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When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa

Intersections Between the Holocaust and the Nakba in the Shadow of Zionism

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The intersection between the Holocaust and the Nakba has been the subject of a number of literary and scholarly discussions among Palestinian writers and authors who write about the Palestinian experience. Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*, published for the first time in 1969, is perhaps one of the most renowned of the literary works narrating the tragic meeting between the Nakba and the Holocaust. It tells the story of a remarkable encounter between Palestinian and Israeli families: the Palestinian family had fled under the terror of heavy bombardment from their house in Haifa during the Nakba and, amid the war, had forgotten their son Khaldoun in the house that would later be occupied by the Jewish family, a group of Holocaust survivors, who would raise the Palestinian child and name him Dov. Kanafani's novella is set apart politically and ideologically by its portrayal of the Jews as victims and not only as colonizers. One of the most prominent themes presented in the work is the suggestion that people are not what they are born into but what they are raised upon, which becomes their struggle; another is the inevitability of confrontation for the liberation of Palestine. The novella has received much attention and widespread fame and has been adapted more than once into films¹ and TV series.² Furthermore, the Israeli author (of Iraqi origin) Sami Michael wrote an intertextual novel that used the same plot while trying to find alternative scenarios to confrontation. After something of a hiatus, works linking the Holocaust to the Nakba again began to appear, including the publication of a number of literary works illuminating the intersection of the two events in light of the Zionist enterprise. The most prominent of these works are *Children of the Ghetto*, by Elias Khoury³ (2016), and *Destinies: Concerto of the Holocaust and the Nakba*, by

Rabai al-Madhoun⁴ (2015), which won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (the Arabic equivalent of the Booker Prize). Adding to these works is the thorough and pioneering research presented by Lebanese historian Gilbert Achcar under the title *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*, in which Achcar discusses Arab attitudes to anti-Semitism and Nazism while focusing especially on the existence of a politically and ideologically distinct and diverse group of reactions.⁵

The interest in the intersection between the Holocaust and the Nakba reflects, on the one hand, the growing awareness of the centrality of the Holocaust in legitimizing the Zionist enterprise and its political utilization by the Israeli state and leadership in their colonial enterprise and, on the other hand, European sensitivity and guilt surrounding the Holocaust and the unprecedented tragedy it represents.⁶

Despite the significance of these recent works, tackling the tragic intersection between the Holocaust and the Nakba had an early start. In this context, Rashid Hussein's poem "Love and the Ghetto," published in 1963, is one of the firstlings of illumination around the dialectic of the relationship between the Nakba and the Holocaust in the context of the Zionist colonial enterprise. The poem's significance goes beyond its painful aesthetic in the meeting of the two catastrophes—it lies in its poetic, semisociological treatment of the relationship created from the Palestinians' obliteration and expulsion upon meeting with the Holocaust on Palestine's ravaged, Nakba-stricken land. Using the Bakhtinian term "chronotope," which is concerned with the representation of configurations of time and space in discourse,⁷ Hussein's poem is situated within the middle of the second decade of the Nakba, and it parallels the nation-building projects and institutionalization of commemoration connected to the Holocaust as part of the state enterprise. It falls within the period of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem⁸ as well as the prevention of the return of the refugees and the institutionalization of Israel as an exclusively Jewish state upon the rubble of Palestine.

This chapter sets out to investigate the poem's political and historical understanding of this complex intersection. The first part of the chapter will be dedicated to a close reading of the poem itself, while the second part will further explore its essential political context. More specifically, in the second part I will focus on the process of the establishment of the Yad Vashem compound, which reflects the entanglement of the Holocaust in the history of the Zionist colonization of Palestine and its intertwinement in a double binary of construction and obliteration—the construction of the compound for immortalizing the memory of the Holocaust victims as part of the colony's enterprise and the practical and symbolic elimination of the surrounding Palestinian landscape.

But before I begin, I wish to first say a few words on the domination of Zionism over the intersection between the Holocaust and the Nakba and to demonstrate how the Palestinians' understanding of the Holocaust has been influenced and mediated by their familiarity and understanding of this Zionist domination.

The Hegemony of Zionism

The starting point of analysis of the current chapter is that it is very hard to tackle the intersectionality between the Nakba and the Holocaust without implicating the mediation of hegemonic Zionism that regulates the forms of meeting and interaction among the question of the Holocaust in general, its survivors in particular, and the Palestinians and Palestine. This is due to various reasons:

First, Palestinians would not have found themselves face to face with Holocaust survivors were it not for Zionism or, more accurately, were it not for Zionism's proposition of establishing a national state for the Jews on the Palestinians' homeland and upon the debris of their tangible and symbolic existence in the same place. For it was Zionism that had summoned the Holocaust survivors to the land of Palestine, taken from its people in order to remedy Jewish wounds and rebuild the survivors' national entity. According to statistics for the period between the end of World War II and the mid-1950s more than half a million immigrants arrived from Europe in Israel, the vast majority of them Holocaust survivors.⁹ In parallel, around 850,000 Palestinians, who populated 90 percent of the territory upon which Israel was established, either were expelled or escaped, terrorized by the war.¹⁰

Second, many of the Holocaust survivors participated directly in the Palestinian Nakba through their enlistment in the combatant Zionist forces. Statistics indicate that a large percentage of those enlisted in the Zionist forces in 1948 were Holocaust survivors; according to Hanna Yablonka (1997), they made up nearly half the total number of conscripts. In this context, Yair Auron emphasizes the significant role played by Holocaust survivors in the battles of 1948 and their significant contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel.¹¹ Auron also notes that at one point their percentage of total personnel in the combatant units would reach a third or even a half, which leads Auron to conclude that "the Holocaust was present through the tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors who reached Palestine after 1945 and participated in the war of 1948, in which some of them were killed."¹²

Third, Israel treats the Holocaust as a central component of the collective identity of the people it claims to represent, and this state works at distributing roles,

building institutions, and creating various national activities that immortalize the memory of the Holocaust.¹³ At the level of legislation, the Knesset has approved a number of laws related to the holocaust: in 1950, Basic Laws of Israel: Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law; in 1952, the Reparations Agreement between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany; in 1953, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance (Yad Vashem) Law; in 1954, the Disabled of the War against the Nazis Law; in 1959, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Law.

Publicly, one of the demonstrations of the centrality and instrumental use of the memory of Holocaust in shaping contemporary Zionist identity and justifying the legitimacy of Zionism in Palestine and its measures and policies against the Palestinians is the organized week-long school trips taken by Israeli teens to Poland. These trips, which mark the end of high school years and the beginning of compulsory army service, are supposedly designed to raise Holocaust awareness and provide thorough understanding of the atrocities of World War II, while in fact they feed and nourish Zionist, nationalistic, and exclusionary sentiments.¹⁴

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, many researchers have concluded that Israel would perhaps not have been established were it not for the Holocaust and that the Holocaust formed in practice the ethical legitimization for its creation.¹⁵ This means that the Nakba must be perceived as one of the continuous reverberations of the Holocaust. The Holocaust that sought the annihilation of the Jews of Europe did not end with the termination of anti-Semitism and the reintegration of Jews based on the fundamentals of a democratic and liberal citizenship but unfolded in a binary new reality that integrated the essences of anti-Semitism and colonialism. As a result of the Holocaust the Jews left Europe, which is what the anti-Semites wanted, with the Nazis at the forefront during the thirties, and this took place through the immigrant Jews' integration into a settler-colonial enterprise led by Zionism in Palestine. This dual act of the Holocaust survivors' exit from Europe and the integration of a significant number of them in the Zionist national-colonial enterprise has practically carved out the relationship between the Palestinians and the Holocaust and between the survivors and the Nakba.

We should bear all of this in mind while reading Rashid Hussein's poem of 1963.

Existential Intersections: Rashid Hussein and the Discourse of the Holocaust and the Nakba Over (J)Yaffa's Ruins

In the first years following the war, around 150,000 Palestinians remained in the territory now controlled by Jewish forces, upon which the State of Israel

was declared. These remaining inhabitants tried to rebuild their entity and rearrange their lives under the new rules laid by the new Jewish state, by which they were rendered its citizens. Fear and confusion concerning the future guided and prevailed over much of their collective behavior, especially after the majority of the land's population were expelled, metropolises demolished, and villages razed to the ground. One may infer the reality of the prevailing fear throughout the early 1950s from the state of silence that dominated the cultural production amongst the Palestinians in Israel, excepting a few cases. This state of affairs began to change gradually with the passage of time and the waning of the prospect of expulsion, especially after the massacre of Kafr Qasim in 1956 on the eve of the Tripartite Aggression and the subsequent reconciliation in Kafr Qasim.¹⁶ In addition there were the rising voices of the Communist Party and of Mapam (United Workers), the left-wing Zionist party that were opposed to the state policies directed against the Arabs, launching a number of publications to spread the cultural production of Palestinians within their borders. One of these was the magazine *al-Fajr*, which belonged to Mapam and in which the works of poet Rashid Hussein (1936–1977) and poet and writer Fauzi al-Asmar (1937–2013) would appear. There were also the magazine *al-Jadid* and the newspaper *al-Ittihad*, both published by the Communist Party.

In parallel with the state of fear that prevailed amongst the Arabs, during the first two decades following its establishment Israel saw the arrival of almost half a million Holocaust survivors; and as Hanna Yablonka claims, “the public perception of the Holocaust question was ambivalent,” moving between accusing them of passivity and lack of resistance and humiliating submission to the Nazis (encapsulated in the saying that they were driven like sheep to the slaughter) and a regard of mercy and pity, while emphasizing the resistance and rebellion in the ghettos and the importance of creating a collective memory that celebrates that act instead of lamenting their victimization. The question of the Holocaust presided over Israeli public opinion during the 1950s due to rise of the question of compensations paid by Germany and also due to the Kastner affair.¹⁷ The survivors, however, as Yablonka says, preferred silence during that period, a silence that was publicly referred to as the “Great Silence.” The survivors dedicated themselves to the restoration of their broken remnants. In this context, two collective silences intersect in the early 1950s: the silence of Holocaust survivors and the silence of the survivors of the collective expulsion and Nakba, with the essential difference being that the former were trying to rebuild their entity while the latter were the ones left with the rubble.

Through his political and cultural engagements, the Palestinian poet Rashid Hussein was closely familiar with the intersection between the Holocaust and

the Nakba. Hussein was born in Musmus, Palestine. He published his first collection in 1957 and established himself as a major Palestinian poet and orator. He participated in the founding of the Land Movement in 1959. He had close ties with Mapam and contributed regularly to its affiliated magazines and journals in Arabic and Hebrew. He left Israel in 1966, became active in the Palestine Liberation Organization, and lived in Syria, Lebanon, and New York City, where he died tragically in February 1977. He was buried a week later in Musmus. His funeral was attended by tens of thousands of Palestinians. His poem “Love and the Ghetto,” which he wrote and published in Jaffa in 1963, fifteen years after the Nakba of 1948, is divided into six scenes that describe the intersection between the Holocaust and the Nakba on the land of Palestine. The poem investigates an impossible love story, set upon the ruins of (J)Yaffa, between the Holocaust survivor Yaffa and a Nakba survivor—the futility stemming from the deadly relationship between the building of a new life for Yaffa, the survivor girl, and the death of (J)Yaffa, a city upon whose rubble a new state had been built.

The poem opens with the section “(J)Yaffa my city,” in which the poet describes (J)Yaffa’s tragic present after its metropole was destroyed and its residents prevented from returning in 1948:

The Hashish chimneys in “(J)Yaffa” disseminate numbness
And the skinny roads are pregnant . . . with flies and dullness
And the heart of (J)Yaffa is silent . . . a stone closed it.¹⁸

After describing a panoramic, tragic view of (J)Yaffa, Hussein opens a bracket to explain to whomever is ignorant of (J)Yaffa’s past and its tragic transformation that

(J)Yaffa—to those who do not know it—was a city
its vocation orange exportation
And one day it was demolished . . . and they transformed
its vocation . . . into refugee exportation.)¹⁹

At this point, Hussein does not specify who “they” are, but virtually every reader of the poem will know perfectly well that they are the Zionists who established Israel in 1948, in parallel with Palestine’s Nakba. In “(J)Yaffa . . . the uprooted,” Hussein tells the story of his meeting, as a survivor of his people’s Nakba who continued gathering up the Nakba of (J)Yaffa the city, with Yaffa, the girl who had survived the Holocaust and who shares the name of his city. They also share many experiences, including the survival of catastrophe. He

first describes his reality and condition after the destruction of the city, where he stayed to clear the rubble from the bloodied place:

And I was in (J)Yaffa . . . picking the rats off its forehead
 Lifting the rubble off the dead
 With no knees no heads
 And I bury the stars in the sands' womb
 And the trees
 And the walls
 And I pull the bullets out of its bones
 And I suck the rage
 And I choose a dead braid that I grind
 I roll it a cigarette
 I light it . . . and guzzle the smoke
 To rest for a moment . . . without reason!²⁰

Against the backdrop of this catastrophic scenery where blood, killing, and complete destruction intermix, the two Yaffas meet, joining two destructions and two devastations. The uprooted (J)Yaffa lands in Yaffa seeking a place for herself, a reference of course to the hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors who had come to Palestine after the establishment of Israel during what became known as the grand immigration:

That moment a young woman seeking an address
 She came with the waves
 Her carriage a wooden board
 Behind her tombs and flames run
 Her name was my city's name
 Yaffa is her name
 Her history: six numbers on her arm.²¹

Hussein writes about the similarity between two beauties who are both victims bleeding from the horror of their catastrophes: Yaffa, the survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, and (J)Yaffa, the city devastated by Zionism:

She was beautiful as if she were my city
 Ruined . . . as if she were my city
 As if what we underwent . . .
 We underwent to meet?!
 Then love?!²²

The spatial and political context of the meeting in the devastated (J)Yaffa is what would determine the possibilities of a relationship developing between the two survivors. As it becomes clear later in the poem, the stipulated relationship entails the teenage boy, whose body is burning in a different kind of oven, the oven of adolescence, and who is going through the labour of manhood, taking in beautiful, bloodied (J)Yaffa. The hope for a meeting between lovers is expressed by Yaffa the Holocaust survivor in the following passage:

Perhaps this inferno gives us a shooting star
 With which we light our way
 Upon it to grill our bread
 You've tried the ovens of the old
 Try now the ovens of the young.²³

In his poem, Hussein moves between three ovens: the oven of the Nazi Holocaust, in which the people of (Jewish) Jaffa were burned; the body's oven, in which adolescents writhe at a young age; and the Nakba oven, in which (J)Yaffa, as a metonym for Palestine, was burned. In this context, Yaffa who survived the Nazis wants to try the kids' oven in an attempt to begin a love story between her and the Nakba-stricken Palestinian boy: "The oven has devoured all that I possess of earthly goods / Nothing remains of the land but me." Nevertheless, what matters is that despite all this loss, the boy is ready to begin anew in order to live:

Therefore I want to live!
 On the soil of my body
 A child is yielded . . . the soil raising anew.²⁴

The desire to start anew despite all the devastation is a desire shared by the two survivors, with one difference between them being that the Holocaust survivor believes that starting afresh in the new place is possible because it was built to provide new beginnings, or, in her words: "It is said this oven was built to make children / Perhaps it yields a child with our love. . . . So come?!"

With Yaffa's invitation to the Palestinian boy to begin anew the impossibility of meeting unfolds, because of the conditions laid by the "baker" who controls the oven built on the rubble of (J)Yaffa and who wants the oven and the place exclusively to himself and his people. In the poem's fourth scene the baker explains: "This oven is mine / Its warmth a consecration of my people." The possibility of starting anew despite the devastation, then, is not just contingent on the wishes of the lost survivors and their willingness to begin again ("We are but astray / Looking in the jungle for a way"); the question is up to the baker and

his choices that lay down rules for love and hate and control the spaces of the admissible and the forbidden:

My law here is
that love has a nationality
In the twentieth century . . . love is burned in the oven of hate.²⁵

Through this drama of the meeting on the rubble between two survivors exhausted from the horrors of their experiences unfolds the repugnance of the landscape that is built on (J)Yaffa's debris, as described by Hussein in the fifth scene, in which he depicts the Holocaust of Yaffa, his Palestinian city, and the closure of love's door within it:

My city (J)Yaffa . . .! Fire is in my joints
Where is the milk of oranges to extinguish the fire?
"Yaffa" my beloved . . .! The road is closed
Where are the tears of love . . . to open the road?!
But "Yaffa" didn't answer . . .
And when she called I didn't answer . . .
And the oven is roasting our flesh . . . burning our love.²⁶

Amid this devastation and closure of roads and horizons, the Nakba survivor wonders about and decries the bloody relationship that the one who controls the place is generating, whereby the Holocaust survivors' wounds are mended and the Palestinians' wounds, represented by Yaffa's boy, are opened:

Oh policeman of God . . . Did you flay my arm
To patch the arms which other men have flayed?
Oh policeman of God . . . Will extinguishing my stars
Kindle the stars that others have extinguished?²⁷
Oh policeman of God when you were:
In the Torah
In New York
In London
In Paris
You chosen . . . You prophet
Did you tattoo my arm with a verse that goes
"This boy had
Skin . . . I flayed it.
He had a star . . . I extinguished it

And a homeland I killed . . .
 I was without skin . . . without stars . . . without homeland
 The Nazi burned me . . .
 Shall this boy pay the price?"²⁸

Hussein recapitulates the deadly relationship that joins the two Yaffas: Yaffa his city and Yaffa the runaway from the Holocaust's fire:

(Yaffa that I deemed a tortured refugee
 Who loved in (J)Yaffa my city
 The stones with which to scrape the number off her arm
 But she is wrong to deem
 That stolen stones will build the cells of her injury.)²⁹

In the last scene of the poem, titled "the Tomb and the Cross," Hussein beautifies, with tragic poeticism, the relationship between the project of rebirthing, resurrecting, and restructuring Yaffa the survivor of the European Holocaust and the obliteration, annihilation, and destruction of his Palestinian city of Jaffa/Yaffa that was devastated and obliterated so that the new entity could be built upon its rubble. There is no space for Yaffa the survivor to renounce her responsibility for the ruin of (J)Yaffa the city, because she is practically implicated in the exclusionist, destructive enterprise inflicted on Palestinians:

"Yaffa" whose history
 Is a number on her arm
 Is building on (J)Yaffa my city
 "A ghetto without doors."³⁰

The doorless ghetto has room for Yaffa the Holocaust survivor and whom-ever the sovereign decides is part of his national enterprise, as Hussein notes earlier; and more than that, that Yaffa who "came with the waves / Believes that she's God . . . that I am the sacrifice!"

Hussein's portrayal of Yaffa the Holocaust survivor is not simplistic; it develops and grows in complexity with the succession of the poem's scenes until its end. For she too is made out of conflicts and torn by wishes (the same is the case for the son of (J)Yaffa the Nakba survivor, who apparently represents the rest of the Palestinians who remained in their homeland following the Nakba and became citizens of Israel). In her first portrayal, she is a survivor from the oven of the Holocaust and hate; she is loving and open just like the Nakba survivor, who commiserates with her suffering and pain. For a moment, the gate of

love that could overcome the pain of their pasts is opened before them, except that the meeting on the land of (J)Yaffa is not a meeting on a disconnected and neutral land but on a land burned by her people's builder to establish upon it a house that is practically constructed like a new ghetto, whose doors are closed before the inhabitants of the place. In between posing rhetorical questions and expressing anger over the exclusionist relationship entangled with the destruction of the Palestinians for the sake of building a new entity on their debris to shelter the Holocaust survivors and house Yaffa the survivor under its roof and its law, the final scene advances toward a clashing relationship between two Yaffas who are fighting for their existence, though they could have been lovers but for the conditions imposed by the deadly place. This puts before them two options: the cross and the tomb. At that point

"Yaffa" the immigrant
 "Yaffa" the adventurer
 Will raise the cross for me
 At the top of the mountain
 And I will dig her tomb
 At the bottom of the mountain.³¹

The poet does not give up on (J)Yaffa his city and homeland, and he will continue to dream of it, waiting for its return:

I dream that I will remain a moment or two
 Waiting for (J)Yaffa
 (J)Yaffa the real
 (J)Yaffa my beloved
 (J)Yaffa my city.³²

However, despite the tragic and deadly relations depicted in its six scenes, encapsulating the meeting of the Holocaust and the Nakba on the land of Palestine, the poem does not end with death as the only choice given but with a question that propounds other possibilities than the cross and the tomb:

And then, oh night . . .
 I will keep dreaming
 Waiting for Yaffa like a child waits for milk
 Perhaps it would ask:
 "After all that had passed . . .
 Must there be a tomb, and cross?!"³³

In a certain sense, despite the fatalistic trajectory of the poem as a whole, Hussein leaves the question open, but in fact the tomb and the cross bring us back to the Zionist landscape of memorialization and to its inherent obliteration of the Palestinian Nakba, which I wish to further explore in the next section. More specifically, the following section seeks to illustrate why, despite the human empathy and nuanced sensitivities which are expressed in Hussein's poem, within a Zionist-dominated temporospatial context the intersection of the Nakba and the Holocaust is doomed to fail, as the poem demonstrates.

Between Constructing Yad Vashem and Eliminating the Palestinian Landscape

Exploring the political geography of many sites and places in Israel demonstrates the formative constitution of the Zionist national enterprise as one built upon the diligent obliteration and elimination of the Palestinian landscape. Through the adoption and deployment of a sophisticated colonial economy of obliteration, construction, concealment, and exposition, the indigenous Palestinians and their landscape are aggressively and violently replaced by the colonial Jewish-Israeli-Zionist settlers and landscape. The description of this phenomenon by prominent Zionist leader Moshe Dayan, given during a lecture to students at the Technion Institute on March 19, 1969 and published in *Haaretz* on April 4 of the same year, adds to and explains the intertwinement of obliteration and replacement in the Israeli landscape that was established on the rubble of the Palestinian landscape:

The Jewish villages have replaced the Arab villages, and today you would not be able to know even the names of those Arab villages, and I wouldn't blame you, for the geography books do not exist anymore. The entirety of Arab villages themselves have no more existence. Nahlal has replaced Ma'aloul, Givat replaced Jabaa', Sarid replaced Khanfis, and Kfar Yehoshua replaced Tal al-Shammam.³⁴

This practice and logic also apply to the geography of memory in Israel, as realized, for example, by Yad Vashem, which its website describes as "the World Holocaust Remembrance Center . . . the ultimate source for Holocaust education, documentation and research." "From the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem," it continues, "Yad Vashem's integrated approach incorporates meaningful educational initiatives, groundbreaking research and inspirational exhibits."³⁵

Its role, according to the website, is defined by four pillars: commemoration, documentation, research, and education.

These certainly are elements of international institutes' efforts to conserve and produce memory. However, any Palestinian passing by the compound would not intersect with the purportedly objective role of the compound, which would be disconnected from his or her context. Rather, he or she would intersect with its context in terms of its relationship with him or her and its theft of his or her own landscape, one that stretches out between Deir Yassin and Ein Karem, with all their implications in the catastrophe-stricken Palestinian history.

Yad Vashem was built upon the lands of Khirbet al Hamama, which were public lands that belonged to the village of Ein Karem, which used to be one of the biggest villages in the Jerusalem district in terms of space and population and included 2,510 Muslims and 670 Christians. Unlike most other Palestinian villages, its houses and other structures were preserved from demolition; this was after the Arab residents were expelled from their homes and prevented from returning and their houses were inhabited by Jews in their place. Whoever visits today will find a traditional Palestinian village in terms of construction and a Jewish Israeli village in terms of residents, language, names, and ethos. According to Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi's book *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, the village had two elementary schools (one for boys and another for girls), a library, and a pharmacy as well as numerous sports and social clubs, including a Boy Scouts organization.³⁶ Residents would also attend productions at the theatre, including the plays of Nuh Ibrahim, the Palestinian artist and singer who was banished from his village in the north of Palestine to Ein Karem due to his involvement in the struggle against the British Mandate. In addition, one of the many means of entertainment, communication, and media was an open-air theatre consisting of a radio in the village café connected to megaphones so that as many people as possible could listen to it. Ein Karem also had its own town council that ran its administrative affairs. The village was occupied in July 1948, and in 1949 the Israelis established the two colonies of Beit Zayit and Even Sapir on the village grounds. In 1950, Ein Karem's Agricultural School was built upon on the site. As for the rest of the lands, including Khirbet al Hamama, they were annexed into the municipality of West Jerusalem.



No more than two and a half kilometers from the Yad Vashem compound is the village of Deir Yassin. As is well known, Deir Yassin witnessed a horrific massacre in 1948 in which tens of civilians were killed, including women and children,

after which the entire village, excepting a few buildings, was demolished, and Kfar Shaul was established upon its ruins.³⁷ In the village periphery there once were more than forty Palestinian villages, all of which were destroyed, as were neighborhoods in the western part of Jerusalem such as Talbiyeh, Katamon, Talpiot, and Baka'a. In 1948 all these villages and neighborhoods were completely emptied, as were their hospitals, including the hospital for leprosy, whose staff and patients were expelled (this is described in Salim Tamari's account). The number of Palestinians expelled from these villages reached more than seventy thousand, which is not to mention the tens of thousands expelled from neighborhoods of western Jerusalem.³⁸

Thus the significance of the geopolitical location of Yad Vashem in between Ein Karen and Deir Yassin is that these sites intertwine the surreal intersection between the Nakba and the Holocaust in the shadow of the colony's enterprise. On the one hand, the compound commemorates six million Jews that were victims of one of humanity's greatest crimes. In April 1951, the Israeli Knesset set the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar as the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, a day preceding the memorial day of the "fallen soldiers of Israel" and Israel's Independence Day. As the Knesset website declares, "This concurrence has come to symbolically express the historical transformation from catastrophe to rebirth."³⁹ The Jewish rebirth in Israel is the other side of Palestine's destruction and forms the "black box" of the Palestinian Nakba. It articulates the establishment of Israel in place of Palestine. Yad Vashem is located on the western slope of Har Hertsel, also known as the Mount of Remembrance. The mount, named after Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, is site of Israel's National Civil Cemetery, the burial grounds of Israel's war dead, and other memorial and educational facilities. Thus the Yad Vashem compound is part of a series of memorial sites, institutions, and centers that were founded by the state and were built upon the rubble of Palestine, which was colonized and had its people expelled.

The construction of Yad Vashem upon Khirbet al Hamama Land, near the ruins of Deir Yassin and displaced Ein Karem, reveals how the Palestinians and Jews have conflicting perceptions of the landscape (space) and different perceptions of time and history.

The idea of establishing Yad Vashem's memorial compound belonged to Mordechai Shenhavi from Hashomer Hatzair. Shenhavi first presented this idea publicly in 1942, in an article for the newspaper *Davar* titled "Yad Vashem for the Devastated Diaspora".⁴⁰ And on August 15, the Hapoel HaTzioni committee authorized the establishment of Yad Vashem at a conference in London. In April 1949 Shenhavi sent many communications concerning the division of the lands of Khirbet al Hamama between the proposed Yad Vashem compound and the

military cemetery.⁴¹ The lands of Khirbet al Hamama were occupied along with the village of Ein Karem in July 1948, and shortly before then Shenhavi had suggested the planting of the “Defenders” forest for the sake of immortalizing the memory of the Zionist soldiers who fell in 1948 on the lands that would be designated for the establishment of Yad Vashem. His wish was to link the victims of the Holocaust and the soldiers who had fallen in the “war of 1948.”⁴² Shenhavi noted in one of his writings that “the compound must be built in an agricultural environment, as it would naturally bespeak the activities of Keren Kayemet (the Jewish National Fund) in specific;” he also wrote in his papers that “there is no better environment than the agricultural one.”⁴³

It is interesting to note the phrasing used in Wikipedia in reference to the establishment of Yad Vashem and how it reflects the entanglement of the Holocaust with the Nakba. Under the entry for Yad Vashem, a subsection titled “Dates in the Establishment of Yad Vashem”⁴⁴ describes the events leading to the building of the statue, as well as the intersection between the Nakba and Holocaust in Palestine:

August 1942: Mordechai Shenhavi from Hashomer Hatzair proposes the idea of building a memorial statue.⁴⁵

August 1945: The administration is formed in London as a department in the Jewish Agency for Israel.

May 1946: The “Yad Vashem project” set to work in a two-room apartment at 2 King George St. in Jerusalem.

July 1948: Occupation of the area by Jonathan Company brigades during the ten days’ battles, upon which “Yad Vashem” would later be built.

This technical introduction of the steps leading to the establishment of Yad Vashem encapsulates the catastrophic meeting that took place between the Nakba and the Holocaust in Palestine, which was facilitated by Zionism and its enterprise of establishing the Jewish state on Palestinian lands.

If we were to dig a little underneath the phrase “ten day battles” mentioned above in the description of the leadup to the establishment of Yad Vashem, we could rebuild and reconstruct the process of destruction and ruin that had taken over the Palestinian people, a process that was carried out in parallel with the establishment of the State of Israel and its institutions, including Yad Vashem, and we could understand too something more about Zionism’s implications with regard to the Holocaust in the Nakba.

The “ten-day series” refers to a series of operations undertaken by the Zionist forces lasting from the eight until the eighteenth of July, 1948, during which many operations to expel inhabitants and seize villages took place. In the

median area, two important operations were carried out: Operation Danny and Operation Kedem. Operation Danny was the occupation of Ramla and Lydda as well as the consolidation of control over the Jerusalem corridor, and Operation Kedem entailed the failed attempt to occupy Old City of Jerusalem.

During the “ten days,” the Etzioni Brigade attacked the villages located south of Jerusalem alongside forces from the Lehi and Etzel brigades, who had already committed the massacre of Deir Yassin in April 1948. These joined forces attacked and occupied the villages of Beit Mizmil, upon which the Kiryat Yovel colony was later built; Malha, upon which Minhat Maleh was later built; and Ein Karem, which later became a colony of the same name; half the village of Beit Safafa was also assaulted and occupied.⁴⁶

Operation Danny, which took place between the ninth and seventeenth of July, 1948 was one of the most significant operations of the “ten days,” during which both Lydda and Ramla fell on the twelfth and thirteenth of July as well as villages south of Jerusalem. The fall of Lydda and Ramla (and the implications of these events), whereby the residents were systematically expelled and prevented by armed force from returning to their villages and cities, constituted one of the most tragic moments of the war for Palestinians. According to Benny Morris, “At the end of the ten days operations, the Israeli army forces prevented the Arab residents from returning to their villages and cities that were occupied, and expelled the refugees who repositioned by the front lines in the hope of returning.”⁴⁷

On the crimes committed against the residents, Benny Morris quotes the testimony of one of the soldiers from Gideon’s unit who had partaken in the occupation of Lydda:

At the entrance of one of the invaded houses stood an Arab child. She was standing and screaming with eyes filled with terror and fear. She was all torn and exhausted and bleeding—she was certainly shot. Around her on the ground lay the bodies of her family members. She is still shaking. And death hasn’t saved them from their pain. . . . They all shot. . . . And I, did I shoot? . . . But what are thoughts in a battle, amidst occupying the city. . . . The enemy is around every corner. Every human is an enemy. Kill! Terminate! Kill or they will kill you and you won’t occupy the city.⁴⁸

Lydda also witnessed the Dahmash Massacre, during which tens of Palestinians who were gathered in the Dahmash mosque were terminated. Ben-Gurion had commissioned Yigal Allon to expel the residents of Ramla, and on July 12 Yitzhak Rabin, who was working as an operations officer for Allon, issued a written order: The inhabitants of Lydda must be expelled quickly, without regard to

age, and they should be directed toward Ramallah. That is how fifty thousand residents of Lydda and Ramla were expelled after being terrorized. And, according to Benny Morris, the soldiers at the borders then would seize and steal the residents' money and jewelry.⁴⁹ Along similar lines, an Israeli soldier described a column of refugees as such: "In the beginning [they left behind] utensils and furniture and at the end human bodies of women and children thrown by the road sides. The elderly would be seen sitting in the shadow of their carriages begging for a drop of water. Utensils and furniture—then nothing."⁵⁰

Parallel to the catastrophic state of the expelled and terrorized Palestinians, Moshe Dayan described his euphoric feelings following the occupation of Lydda:

The sound of bullets we shot in Lydda were echoed in the Adhan. In the hospitals remained those badly injured. But as for the lightly injured, they were treated and continued with us. Morale was high and hearts were beating with pride: we fucked Lydda.⁵¹

The word that Dayan uses to describe the occupation of Lydda is none other than *dafaknu*, which literally means "crushed," but in its common usage in Hebrew means "fucked"; this practically encapsulates a tyrannical, chauvinistic, phallic behavior toward the land and the residents together.



However, this expulsion and destruction that would be called Palestine's Nakba is only one side of the event; for the other side is the construction, development, and placement of the Zionist landscape in its stead. The settler colonial enterprise, as noted by Patrick Wolfe, is structurally built on the obliteration of the indigenous in parallel with the construction and development of the colony.⁵² As such, it is an enterprise that is based on a syndrome that continues its obliteration and construction from within the ruins, in a cycle of construction, destruction, and further construction.⁵³ The renowned Israeli journalist Ari Shavit described this deadly relationship between the Zionist settlers and the indigenous Palestinians in an article published in the *New Yorker* in 2013:

The truth is that Zionism could not bear the Arab city of Lydda. From the very beginning, there was a substantial contradiction between Zionism and Lydda. If Zionism was to exist, Lydda could not exist. If Lydda was to exist, Zionism could not exist.⁵⁴

And in this context we could cite what Ben-Gurion said about preventing the refugees from returning to (J)Yaffa and settling the Jewish colonizers in their place:

I believe that their return must be forbidden. [. . .] We must settle Jaffa; Jaffa will be a Jewish town. War is war. [. . .] Returning Arabs to Jaffa wouldn't mean justice but idiocy. [. . .] I support their not returning after the war either.⁵⁵

The concurrence between the establishment of Israel and the Palestinians' Nakba is important for our understanding of the implications of the Holocaust in the Zionist-colonial context and, subsequently, in Palestine's Nakba, which is what the process of delineating the political discourse in the compound especially illuminates. Through this lens the conflictual political questions, whether they stem from the right or the left, are set aside, and the international and human dimensions of the Holocaust are emphasized. In that context, one of the tour guides of Yad Vashem was kicked out of the facility because he had mentioned the massacre of Deir Yassin to visitors. In a similar vein, another tour guide claimed he was dismissed for saying to a group of students on July 14, 2014, that "people were murdered in the Holocaust because they were Jews, just as the three teenagers were in Gush Etzion," referring to the killing of three teenage settlers that same day by a group of Palestinians.⁵⁶ The director general of the institute defended the dismissal by saying that the compound does not engage with recent controversial political questions.

But Yad Vashem had been established on colonized land during a process of obliteration of another people. Nevertheless, protecting and fortifying it on all ends in a colonial context is problematic and sustains the reproduction of an imagined and decontextualized objectivity which is precisely what further implicates the Holocaust in the Nakba. For it seems that remembrance in Yad Vashem cannot sustain mention of the shushed history of the surrounding evicted villages, those villages whose people were expelled and erased from the face of the earth to enable the establishment of Israel and, by extension, the establishment of Yad Vashem's compound on the lands of the "present absentees." In other words, the Nakba had to shut up to enable the Holocaust to speak in colonized Palestine.

As we have seen, this is precisely what enraged the prominent poet Rashid Hussein, who tried in his poem "Love and the Ghetto" to deconstruct this catastrophic temporospatial meeting between the Nakba and the Holocaust on the burning land of Palestine in the wake of 1948 and the destruction and obliteration of the Palestinian metropolises in order to replace them with the Zionist-Jewish entity. Due to its binary dimension—obliteration of the

Palestinian homeland and its replacement by the Zionist-Jewish colonial enterprise—this meeting constitutes a severe and multilevel catastrophe, as portrayed in “Love and the Ghetto,” that produces a tense and contradictory relationship between the devastated Palestinians and the victims of the Holocaust who had come from Europe to live in their place and upon their ruins.

Conclusion

*Did you flay my arm
to patch the arms which others have flayed?*

—Rashid Hussein

The meeting between the Palestinian and the Holocaust survivor in a settler colonial context is intertwined with the enterprise of the establishment of Israel in 1948 upon the obliterated Palestinian landscape. The relationship between the two events was formed on the basis of an exclusionist prototype, deadly for the Palestinian due to its contextualization within the Zionist national enterprise, whereby the State of Israel was established using measures of violence against and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians; this is especially evident when taking into account that, as some have noted, almost half of the participants in the war of 1948/Palestinian Nakba were Holocaust survivors.⁵⁷ After this episode the existence of the country was constructed on an exclusionist, nationalist, ethnic Jewish basis that manifested in the laws, regulations, configurations of symbolic and practical violence, and various other structures of the state.

In other words, the meeting between the Holocaust and the Nakba has been colonially formed and regulated through Zionism and its practices on the land, first through the binary of obliterating the Palestinian landscape in concurrence with the construction of the Israeli landscape, which in Walter Benjamin’s terms could be called “founding violence,” and secondly through the intertwining of this process of obliteration and construction in the constitution of the state, its legal institutions, and the praxis on the ground within the founding ethos of the state, the sort of phenomenon Walter Benjamin refers to as “conserving violence.” This process renders the “obliteration” of the Palestinian landscape and what accompanies it an ethnic cleansing of the place, paralleled with its replacement by the Zionist landscape in 1948 and the configuration of the Zionist-Jewish national state.

The state-building enterprise that followed the Nakba comprised the compounds of memory and remembrance for the Jewish victims who had fallen during World War II and the Holocaust. These projects were codified in the new state's laws and allocated official funding. The establishment of the Yad Vashem compound was a component of this state project, and it reflects through its temporospatial geography the colonial power relations that facilitated its existence. The compound is built by villages that were destroyed and whose people were prevented from returning, with Jewish immigrants settled in their stead. For the Palestinians of the place who are forbidden from exercising their right to live in their own homeland, this means in practice that the Holocaust was settled colonially and that the compound, as a representation of Holocaust memorialization, is a political structure intertwined with the fundamental obliteration of the Palestinians.

Moreover, as we saw through the reading of "Love and the Ghetto," the Palestinians are very much aware of the colonial implication of the Holocaust in the Nakba. The attempt to heal the Holocaust survivors' wounds was carried out through theft of the Palestinians' homeland. Or, to put it differently: the Palestinians are made to pay the price of a heinous crime that was committed in a far-away land, without having had anything to do with it. Palestine tragically turns into a sacrifice offered to redeem the victim, in a deadly and bloody relationship that renders the Palestinian a victim of the victim who had become a partner in crime. Or, as Hussein fatally describes it. "Did you flay my arm / to patch the arms which others have flayed?"

NOTES

1. The novella was first adapted for film by the Al-Ard Film Production Institute in 1980–1981, 16 mm color, 85 minutes, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVzP4gpLx40>. It is considered the first Palestinian feature film. It was adapted for film again through an Iranian-Syrian coproduction in 1995. See *The Survivor*, written and directed by Saifullah Daad, 35 mm color film, 147 minutes. The novella was also adapted by Boaz Gaon and produced by the Cameri Theatre in Israel.
2. *Returning to Haifa*, directed by Basil al-Khatib, 2004. For more information see <http://www.elcinema.com/work/1011038/>.
3. Elias Khoury, *Children of the Ghetto: My Name Is Adam* [Awlad el-ghetto: Esmi Adam] (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2016).
4. Rabai Al-Madhoun, *Destinies: Concerto of the Holocaust and the Nakba* [in Arabic] (Beirut: Arab Studies Institute; Haifa: Kul-Shee Library, 2015).
5. Gilbert Achcar, *Arabs and the Nazi Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives s* [in Arabic] (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2010).
6. On Zionism and the use of the Holocaust see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Maxwell-McMillan Keter Publishing House, 1991); Hanna Yablunka, "Holocaust Survivors in Israel—Early Summary," [in Hebrew] *For the Sake of Memory*

- 27 (1998), 4–10; Yablonka, *Stranger Brothers: Holocaust Survivors in Israel 1948–1952* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi, 1994); Ben Hecht, *Perfidy* (New York: Messner, 1961); Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Avraham Burg, *The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise From Its Ashes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
7. Nele Bemong and Pieter Borghart, “Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives,” in *Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, ed. Nele Bemong et al. (Gent: Academia, 2010), 1–3.
 8. For more on the Eichmann trial, see Hanna Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006).
 9. Yablonka, “Holocaust Survivors in Israel.”
 10. Honaida Ghanim, “The Nakba” [in Arabic], *Jadal* 3 (May 2009): 40–48, available at http://mada-research.org/en/files/2009/05/jadal3/jadal3-arab-fainal/Jadal_May09_Arab.pdf.
 11. Yair Auron, *The Holocaust, Rebirth, and the Nakba* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013).
 12. Auron, *Holocaust*, 82.
 13. Yachiam Weitz, “The Political Dimension of Commemorating the Holocaust in the Fifties” [in Hebrew], *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel* 6 (1996): 272–273.
 14. For more on these trips and the debate in Israel surrounding them, see, for example, Inna Lazareva, “Leading Israeli Principal Warns Annual Trip to Concentration Camps Fuels Extreme Nationalism,” *Time*, August 2, 2017, <http://time.com/4285002/herzilya-gymnasium-cancels-camp-trips/>.
 15. See Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 9.
 16. The massacre took place on the October 29, 1956, in the village Kafr Qasim. The Israel Border Police shot dead forty-nine Palestinian Arab civilians, all of whom were citizens of Israel.
 17. Rudolf Kastner was a leader of a Hungarian Jewish aid and rescue committee during World War II that helped Jewish refugees escape to Hungary from around Nazi-occupied Europe. In 1953 he was accused of having collaborated with the Nazis by failing to warn 400,000 Hungarian Jews that they were being sent to Auschwitz. In 1957 he was assassinated in Tel Aviv. The Supreme Court of Israel overturned most of the judgment against Kastner in January 1958, but his reputation was damaged in Israeli public discourse. For more on this, see Stephen Holden, “Examining a Man Who Was (or Wasn’t?) a Holocaust Hero,” *New York Times*, October 22, 2009.
 18. Rashid Hussein, “Love and the Ghetto,” in *The Poetry Works*, [in Arabic, trans. Yasmine Haj] (Haifa: Kul-Shee Library, 2004), 465.
 19. Hussein, 466.
 20. Hussein, 467.
 21. Hussein, 468.
 22. Hussein, 468.
 23. Hussein, 470.
 24. Hussein, 471.
 25. Hussein, 472.
 26. Hussein, 473.
 27. Hussein, 474.
 28. Hussein, 474–475.
 29. Hussein, 475.
 30. Hussein, 476.
 31. Hussein, 477.
 32. Hussein, 477–478.

33. Hussein, 478.
34. Moshe Dayan, lecture at the Technion Institute, Haifa, *published in Haaretz*, April 4, 1969.
35. "What Is Yad Vashem," Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.yadvashem.org/about/yad-vashem>.
36. Walid Khalidi, ed., *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).
37. For more on the massacre, see Walid Khalidi, *Deir Yassin Massacre [in Arabic]* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1999).
38. Salim Tamari, "The City and Its Rural Hinterland," in *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighbourhoods and Their Fate in the War*, ed. Salim Tamari (Jerusalem: Institute of Jerusalem Studies and Badil Resource Centre, 1999), 75–78.
39. Website of the Twentieth Knesset [in Hebrew], <http://main.knesset.gov.il/About/Occasion/Pages/ShoahIntro.aspx>.
40. Yizhar Ben-Nahum, *Vision in Action: The Life Story of Mordechai Shenhavi*, vol. 2 (Givat Haviva: Yad Ya'ari, 2011), 72.
41. Ben-Nahum, 209.
42. Ben-Nahum, 94.
43. Ben-Nahum, 70.
44. Wikipedia, s.v. "Stevie Nicks," last modified April 2, 2016, 18:30, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevie_Nicks https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%99%D7%93_%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9D, accessed February 2017.
45. Shenhavi first published the idea of founding the memorial compound on May 25, 1945 in *Davar* newspaper, under the title of "Yad Vashem for the Devastated Diaspora." He had borrowed the combination of "Yad Vashem" (memorial and name) from the book of Isaiah 56:5: "To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever." (Quoted in Izhar Ben-Nahum 2011 *ibid.*, p. 70).
46. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *History of the Land of Israel—War of Independence (1947–1949)* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1983), 223.
47. Benny Morris, *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* [in Hebrew] (Ra'anana: Am Oved, 2010), 321.
48. Morris, 315.
49. Morris, 317.
50. Morris, 317.
51. Moshe Dayan, "The Commando Battalion Takes Possession of Lydda" [in Hebrew], *Maarachot* 62–63 (1950), 40.
52. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387–409.
53. See Honaida Ghanim, "Of Obliteration and Construction in the Zionist Settler Colonial Context," *Majallat al-Derassat al-Felesteniya*, 18, no. 96 (2013): 118–139.
54. Ari Shavit, "Lydda, 1948: A City, a Massacre, and the Middle East Today," *New Yorker*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/10/21/lydda-1948>.
55. David Ben-Gurion, *The Renewed State of Israel* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1969).
56. This took place on July 14, 2014 during a tour about the Holocaust for students visiting the compound. Follow this link to hear about the incident itself and the discussion around it on Galei Zahal radio: <https://soundcloud.com/glz-radio/qcrfvgmntf5r>, accessed February 2017.
57. Yablonka, "Holocaust Survivors in Israel."