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Israeli Apartheid: Our South Africa Moment

Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs, eds., *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, Haymarket Books, 2015, 212 pp., \$16.00 US (pbk), ISBN 9781608465187.

Ilan Pappé, ed., *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, Zed Books, 2015, 374 pp., \$21.95 US (pbk), ISBN 9781783605897.

In April 2016, Palestinians unveiled a six-meter (20 feet) tall statue of Nelson Mandela in Ramallah, the political capital in the West Bank and the “twin city” of the South African city of Johannesburg, whose leaders had donated the statue. Ramallah mayor Mussa Hadid said the statue “symbolizes the shared suffering” of the South African and Palestinian peoples.¹ Global media captured images of South African and Palestinian leaders at the ceremony that drew parallels between liberation movements of the past and present.

For nearly half a century, politicians, activists, and academics have mined the analogies between South Africa and Israel/Palestine to analyze systems of apartheid and oppression and the “shared suffering” of nonwhite South Africans and Palestinians. They utilize the term “apartheid” strictly or loosely, as Soske and Jacobs explain in their introduction “Apartheid/Hafrada: South Africa, Israel, and the Politics of Historical Comparison,” relying on a foundational understanding of apartheid as a “state-sanctioned regime of law, policy, and institutions” that segregates races of people and “reorganize[s] and rationalize[s]...mechanisms of segregation on a national scale in defense of an ethnonationalist ideal...” (*Apartheid Israel*, 3, 2).

With increasing frequency over the past decade, Palestinian protest movement activists have used the global movement that ended South African apartheid as a template for engagement. In 2005, 170 Palestinian organizations issued a call for a Global BDS Movement—boycott, divestment, and sanctions—for Israel.² The BDS movement lists as its mission: “[t]o strengthen and spread the culture of Boycott as a central form of civil

¹ AFP, “Palestinians Unveil 20-Foot Mandela Statue in Ramallah,” *The Times of Israel*, 26 April 2016, <<http://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-unveil-20-foot-mandela-statue-in-ramallah/>>, (accessed June 2, 2016).

² Website of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), <<http://www.bdsmovement.net/>>, (accessed June 16, 2016).

resistance to Israeli occupation and apartheid.”³ Also in 2005, activists programmed the first Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) with speakers, programs, and protests focused on Palestinian political prisoners, Israel’s policies toward Palestinians, and the BDS movement. Beginning in Toronto, IAW spread to nearly 100 cities across the world by 2013; only three years later, as Mandela’s statue rose in Ramallah, IAW occurred in 250 cities.⁴

The use of the word “apartheid” to describe Israel’s policies—in Gaza and the West Bank, where Israel has called itself an occupying force since 1967, and within Israel’s national borders—sets off firestorms of debate in certain corners. These debates (in person, print, or social media) are so intense because those involved feel the stakes are so high. Arguments about the history of Zionism and Palestine, the future of the Jewish state, the Jewish people, and the legacies of Jewish history encounter and become intertwined with arguments about settler colonialism, neoliberalism, justice, and human rights.

Entering these debates and clarifying these currents are two new essay collections. *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid* is edited by Ilan Pappé, Professor of History at the University of Exeter. *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy* is edited by Jon Soske, Assistant Professor of Modern African History at McGill University, and Sean Jacobs, Assistant Professor of International Affairs at the New School, with a foreword by Achille Mbembe, Professor at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of the Witwatersrand. Essay authors in both books are nearly all academics and journalists whose research (and in many cases, activism) centers on Southern Africa and the Middle East. Pappé’s collection contains longer essays, and its contributors often draw more deeply from their disciplines—e.g., philosophy, cultural studies—in language and conceptualizations. Notably, though, his volume includes an essay by South African politician Ronnie Kasrils. Contributions to Soske and Jacobs’s collection are of varying length, and read as though drawn from a group with perhaps wider interests, including activism and the arts.

Here I will treat the collections together, for together they are engaged in conversations that reposition debates about Israel and Palestine. They tap simultaneously into the two extremes of our present moment. First, there is the dire urgency of the Israel/Palestine crisis, what South African writer Ishtiyahq Shukri calls “an escalating human disaster” in Palestine where “the strangulation is suffocating” (*Apartheid Israel*, 24, 25): the growing separation wall snaking through the Occupied Territories, appropriating and destroying Palestinian land; the dehumanizing checkpoints for Palestinians; the destruction of Palestinian homes; the continued building of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. Benjamin Netanyahu’s appointment of far-right Israeli politician Avigdor Lieberman, who himself lives in a West Bank settlement, as Israel’s Defense Minister, offers further evidence of the rise to power of far-right politicians who openly call for the removal of Palestinians in Israel.

Second, there is the growing momentum of resistance to Israel’s policies within the BDS and other movements, what sociologist Ran Greenstein calls “growing international solidarity with the struggle of Palestinians against the occupation and for political rights” (*Israel and South Africa*, 352). Indeed, the respective editors introduce both in the spirit of hope. Pappé’s ambition is that *Israel and South Africa* might “produce, modestly, a new thinking that could extricate all those involved from the misery and hopelessness that they are experiencing today” (*Israel and South Africa*, 4). Soske and Jacobs write that the authors of *Apartheid Israel* “strive for attentiveness to the singularity of the individual cases [of apartheid

³ Ibid.

⁴ Website of Israeli Apartheid Week, <<http://apartheidweek.org/>>, (accessed August 1, 2016).

in South Africa and Israel] even as they attempt to place multiple histories of oppression and resistance in dialogue.” Their writings work toward building alliances with other “oppressed and working-class people around the world” (*Apartheid Israel*, 9).

Together, these books make for essential reading that reeducates us, helping us to see South Africa, Israel, and Palestine through new, clearer lenses. Contributors look backward, to history, and also forward, to hope. They illuminate the usefulness of the Israel/South Africa apartheid analogy, where it fits and does not fit, and where it might contribute to resistance. They ask what South Africa’s imperfect transition to democracy has to offer Israel and Palestine as a model of a one-state solution. They also discuss how the struggle over Israeli apartheid connects to their readers as teachers, academics, and world citizens. Finally, these essays, perhaps especially the final contributions to *Apartheid Israel*, engage with grace what might be most difficult for some of us, especially but not exclusively in the Jewish world: talking about apartheid while also talking about the connections between Israel and the Holocaust.

My own work on American Jews and apartheid suggests just how intense and difficult it is to talk about Israel and apartheid, with the Holocaust and its legacy playing a role in nearly every conversation. We need only look to history to see what a profound role Holocaust consciousness has played in fervent debates among Jews over apartheid. Soon after World War II, as South Africa began to build the legal and political apartheid system, Western Jews began to debate whether or not to speak out against it. Some saw resistance as the logical extension of their Civil Rights commitments, their obligation given the genocidal racism of the Holocaust. Others feared that opposition to apartheid would threaten the wellbeing of South African Jews, and thus threaten Jewish unity, which they saw as crucial in light of the Holocaust. Within most mainstream Jewish organizations, the call for Jewish unity often meant marginalizing or purging those who critiqued racism and colonialism in the U.S., South Africa, Israel, and elsewhere.

These tensions between Jewish unity and Jewish commitments to justice ran through the dismantling of South African apartheid. When Nelson Mandela was first released from prison and visited New York City in 1990, American Jewish leaders engaged in fervent debate over whether to welcome him. Mandela had himself paralleled the cause of Palestinians with that of non-white South Africans at a time when American Jewish leaders often denied the existence of Palestinians as a people. These leaders saw Mandela as “anti-Israel,” which they equated with anti-Jewish sentiment because they spoke of Israel—and a unified Jewish “consensus” around Israel’s policies—as the only assurance of Jewish survival in the wake of the Holocaust.

American Jews had to navigate Mandela’s visit carefully. U.S. Civil Rights and global anti-apartheid activists cited the fact that American Jewish leaders had at first denied and then defended Israel’s commercial and military ties to apartheid South Africa.⁵ Black leaders, especially, went back still further, noting how many Jews in the United States had abandoned anti-colonialist and Third World movements after 1967, when critics of Israel’s occupation grew more vocal. Only in the mid-1980s, when the global anti-apartheid movement gained tremendous momentum, did mainstream Jewish organizations finally follow the lead of liberal and left Jews and pledge their organizational support for the anti-apartheid movement. In 1990, then, mainstream Jewish leaders were relieved when Mandela agreed to a secret meeting, assuaging their anxieties by assuring them that he supported Israel and

⁵ On the alliance between Israel and South Africa, see Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel’s Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Vintage, 2010).

Jewish communities. Here the arguments over prioritizing Jewish unity and/or Jewish commitments to justice were intricately bound up in a pivotal historical moment.⁶

We live still with these tensions. American Jewish leaders continue to marginalize dissent on Israel, rejecting what is accepted across much of the world and supported by the studies and narratives of these two books: that Israel's systematic oppression of Palestinians constitutes a system of apartheid, in line with South Africa's ethnocentrist ideal. Many Jewish leaders demand that politicians and laypeople alike march in lockstep with their rightwing views on Israel in order to appear "friends of the Jews." Then as now, as Achille Mbembe points out, she who analogizes Israel and apartheid South Africa, who denies the legality of the Occupation, is seen as "an enemy, a 'self-hater,' or both" (*Apartheid Israel*, vii). Then as now, "the global Jewish diaspora is...divided over Israel's claim to speak in its name" (Soske and Jacobs, *Apartheid Israel*, 5). While there was little social media response to Mandela statue's unveiling in Ramallah within Jewish communities, virulent arguments over Israel and apartheid continue despite—and perhaps because of—the growing humanitarian crisis of Palestine. In a word, these books testify: their evidence and arguments shape the contours of this debate, and indeed push back against the arguments for "Jewish unity" that kept some Western Jews from joining the anti- (South African) apartheid movement and now from joining the growing resistance to the work of apartheid done in their name in Israel.⁷

To rely on the analogy of Israeli apartheid is, as Soske and Jacobs state, to work toward "a paradigm shift in the international community's approach to the conflict." Instead of seeing "the situation as a territorial dispute between two peoples (one under temporary military occupation)," it is a "situation...defined by a complete asymmetry of power" (*Apartheid Israel*, 2). That new way of seeing must begin with Israel's founding in 1948, the Nakba, or catastrophe, the mass expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from their land; erased from history, these families' stories are not a part of the mythical narrative of Israel's making the "empty" desert bloom.

In his essay, "'Visible Equality' as Confidence Trick," journalist Jonathan Cook pushes further in re-viewing the historical grounding of apartheid in Israel's founding. He studies Israel's ethno-nationalism, its existence as a "Jewish state" with no constitution or other founding document to carve out "Israeli nationality." Jews around the world are eligible for automatic citizenship under Israel's Law of Return, and "Palestinian citizens have no legal grounds for appealing against the exclusive national rights enjoyed by Jews or for demanding their own national rights, such as right of return for their Palestinian relatives." To create Israeli nationality would mean creating "equalization of rights between all citizens," and that would "spell instant death for Israel as a Jewish state, in both a legal and a demographic sense" (*Israel and South Africa*, 127). Cook cites the startling, tragic statistics for Palestinians living in Israel: the average monthly income for a Palestinian family is about 60% of that of a Jewish family; half of all Palestinians live below the poverty line, compared with less than a fifth of Israeli Jews; 60% of all Palestinian children live in poverty, compared with less than a quarter of Jewish children (*Israel and South Africa*, 148). Cook's essay compels us to think about the global asymmetry in power and injustice born of Israel's ethno-nationalism, and the untenable prospect of a two-state solution.

⁶ These stories are told in my book, *Nations Divided: American Jews and the Struggle over Apartheid* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁷ There are Jewish organizations that endorse the BDS movement, including Jewish Voice for Peace, <<https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>>.

Anthropologist and political scientist Mahmood Mamdani joins Cook in arguing definitively that Israel must have an alternative to ethno-nationalist “democracy” in his chapter, “The South African Moment,” in *Apartheid Israel* (155). Only a single state solution is viable, because, as in South Africa, as Steven Friedman writes, a single state will require “less acknowledgement of interdependence” (“The Inevitable Impossible: South African Experience and a Single State,” in *Israel and South Africa*, 285). Israel’s Jewish settlements, with their monopoly on passable roads, water, and other resources, have made untenable the idea of creating Palestine from the Territories. Virginia Tilley’s analysis brings the situation and the one-state solution into sharp focus. She emphasizes the fact that Israel’s claims of being an Occupying (instead of a sovereign) force belie the true distribution of power in the Occupied Territories and also keep Palestinians in a state of “increasingly hopeless limbo” (“Redefining the Conflict in Israel-Palestine: The Tricky Question of Sovereignty,” in *Israel and South Africa*, 320). Her words are worth quoting at length: “[T]he fact that Israel *does not* hold formal sovereignty is the key condition that allows it to evade its own existential Scylla and Charybdis,” she writes. “On one side, international opprobrium for maintaining an openly apartheid regime; and, on the other, the ruinous consequences for Jewish statehood of enfranchising such a large non-Jewish population” (298). Tilley lines the definition of settler colonialism neatly up against Israel’s claim, and in the end measures the viability of the one- versus two-state solution: “the settler colonial state has rendered obsolete one course of justice for the Palestinian people (statehood) while the international community, acting dutifully to preserve international order and norms, has helped to forestall the only logical alternative: unification” (321).

Across the books, Pappé, Cook, and Robin D. G. Kelley trace—and smash to pieces—the romance liberals and leftists have with Israel’s mythically socialistic and inclusive past. Israel’s collective settlements called kibbutzim were founded on stolen, ethnically cleansed lands; to some they were seen as socialistic utopias, while to others, they “broadcast a wish to defend an aggressive settlement against a local population” (Pappé, “The Many Faces of European Colonialism: The Templers, the Basel Mission and the Zionist Movement,” in *Israel and South Africa*, 48). The Histadrut, Israel’s celebrated, powerful trade union federation, “worked relentlessly to exclude the Palestinian minority from a voice in workers’ issues over many decades” (Cook, “Visible Equality,” 147).

Kelley’s fascinating essay on “Apartheid’s Black apologists” traces Black activists’ journey. Israel tied itself to the Holocaust and to Jews’ spiritual rebirth, spoke of its historic battle against British imperialism, and then formed alliances with African independence movements, making it “virtually impossible” for African Americans “to see Israel as a colonial project” from its founding (Robin D. G. Kelley, “Apartheid’s Black Apologists,” in *Apartheid Israel*, 132). Into the 1960s, Black leaders still looked at the kibbutzim and powerful trade unions and saw Israel as “a ‘model democracy’—if not a semi-socialist society” (135). As I do in my own work, Kelley cites then foreign minister Golda Meir’s strong anti-apartheid stands at the United Nations, the parallels she drew between Jewish and Black African struggles for independence. For a time, Meir’s public positions made it easy for Western Jews to see fighting South African apartheid as an extension of their Civil Rights commitments, to build coalitions under African American leadership. But the 1967 War, as Kelley writes, “changed everything,” as it brought a “sharper African American critique of Zionism and the possibilities of solidarity with the Palestine Liberation Organization” (135). The rise of Black Power, the strident Zionism embraced by many American Jews post-1967, the insistence on lockstep consensus on Israeli policies (including its Occupation) among American Jewish leaders: these accompanied this “sharper critique,” and the Black/Jewish

coalition fell apart.⁸ Black leaders found it increasingly difficult to serve as apologists for Israel's apartheid.

Kelley's analysis provides the background for the rise and fall of progressive American coalitions with regard to Israel and South Africa, while other contributors analyze the political realities of the two nations. In her essay, "Apartheid, Israel, and Palestinian Statehood," political scientist Leila Farsakh notes the parallels between the post-1967 Occupied Territories and the Bantustans, the Black "homelands" created by the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959, which "institutionalized the residential and political separation of the natives from the whites." As with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, these "homelands" sought to "resolve the question of Africans' political rights by disenfranchising them" (*Israel and South Africa*, 166). Arianna Lissoni moves past analogy, highlighting the reciprocal relationships between the Bantustans and Israel. Israel's "extensive" and intimate commercial and military relations with the Bantustans meant huge profits, the propping up of "their illegitimate governments" and a distraction from the illegal trade in arms with apartheid South Africa ("Apartheid's 'Little Israel' Bophuthatswana," in *Apartheid Israel*, 56). Politically, these ties were to Israel's "allies in the future geopolitical reconfiguration of the region (against the prospect of the coming to power of the 'pro-Soviet' and 'pro-Palestinian' ANC)." The modeling went in both directions, as for South Africa, "Israel became a cultural and ideological model on which the Bantustan could draw to shape its own ethnonationalist project and articulate its right to exist" (63, 66).

As the authors engage each other across the pages, education scholar Salim Vally cautions us against thinking of Palestine simply as "Bantustans Redux." With separation and oppression as its sole motivation, South Africa's apartheid regime wanted the Bantustans to be "viable," whereas "apartheid rulers in Israel" have "an unrestrained zeal to destroy any potential, any capacity to be viable" ("Solidarity with Palestine: Confronting the 'Whataboutery' Argument and the Bantustan Denouement," in *Apartheid Israel*, 48). Still, to use Bantustanization as a shorthand for the process of separating and cordoning off various parts of Palestine is useful for insights into Israel and South Africa. Farsakh teaches about how the Oslo Accords facilitated the Bantustanization of the West Bank and Gaza. She utilizes the apartheid analogy to demonstrate how the "legal structure puts the Palestinian entity in a similar position to South African Bantustans under the apartheid regime"—which is to say, without any real, viable power (*Israel and South Africa*, 172). With Oslo, she writes, "the PLO gave up any claim to 78% of historical Palestine and to any thought of [Palestinian] citizenship rights within Israel...[t]he Palestinian leadership de facto accepted, rather than challenged, Israel's colonial reality and claim to separateness" (*Israel and South Africa*, 169, 172).

Sociologist Andy Clarno joins Farsakh's critique of Oslo, seeing the Accords as integral to a neoliberal agenda. Israeli business elites promoted Oslo only out of concern "that political instability would impede their ability to attract foreign investors and multinational corporations." The Palestinian Authority's economic policies "were shaped from the start by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund," and thus their projects "have amplified the class divisions within Palestinian society." "Neoliberal restructuring" meant "greatly reducing Israeli reliance on Palestinian labor," relying instead on "thousands of low-paid

⁸ On the Black-Jewish alliance, see especially Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

migrant workers” and suffocating Palestinian agricultural and industrial economies (“Neoliberal Agenda,” in *Apartheid Israel*, 70).

The intricacies of the two nation’s labor histories are also essential to the analysis of Ran Greenstein, who authors essays in both collections. The South African economy was utterly dependent on Black labor, with apartheid ensuring that “Black people performed their role as providers of labor without presenting difficult social and political challenges.” The system “created a bloated and expensive repressive apparatus.” Israel’s labor history stands in contrast to this: “Palestinian workers...never became central to the Israeli labor market as a whole” (“Israel, The Apartheid Analogy, and the Labor Question,” in *Apartheid Israel*, 33, 38, 37). Embedded in these divergences are lessons about the anti-(Israeli) apartheid resistance movement. “[T]he central role played by the labor movement in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa,” he writes, “cannot be replicated in Israel/Palestine.” Though activists in the BDS movement will find no direct parallel in labor, he asserts, they must tap the “creative attitude” of the South African movement to work with Palestinians, Israeli-Jewish constituencies, and global solidarity efforts (37, 41).

The strengths of these essays often lie in the contributors’ creative reach in thinking about resistance. English scholar M. Neelika Jayawardane discusses “Cultural Weapons Against Apartheid,” and examines the cultural boycott as a method of “ending complicity” (“Cultural Weapons Against Apartheid: Art, Artists, Cultural Boycotts,” *Apartheid Israel*, 117). She reviews the parallels with the boycotts of apartheid South Africa and warns against tokenizing Palestinian or Arab art and thus “normalizing” or presenting a “united front” of colonized and colonizing (113). She joins other authors in insisting that the asymmetry of power must always be in view.

Even absent a labor movement uniting against Israeli apartheid, these contributors remind us, broad-based coalition builders have long been at work. Anthropologist Kelly Gillespie writes “Toward a Queer Palestine,” noting the global resistance that has emerged from Israel’s “pink washing...the strategic use of ‘gay rights’ to create the veneer of democracy over a conservative political project.” Gillespie envisions “an expansive vision of the politics of antiapartheid,” opening “a political space for imagining a future Palestine where freedom is an expansive project reflecting an antiracist, anti-imperialist sexual politics” (*Apartheid Israel*, 106, 109). Media and Communications scholar Anthony Löwstedt also writes about human rights coalitions. He notes how apartheid regimes promote and accept femicide, defined as the targeting of girls and women with deadly force because within “apartheid victim communities” it serves to divide the victim population in conflict and provide proof of the “backward” nature of that population (“Femicide in Apartheid: The Parallel Interplay between Racism and Sexism in South Africa and Palestine-Israel,” *Israel and South Africa*, 192, 193).

For those of us in the West, especially in academic settings, these essays reach into our own lives; they bind us to the issue of apartheid by heightening awareness of its proximity and our own responsibility for its undoing. To “Stand in Solidarity with Palestine,” writes Vally, is to stand against Israel, the nation that does “the Empire’s bidding” in the Middle East. It is to protest the nation that “trains police forces and military personnel around the world”—“whether in Guatemala, Iraq, or New Orleans”—lending its expertise in collective punishment and terror.” Vally reminds us that “two of the four law enforcement agencies” deployed in Ferguson after the killing of Michael Brown “had received training from Israeli security forces” (“Solidarity with Palestine,” 43, 44). As Soske and Jacobs write in their introduction, “It is only possible to treat the question of Israeli apartheid as ‘something over

there' by ignoring its intimate connection with forms of racism, militarization, and censorship at work in North America" (*Apartheid Israel*, 11).

The most visible form of academic protest has been through boycotts, and Politics professor Shireen Hassim assesses these in a calm voice that counters the shrill notes sounded in professional academic societies over their own roles in the BDS movement. Hassim contends that these debates fail "to address the conditions in which Palestinian scholars work": scholars will invoke academic freedom for those studying in (or travelling to) Israel, yet they do not see how that invocation "constrains the possibility of collective action by the academic profession in contexts where other freedoms are violated on a daily basis" ("Academic Freedom and Academic Boycotts," in *Apartheid Israel*, 102). As History and Gender Studies scholar Teresa Barnes reminds us, colleges and universities can be "the most prominent institutions that could raise voices against this insanity" ("Teach for Your Life," in *Apartheid Israel*, 88).

These illuminating correctives help restructure our understanding of Israel's past and present, changing the way we think about justice. In "Apartheid and the Question of Origin," Oren Ben-Dor, a professor of law and philosophy, pulls back, focusing on language and ideas as he hits home the urgency of ending our reliance on the language of "occupation." The dominance of that language, he notes, "generally functions to silence any discussion of the apartheid nature of Zionism proper," and, importantly, disguises the fact that it's a "democracy with an inbuilt apartheid bias." In his sweeping essay, Ben-Dor ties Zionism inseparably to "the Jewish question." He sees Zionism "far from abusing the Jewish experience" as "in fact a manifestation of Jewish being and thinking." Zionism's "existential shackles" tie it to Jewishness; it is the desire for separateness and the "tribal collective unconscious" which "provokes and utilizes violence in order to self preserve" (*Israel and South Africa*, 85, 100, 104, 112).

Ben-Dor's query as to why some "phenomena refuse to give up the ghost" moves us outside the realm of thinking of one-state solutions, instead prompting thoughts on Jewish existence after the Holocaust ("Apartheid and the Question of Origin," 95). Soske and Jacobs made the compelling decision to end their book on Israeli apartheid with Jewish voices from South Africa. Here I do not wish to be reductive; these are scholars who self-identify, and their essays, inflected with personal experience, work to untie Jewishness from Zionism, to give up the ghost. In doing so, they address a segment of the population who remain "steadfast" in their belief that only "Israel's existence can secure Jewish life on earth" (Melissa Levin, "The Last Colony," in *Apartheid Israel*, 170).

Melissa Levin's words resonate deeply with me because I grew up in a household, in a community, that imbibed this belief. I too was taught that, "Zionism was the articulation of our deepest longing to return to the land of our ancestors. I thought that this was our only opportunity for Jewish survival" after the Holocaust exposed us as weak. "Palestinians struggle to find a place within a narrative of liberation," she writes, "in part due to the impossibility of being a victim to the ultimate victim. Auschwitz fixes the status of Jews as definitive of the wounded, and, in so doing, vanishes the trauma of those who would claim to be injured by them" ("The Last Colony," 170, 171).

In *Apartheid Israel's* closing essays, Melissa Levin and Heidi Grunebaum write of their painful journeys away from the Holocaust/Zionist narrative so familiar to them as South African Jews—and to me as an American Jew. "The unfortunate response of Zionism to the Shoah," writes Levin, bravely, "is that it replicates the very forms of being that sustain the modern European state's incapacity to accommodate life for too long. The terms of the oppressors become rearticulated as our terms.... It is a fool's endeavor" ("The Last Colony,"

175). Grunebaum writes of how she created a documentary on Israel to encourage individuals toward a “personal meditation on complicity,” to open up a “wider set of shared resonances” (“Reflections in a Mirror: From South Africa to Palestine/Israel and Back Again,” in *Apartheid Israel*, 165). At their best, all of these essays do precisely this work.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as activists built the momentum that later brought down the apartheid regime in South Africa, most American Jewish leaders looked away, citing “Jewish unity,” often defending South Africa’s alliance with Israel, and decrying the anti-Zionism of the movement. Only in the mid-1980s did they tentatively rejoin the movement. They welcomed Mandela to New York in 1990, and assumed a public role in ushering in South Africa’s imperfect democracy. With time, those leaders began rewriting history to put back in the marginalized dissenters who had linked Holocaust consciousness to anti-apartheid and made it a Jewish issue all along.

Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian human rights activist and cofounder of the BDS movement, speaks frequently about the momentum of his cause by measuring the collapsing distance between right now and “our South Africa moment.”⁹ In that moment, the anti-(Israeli) apartheid movement will attract the global attention and support needed to bring down the apartheid regime studied by the contributors to both of these volumes. Using the anti-South African apartheid movement as a roadmap, American Jewish leaders might engage these essays’ arguments, opening up to conversations about BDS and Palestine as we approach our South Africa moment with Israel/Palestine.

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⁹ Rami Younis, “Interview: The Man Behind the BDS Movement,” +972, June 14, 2015, <<http://972mag.com/interview-the-man-behind-the-bds-movement/107771/>>, (accessed June 12, 2016).

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