

**An Annotated Bibliography of
Children’s and Young Adult Books on the Arab-Israeli Conflict
Containing Significant Anti-Israel Bias**

Compiled by Marjorie Gann

June, 2021

Children’s attitudes and ideas are influenced by the books they read, with lasting impressions of the heroes and villains of history formed by literature. Fiction and memoir are especially influential because they engage not just the intellect, but the emotions, and young readers often identify closely with the characters they encounter. For this reason, it is important to select books on controversial topics that are unbiased in both content and tone. The books in this list contain significant anti-Israel bias, to the point where many can be classified as mere propaganda.

I compiled this bibliography to assist teachers and librarians in identifying these books. Parents whose children are assigned books in school that arouse concern can consult this bibliography for evidence of bias. I have endeavored to substantiate all my findings of bias with documentary evidence.

Marjorie Gann

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Children's and Young Adult Books on the Arab-Israeli Conflict

with Significant Anti-Israel Bias

Compiled by Marjorie Gann

[Abdelfattah, Randa. *Where the Streets Had a Name*. New York: Scholastic, 2008.](#)

[Abdelrazaq, Leila. *Baddawi*. Charlottesville: Just World Books, 2015.](#)

[Barakat, Ibtisam "Marked for Destruction," in *Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict*, Laurel Holliday ed. New York: Simon & Schuster \(Pocket Books\), 1999.](#)

[Barakat, Ibtisam. *Tasting the Sky*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux: 2007; *Balcony on the Moon: Coming of Age in Palestine*. New York Farrar Straus Giroux, 2016. \[Sequel.\]](#)

[Bashi, Golbarg. *P is for Palestine: A Palestine Alphabet Book*. Illus. by Golrokh Nafisi. Dr. Bashi: 2018; Bashi, Golbarg. *Counting up the Olive Tree: A Palestine Number Book*. Illus. by Nabi H. Ali. Dr. Bashi: 2019. \[Sequel.\]](#)

[Ellis, Deborah. *The Cat at the Wall*. Toronto: Groundwood, 2014.](#)

[Ellis, Deborah. *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*. Toronto: Groundwood, 2004.](#)

[Carter, Anne Laurel. *The Shepherd's Granddaughter*. Toronto: Groundwood, 2008.](#)

[Clinton, Cathryn. *A Stone in My Hand*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2002.](#)

[Laird, Elizabeth. *A Little Piece of Ground*. London: Macmillan, 2003.](#)

[Laskin, Pamela L. *Ronit & Jamil*. New York: Harper Collins, 2017.](#)

[Lieberman, Leanne. *The Book of Trees*. Victoria, BC: Orca, 2010.](#)

[Morpurgo, Michael. *The Kites Are Flying!* London: Walker, 2009](#)

[Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Everything Comes Next: Collected & New Poems*. New York: Greenwillow, 2020; *The Tiny Journalist: Poems*. Rochester: BOA Editions, 2019.](#)

[Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997](#)

[Saba, Wadad. "A Christian Palestinian's Story," in *Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict*, Laurel Holliday ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.](#)

Abdelfattah, Randa. *Where the Streets Had a Name*. New York: Scholastic, 2008

Thirteen-year-old Hayaat lives in Bethlehem, where she is separated from Jerusalem by the security wall constructed by the Israelis against terrorist operations – although the rationale for the construction of this wall is never spelled out in Randa Abdelfattah’s *Where the Streets Had a Name*. Instead, it is described in loaded language as “the ubiquitous Wall, twisting and turning, devouring the landscape, towering over the fields, villages and towns.”¹ This, of course, is a distortion, since most of the security fence is an electrified fence, not a wall at all.

Hayaat is strongly attached to her grandmother, her “Sitti,” and when the old woman becomes ill, Hayaat is determined to make the difficult trip back to her grandmother’s former home in Jerusalem (from which she was exiled in 1948), and return with some soil, to give her grandmother comfort and reaffirm her connection with her lost home. This she does with Samy, a boy filled with resentment over his father’s lengthy incarceration by the Israelis; Hayaat says to Samy, “your father’s a hero. Locked up all these years for no reason other than organizing protests and strikes.”² (p. 125) – an accusation, like many of Abdelfattah’s, that has to be taken with a grain of salt. It isn’t protests and strikes that the Israelis object to – it’s violence and terror.

Because the context underlying the restrictions on mobility depicted in Abdelfattah’s anti-Israel screed is never outlined by the author, a young reader will come away from *Where the Streets Had a Name* with the impression that the Israelis make Palestinian lives miserable for their sport. That the security fence was constructed, and that checkpoints function, to ensure that armed terrorists and suicide bombers don’t enter West Jerusalem to bomb cafes or stab Israelis is never explained. So while it may well be true, as Hayaat says, that “there’s a cloud of humiliation looming over us as the soldiers scold women when they don’t empty their bags quickly enough and order some of the men to remove their shirts and raise their arms in the air”³ (p. 151), these measures save Israeli lives. Doubtless some young Israeli soldiers and border police are bored, inconsiderate, even abusive. There is a distressing account in the book of Israeli soldiers stationed in a home in Gaza in which they humiliate the father of the family by denying him use of his own bathroom until it is too late. Whether this is fact or fabrication is impossible for the reader to verify. But the IDF would not be in Gaza at all if it weren’t for the threat to Israel posed by Hamas.

Like many of her fellow Palestinian authors, Abdelfattah relies heavily on nostalgia for an idealized past to garner sympathy for the Palestinian cause, painting an idealized picture of the world she inhabited before tragedy struck her family. Sitti describes her ancestral home:

I lived with my parents and sister in a village on the top of a hill in Jerusalem,” she explains. “To reach our house you had to climb a steep stone staircase.”⁴

¹ Abdelfattah, p. 122.

² Abdelfattah, p. 125.

³ Abdelfattah, p. 151.

⁴ Abdelfattah, p. 104.

It is Sitti's longing for her past that inspires Hayaat to sneak into Jerusalem:

I peer out at the landscape. I want to climb those stone stairs, touch the hills where Sitti Zeynab and her sister danced on their wedding days. I want to tear our papers and identity cards into a million tiny pieces and throw them to the wind so that each piece of me can touch my homeland freely.⁵

What Abdelfattah fails to tell her readers – and what she herself may not know -- is that the uprooting and dislocation of Jerusalemites in 1948 cut both ways; Jews whose families had lived for generations in the Old City were uprooted in that year. Sima Nightingale's family had lived in the Jewish Quarter for eight generations when, during the 1948 siege, an Arab sniper on the roof of the synagogue near her family home shot her grandfather dead as he went to fetch the last of his family's water supply. Puah Shteiner's family had been in Jerusalem for six generations, ever since her ancestor Rav Eliezer Bergman arrived in the city in 1835. She remembers fleeing her Jerusalem home with only the clothes she was wearing. "The world has heard of Arab refugees," Shteiner comments, "but there were also Jewish refugees." In fact, the Jewish Quarter was emptied of its Jewish residents by the Jordanian Army in 1948.⁶

The book offers a litany of accusations against the Israelis: that Jews who build in Jerusalem are "settlers," that home demolitions are wanton, that IDF soldiers shoot a man as punishment for his links to a suicide bomber." All of this makes the Israelis look like brutes who wantonly exercise unchecked power, because nothing is explained: that home demolitions have been extensively debated and ruled on by the Israeli Supreme Court, that the role of the IDF soldier is to arrest, not to carry out punishments, and that there is land that Israeli courts deem legal to build on, and other land on which building by Israelis or by Arabs is illegal.

As proof that her attacks against Israel are untainted with prejudice, Abdelfattah offers her readers two "good" Israeli characters, but – given the author's premise that Israel is imposing unwarranted hardships upon a largely innocent Arab population – in fact the only "good" Israelis are those who oppose their government's measures. The "good" David deserted from the IDF after observing the misbehavior of soldiers when they took over a house in Gaza. He and Mali describe themselves as "peace activists" who are "on checkpoint watch" and are "against the occupation."⁷

The "occupation," however, is never explained -- neither how it came about, nor why, from the Israeli perspective, it has persisted since 1967. So young readers are left with the impression that the occupation was engineered by Israel to oppress another people. That under the Oslo accords large tracts of the West Bank are under the control of the Palestinian Authority, which offers considerable local (and quite corrupt) government is never disclosed by the author.

⁵ Abdelfattah, p. 107.

⁶ Honest Reporting video at: jewishrefugees.blogspot.ca/2011/05/Jerusalem-refugees-of-1948.html Accessed June 6, 2021.

⁷ Abdelfattah, p. 129.

Abdelrazaq, Leila. *Baddawi*. Charlottesville: Just World Books, 2015

Leila Abdelrazaq's family has a heartbreaking memory: Her father's village, Safsaf, was the site of what they report as a gruesome Israeli atrocity in the '48 war. What Abdelrazaq does with that memory, though, is revealing.

Her highly polemical graphic novel *Baddawi* appeals to the reader's emotions through a motif common to many Palestinian memoirs of the period before 1948. Abdelrazaq paints an idealized (and idyllic) picture of life in Palestine by conjuring up images of her grandmother: "Palestine is buried deep in the creases of my grandmother's palms. They once kneaded bread dough and sowed the seeds of her homeland in my family's village, Safsaf. Its name means 'the weeping willow.'"⁸(p. 16)

Ironically, from a left-wing perspective that would be highly critical of Orientalism as outlined by the anti-Israel scholar Edward Said, it's hard to see this motif as anything but an Orientalist trope of the passive, unchanging, eternal East.

The author then goes on to explain that her father Naji al-Ali was a political cartoonist, whose life she tells in *Baddawi*. Al-Ali had created a character, Handala—

a ten-year-old boy with spiky hair, bare feet, and tattered clothes. He always stood with his back to the reader, hands clasped behind him, as political events unfolded around him. Naji al-Ali promised that once the Palestinian people were free and allowed to return home, Handala would grow up and the world would see his face."⁹

The Palestinian is Orientalized as a passive child -- the grandchild of a creased, bread-kneading, seed-sowing grandmother. He has no energy, no agency, no ability to adapt to a changed reality.

Ironically, by insisting on this metonymy – child = Palestinian victimhood -- Abdelrazaq and her father favor infantilization and victimhood over growing up.

The book repeatedly accuses Israel of "ethnic cleansing": "But Zionist gangs were ethnically cleansing villages all over Palestine, committing widespread massacres,"¹⁰ writes Abdelrazaq. According to the methodical and reliable Israeli historian Benny Morris, Israel did indeed commit some atrocities (as did the Arabs, though Abdelrazaq never alludes to these) in 1948, and there were villages which the Arab populations were "encouraged" to abandon during that war. Still, if Israel had really had a policy of deliberate and determined "ethnic cleansing," the population of Israel today would not be twenty percent Arab. That there was a war that the Arabs started by not agreeing to the UN Partition vote of 1947 is never mentioned. In fact, the reader will find no Arab-initiated violence in this book, no invasion by Arab armies in contravention of the partition policy of the UN.

⁸Abdelrazaq, p. 16.

⁹ Abdelrazaq, p. 11.

¹⁰ Abdelrazaq, p. 18.

Glaring omissions, like any manifestations of Arab violence or aggression, are accompanied by out-and-out lies. Thus, the author claims that the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza “was to become the longest and most brutal military occupation of modern times,”¹¹ neatly ignoring the Chinese occupation of Tibet (which began in 1950), not to mention Stalin’s brutal population transfers (the Crimean Tatars were deported in 1944) from territory his army occupied.

She also invokes the “Right of Return” for Palestinian refugees as (she claims) enshrined in “international law,” through GA Resolution 194. In fact, she claims that this “right of return” is guaranteed to “refugees and their descendants,”¹² a total fabrication. Despite what is claimed by many partisans of the Palestinian cause, refugee status is not heritable, so the only genuine Palestinian refugees are those who fled or were forced to leave Israel themselves in 1948, not their descendants.¹³

¹¹ Abdelrazaq, p. 35.

¹² Abdelrazaq, p. 120.

¹³ See “Does UNRWA Violate International Law?” at Honest Reporting: <https://honestreporting.com/does-unrwa-violate-international-law/> [Accessed June 6, 2021](#). In the article “Peter Beinart in NYT: Root Cause of Gaza War is Israel’s Creation,” Honest Reporting demonstrates the double standard for counting Palestinian refugees: “[T]he United Nations treats Palestinians differently from the rest of the world’s refugees. Palestinians are under the auspices of [UNRWA](#), an entity created *uniquely* for them that has transformed the concept of refugee into an inherited characteristic. As a result, UNRWA today counts four generations of Palestinians as “refugees” — more than 5 million people. This totally new definition is [not supported by international law](#). And while in every other conflict around the world, refugee populations decrease over time, the number of Palestinian refugees has continued to rise — a phenomenon that has been weaponized against Israel. In fact, according to [US government estimates](#), less than 200,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 War of Independence are still alive.” See <https://honestreporting.com/new-york-times-peter-beinart-root-cause-of-gaza-war-is-israels-creation/> [Accessed June 6, 2021](#).

Barakat, Ibtisam. “Marked for Destruction,” in **Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict**, Laurel Holliday ed., New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999

“Marked for Destruction,” Ibtisam Barakat’s account of her family’s experience of the Six-Day War, incorporates a gross distortion of Israel’s objectives in that war which the book’s editor, Laurel Holliday, leaves without comment.

Barakat’s family was living in the West Bank when Israel struck Egypt pre-emptively. As war broke out, her father ran home, crying, “Run back and tell your mother the war has started!”

Now, standing in the kitchen as my father’s words hung in the air like a brandished sword, my mother was reminded that her family, her people, and everything Palestinian were bound for *mass destruction* once again¹⁴.
[My italics.]

But “mass destruction” was not the Israelis’ objective. This was a defensive war against four enemy nations whose leaders openly declared their genocidal intentions:

“Our basic objective will be to destroy Israel.” (Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, May 26, 1967)

“In the event of a conflagration, no Jews whatsoever will survive.” Ahmed Shukeiri, future chairman, PLO)¹⁵

Barely two decades after the Holocaust, Israel was defending itself against a second annihilation, not perpetrating “mass destruction” on the Palestinians.

People’s memories of terrifying experiences do not always tally with what really happened. As Barakat’s family hides in a ditch with Israeli warplanes flying overhead, Barakat reports that “bullets were being fired at my mom”¹⁶, but there is no evidence that the Israelis had any reason to waste their bullets on Arab civilians. Barakat recalls a fleeing man warning the family, “After their planes attack, they will be combing the area house by house. The word is that they will butcher every living thing that they find.”¹⁷ If she remembers this correctly, it is no wonder her credulous family was terror-stricken, but in fact there was no butchery of civilians. In fact, according to Michael Oren’s definitive history of the Six-Day War, “Few Israelis even came in contact with civilians, most of whom had fled with the Syrian command, well in advance of the

¹⁴

Holliday, p. 240.

¹⁵ Quoted in Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, p. 270

¹⁶ Holliday, p. 243.

¹⁷ Holliday, p. 242.

attackers,” and in general civilian casualties were “remarkably low” because Israel made sure that most of the fighting “took place far from major population centers.”¹⁸

From the onset of hostilities, Israel’s strategy was to repel an attack on Jerusalem by Jordan, whom the Israelis had begged to stay out of a war they knew was coming. The panic on the part of Arab families like Barakat’s may have been triggered by Arab propaganda; we know, for example, that one Palestinian working for UNRWA in Jordan said that Arab politicians were spreading rumors that “all the young people would be killed. People heard on the radio,” the UNRWA administrator went on, “that this is not the end only the beginning so they think maybe it will be a long war and they want to be in Jordan.”¹⁹

[Fortunately, Holliday’s Why Do They Hate Me? is no longer available, though it may still be found on library shelves. But Ibtisam Barakat’s Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood, 2007, is still accessible to young readers. It incorporates many of these distortions, and will not give young readers a true picture of the history of the Six-Day War. See the review of Tasting the Sky in this bibliography. See following entry.]

¹⁸ Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, p. 306.

¹⁹ Accessed May 12, 2021 at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/myths-and-facts-online-the-1967-six-day-war>

Barakat, Ibtisam. *Tasting the Sky*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 2007. Barakat, Ibtisam. *Balcony on the Moon: Coming of Age in Palestine*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2016. [Sequel]

Tasting the Sky is Ibtisam Barakat's memoir of her experiences during and after the Six-Day War. It opens as a fleeing man warns Barakat's Palestinian family, "After their [the Israelis'] planes attack, they will be combing the area house by house. The word is that they will butcher every living thing that they find." (22)

But "butcher[ing] every living thing" was not the Israelis' objective. This was a **defensive** war against four enemy nations whose leaders openly declared their **genocidal** intentions:

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According to Michael Oren's definitive history of the Six-Day War, "Few Israelis even came in contact with civilians, most of whom had fled with the Syrian command, well in advance of the attackers," and in general civilian casualties on both sides were "remarkably low" because most of the fighting "took place far from major population centers."²¹

Barakat also accuses Israeli planes of shooting at her mother as the family hides in a trench upon the outbreak of hostilities, ignoring what really occurred between Israel and Jordan, whom the Israelis had begged to stay out of a war they knew was coming. The Jordanian attack on Israel began at 10:00 a.m. on June 5 with a barrage "on all enemy [Israeli] positions," which included civilian settlements in Israel's interior. At 11:15 the Jordanians lobbed 6000 shells at Jewish Jerusalem, damaging over 900 buildings (including Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem). They wounded over a thousand civilians, 150 seriously, and caused 20 deaths.²² None of this is reported by Barakat.

The panic on the part of Arab families like Barakat's may have been triggered by Arab propaganda; we know, for example, that one Palestinian working for UNRWA in Jordan said that Arab politicians were spreading rumors that "all the young people would be killed. People heard on the radio," the UNRWA administrator went on, "that this is not the end only the beginning so they think maybe it will be a long war and they want to be in Jordan."²³

Barely two decades after the Holocaust, Israel was defending itself against a second annihilation, not "butcher[ing] every living thing they can find," as Barakat would have it.

²⁰ Quoted in Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, p. 270

²¹ Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, p. 306.

²² Oren, pp. 186-187.

²³ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/myths-and-facts-online-the-1967-six-day-war>. Accessed May 12, 2021.

Other accusations are belied by the facts. For example, if the goal of Israel had really been to dispossess the Palestinians, why was her family permitted to return to their home in Ramallah after an absence of only four months and thirteen days (70)? Doesn't that indicate that dispossession of the Arabs was not Israel's primary goal in this war? True, the area was occupied, and Ibtisam's mother was scared by some poorly-behaved young Israeli soldiers who made rude gestures at her. But they were not ethnically cleansed from their home.

Barakat's memoir honestly reflects how the outbreak and consequences of the war appeared to her. But how it *appeared* is contradicted by documentary evidence, and should not be transmitted uncritically to the uninformed young reader.²⁴

Balcony on the Moon

Barakat's memoir *Balcony on the Moon* picks up where her *Tasting the Sky* leaves off, tracing the course of Barakat's life from her childhood following the Six-Day War to her acceptance at university. It's a book about the effects of the war and the Israeli occupation on her family, but also about the author's love of school, her dawning love of writing, and her developing commitment to literacy and equal rights for women and girls.

Her story is also polemical, and her Author's Note, which outlines the context for her childhood and adolescence, is a one-sided account of the history of what to her is exclusively "Palestine." As she tells it, Israel was founded "because of the Holocaust and extensive Jewish immigration to Palestine, with the aim of making it a national home for Jews." In other words, Jews were interlopers, with no roots in this region worth reporting to young readers.

Is Barakat aware that there has been a continuous Jewish presence in Palestine since the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, well before the Arab invasion of the seventh century? Does she know that there were Jewish communities, some quite large, in Tiberias and Jerusalem? Why does she avoid mentioning Arab in-migration, which increased under the British Mandate in part because of economic activity and job opportunities generated by the Jews of the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement)? In fact, from 1922 to 1947, it was the cities with large Jewish populations, like Haifa, Jerusalem, and Jaffa, where the Arab populations increased most markedly, not the all-Arab cities.

Barakat also faults Israel for failing to implement UN General Assembly Resolution 194 which, she says, "aimed to facilitate a peaceful return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes," as though this was something simple to do.

To admit a large population of hostile Arabs into the nascent Israeli state would, of course, have been suicidal, especially when the young country was struggling to settle and

²⁴ For example, you will find this book on a list of recommended titles for synagogue youth at the "Reframing Israel" website – a site endorsed by a group of liberal rabbis who clearly consider it legitimate to educate synagogue youth that the Israelis, in '67, were not fighting a defensive war against an enemy aiming at their destruction, but were out to butcher Palestinians.

accommodate hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing hostile countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The mass of Jewish refugees from Muslim countries – approximately equivalent to the number of Palestinian refugees -- is invisible in Barakat's account.

As in *Tasting the Sky*, Barakat also offers a distorted history of the Six-Day War. She says it "occurred" in 1967, failing to acknowledge, as noted in the review of *Tasting the Sky*, what it really was: an attempt by four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq) to wipe Israel off the map and even to annihilate the Jews.

Grateful to schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for the life-altering education it offered her, Barakat paints a sanitized picture of the agency. She notes that it was the sole UN agency devoted to "one displaced people," but fails to ask why the UN, which already had the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), with its extensive refugee-support network serving millions of post-World War II refugees, had to create one exclusively for the Palestinians. The truth is that this decision was political. UNRWA defined refugees differently; under the UNRWA definition, refugee status is passed on to future generations. Perhaps, having lost to Israel on the battlefield, the Arabs decided to perpetuate the conflict rather than resolving the refugees' situation.²⁵

UNRWA schools have been found responsible for teaching for conflict rather than peace,²⁶ and many of their teachers have posted inflammatory material on their Facebook pages.²⁷

²⁵ See "Does UNRWA Violate International Law?" at Honest Reporting: <https://honestreporting.com/does-unrwa-violate-international-law/> Accessed June 6, 2021. In the article "Peter Beinart in NYT: Root Cause of Gaza War is Israel's Creation," Honest Reporting demonstrates the double standard for counting Palestinian refugees: "[T]he United Nations treats Palestinians differently from the rest of the world's refugees. Palestinians are under the auspices of UNRWA, an entity created *uniquely* for them that has transformed the concept of refugee into an inherited characteristic. As a result, UNRWA today counts four generations of Palestinians as "refugees" — more than 5 million people. This totally new definition is not supported by international law. And while in every other conflict around the world, refugee populations decrease over time, the number of Palestinian refugees has continued to rise — a phenomenon that has been weaponized against Israel. In fact, according to US government estimates, less than 200,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 War of Independence are still alive." See <https://honestreporting.com/new-york-times-peter-beinart-root-cause-of-gaza-war-is-israels-creation/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

²⁶ See IMPACT-se January, 2021 document, "Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories" at <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf> Accessed June 6, 2021.

²⁷ See UN Watch February 2, 2017 report to US Congress House Foreign Affairs Committee, "Poisoning Palestinian Children," on UNRWA Teachers' Incitement to jihadist terrorism:

The map Barakat has selected on the page facing the opening section of her book implies that there was an independent entity called “Palestine” before 1948. This is the misinformation communicated in the notorious “map that lies” used as anti-Israel propaganda. It ignores the partition of the Palestine Mandate accepted by Israel and rejected by the Arabs in 1947, implying that all of Israel was a legal entity known as “Palestine” and stolen by Israel in '48 and '67.

[An earlier piece of writing by Ibtisam Barakat, a memoir in Laurel Holliday’s Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict, published in 1999, makes the accusation that Israel’s aim in the Six-Day War was “mass destruction” of Arab Palestine. See the review of Barakat’s “Marked for Destruction” in this bibliography, in preceding entry.]

<https://unwatch.org/130-page-report-unrwa-teachers-incite-terrorism-antisemitism/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

Bashi, Golbarg. *P is for Palestine: A Palestine Alphabet Book*. Illus. by Golrokh Nafisi. Dr. Bashi: 2018; Bashi, Golbarg. *Counting up the Olive Tree: A Palestine Number Book*. Illus. by Nabi H. Ali. Dr. Bashi: 2019 [Sequel]

In 2018, controversy broke out over a public reading of a picture book titled *P is for Palestine* by Iranian-Swedish-American author Golbarg Bashi, illustrated by Golrokh Nafisi. The book selects an object, custom or artifact from Palestinian culture as it walks young readers through the alphabet. The reading was held at the Highland Park (New Jersey) public library; Highland Park has a large Jewish community, and controversy quickly ensued.

The controversy was not over holding a reading of a children’s book on Palestinian culture, but on problematic passages within the book. The one that made most headlines was the selection for the letter “I”, which reads, “I is for Intifada.” Illustrated by a man and child making the “V” for victory sign, the text continues, “I is for Intifada, Intifada is Arabic for rising up for what is right, if you are a kid or a grownup.” But of course that isn’t what the Intifada was; it was a violent uprising directed specifically at innocent Israeli civilians. In the Second Intifada, over 1000 Israelis were killed and many maimed and injured.

For the letter “H,” the book offers “H is for Handala,” a symbol less familiar to American or Canadian readers. “Hear his hellos,” the text continues, “he is our hero.” The image of “Handala” was created by Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali. In Al-Ali’s own words, “Handala was born ten years old, and he will always be ten years old. At that age, I left my homeland, and when he returns, Handala will still be ten, and then he will start growing up. . . Things will become normal again when the homeland returns.” Handala has been adopted as the symbol of the anti-Semitic BDS movement.

It is actually disturbing that a children’s book would select two such negative symbols for young readers – one of a violent uprising, the other of a refusal to grow up and get on with life.

A few letters further, we find “M is for Miftah, Key of Return.” The page goes on, “M is for Miftah, Key of Return. . . Mama’s Mama, and my Jiddah’s Mama’s, for which I yearn.” The key is used by angry Palestinians as a symbol of their loss of their homes, to which they claim to have a “right of return,” although this is nowhere established in international law.²⁸ If the

²⁸ In the article “Peter Beinart in NYT: Root Cause of Gaza War is Israel’s Creation,” Honest Reporting demonstrates the double standard for counting Palestinian refugees: “[T]he United Nations treats Palestinians differently from the rest of the world’s refugees. Palestinians are under the auspices of [UNRWA](#), an entity created *uniquely* for them that has transformed the concept of refugee into an inherited characteristic. As a result, UNRWA today counts four generations of Palestinians as “refugees” — more than 5 million people. This totally new definition is [not supported by international law](#). And while in every other conflict around the world, refugee populations decrease over time, the number of Palestinian refugees has continued to rise – a phenomenon that has been weaponized against Israel. In fact, according to [US government estimates](#), less than 200,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 War of Independence are still alive.” See

millions of descendants of the Palestinians who fled or were exiled in 1948 were accorded this so-called “right,” they would swamp the Israeli population and Israel would cease to exist as a Jewish homeland.

P is for Palestine is a propaganda tool advocating the elimination of the state of Israel. It is inappropriate for public readings in schools or libraries.

Without naming Israel, the book’s equally propagandistic sequel, *Counting up the Olive Tree: A Palestine Number Book* (2019), raises the accusation that Israeli settlers (the “woeful woodcutter”) cut down Palestinian olive groves, while children try to stop him, in verses like this one: “When the woeful woodcutter came to cut down the last olive tree/The kids cried, “Please don’t cut our precious tree in our land yet to be free!””²⁹

<https://honestreporting.com/new-york-times-peter-beinart-root-cause-of-gaza-war-is-israels-creation/>
Accessed June 6, 2021.

²⁹ The accusation that Israeli settlers have cut down Palestinian olive trees is fraught with controversy, with claims and counter-claims. There are certainly extremists among the settlers, particular sme segments of settler youth. However in October 2012, in response to the accusation that settler extremists set fire to Palestinian olive groves, the Shomron Regional Council released a video purporting to show Palestinians setting fire to their own olive grows. See Algemeiner, [Accessed June 6, 2021.](#)

Ellis, Deborah. *The Cat at the Wall*. Toronto: Groundwood, 2014

Deborah Ellis's *The Cat at the Wall* paints an idealized picture of children on both sides of the divide yearning for peace and of teachers encouraging peaceful values while the Second Intifada rages in the streets. In this fanciful book, an Arab boy named Omar has been left behind in an apartment in Bethlehem. Sharing the refuge with him are two Israeli soldiers, sent to check out the building for terrorists. In an absurdly contrived scene, Omar's teacher and classmates approach the building, hoping to extricate the boy:

Ms. Fahima, with fear all over her face, tried again to open the door.

"Let me inside!" she cried out in Hebrew. "Let Omar go and take me in his place!"³⁰

Painted as a self-sacrificing pacifist, this devoted teacher counsels her students that "misunderstanding the context could lead to a conflict,"³¹ absurdly warning them not to look in the windows of the apartment: "Children, it is not polite to look in someone's windows. Just because we are under occupation, that's no reason to forget our manners."³² It strains credulity that Ellis witnessed a scene like this in Bethlehem during the Second Intifada.

Ms. Fahima seems to be Deborah Ellis's creation, but how typical is she? It has been documented by UN Watch that many of the teachers in West Bank schools run by UNRWA (the UN special agency devoted exclusively to Palestinian refugees) are radicals³³, and by IMPACT-se (the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education) that the curriculum and textbooks in these UN-run schools glorify martyrdom.³⁴

The context of the conflict occurring in Bethlehem is vague. Though the role of Israeli soldiers looms large in this account, in fact Bethlehem is situated in Area A under the Oslo accords, and therefore under the control of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli army is not allowed in except when Israel is in danger from events there.

³⁰ Ellis, p. 132 [Check]

³¹ Ellis, p. 118.

³² Ellis, p. 95

³³ See UN Watch February 2, 2017 report to US Congress House Foreign Affairs Committee, "Poisoning Palestinian Children," on UNRWA Teachers' Incitement to jihadist terrorism: <https://unwatch.org/130-page-report-unrwa-teachers-ignite-terrorism-antisemitism/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

³⁴ See IMPACT-se January, 2021 document, "Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories" at <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf> Accessed June 6, 2021.

Ellis, Deborah. *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*.
Toronto: Groundwood, 2004

Deborah Ellis's *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*, stirred up considerable controversy when it was published in 2004, especially after it was short-listed for the Ontario Library Association's Silver Birch Award (a book award selected by children in schools throughout the province). Jewish community organizations contended that it presented Israeli actions in the West Bank during the Second Intifada in a very negative light, without sufficient context, and treated suicide bombers sympathetically

As the terrorist campaign known as the Second Intifada raged in Israel and the territories from 2000 to 2005, Canadian children's author Deborah Ellis visited the region to interview Arab and Israeli children about their lives, their fears, and their hopes for the future.

Although Ellis is sympathetic to children on both sides of the conflict (the book alternates the perspectives of Arab and Jewish children), some of the anti-Israel claims don't withstand scrutiny. One example is a disturbing photograph of two women at a demonstration in Israel holding up a poster that reads: "Don't shoot at ambulances." The picture caption purports to provide context, describing the demonstrators as "Israelis protesting against their government's policies".

Set in the middle of a children's book about the Arab-Israeli conflict, the photo certainly makes Israel look bad. What kind of government would shoot at ambulances?

In an interview³⁵, Ellis admitted that she had not investigated this claim. She didn't verify IDF (Israel Defense Forces) policy on ambulances either with an IDF spokesperson or with a soldier. What follows is a direct transcript of the orders a member of the IDF told this author he was to follow at checkpoints regarding ambulances:

After it was discovered that [ambulances] were being used to smuggle terrorists and weapons (which they began doing because ambulances were getting special treatment), the policies regarding ambulances were: Only open fire if there is an immediate and direct threat to your life, meaning that if it doesn't stop at the checkpoint you can only shoot if (A) the vehicle went out of its way to hit you, or (B) somebody shoots at you from the vehicle. If the vehicle didn't stop when approaching a checkpoint, spikes would be spread to puncture the tyres of the car, but no shots. There may have been individual cases where specific intelligence was directed at a

³⁵Telephone interview with Marjorie Gann, June 14, 2018. Recorded with permission.

specific ambulance (identified by licence plate #) and the rules were stricter [meaning, more lenient], but I *seriously* doubt that even in those cases there would be an order to fire without identifying a direct threat.³⁶

Despite this, a child reading *Three Wishes* will encounter the words of Salam, a Palestinian child interviewed by Ellis: “I’ve even seen soldiers shoot at an ambulance. . . They don’t care. They just want to kill us all.”³⁷

Ellis also tackles the subject of suicide bombing, a common occurrence during the Second Intifada. Initially, she explains this curious phenomenon this way:

Suicide is usually associated with despair, with the person unable to see any other way to solve their problems, and being unable to face another day in their current circumstances. . . . Suicide bombers kill themselves by strapping dynamite or some other explosive material to their bodies. They then go into a public place, detonate the explosive and blow themselves up. They also blow up whoever is around them. . . A number of Palestinians have killed themselves and many Israelis this way.³⁸

The emphasis here is on the despair of the Palestinians; nowhere is the type of “public place” specified – but these were most often places where young people congregated, like ice cream parlours, Sbarro pizza shops, young people’s clubs. Nor is it made clear that the explosives were packed with ball bearings, bolts and other pieces of metal calculated to maim and cause brain injuries. And it’s not just despair that impels suicide bombers to do their damage. They were psychologically manipulated by handlers who targeted vulnerable, depressed young people. Suicide bombing is not a spontaneous act.

The author shifts, curiously, from merely reporting that “other Palestinians consider suicide bombers to be martyrs, or heroes,” whose “photos are posted in Palestinian towns and camps,” to labelling them as martyrs without quotation marks or attribution:

People who die as martyrs are said to have special places in paradise.³⁹

[T]heir walls decorated with posters of Palestinian martyrs.⁴⁰

Which are they – “martyrs” or martyrs? Ellis seems to be confused, but surely there is little resemblance between these youths and Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi, who preached and practised non-violence, and gave their lives for those principles.

Finally, Ellis makes categorical assertions about international law that do not withstand scrutiny. Since, in talking about the Second Intifada, Ellis feels it necessary to address the question of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, she states categorically that the West Bank settlements are illegal:

³⁶ Email from Israeli soldier, September 16, 2010.

³⁷ Ellis, *Three Wishes*, p. 101

³⁸ Ellis, *Three Wishes*, p. 99

³⁹ Ellis, *Three Wishes*, p. 99

⁴⁰ Ellis, *Three Wishes*, p. 100

Settlements are Israeli communities that have been built on Palestinian land occupied by the Israeli army after the 1967 war. They were begun by people who wanted to claim that land for Israel even though under international law, the land belongs to the Palestinians.⁴¹

In fact, there is scholarly debate over the legality of the settlements. While it is not necessary to go into this debate here, it should be noted that there are two sides to this argument, and eminent legal scholars like Professor Eugene Kontorovich and Ambassador Alan Baker provide substantive legal arguments for the legality of Israel's settlements on the West Bank.⁴²

⁴¹ Ellis, *Three Wishes*, p. 63

⁴² See, for example, Alan Baker, "Ten False Assumptions Regarding Israel," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Baker's Point 5 addresses the assertion, "Israel's settlements are illegal and violate international law." <https://jcpa.org/article/ten-false-assumptions-regarding-israel/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

Carter, Anne Laurel. *The Shepherd's Granddaughter*. Toronto: Groundwood, 2008

The Shepherd's Granddaughter delivers a clear message: Israelis, in the person of IDF soldiers and privileged settlers, are usurpers in the West Bank.

The book's heroine, Amani, is a twelve-year-old Arab girl whose family has been herding sheep "for more than a thousand years" in the West Bank village of Al-Khalil. Amani wants to continue that tradition, but regulations to protect Israeli settlers put her family at the mercy of debilitating restrictions on their movement, making it hard for them to earn a living under the Israeli occupation.

What Carter does not tell her readers is that Al-Khalil has another name -- Hebron. It is the site of the Cave of Machpelah, which, according to the Biblical account,⁴³ the Jewish patriarch Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite to bury his wife Sarah. Until the Jewish community of Hebron was driven out by the murderous Arab pogrom of 1929,⁴⁴ Jews had been living there virtually uninterrupted since the Byzantine era, likely longer than the purported thousand-year presence of Amani's family.

When Israel won the Six-Day War in 1967 – an aggressive war launched by Egypt, Jordan and Syria to annihilate the State of Israel – and captured the West Bank, it never occurred to the Israelis *not* to resettle their historic city, the heart of the Jewish homeland, from which a millennium-old Jewish community had run for their lives in 1929.

To Carter, the Jewish settlers are interlopers. To the Jews, they've come home.

Carter ascribes all restrictions on Palestinian movement to Israel's will to dominate the Palestinian population. But, as historian Yaakov Lozowick explains, "the present no-movement restrictions don't appear on the 1997 map. Nor did they exist in 2002, at the height of the 2nd Intifada. They were put in place, or rather they evolved, as part of that war. . . . Sucking the life from the heart of Hebron and transforming it into a ghost town was not a result of the settlements, which were all there a decade before the 1997 partition."⁴⁵ What Carter ascribes to Israeli malice was put in place to protect Israelis against Palestinian attacks. But these attacks – the Intifada – barely register in Carter's book.

Carter also accuses settlers of poisoning the water supply of Amani's sheep. There are indeed extremists among some West Bank settlers, and the Israeli government took a stronger stand against the notorious Hilltop Youth once their provocations became obvious. But Carter seems unaware that accusing Jews of poisoning has a long and shameful history. In the Middle

⁴³ Genesis 23:11-20

⁴⁴ In 1929, instigated by the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Al-Amin Hussaini, Arabs in Hebron attacked the Jewish residents, killing sixty-seven and wounding another sixty. The riot was sparked by a rumour that Jews were attempting to take over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ Yaakov Lozowick, "Hebron Regrets to Inform Jerusalem," December 2009

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gcZhu09kwKL-NOBg2wdDHjzIjJJOObXFBMZbFliVO/preview> Accessed June 6, 2021.

Ages Jews were accused of poisoning the Christians' wells to cause the Black Plague. In 1983 a yellow dust on a West Bank school's windowsill was cited as evidence that Israel was deliberately releasing poison. In the end, the yellow dust proved to be nothing but pollen, and the Israelis uncovered a deliberate PLO plot to spread the poisonous rumour.⁴⁶ Given the long history of this anti-Semitic canard, Carter would do well to ask herself why she received the malicious libel so uncritically.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, called on by Israel to conduct an independent investigation, concluded that the schoolgirls' symptoms, attributed by the PLO to poisoning by Israel, were psychological or caused by hydrogen sulphide, a smell released by raw sewage.

⁴⁷ There have been many similar accusations. For example, in 1999, Suha Arafat, Yassir's wife, announced publicly that the Israelis used poisonous gas against Palestinians to increase cancer cases among women and children, and poisoned the PA's water sources with chemicals. The director of the PA's Committee for Consumer Protection said Israel supplied chocolates that cause mad cow disease to the Palestinian market. The Palestinian UN representative accused Israeli authorities of injecting 300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus.

Clinton, Cathryn. *A Stone in My Hand*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2002

Cathryn Clinton's *A Stone in My Hand* is set in Gaza City between 1988 and 1989, during the First Intifada, when Gaza was still under Israeli occupation (which ended when Israel withdrew entirely in 2005). The author's purpose is to elicit sympathy for the people of Gaza, especially the youth, who come into conflict with Israeli soldiers during the Intifada. One of the book's themes is the gap between the radicalism of the youths of the city and their parents' caution and wariness. Although the older generation expresses only rare sympathy for the Israeli soldiers they encounter, they know what will happen to their hot-headed boys in confrontation with the Israelis, and warn them against the risks they are taking.

The focus of the novel is on the perceptions of young Malaak, who has been silent, almost entirely non-communicative, since her father's disappearance after going off to Israel to work. It unfolds that he was killed in a bus bombing by Islamic Jihad, one of the most radical terrorist groups in Gaza. Despite this, Malaak's brother Hamid and his friend Tariq join the stone throwers and get involved in terrorist actions.

Although Clinton certainly does not advocate terrorism, she promotes an exculpatory narrative: that it is born out of desperation on the part of youth with no prospects for a future: As one character explains, "The young men of Gaza are tired of standing by the road, hoping for a day's job. Waiting, waiting for some Israeli to come up and check our muscles and stare into our eyes. We are not animals. We are *Shabab*" [translated by Clinton as "young activists," but referring to the gang of stone-throwing boys].⁴⁸

Aiming for some nuance, Clinton acknowledges the level of indoctrination the youth of Gaza are exposed to; in Malaak's words, "Hamid shakes his fist as he speaks. I just stare at him. He must have heard those words from someone else."⁴⁹ She also concedes the humanity of some Israeli soldiers. Noticing Malaak, the young heroine of Clinton's novel, running in the street, one soldier looks down an alley to be sure she is not injured.

Still, the dominant theme of Clinton's book remains what she views as Israeli crimes and the soldiers' brutality. Malaak's father invokes a mythologized past predating the foundation of the State of Israel: "Ah, Malaak, when I was a boy, we lived in the country in a little village. Jews, Christians and we Muslims. We lived in the same place without fighting. Can you believe that, Malaak?"⁵⁰ What is complex, controversial, and in need of context, Clinton records as indisputable, as when the grandfather evokes the Deir Yassin massacre:

"My father, blessed be his memory, was the *mukhtar*, head of our village. He had much land and even a car. when he heard that the LEHI, a Jewish unit, had attacked Deir Yassin and massacred many Arabs—men, women, and children—he told the people of our village to flee. Most came to Gaza. My father didn't know that when the war was over, the Israelis wouldn't let

⁴⁸ Clinton, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Clinton, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Clinton, p. 24

us return to our homes. Now our village is gone. The Israelis bulldozed it and built a settlement for Jews in its place.”⁵¹

She shows Israeli soldiers overreacting to stone-throwing Arab youths. They beat one boy for throwing a stone, though he was not the perpetrator.⁵² When another boy raises a Palestinian flag (in violation of IDF regulations) during his brother’s funeral, he falls to an Israeli bullet.

I see the soldiers lift the rifles. I look for tear gas canisters, but there are none. The young man with the flag drops to the ground, and a moment later I hear a shot and see the coffin tilting forward.⁵³

Can Clinton substantiate this serious accusation? Or is it based on hearsay taken at face value?

Clinton is oblivious to the Jewish past in the region. She quotes Hamid’s justification for his terrorist acts without comment: “They stole our land.”⁵⁴

Malaak describes her longing to revisit Jerusalem. She remembers a picture on her wall “from a family visit to Jerusalem during happy times. . . . When I was little, I would close my eyes and pretend that I was in that beautiful place in Jerusalem and that nothing had changed since that picture. I would smell the jasmine. I would eat the olives.”⁵⁵ Malaak’s older sister asks, “Can you imagine living in your family home and tracing your family back hundreds of years? Everyone living in the same place?”⁵⁶

What Clinton fails to tell her readers, and what she herself may not know, is that uprooting and dislocation of Jerusalemites in 1948 cut both ways. Sima Nightingale’s family had lived in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City for eight generations when, during the 1948 siege, an Arab sniper on the roof of the synagogue near her family home shot her grandfather dead as he went to fetch the last of his family’s water supply. Puah Shteiner’s family had been in Jerusalem for six generations, ever since her ancestor Rav Eliezer Bergman arrived in the city in 1835. She remembers fleeing her Jerusalem home with only the clothes she was wearing. “The world has heard of Arab refugees,” Shteiner comments, “but there were also Jewish refugees.” In fact, the Jewish Quarter was emptied of its Jewish residents by the Jordanian Army in 1948.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Clinton, p. 25

⁵² Clinton, p. 89.

⁵³ Clinton, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Clinton, p. 120.

⁵⁵ Clinton, p. 89.

⁵⁶ Clinton, pp. 101-102

⁵⁷Honest Reporting video at:

<http://jewishrefugees.blogspot.com/2011/05/jerusalem-refugees-of-1948.html>

Accessed June 6, 2021

Laird, Elizabeth. *A Little Piece of Ground*. London: Macmillan, 2003

Elizabeth Laird's *A Little Piece of Ground*, written in collaboration with Palestinian teacher Sonia Nimr, met with controversy from the moment it was published in Britain in 2003. Phyllis Simon, co-owner of a Vancouver, Canada, bookstore, urged Laird's publisher (Macmillan) to reconsider publication of the book, pointing out that "there is not even one mildly positive portrait of an Israeli in the entire book. . . . *A Little Piece of Ground* . . . is for children, the overwhelming number of whom clearly haven't a clue about this conflict, and thus depend on books like this for the opinions they form about what goes on in the Middle East."⁵⁸

Laird answered Simon as follows: "The book is written through the eyes of a 12-year-old who just sees men with guns. It would not have been true to my characters to do otherwise," she writes⁵⁹.

But this is disingenuous: Who but the author made the decision to paint the Middle East conflict exclusively through the eyes of a twelve-year-old Arab boy living in Ramallah during the Second Intifada? Karim sees his father humiliated at checkpoints; not only has he no idea why the Israelis have set these up in the first place, it's a question he wouldn't think to ask. Karim and his friends are confined inside by endless curfews which to them seem arbitrary, and there is no voice in the novel to explain them. Soldiers damage his school; are they just throwing their weight around, or are they looking for stashes of weapons? The reader isn't told.

In fact, Laird never explains anything the soldiers do. What she lavishes her considerable stylistic gifts on is depicting Israeli soldiers not as what they really are -- teenage boys in tanks -- but as tanks incarnate:

The Israeli tank that had been **squatting** at the crossroads just below the apartment block for days now had moved a few metres closer."⁶⁰

"He could imagine the great armoured **machines** lying down there, like a row of **green scaly monsters, crouched** waiting to **crawl** back up the hill and **pin the people of Ramallah down** in their houses again" ⁶¹

Language like this dehumanizes and demonizes Israeli soldiers. As mutant *green scaly monsters*, they *squat, crouch, crawl* and *pin the people of Ramallah down*.

One can only imagine the outcry if an American author employed similarly loaded terms to Black youths in an urban gang: "She could imagine the great **hulking panthers, crouched** behind the parked cars waiting to **pounce** on any passerby who neared their hiding place." Caricaturing Israelis in the same way, though, gets a pass.

Laird makes no moral distinction between aggressive and defensive violence. She doesn't care to find out *why* the IDF might have shelled that Gaza refugee camp. In 2002, 17

⁵⁸ Teacher's Guide for *A Little Piece of Ground*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Teacher's Guide, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Laird, pp. 4-5

⁶¹ Laird, p. 12

rockets and 455 mortar shells were fired at Israel from Gaza, and in 2003 there were at least 123 rockets and 514 mortars fired.⁶² But to Laird, neutralizing rockets and mortars to protect the lives of your civilian population is morally equivalent to shooting civilians in a café.

Nor does the novel really care about Israeli victims of terror. When terrorist operations are mentioned, the novel's tone – heightened and sympathetic when Arab victimhood is reported – is oddly flat: “Since a Palestinian gunman had shot two people in an Israeli café two weeks ago, the Israelis had set up another curfew, which meant that the whole city had been locked down.”⁶³

Note: *Although association does not necessarily imply collaboration or even agreement on political issues, it perhaps bears noting that Laird's husband worked in the 1970s for UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Administration, created in the aftermath of the 1948 war exclusively for the benefit of Arab refugees (though not of Jewish refugees from Arab lands). UNRWA is notorious for its pro-Arab bias and its staff for cooperation with terrorist groups like Hamas and Fatah.*

⁶² Figures from Israel Security Agency.

⁶³ Laird, p. 5

Laskin, Pamela L. *Ronit & Jamil*. New York: Harper Collins, 2017

Pamela L. Laskin's *Ronit & Jamil* does a Middle Eastern *West Side Story*, retelling Romeo and Juliet as a love story between two adolescents. Ronit's father is a pharmacist in Jerusalem, Jamil's a doctor who shuttles between Ramallah on the West Bank and a hospital in East Jerusalem. As the youngsters catch a glimpse of each other over the fence that divides them, they move from attraction to clandestine rendezvous, and from there to the consummation of their desires. The book's poems, which alternate between the two lovers, carry a political payload.

Many of these highlight the similarities in the lovers' backgrounds (both mothers make great hummus, falafel, baba ghanoush); others highlight the conflicting perspectives of Arab and Jew, as in this poem, spoken by Jamil:

Hands⁶⁴

Abi's hands
soft as dates
when he touches
the wounds of a child
swept from the streets,

but I remind him
"some of our people
wear bombs
on their bodies."

"Because there is no electricity
no running water
no health care,' he shouts
then adds
"our people wear bombs
because of this."

In her attempts to show the perspectives of both sides, the author justifies the barbaric practice of suicide bombing as an inevitable response to a lack of running water, electricity and health care. Nor does she offer any explanation of the electricity shortage or the health care issues she cites. Under the Oslo accords, for example, health care on the West Bank is controlled not by Israel but by the Palestinian Authority. The accusation that Israel is responsible for water shortages there has been rebunked by Prof. Haim Gvirtzman, professor of hydrology at the

⁶⁴ Laskin, p. 46.

Institute of Earth Sciences at Hebrew University and a member of the Israel Water Authority Council, who points to serious issues in water conservation and the maintenance and development of water infrastructure on the part of the Palestinian Authority.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Haim Gvartzman, "The Truth Behind the Water Libels," BESA Center Perspectives Paper N. 238, February 24, 2014 <https://besacenter.org/truth-behind-palestinian-water-libels/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

Lieberman, Leanne. *The Book of Trees*. Victoria BC: Orca, 2010

Leanne Lieberman's *Book of Trees* tells the story of a North American teenager who spends a summer in Israel at an Orthodox girls' seminary. It is on an excursion with her friends that she learns that Canada Park, a treed recreational area in the outskirts of Jerusalem, was built over an Arab village. It had never occurred to Mia before that Arabs were displaced by Israelis. This triggers a crisis of faith which mirrors Lieberman's own crisis of faith, as outlined in her author's note:

I loved Israel and I wanted to believe Israel had a heroic and honorable history. How could I, a Jew, criticize the state after the centuries of oppression Jews had endured? Eventually, I decided to embrace the Jewish tradition of fighting for social justice and write this book. I believe Israel will be a stronger, more peaceful country when it follows international law and protects the human rights of all peoples within its borders. I pray for peace, but I believe it will only come when the occupation is ended.

Lack of knowledge has not deterred Canadian author Leanne Lieberman from falsely accusing Israel of many sins: violating international law, appropriating the Palestinian homeland, and killing innocent bystanders. Asked in an interview whether she had consulted any experts in international law in the course of her research, Lieberman replied, "I wouldn't have spoken to anyone, like, from a legal perspective. . . . I did a lot of reading at the time. . . . One of my friends here in Kingston is a film prof. [who made a film about houses in Katamon owned by Arabs until '48] . . . I remember reading Sandy Tolan's *The Olive Tree* (sic: The correct title is *The Lemon Tree*)." ⁶⁶

Lieberman begins her anti-Israel polemic by getting the date of the UN vote to partition Palestine wrong; it was 1947, not 1948. And it was not a vote "to make Israel into two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian"; it was a vote to partition the Palestine Mandate.

When Mia justifies the Palestinians' refusal to accept the partition, she comments, "I guess they were determined to keep their homeland." Is she arguing that Palestine was exclusively the "homeland" of the Arabs, and not of the Jews? Does she agree with Palestinian terrorist Yassir Arafat that no Jewish history happened in Palestine before the twentieth century brought European interlopers? Is she aware that the robust economy these Jewish settlers generated in Palestine attracted a wave of in-migration to Palestine by non-indigenous peoples – Druse, Maghrebian Numidians, Syrian Hauranese, Abyssinians, and Arabs from Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and Transjordan? Maybe some residents of this "homeland" didn't have roots that went back much farther in the past than many of the Jewish residents.

While Lieberman has her character, Mia, exclaim, "Where had the Arab people who used to live here gone? Were they killed or did they just move somewhere else?" she herself seems to lack any curiosity about the conflicts of '48 and '67. Canada Park, which she believes is built

⁶⁶ Telephone interview with Leanne Lieberman, June 4, 2018. Recorded with permission.

on stolen land, is situated in the Latrun area, overlooking the Ayalon Valley and north of the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, and is indeed situated on the sites of former Arab villages. During the 1948-49 War of Independence, this area “played an active and strategic role in blocking the route to Jerusalem and in attacking and bombarding both Jerusalem itself and convoys driving to and from Jerusalem,” according to Alan Baker, former Israeli Ambassador to Canada and expert in international law. It was never part of a Palestinian state because no such entity existed, and following the 1949 Jordanian-Israeli armistice agreement, it was simply designated as no-man’s-land, a demilitarized zone. Israel gained control of it after the *defensive* 1967 war. Given its strategic location on the road to Jerusalem, Israel declared it “a closed military area under strict military control.” The Arab villagers fled or were expelled, and were not allowed to return. Under the terms of the Oslo accords, Canada Park is within Area C, over which Israel has full control.⁶⁷ For the Arabs who lost their homes in ’67, this was a catastrophic event, but given the security issues Israel has faced from that strategic location, it is understandable that she prefers it remain uninhabited.

But terms like “security” and “strategic location” don’t resonate with Lieberman, who seems more comfortable with racial slurs. Mia’s boyfriend is Andrew, a cool, guitar-toting musician the reader is expected to like. Involved with a so-called “human rights” NGO, Andrew claims that “the Israeli army kills innocent bystanders or imprisons innocent people as precautions, or surrounds a community and cuts people off from the supplies they need to survive.”⁶⁸ Sometimes, his villains aren’t even the IDF. “Seems to me the Jews are always killing for their land,”⁶⁹ he claims. He offers no sources for these wild accusations. Even if the (Jewish) Lieberman had no intention of putting antisemitic words in her character’s mouth, that is what these words are. There is a real danger that a thirteen-year-old reader’s take-away from this book will be exactly what Andrew said: “The Jews are always killing for their land.”

[See the discussion of the defensive nature of the 1967 (Six-Day) War in the entry on Ibtisam Barakat’s Tasting the Sky. An excellent source on the defensive nature of that war is Michael Oren’s Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East: Ballantine, 2002/2003.]

⁶⁷ Alan Baker, “Canada Park Wasn’t Stolen from the Palestinians,” Canadian Jewish News, September 24, 2015.

⁶⁸ Lieberman, p. 152.

⁶⁹ Lieberman, pp. 84-85.

Morpurgo, Michael. *The Kites Are Flying!* London: Walker, 2009

Michael Morpurgo is the author of the acclaimed *War Horse*, and of the poignant *Waiting for Anya*, about a Jewish child in hiding in France during World War II. He is now Sir Michael Morpurgo, so a book by him which (however naively) attacks Israel carries some weight.

Morpurgo is also a friend of BBC journalist Jeremy Bowen, who wrote the Afterword of *The Kites Are Flying!* and was the model for its main character Max, a film maker who goes to make a film in the West Bank. (It is noteworthy that two complaints for bias were upheld against Bowen by the BBC Trust in 2009.)

The book is a story of children on both sides of the separation barrier (which Morpurgo calls a “wall,” though it is primarily an electronic security fence). In the course of telling his story, he features children on both sides of the “wall” flying kites labelled “shalom” and “salaam”. The message here? All the children want is peace, so why can’t the adults give it to them?

This is naïve and ill-informed. It has been documented by the monitoring NGO UN Watch that many of the teachers in West Bank schools run by UNRWA (the UN special agency devoted exclusively to Palestinian refugees) are radicals⁷⁰, and by IMPACT-se (the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education) that the curriculum and textbooks in these UN-run schools glorify martyrdom.⁷¹ Children in the West Bank are being educated for war, not peace; they won’t be flying kites with the word “salaam” on them!

Moreover, when it comes to kites, Israelis living on the border with Gaza know more than Michael Morpurgo. The kites sent to them by Palestinians don’t say “salaam.” They burn Israeli crops and deliver explosives over the separation barrier.

⁷⁰ See UN Watch February 2, 2017 report to US Congress House Foreign Affairs Committee, “Poisoning Palestinian Children,” on UNRWA Teachers’ Incitement to jihadist terrorism: <https://unwatch.org/130-page-report-unrwa-teachers-ignite-terrorism-antisemitism/> Accessed June 6, 2021.

⁷¹ See IMPACT-se website at <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf> for their January, 2021 document, “Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories” Accessed June 6, 2021.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *The Tiny Journalist: Poems*. Rochester: BOA Editions, 2019; *Everything Comes Next: Collected & New Poems*. New York: Greenwillow, 2020.

Naomi Shihab Nye is an American poet and novelist of some renown. She won the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature in recognition of her entire body of work in 2013, placing her on a plane with eminent children's writers Vera Williams and Katherine Paterson.⁷² She was named Young People's Poet Laureate for 2019-2021 by the Poetry Foundation. One of her most anti-Israel poems, "A Palestinian Might Say," highlighted on her Poetry Foundation page, reflects her bitterness against Israeli *olim* (immigrants) whose difficulties adjusting to Israel she juxtaposes against Palestinians' sense of comfort in their homeland.

Palestinian on her father's side (her mother is American), Nye credits a visit to her grandmother in a West Bank village for its impact on her political perspective. Running through her poems about "Palestine" is her conviction that her homeland was stolen by the Zionists.

Nye would certainly not have garnered the recognition she did without striking the pose of a fair-minded and humane campaigner for human rights, a Palestinian with Israeli and Jewish friends. And indeed, some of her best friends are Jewish:

Thus in the poem "Before You Can," she proclaims the shared humanity of Jew and Arab:

My Jewish friends are kind and gentle.
Not one of them would harm another person
even if they didn't know that person.
My Arab friends are kind and gentle.
Not one of them would harm another person
even if they didn't know that person. (*Everything Comes Next*, p. 74)

Both *Haaretz* journalist Bradley Burston, who has accused Israel of apartheid practices, and poet Yehudah Amichai, who told her "I would never have taken your father's home!/I could never have lived in a stolen Arab home!" ("Double Peace," *Everything Comes Next*, 103), have been vocal critics of Israel. Nye employs them as Jewish fig leaves to mask her deep resentment of the Jewish state.

Constructed Image vs. Anti-Semitic Tropes

Nye presents herself as tolerant, philosemitic, and opposed to violence, employing the dishonest argument that "[s]ince Palestinians are also Semites, being pro-justice for Palestinians

⁷² In her nominating statement for Nye, Palestinian-American children's author Ibtisam Barakat praised Nye's "incandescent humanity and voice [that] can change the world." But Barakat herself is a biased critic; her memoir of her family's experience of the Six-Day War, *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* (2007), distorts history, accusing the Israelis of initiating that conflict, and her memoir essay about that event, "Marked for Destruction," falsely accuses the Israelis of aiming at "mass destruction" of the Palestinian communities in the course of that short war, which is not substantiated by the facts. See entries on Ibtisam Barakat for details.

is never an anti-Semitic position, no matter what anybody says.” (*The Tiny Journalist*, Author’s Note).

The term “antisemitism” was coined by German anti-Semite Wilhelm Marr in his book *The Victory of Germanicism over Judaism* (12th edition, 1879) expressly to distinguish his racial antisemitism, which he argued was based on “science,” from the German term “Judenhaus,” which had religious overtones. Marr didn’t want to be accused of old-fashioned religious bigotry. His coinage, which has been widely accepted, had nothing to do with Arabs, and to argue that it is “never anti-Semitic” to criticize Israel because you decide to redefine the term to take the Jew out of anti-Semitism is pure sophistry.

From the days of medieval blood libels, which accused Jews of killing Christian children for the blood from which they baked their matzah, the child victim has been a staple of anti-Semitic accusations. That is what makes the deceptive gimmick of Naomi Shihab Nye’s *The Tiny Journalist: Poems* so nefarious. Nye admits in her Author’s Note that the poems in this book are hers, but claims to have based their content at least in part on the Facebook postings of Janna Jihad Ayyad, a girl living in the village of Nabi Saleh on the West Bank. (Her father’s family’s home was nearby). So the victim of the Israeli “abuses” catalogued in so many of these poems is presented as an innocent child, a “tiny journalist.”

The Company Nye Keeps

Nye’s real political bias is revealed not in the benign image she paints of herself, but in the company she keeps. *The Tiny Journalist* is dedicated to “Janna Jihad Ayyad and her cousin Ahed Tamimi – all young people devoted to justice and sharing their voices.”

But who is Ahed Tamimi?

In December, 2015, sixteen-year-old Ahed Tamimi deliberately provoked a confrontation with an Israeli soldier outside her West Bank home by slapping and kicking him; he chose not to fight back. Tamimi comes from a family notorious for supporting terrorism. Her aunt, Ahlam Tamimi, murdered fifteen Israelis, half of them children, in the suicide attack on the Sbarro pizzeria in 2001. Her mother used social media to instruct would-be terrorists on the best places to knife Israeli victims. Two years before the 2015 incident, Ahed Tamimi was photographed biting a soldier who tried to arrest her brother. She revealed her true colors in late 2015, when she addressed a conference of the GCRP (Global Campaign to Return to Palestine) in Beirut – a conference of terrorist leaders. Attending were Deputy Secretary-General of Hezbollah Sheikh Naeem Qasim, Vice-President of Islamic Jihad (now President) Ziyad-Al-Nakhalah and Hamas’s representative in Lebanon Ali Baraka. So this is the company Tamimi keeps – Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas -- yet Nye admires Tamimi as “devoted to justice”.

Similarly, the poem “America Gives Israel Ten Million Dollars a Day” asks the reader to view as unjust the incarceration of West Bank columnist Lama Khater, the mother of a two-year-old. Khater has been detained seven times and is not allowed to write about politics by Israel, a restriction presented by Nye as a violation of Khater’s freedom of speech. But how many of Nye’s young (or adult) readers will recognize that Khater’s platform is a Hamas website,

where she praises the terrorist organization for its evolution “from rock to knife to rifle to explosive vest to rocket and to tunnel.”⁷³

In the same poem she points to Salah Hamouri, a French/Palestinian lawyer “detained without charges or trial for more than a year.” Hamouri, too, is no innocent victim; in fact, he served seven years for an attempt to murder former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel Ovadia Yosef, and was suspected of belonging to the terrorist PFLP.⁷⁴

Selective Victimhood

While most of Nye’s Palestine poems resonate with complaints of Palestinian victimhood – of Israeli “apartheid,” of separate roads for Jews and Arabs, of the neglect of Palestinian issues by American news outlets, of Israeli guns “pointed at us all our lives,” of bulldozed homes, of polluted water – she protests, “I’m not interested in who suffered the most./I’m interested in/people getting over it.” (*Everything Comes Next*, 106-108).

But is she? In “Rumor Mill,” she evokes diaspora Palestinians in highly romanticized sketches: I

I heard that far away in other countries,
Finland and China, ancient Palestinian men and women
fall asleep with their hands on their hearts and by now
their hearts are shaped just like old Palestine,
not the new cut-into-bits pockmarked map of places
we are allowed to live, but the whole stitchery of towns. . . .
When they weaken,
after dreaming like that,
it is easier for them
to go on living
(*The Tiny Journalist*, 110)

And though she says she’s not interested in “who suffered the most,” it’s clear from “Better Vision” that it’s the Israelis who are holding hatchets over Palestinians’ heads:

See close, see far, see how similar we are

⁷³ See MEMRI site:

<https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-marks-its-29th-anniversary-reiterating-its-adherence-armed-struggle-liberate-palestine> Accessed June 6, 2021.

⁷⁴ See MEMRI site:

<https://www.memri.org/reports/network-french-municipalities-grant-marwan-barghouti-honorary-citizenship>, which cites the Committee for the Support of Palestinian with French citizenship Salah Hamouri. Accessed June 6, 2021.

or could be, if the hatchets weren't hanging over half our heads. (*Tiny Journalist*, 110)

Facts and Context

Nye also accepts widely-circulated clichés and libels as fact. “Gaza Is Not Far Away” caricatures Gaza as “the world’s largest open-air prison,” its water shortage and polluted sea caused by Israel, not Hamas’s corruption and distorted priorities. (*Tiny Journalist*, 51)

“For Mohammed Zeid of Gaza, Age 15” (*Everything is Next*, 86-87) opens in outrage: “There is no *stray* bullet, sirs,” implying that the “stray bullet” that Israeli investigators sometimes offer to explain a civilian casualty is never credible. What would Nye say, then, of the report that three Gaza fishermen were killed in a Hamas misfire on March 7, 2021? Did Hamas fire on them deliberately?⁷⁵

Jewish Chosenness

Running through Nye’s work is resentment of the Jewish belief that Jews are a chosen people. Without researching its theological interpretation, she takes the word “chosen” at face value and gives it a simplistic, almost childish, meaning.

Nye’s discomfort with Jewish chosenness resonates in several poems. In the heavily ironic “A Palestinian Might Say,” (*A Tiny Journalist*, 90) she contrasts the difficulties new *olim* (immigrants) face in adjusting to Israel with their comfort in their former countries, where “you mingled freely. . . appreciated people who weren’t just like you,” rounding on Jewish immigrants with “That’s what ‘chosen’ and ‘unchosen’ will do.” In other words, if Jews didn’t think this was the land chosen for them by God, they’d have remained in their old countries, mingling freely with people who weren’t like them, where they’d be a lot more at home. As though Jews hadn’t tried that for two thousand years.

Again in “Double Peace,” dedicated to Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, she writes:

Not for him and his people alone
But for all who loved that rocky land
Everybody everybody Sing it!
No chosen and unchosen but everybody chosen
Sing it!” (*Everything Comes Next*, 102-103)

Chosenness in Jewish tradition means only that God chose the Israelites to communicate the idea of God’s oneness to a pagan world. It does not mean that Jews believe they are better than others. To the contrary, according to the Hebrew prophet Amos, it means that God will be particularly stringent with the Jews:

You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth. That is why I call you to account for all your iniquities.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Times of Israel, *Three Gazan fishermen killed in suspected Hamas rocket misfire*, March 7, 2021.

⁷⁶ Amos 3:2

The proof that chosenness has nothing to do with racial superiority is that Jews believe that the Messiah will descend from Ruth, a non-Jew born among the Moabites, the Hebrews' enemies.⁷⁷ Nye's misreading of Jewish chosenness repeats an anti-Semitic trope that has underpinned resentment of the Jew throughout history. Her denial of the Jews' unique connection with the land of Israel belies her philo-Semitic posturing.

[For more discussion of Shihab Nye's criticism of the Jewish idea of chosenness and her other anti-Israel perspectives, see following entry for her novel Habibi.]

⁷⁷ Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*. NY: William Morrow, 2001. p. 557.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997

Naomi Shihab Nye is an American poet and novelist of some renown. She won the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature in recognition of her entire body of work in 2013, placing her on a plane with eminent children's writers Vera Williams and Katherine Paterson.⁷⁸ She was named Young People's Poet Laureate for 2019-2021 by the Poetry Foundation. One of her most anti-Israel poems, "A Palestinian Might Say," highlighted on her Poetry Foundation page, reflects her bitterness against Israeli *olim* (immigrants) whose difficulties adjusting to Israel she juxtaposes against Palestinians' sense of comfort in their homeland.

Palestinian on her father's side (her mother is American), Nye credits a visit to her grandmother in a West Bank village for its impact on her political perspective. Running through her poems about "Palestine" is her conviction that her homeland was stolen by the Zionists.

Nye would certainly not have garnered the recognition she did without striking the pose of a fair-minded and humane campaigner for human rights, a Palestinian with Israeli and Jewish friends. And indeed, two of the three excerpts from poems used as epigraphs for *Habibi* are by Jews who acknowledge the Palestinian narrative, poets Yehuda Amichai and Anndee Hochmann ("We are challah and hummus, eaten together to make a meal.")

Nye's *Habibi* makes an effort to present some elements of the Jewish Israeli perspective on the conflict. Liyana, its protagonist, is a Palestinian-American teenager whose family moves back to her father's ancestral home, near Ramallah on the West Bank, after the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993. To underline her goodwill, Nye, a Palestinian-American poet, has Liyana meet Omer, a Jewish boy.

I mean, (Liyana explains) I understand it mostly from the Arab side because my father's family lost their house and their money in the bank and lots of their community when my father was a boy and the Palestinians were suffering so much, just kicked around till recently as if they were second-class human beings you know they couldn't even show their own flag or have hardly any normal human rights like the Jews did till recently and it's getting better only slowly you know my relatives have to get permits for things all the time and it wasn't that way when my father was little, things were more equal then and of course I know the Jewish people suffered so much themselves, but don't you think it should have made them more sensitive to the sufferings of others, too?" . . .

"He stared at her quietly. 'I do.'"⁷⁹

⁷⁸ In her nominating statement for Nye, Palestinian-American children's author Ibtisam Barakat praised Nye's "incandescent humanity and voice [that] can change the world." But Barakat herself is a biased critic; her memoir of her family's experience of the Six-Day War, *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* (2007), distorts history, accusing the Israelis of initiating that conflict, and her memoir essay about that event, "Marked for Destruction," falsely accuses the Israelis of aiming at "mass destruction" of the Palestinian communities in the course of that short war, which is not substantiated by the facts. See entries on Ibtisam Barakat for details.

⁷⁹ Nye, *Habibi*, pp. 165-166.

Omer is the right kind of Israeli: he criticizes his country.⁸⁰

Nye also has her characters voice unease with the Jewish idea of being a “chosen people,” without really understanding the complexities of the trope. Liyana thinks it has to do with a sense of “being ‘chosen’ *over* anybody else” [my italics]. Though she allows Omer to present a different angle on Jewish chosenness -- “Maybe Jews are also chosen to suffer. Or to be better examples” -- in the end she concludes, “It seems like big trouble any way you look at it. I’m sorry, but I don’t like it. Do you *believe* you’re chosen? It sounds like the teacher’s pet.”⁸¹

Pace Liyana, chosenness in the Hebrew Bible means only that God chose the descendants of the patriarch Abraham, who first acknowledged the one God, to communicate the idea of God’s oneness to a pagan world. It does not mean that Jews believe they are better than others (“the teacher’s pet”). To the contrary, according to the Hebrew prophet Amos, it means that God will be particularly stringent with the Jews:

You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth. That is why I call you to account for all your iniquities.⁸²

The proof that chosenness has nothing to do with racial superiority is that Jews believe the Messiah will descend from Ruth, a non-Jew born among the Moabites, the Hebrews’ enemies.⁸³ But perhaps, at bottom, Nye attacks the Jewish idea of chosenness because it underpins the millennia-long Jewish claim that God selected them to live in the land of Israel, a claim that Nye herself cannot accept.

Though *Habibi* is not anti-Semitic in intent, the author’s misreading of Jewish chosenness repeats an anti-Semitic trope that has perpetuated resentment of the Jew throughout history.

The book also presents a litany of uncontextualized criticisms of Israeli regulations and practices related to the occupation of the West Bank. Sitti, the grandmother, complains of “how mean the Jewish soldiers are to us. They don’t even know who we are!” Uncle Daoud is demeaned at a checkpoint. A Jewish man in a yarmulke calls Arabs “animals.” Soldiers searching the home of their cousin Mahmud break plates, smash bathroom fixtures and tear apart comforters. A marketplace bombing by Palestinians isn’t justified (the family condemns it), but Liyana tries to explain it:

“Maybe it was done by the Arab father whose ten-year-old son was shot by Israeli soldiers last week. Maybe it was done by the brothers of the tortured prisoners Poppy met all the time, or the cousin of the mayor who lost both legs when the Israelis blew up his car. Did

⁸⁰ In Randa Abdelfattah’s *Where the Streets Had a Name*, Hayaat, on her trip to Jerusalem to bring its soil back to her grandmother, meets two sympathetic Israeli characters, David and Mali, who call themselves “peace activists” and wear both Israeli and Palestinian flags. After watching his comrades abuse Palestinians in Gaza, David had deserted the IDF and spent some time in jail. It is “good” Israelis like these that figure in books that attack Israel. In this way, the authors hope to clear themselves of the taint of prejudice.

⁸¹ Nye, *Habibi*, pp. 178-179

⁸² Amos 3:2

⁸³ Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*. NY: William Morrow, 2001. p. 557.

people who committed acts of violence think their victims and their victims' relatives would just *forget?*"⁸⁴

How many of these accusations are verifiable, and how many are based on unsubstantiated hearsay? We can't know. But they pack emotional punch, and create an image of Israelis that will remain with the young reader after he or she finishes the book.

[For more discussion of Shihab Nye's anti-Israel writings, see preceding entry for Everything Comes Nest: Collected & New Poems, and The Tiny Journalist, her poetry collections.]

⁸⁴ Nye, *Habibi*, p. 235

Saba, Wadad. "A Christian Palestinian's Story," in *Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict*, ed. Laurel Holliday. New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, 1999

Publishing a memoir in an anthology imposes a special burden on the editor. Eyewitness testimony to traumatic events can be uniquely compelling, but memoirists can also get things wrong. In *Why Do They Hate Me? Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict*, editor Laurel Holliday presents an account by Wadad Saba of her family's loss of their Jerusalem home in 1948. Saba grossly misrepresents the history of the Jewish presence in the Middle East, erasing the Jews from the region's history:

You see, for centuries there was no country known as Israel. My country was known as the land of Palestine, spoken of so prominently in the Biblical record, and that land clearly belonged to its native inhabitants, the Palestinians."⁸⁵

Of course, there is no "Palestine" in the Bible, where the names Judea and Israel figure large— a fact Saba, as a Palestinian Christian, should have known. After crushing the Jews in the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE, the Romans renamed Judea "Palaestina" (after the ancient Philistines) to extinguish the memory of the Jewish presence there. Holliday should have corrected this elementary historical error. Young readers deserve facts, not propaganda.

[Holliday's anthology also includes a memoir by Ibtisam Barakat, "Marked for Destruction," which is covered in this bibliography, and which distorts the goals of Israel in the Six-Day War and overlooks the exterminationist motives of its Arab enemies.]

⁸⁵ This is the party line of the Palestinian Authority, reflected in the outrageous October 13, 2016 vote of UNESCO denying the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. and repeated on many occasions by Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas.