used in these Christian sacraments as symbols of God's vitality and healing power at work among us.

In baptism, after coming out of the water and being clothed with a white garment, the neophyte is anointed with chrism: an aromatic version of olive oil consecrated during the week leading up to Easter.

Then the neophyte is led to the banquet table where the bread and wine are consecrated and shared.

The oil of athletes-in-training (catechumens) is used before baptism, just as the chrism is used after baptism. The second anointing is the source of the word "christening." The newly-baptized are anointed as kings and priests are anointed to show they share the dignity of Christ.

Kings and priests have been anointed with chrism throughout Christian history.

As have the sick, another Jewish custom taken over by Christians (James 5:13-15).

It is good to recall this long tradition to begin a reflection on the olive tree in the Mediterranean world, especially in Palestine.

In Jotham's fable of the trees (Judges 9:8-15) we see the hierarchy of the trees, beginning with the most sacred:

"So they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us'. But the olive tree answered them 'Must I give up my rich oil, whereby men and gods are honored, and go and wave over the trees?'"

The fig tree and the vine then ask similar questions to show that their fruit is sacred to men and gods. They have no time or energy to waste merely ruling over others.

In the story of the great flood in Genesis, the two signs of a coming period of peace between God and all living creatures are the olive branch and the rainbow.

Noah sent out the dove from the ark a second time. According to Genesis 8:11, "In the evening the dove came back to him, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf!"

In spite of all this biblical tradition, we come now to the crux of our meditation.

Something there is that does not love the olive tree.

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## Buzz Saws

Thirty-five years ago, Mohammad Abu-Awad, a teacher of agriculture, planted 70 olive trees on his land. On the night of Sept. 25, 2009, the eve of the olive-picking season, while he slept, vandals came to his grove from the Jewish settlement of Adei Ad. Armed with buzz saws, they ravaged his field, leaving twisted stubs. Abu-Awad wrapped the mutilated limbs in sackcloth to shield them from sun scald. He would replant them, he said. If he can.

Twenty acres had already been taken from him to build the Jewish settlement of Shiloh, and another 25 for the settlement of Rahelim. Four acres remained. Now 68, his eyes wet, he told the Israeli journalist Gideon Levy: "If I had been there, I'd have told them, cut off my hands, but don't cut down my trees. What did the tree do to them, for them to treat it like this? I love the soil, I am in love with it. I am not afraid of them. If they want to kill me, let them. This is my land. I sleep on it."

Mohammad Abu-Awad is one of an estimated 100,000 families in the West Bank alone who are dependent on income from their olive trees.

Agricultural experts in the Holy Land estimate that over one million olive trees—yes, one *million*—have been uprooted and destroyed by Israel since its founding in 1948. Almost half of these have been uprooted in the last nine years, with the start of the second intifada in 2000. Just during its last war on Gaza, the Israeli army, in the course of 22 days, destroyed more than 13,000 olive trees.

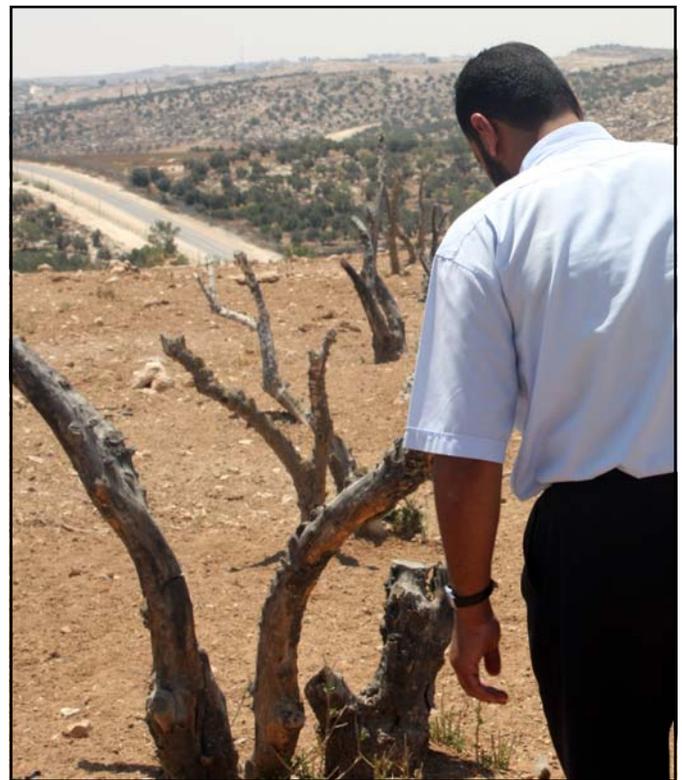
Jamil Khader and his brothers and their children from the northern West Bank village of Jeet are completely dependent on their olive trees. Last year, Jamil discovered that nearly all of the 1,400 trees his extended family had planted were uprooted and stolen. He had not been able to check on his trees regularly because settlers from the nearby settlement of Kedumim had pulled guns on him. When Khalil, his son, told his father his trees were gone, the 87-year-old Jamil fell ill and was in bed for a week.

Olive oil is a basic part of daily meals for Palestinians. Breakfast usually includes *zait* and *zaatar*, olive oil and ground thyme, that are sopped up with fresh *kmaj* bread. It is also one of the best woods for

creating Holy Land souvenirs, as well as a main source for home heating and clay ovens throughout the territories. In terms of overall agricultural production, olive production is Palestine's number one product, taking up to 25% of total agricultural production in the West Bank. About one-third of the Palestinian population lives directly off olives and another 20% depends indirectly on them.

Ibrahim Imran is a Palestinian farmer from the village of Burin, located in a valley between the two hilltop settlements of Har Bracha and Yitzhar. Earlier this year settlers torched some of the homes in the village, and on numerous occasions they raided the olive orchards. Finally, they showed up with hand-saws and, as reported by journalist Gideon Levy in the Israeli daily Haaretz, "ripped out the crowns of the trees with their hands, one crown after another, one branch after another, rending and wounding the trees."

"These trees are like my children," Ibrahim cried. "After God, I rely only on my olive trees. My great-great-grandfather planted them." Meanwhile, an-



A Palestinian farmer in the village of Dora, with centuries-old olive trees, his livelihood, destroyed by Israel.—  
Photo by Fouzi Slisi

other Palestinian farmer in Burin says that he has heard that Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, from the settlement of Yitzhar, has written a book saying that the killing of all non-Jews who constitute a threat to the Jewish people, even children and infants, is permitted in the Torah. The sight of advancing settlers with buzz-saws and M16 rifles, this is what terrifies the farmers of Burin.

### Something there is...

In 2004, a group of us representing United Nations Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) toured the villages of occupied Palestine to see the effects of the apartheid wall the Israelis were building on Palestinian land.

We saw how the massive construction was dividing people from each other: village from village, people from their fields, children from their schools, families from their places of worship.

Despite the outcry from almost everyone who saw it in progress, the work went on and is a monument to the harsh and relentless approach to the Palestinians still living under occupation on their ancestral lands.

The thought that kept going through my mind were words taken from a poem by Robert Frost: "Something there is that does not love a wall, that sends up a ground-swell against it..."

In the poem, however, it is the neighbor building the wall who has the last words: "Good fences make good neighbors."

Good fences for Israel might make sense if the Israelis had built the wall on their own land, i.e., on the land they wrested from the Palestinians in 1948, which the world at the time sanctioned.

But the world has not approved of the land-grab in the wake of the 1967 war. And Israelis are using the wall to annex yet more Palestinian land—some 9.5% of the West Bank has been confiscated for the wall, and another 3.4% is completely or partially surrounded by it. Meanwhile, the concrete slabs and electronic fence make life ever more difficult for those enduring the longest military occupation in modern history.

All this history is old hat. Still a similar refrain to



**Mahfoutha Shtaya, 65, stood up to Israeli soldiers and settlers in 2004 when they were uprooting hundreds of olive trees, the source of her community's livelihood. Alone and defenseless, she clung to one of the few trees left standing.**

the one borrowed from Robert Frost goes through my head: "Something there is that does not love an olive orchard..."

And this refrain makes me ponder, because we are dealing here with something mysterious. Why do olive trees attract such fury from the Israelis, especially the fanatic settlers?

To go back to the wall for a second, I remember four of us trying to climb the cumbersome thing while it was still being built without stumbling or being blown into the deep ravine by a strong wind. It took us a good ten minutes to make the climb up and down.

Then a Palestinian woman came along the path with a ceramic jug on her head. She came up to the wall. Without hesitating or losing her balance she ascended and descended it in about 15 seconds. Then continued on her way. She remained erect through it all, and the jug remained firmly on her head.



**Settlers in the West Bank are a constant threat to Palestinian agriculture. Armed and seldom restrained by the Israeli military, they assault farmers, particularly during planting and harvesting periods, block access to fields, and destroy trees and crops.**

Thinking of her I recall a conversation I once had with Grace Halsell, one, if not the first mainstream U.S. journalist and author to tell the unvarnished truth about what was being done to the Palestinians with our tax money. We were having coffee near the Damascus Gate. She was wondering why the religious Israelis and the settlers looked so sullen and stern. The best answer we could come up with was they are angry about the real history of this place and are angry at the real people of this place.

That's where the olive tree comes into the picture. And why the Israeli settlers show such fury against the orchards.

They harass the harvesters, causing injury and even death. Not even sympathetic Jews who come to help in the harvest to protect the harvesters are safe. They, too, have been intimidated and injured.

But the olive tree, besides providing an income

and giving joy to feast days, is a stubborn survivor. And when cared for by wise farmers, its fruit will improve with age. One tree can yield between 35 and 45 pounds of olives, depending on how it is tended.

I remember being shown old gnarled trees in the "garden of olives," which some think go back to the time of Christ, possibly the same silent witnesses that stood in Gethsemane the night of Jesus's capture.

Such remarkable trees are an apt symbol for the Palestinian people.

The woman standing erect while scaling the Israeli wall-in-progress symbolizes the nation. I admire her, and when I think of the Israeli settlers, I think: They have picked on the wrong people. These people are not going away.

During that NGO tour in 2004, we heard of Palestinian villages that no longer exist on official Israeli maps. They were just too poor and insignificant for Israel to deal with in 1948. Yet they survive to this day in barren landscapes, without roads, water supply or electric power.

As far as the state of Israel is concerned they don't exist.

The villagers organize in teams to get water for the day. They manage a generator that provides electrical power for a couple of hours a day. They take care of each other without any outside help or interference.

We talked our Palestinian guide into risking the welfare of his vehicle to take us through rutted dirt roads to get to one of these non-existent villages. As we arrived the whole village was in the process of preparing for a wedding celebration. The smell of food being prepared was over-powering. We should have stayed longer than the two or three hours we did stay with them. Being Westerners, we kept to our schedule.

The whole village feasting together in a barren wilderness is another memory of Palestine which gives me confidence in a people strong enough to survive great hardship, even the bulldozing of their homes and buzz-sawing of their orchards.

## **A Nation of Naboths**

On our 2004 tour, we came across another wed-

ding in Bethlehem. We were staying in a hotel recently refurbished for the expected influx of pilgrims on the occasion of the 2000th anniversary of Christians in Bethlehem.

We practically had the hotel to ourselves. The Israeli state of emergency in response to the second intifada kept tourists and pilgrims away.

Coming down the elevator one afternoon we heard the noise of celebration on one of the floors. We decided to crash the party. It was a wedding celebration in full progress.

We discovered that the groom had not shown up yet. He had been detained at a checkpoint. But he had phoned to say they should start the party without him. He would get through the checkpoints eventually.

Better late than never.

The stories of the bible come alive when you travel through the West Bank Palestinian villages.

In chapter 21 of the first Book of Kings, the prophet Elijah confronts the wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Ahab asks Naboth, his farmer neighbor, to give him his vineyard. I'll give you another better one in exchange, he says. This one would make a nice vegetable garden for me, and it is right next to my palace.

Naboth is appalled to think that anyone would expect him to give up his ancestral heritage.

So King Ahab goes home and sulks. He goes to bed, turns his head to the wall and won't eat.

His wife Jezebel asks him, Now what's the matter?

He says, Naboth won't give me his vineyard. I was even willing to buy him a better one.



**On June 20 of this year, Israeli settlers set fires that destroyed 350 olive trees near Nablus. The Israeli human rights group Yesh Din said settlers threatened with evacuation of an illegal outpost respond against Palestinians by "setting fire to crops, attacking villages and people and damaging property in order to draw military energy away from the scheduled evacuation."**

"A fine King of Israel you are," she says. "I'll take care of Naboth."

Then she demonstrates how the tyrants who are shrewd use a legal process to accomplish their crimes: bribing witnesses to accuse the defenseless of made-up crimes for which they can be put to death.

Afterwards she says to the King: Go on. Take possession of the vineyard. Naboth is no longer alive, but dead.

The king trots merrily down the road to take possession of his coveted vineyard, but he encounters the prophet Elijah who says to him: "After murdering, do you also take possession?"

And King Ahab says to the prophet: "Have you found me out, my enemy?"

Michael Sfard knows something of the abuse of authority. He is an Israeli lawyer and legal consultant to Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights organization that monitors settler violence in the West Bank.

According to Yesh Din, 27 incidents of vandalism of Palestinian trees in the West Bank, particularly olive trees, were filed in the first ten months of 2009. A review of each case shows that not a single

investigation has led to the filing of an indictment against persons suspected of involvement in the vandalism.

Michael Sfar knows why. International law governing the actions of an occupier allows for a rare instance when an occupied people's basic rights may be temporarily suspended. The classic example is "necessary or urgent security reasons." The state of Israel, says Sfar, uses this exception, this small window, and turns it into the general rule instead of the exception. Israeli leaders always prefer a policy that damages the trees to other means that would prevent the damage to Palestinian citizens and their economic survival.

Consider the village of Bil'in located northwest of Ramallah. Almost 90% of the village depends on agriculture, mostly olive trees and seasonal crop cultivation.

Bil'in is bordered on the west by eight Israeli settlements, all established on lands originally owned by Palestinians, and all judged illegal by just about all nations of the world, with the exception of Israel and the United States. Now, like King Ahab, Israel wants more land.

In February 2005 the Israeli Ministry of Defense announced that, to build its "security" wall, it would have to take more agricultural lands and open spaces from the people of Bil'in and the neighboring village of Saffa.



**An Israeli truck takes uprooted Palestinian olive trees to be sold in Tel Aviv.—Photo by Christoph Gocke**

The villagers have protested this theft. In June 2005, some 200 Palestinians, together with other international peace activists gathered in Bil'in village and headed towards the construction site, where over 1,000 acres of their land were being razed for the wall's construction. As soon as they reached the site they saw the Israeli bulldozers, backed by Israeli forces, uprooting olive trees. The demonstrators tried peacefully to prevent the uprooting, but they were met with the firing of rubber bullets and teargas bombs.

Often the theft of the land is linked with a literal theft of the olive trees. While Palestinian farmers are forced to watch from afar, their trees are loaded onto Israeli trucks and taken to Israeli cities where they are sold.

For Tawfiq Salim, a farmer in Bil'in, the International Humanitarian Law that requires Israel, as the occupying power, to protect the well-being and safety of all Palestinian civilians living under its authority is meaningless. I'm illiterate when it comes to computers, but if you Google "olive trees + US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation" and click on the first entry, you will find a link to a YouTube video feed from Israel Social TV. Here you will see Tawfiq, beside himself with grief, stumbling amid his butchered olive trees, wiping the



**In a scene that can be found on YouTube, Tawfiq Salim is seen weeping amidst the remains of his olive trees, wiping his tears on their leaves.**

tears from his face with their small green leaves, long held to be curative. Here too you will meet lawyer Michael Sfar who will tell you why what happened to Tawfiq was an outright crime.

Or you can see the movie *The Lemon Tree*, by the Israeli director Eran Riklis. If it's not in your local video store, ask them to order it. It's a simple story about a lemon grove and legal cruelty. It will stir you, as it did the Berlin International Film Festival, which gave it its 2009 Best Film award.

As we bounced along a bumpy road in the West Bank, our tour guide said: On our right is the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite. In the time of Elijah the prophet Naboth was murdered so that the king of Israel could have his vineyard.

Then, in a quiet voice—I doubt any of the others in the bus heard him—our guide added: “Today, we have a whole nation of Naboths.”

## Two Paradigms

Environmental concerns know no walls or fences. In Israel and Palestine, cross-border pollution and the degradation of land and water resources are major ecological problems. In the occupied territories that has led to environmental pollution, less biodiversity, and a loss of habitat for indigenous animals. Continued Israeli military control over ground water resources, severe restrictions on freedom of movement, continued confiscation of ancestral lands, and the destruction of a million-plus olive trees—all pose dire threats to the region's ecology. Much of this is due to Israel's 42-year military occupation.

On May 12 of this year, the deputy director of Israel's Ministry for Environmental Protection informed Major-General Gadi Shamni, commander-in-chief of Israel's central command, that at least five Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) bases in the Palestinian territories are contaminating land and water sources. Handling of diesel fuel and oil on IDF bases, as well as other military activities, constitute a major source of contamination. And the influx of half a million Israeli Jews into the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has created severe sewage and industrial effluent, much of which is being discharged without adequate treatment.

Solutions are at hand. All recognize that coopera-

tion between the two peoples is essential. The violence has to stop and the wall taken down. Only then can Israelis and Palestinians work within the same environmental policy framework and follow the same environmental standards.

Many see such a commitment to a shared future as naïve. I hope against hope.

In the October-November 1993 issue of *The Link*, “Save the Musht (and the land of Palestine),” Rosina Hassoun, then a doctoral candidate in biological anthropology, offered what I believe is a profound understanding of the two dueling paradigms now in use.

How a people administer their human and natural resources, wrote Hassoun, depends upon their cultural attitudes, and their image of themselves and of the land. Israeli and Palestinian images differ radically.

For Zionists, Palestine is a wasteland and a desert. The wasteland paradigm was promoted by the World Zionist Organization in their slogan that Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land.” The paradigm of the desert appeared in the Zionist claim that they “made the desert bloom.”

This dual image of wasteland and desert satisfied the colonizers ideological imperatives: *Ownership* (those who create something out of nothing get to keep it); *Absorption* (a wasteland offers a seemingly endless capacity for absorbing Jews from all over the world); and *Exploitation* (Jews, especially from Europe, America and South Africa have brought western attitudes towards resource usage, namely, that resources are there for the taking, as well as western images of monocropped fields, agribusinesses, manicured lawns and swimming pools.)

Palestinians see Palestine in terms of motherhood, fertility and village.

The paradigm of land as *mother* is found in most indigenous cultures, and for Palestinians stems from their belief that they are descended from the multitudes of people who previously inhabited the land dating back to the Canaanites and before. The *fertility* paradigm refers to the fertile crescent (or bread basket) which derives from the Palestinian village-based



**Rabbis for Human Rights seeks out Palestinian farmers whose have lost olive trees to Israeli actions and helps them replant. An olive tree takes from five to seven years to mature and produce olives. —Reuters**

system of food production founded on agricultural/horticultural/silvicultural practices of planting citrus, olives, grains and vegetables with rock-terracing. Within this paradigm, Palestinians have followed historical patterns of crop rotation, collective and private land ownership, share-cropping and multicropping. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Palestine was an important exporter of agricultural commodities to Europe and the Middle East. And the Zionists knew this. In 1897, a fact-finding delegation they sent reported back that “The bride [Palestine] is beautiful, but she is married to another man [the indigenous people].”

The *village* paradigm refers to the traditional flow of goods and services among Palestinian villages. Here the basic system of food production is supplemented by a village barter system, local markets and city suks, all of which form an integrated concept of life on the land.

On 28 May 2009, the Zionist and the Palestinian paradigms collided. On that day, U.S. President Barack Obama, speaking through his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, told the Israeli government he wants a stop to all settlements, “not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exception.” All settlements.

This was an affront to the Zionist worldview of ownership, absorption, and exploitation of all of historic Palestine. And all Israelis knew it: Obama’s approval rating in Israel sank to 4%. And it didn’t take long for Israel’s prime minister to set the young

American president straight: There would be no settlement halt in East Jerusalem, and life in the West Bank settlements would continue as “normal” — a euphemism for further construction to accommodate population growth. Later Netanyahu said he would ask his cabinet to approve a “temporary suspension” of new construction permits for houses and buildings in the West Bank. The young American president thanked the Israeli prime minister. But no one else was fooled. The Zionist paradigm remained solidly in place.

People of a certain age who remember Palestine, remember the terraced vineyards and orchards tended by farmers who were able to cultivate wonderful harvests on meager resources, without depleting the lakes and rivers and the aquifers. Today Palestinian farmers like Mohammad Abu-Awad, Jamil Khader, Ibrahim Imran and Tawfiq Salim still look upon the land as their mother and the trees they tend as their children. They know that the word “cultivate” means to “cherish.”

## Sprouts

In his book “The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,” the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has a chapter on the “memoricide of the Nakba,” the destruction of any memory of the catastrophe that overcame Palestine by the Zionist conquest and destruction of villages, orchards, vineyards, and farms.

Israel’s national parks are a galling way of obliterating any trace of the culture and agriculture of the native people.

But Pappé noticed, with perverse amusement, how in one park an old olive tree had sent up new shoots amid the evergreen grove that Israelis had planted to remind them of the European forests to which they were accustomed.

Such shoots are visible elsewhere.

I think of Daoud Nasser, who lives in Susya, just south of Bethlehem. His patch of fertile farmland is ringed by eight Jewish settlements. His is the last Palestinian village in the area. And, like King Ahab, the settlers want it. They have uprooted his olive trees and built fences to keep him from the most arable areas, hoping to evict him under an old law dating back to Ottoman times that says if an owner fails to

farm his land for three years in a row, he loses his right to it. They have cut his electricity and disconnected his water supply. They have offered him millions of dollars and safe passage out of Palestine if he would only sell them his land.

But amid this heart-wrenching situation, there are sprouts: An Israeli organization, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) has replanted some of Daoud's olive trees. Daoud himself lives in a tabun, one of the natural caves on his land, where a generator supplies electricity two hours a day, and rainwater is collected for water usage. And while he waits for his land claim to be judged by Israel's Supreme Court, he uses the other caves on his land as youth camps that provide arts, drama and education to the children of neighboring villages and refugee camps, including some Jewish children. As for the money, he told the bribers: "This land is my mother; my mother is not for sale."

Over the years other international and Israeli human rights activists have continued to come to the West Bank to repair and protect Palestinian homes and crops.

There is Rabbi Arik Asherman, executive director of Israel's Rabbis for Human Rights. He has been beaten by security forces, attacked by settlers, and had his car stolen, but he stands steadfast with the Palestinians because, he says, "it's worth taking the risk."

On October 29 of this year, some 200 international activists planted 50 olive trees in Burin, the village where Ibrahim Imran lost his trees. Attending the demonstration were 30 members of the French solidarity organization *Campagne Civile Internationale pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien*. It will take one of these newly planted olive trees between five and seven years to mature and bear fruit—provided, of course, that they themselves are not uprooted.

As I write this article, November 22, 2009, over 150 Palestinians and internationals are gathering on a hill

in an area near Bethlehem called Um Salamuna. Um Salamuna has already lost much of its land to nearby Jewish-only settlements. The Wall, when it comes through here, will take the rest of Um Salamuna. Soldiers stood by while demonstrators cleared rocks and planted olive trees.

There is even a ten-day travel tour for tree planting. In 2001, in response to the plight of farmers, the Olive Tree Campaign was launched. So far six successful seasons of planting have helped hundreds of Palestinian farmers and land owners while, at the same time, bringing awareness to an expanding international network of friends and partners about the real life of people who have been striving for peace with justice for more than half a century. The next tour is scheduled for February 2010. For details, check their website.

You can also help Palestinian farmers by purchasing their olive oil online. One company promoting Palestinian production is Holy Land Olive Oil. They can be reached at [www.holylandoliveoil.com](http://www.holylandoliveoil.com). It's Extra Virgin Olive Oil: First Cold Press, of the finest quality, made from the 2009 harvest. And what a poignant way to celebrate the springtime feasts of renewal, release from bondage, and resurrection.

And a reminder that something there is that still loves the olive tree. ■



*Photo Credit: Dick Doughty/Saudi Aramco World/SAWDIA*

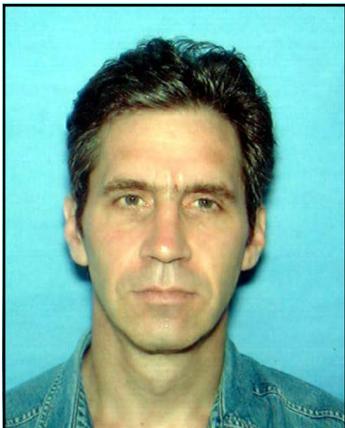
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## From **The Link's** Links

<http://www.mondoweiss.net>

Investigative journalist Philip Weiss had a 30-year career writing for such publications as *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, *National Review*, and *The New York Observer*. He is the author of several books, including *American Taboo: A Murder in the Peace Corps* (2004). These days Weiss is an independent blogger. This interview was conducted by AMEU Vice President Jane Adas.



**How did Mondoweiss get started?** In March 2006 I began writing a daily blog on *The New York Observer* website. My editor, Peter Kaplan, encouraged me to write what was on my mind and it was his idea to call it Mondoweiss. Increasingly what was on my mind were "Jewish issues": the Iraq disaster and my Jewishness, Zionism, neo-conservatism, Israel, Palestine. For many reasons that I detail in "Blogging about Israel and Jewish identity raises Observer hackles" (*The American Conservative*, June 4 2007), in the spring of 2007 I re-launched my own blog on my own website. It became a collaborative effort a year ago when Adam Horowitz joined Mondoweiss. Adam is extremely logical and calm, a good counterbalance to my own intensity, which sometimes scares people.

**Your blog states that Mondoweiss is devoted to covering American foreign policy in the Middle East, chiefly from a progressive Jewish perspective. Are American Jews your intended audience?** There are many sites critical of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, but not that many are Jewish. So our brand is progressive Jews critical of Israel. The Jewish thing is a little tactical. In our racist culture, Palestinians are not allowed to comment. It's harder to dismiss Adam and me because we're both Jewish. We use our Jewishness to get heard and to be taken seriously. Yet we feel strongly that we have to include other people and other voices, especially Palestinians. We need a diversity of voices, including people who support Israel, to promote meaningful dialogue.

**Has the mainstream media taken notice of Mondoweiss?** They either try to ignore us or smear

us. Recently I wrote a post pointing out that, of the two *New York Times* reporters stationed in Jerusalem, one is Israeli and the other married to an Israeli, meaning that our most important paper does not provide diversity on the Israel/Palestine issue. In response, Ron Kampeas wrote in JTA: The Global News Service of the Jewish People an article entitled, "The creepy Mr. Weiss." The mainstream conversation is too Jewish and must be opened up. After all, the U.S. destroyed an Arab society.

I'm so happy the internet came along because it offers more freedom to talk openly about these issues. Adam and I are waiting for mainstream media to catch up with us so we can go out of business.

**Have there been problems with your "Comments" section?** I mostly have smart readers whose comments are often better than my posts. But the blog also got hateful, vicious, ad hominem attacks. Someone wrote that he wanted to cut off my head and s---t down my neck. I guess I had a first amendment thing, which was stupid. I'm paying for these people to be on my site, they're my guests and should behave in a civilized manner. We definitely want to encourage dialogue, but the tone of the conversation is important because criticism of Israel is so emotional. We therefore instituted a Comments Policy banning any racist or sexist comments, gross obscenities, or personal attacks because they do not advance the discussion. As a result, we have blocked quite a number of IP addresses.

**You have written, "some of us have been excommunicated, denied a livelihood...."** We have, of course, suffered financially. Adam and I each give about three-quarters of our time to the blog. I do magazine work on the side about other things to earn a living. We used to receive \$200 a month for hosting Google ads, but we were barred for illegal click activity. We have no idea why this happened. We recently established a relationship with the Nation Institute. They don't give us money, but allow us to raise money on a tax-deductible basis. I believe this came about because the liberal left in America has a very bad record on the Israel/Palestine issue. One of the great things that happened in the last year, after Israel's Operation Cast Lead assault on Gaza, is that liberals are beginning to understand that we have to be engaged on this issue in our own voice and with a different answer than the neo-conservatives.

Like anybody who goes into this issue, I used to pity myself for the sacrifices it requires. Then, after I went to Israel and Palestine, met people and heard their stories, I realized that we are pretty privileged and I stopped complaining. As I wrote in the *American Spectator* article, "I've gained a lot from my blog: knowledge of myself and the world, a feeling of service I've rarely had as a journalist. It is too much to ask the traditional media to provide such rewards, and yet they are so significant that it is only a matter of time before all serious journalists will also be bloggers."

# AMEU's Book Selections

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Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
AMEU	Burning Issues	2007	439	\$16.95	\$5.00	Selected Link issues from the past 40 years.
Ateek, N.	A Palest.-Christian Cry for Reconciliation	2008	224	\$24.00	\$17.50	Sabeel founder's program of non-violence.
Aziz, B.	Swimming up the Tigris	2007	314	\$24.95	\$19.95	Real life encounters with Iraqis.
Baltzer, A.	Witness in Palestine	2007	400	\$26.95	\$19.95	Jewish-American condemns Israel's occupation.
Bennis, P.	Understanding the Pal.-Isr. Conflict	2007	196	\$10.00	\$9.00	An excellent primer.
Buchanan, G.	In Search of King Solomon's Temple	2009	24	\$10.00	\$7.50	Scholar concludes ruins are not under Noble Sanctuary.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	2003	240	\$12.95	\$10.95	Updated ed. with introduction by James Baker III.
Cook, J.	Blood and Religion	2006	222	\$18.00	\$16.50	Can Israel be both a Jewish and a democratic state?.
Cook, J.	Disappearing Palestine	2008	294	\$27.95	\$16.75	Israel's experiments in human despair.
Cook, J.	Israel & the Clash of Civilizations	2008	204	\$24.95	\$17.50	Neocons, Israel, and the Bush Administration.
Christison, K. & B.	Palestine in Pieces	2009	212	\$19.95	\$12.95	Perspectives on occupation by former CIA members.
Eidar, A. & Zertal	Lords of the Land	2007	531	\$29.95	\$15.50	Inside account of Israel's settlement policy.
Favez, J. ed.	The Colonization of Palestine	2007	56	\$9.95	\$3.00	Updated listing of 452 destroyed cities, towns, villages.
Halper, J	An Israeli in Palestine	2008	317	\$27.95	\$23.50	By a longtime opponent of the occupation.
Jamail, D.	Beyond the Green Line	2007	313	\$20.00	\$18.75	Iraq through the eyes of an unembedded journalist.
Kanaanah, H.	A Doctor in Galilee	2008	276	\$28.96	\$16.50	Struggle of a Palestinian doctor in Israel.
Karmi, G.	Married to Another Man	2007	350	\$29.95	\$22.50	Israel's dilemma in Palestine.
Khalidi, R.	Resurrecting Empire	2004	223	\$23.00	\$17.95	Analysis of US role in Middle East.
Khalidi, R.	The Iron Cage	2006	281	\$24.95	\$19.95	Why Palestinians don't have a state.
Kovel, J.	Overcoming Zionism	2007	299	\$26.95	\$18.95	How Israel can heal its "state-sponsored racism."
Makdissi, S.	Palestine Inside Out	2008	365	\$24.95	\$18.95	Why Arafat had to walk away from Camp David.
Nathan, S.	The Other Side of Israel	2005	310	\$25.00	\$17.50	How non-Jews are treated in the Jewish state.
Pappe, I.	The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine	2006	320	\$15.50	\$12.95	Author draws on recently disclosed state documents.
Ramadan, T.	In the Footsteps of the Prophet	2007	242	\$23.00	\$17.95	"By 1 of 100 top innovators of the century". -- Time
Reinhart, T.	The Road Map to Nowhere	2006	248	\$18.00	\$16.50	How Road Map is used to seize more occupied land.
Sgrena, G.	Friendly Fire	2007	216	\$20.00	\$15.95	Journalist's inside story of Iraqi occupation.
Shulman, D.	Dark Hope	2007	226	\$22.00	\$14.95	Memories of an Israeli peace activist.
Sniegowski, S.	The Transparent Cabal	2008	480	\$27.95	\$19.95	The real reasons the US attacked Iraq.
Thomas, A.	The Zoo in the Road to Nablus	2008	293	\$24.95	\$17.50	Extraordinary story of survival.
Thomas, B.	The Dark Side of Zionism	2009	265	\$39.95	\$27.95	Israel's quest for security through dominance.
Warschawski, M.	Toward an Open Tomb	2006	250	\$12.95	\$10.95	From West Bank massacres to The Wall
Winslow, P.	Victory for us is to see you suffer	2007	224	\$24.95	\$18.95	Personal account of Israel's disastrous occupation.

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Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Al-Haq	Punishing a Nation	1988	299	\$12.40	\$7.00	Israeli human rights violations during first intifada.
Al-Hout, B.	Sabra & Shatila	2004	462	\$31.50	\$10.00	History of the 1982 massacre.
Aronson, G.	Creating Facts	1987	334	\$27.00	\$15.00	Jewish settlements: 1967-1987.
Aruri, N., et al.	Enemy of the Sun	1970	141	\$50.00	\$20.00	Includes many of Darweesh's poems.
Aruri, N., et al.	Reagan and the Middle East	1983	95	\$19.70	\$10.00	Role played by Israel in U.S. Middle East strategy.
Ateek, N.	Jerusalem	1997	240	\$65.90	\$15.00	Palestinian Christian and peace-making.
Avnery, U.	My Friend, the Enemy	1986	340	\$22.00	\$10.00	Palestinian self-determination vs. Israeli security.
Badeau, J.	The American Appeal to the Arab World	1968	209	\$7.50	\$5.00	Author was director of Columbia's ME Institute.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	The Israeli Connection	1987	287	\$120.00	\$25.00	Who Israel arms and why.
Bell, J.	Terror Out of Zion	1977	374	\$29.95	\$15.00	Israel's terrorist gangs: 1929-1949.
Boullata, K.	Faithful Witnesses	1990	119	\$18.00	\$10.00	Palestinian children recreate their world.
Brown, M.	Magnificent Muslims	1981	98	\$45.00	\$20.00	Story of Spain's Arab centuries.
Childers, E.	Common Sense About the Arab World	1961	192	\$7.70	\$5.00	Concise history by acclaimed journalist.
Chomsky, N.	Peace in the Middle East?	1974	200	\$12.50	\$6.00	Reflections on justice and nationhood.
Clarke, T.	By Blood and Fire	1981	304	\$15.00	\$10.00	The attack on the King David hotel.
Cobban, H.	The Palestinian Liberation Organization	1984	305	\$12.70	\$7.00	Focuses on Al-Fatah.
Davis, U.	Citizenship and the State	1997	222	\$50.00	\$25.00	Good section on citizenship legislation in Israel.
Haykal, M.	The Life of Muhammad	1976	639	\$22.95	\$12.00	Authoritative biography by leading Arab writer.
Kennedy, H.	When Baghdad Ruled the World	2004	325	\$26.00	\$10.00	Rise and fall of Islam's greatest dynasty.
Khalidi, T.	Classical Arab Islam	1985	158	\$19.95	\$10.00	Culture and heritage of the Golden Age.
Lenczowski, G.	The Middle East	1980	862	\$16.00	\$10.00	Arab vs. Israeli nationalism.
Lustin/Rubin, eds.	Critical Essays	1991	206	\$23.95	\$10.00	Essays on Zionist revisionism, Jewish fundamentalism.
Mallison, W.T., S.	Palestinian Problem in International Law	1986	563	\$54.95	\$20.00	Classic study.
Moughrabi, F., others	The Open Veins of Jerusalem	1997	655	\$24.95	\$15.00	Essays by I. Shahak, R. Khalidi, Garaudy, Moughrabi.
Quigley, J.	Flight into the Maelstrom	1997	256	\$50.00	\$20.00	Soviet immigration to Israel and Middle East peace.
Riad, M.	The Struggle for Peace in the ME	1981	365	\$106.00	\$20.00	Why Camp David failed to bring comprehensive peace.
Said, E.	Culture and Resistance	2003	225	\$16.00	\$8.00	Conversations with David Barsamian.
Sharabi, H.	The Next Arab Decade	1988	347	\$12.00	\$7.00	Author was long-time Georgetown professor.
Sheehan, E.	The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger	1976	288	\$8.95	\$5.00	Secret history of US diplomacy in ME.
Stevens, R.	American Zionism & US Foreign Policy	1962	236	\$14.95	\$7.00	Examines period between 1942-1947.
Turki, F.	The Disinherited	1972	156	\$10.00	\$5.00	Journal of a Palestinian exile.
Waddy, C.	Women in Muslim History	1980	223	\$45.00	\$15.00	Survey of outstanding women in Islam.

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- AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, DVD, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge misconceptions about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- AJPME, **Imagine ...** (2005, DVD, 15 minutes). Palestinian education under Israeli occupation. Excellent for discussion groups. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Baltzer, Anna, **Life in Occupied Palestine** (2006, DVD, 61 minutes). By the American granddaughter of a Holocaust refugee. This is her powerful account of the occupation. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- DMZ, **People and the Land** (2007, DVD, updated version of 1997 film, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- FMEP, **Searching for Peace in the Middle East** (2006, DVD, 30 minutes). A film by Landrum Bolling. **AMEU: \$10.00.**
- Mennonite Central Committee, **Children of the Nabkah (2005, DVD, 26 minutes)**. Why Palestinian refugees must be part of any peace settlement. Comes with study guide. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (2008, DVD, 38 minutes). Rare collection of Palestinian dresses modeled against background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- NEF, **Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land** (2004, DVD, 80 minutes). Excellent analysis of how the U.S. media slants its coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Real People Prod., **Sucha Normal Thing** (2004, DVD, 80 minutes). Six Americans document a "normal" day under military occupation in the West Bank. **AMEU: \$25.00**
- IHF, **USS Liberty Survivors: Our Story** (1992; DVD; 60 minutes). The truth as provided by the men who lived through it. **AMEU: \$25.00**

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