

## Musings on a World without Borders

July 9, 2021

The Interim Global Constructive Program adopted by pioneers of the Global Satyagraha Movement envisions widening circles of caring communities as the seed for a new cultural paradigm. Caring communities do not fit well into political systems. Therefore the new cultural paradigm seeded by caring communities must transcend nations and political borders. That is the non-negotiable goal of the not-quite-yet fledgling Global Satyagraha Movement.

Intellectuals scoff at a world without borders. They cannot envision a homogeneous major population without political boundaries. But I have recently discovered, to my great surprise, that such a population exists and has existed for two-thousand years. *A Passionate Pacifist: Essential Writings of Aaron Samuel Tamares*<sup>1</sup> – a compilation of works written over a century ago – tells the story. It was an eye opener for me who was raised in the American WASP tradition. (Unless otherwise specified, all quotations herein will be from that book.)

Too many people consider the current nation of Israel, regardless of its belligerent and atrocious activity, as representing the Jewish people. Political Israel in no way represents the Jewish tradition loyal to the Covenant and living the Torah. I will explain.

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Rabbi Tamares (1869-1931) is described as a 19<sup>th</sup> century rabbi with 21<sup>st</sup> century vision. Born the same year as Mohandas Gandhi, Tamares' writings straddle the rise of Political Zionism<sup>2</sup> and World War I. After being ordained in 1893, he served in the same, small Polish village from then until his death.

Political Zionism made its first appearance in an article by Theodor Herzl on the front page of *The Jewish Chronicle* (17 January 1896). Herzl outlined his vision of a Jewish homeland to which the Jewish Diaspora (Jews scattered in exile around the world) could return.

Tamares at first “threw himself body and soul into this young movement, because he believed that Zionism was devoted to freedom and justice ... he had not yet developed the insight necessary to evaluate the [Zionist] calls for ‘justice’ [as meaning] redemption not of *people* but of *territories* ...” He also “believed that Zionism would provide an avenue for the spiritual uplift of the Jewish people and the revival of Jewish culture.” (pp. 22-23, emphasis his)

This initial belief had a tremendous pull on Tamares. His pro-Zionist articles got him invited to a seven-district Zionist convention in Vilna. At “the conference a board was elected, consisting entirely of young whippersnappers with clean-shaven mugs, twirled mustaches and jaunty, self-

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<sup>1</sup> Edited, Translated, and Introduced by Everett Gendler (Teaneck, NJ; Ben Yehuda Press; 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Other forms of Zionism appeared earlier. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the concept of resettling Israel became popular. Proto-Zionism (first concepts of Zionism) took place between 1860 and 1874. Practical Zionism (immediately resettling in Israel without necessarily nationhood) was introduced in 1881. Then Political Zionism (nationhood) was introduced by Theodor Herzl in 1896.

satisfied grins.” The rabbis “were seated right under their noses in the front row.” (p. 25) The proceedings were carried out in Russian, which hardly anyone could understand.

“The rabbis, for their part, sat barely breathing, lest they disturb the ‘grand intellectuals’ with their fancy Russian and their unfamiliar, ‘elegant’ words such as ‘agitations,’ ‘propaganda,’ ‘party discipline,’ etc.” Tamares left that gathering “with a crack in his earlier enthusiasm.” (p. 25-26)

Nevertheless, in 1900 he was chosen as a delegate to the Fourth Zionist Congress in London. “The pure emptiness, bureaucracy, and officiousness which he had encountered at the Vilna conference was present to an even greater degree at the London Congress ...” Tamares’ “fantasy that Zionism would uplift the Jewish spirit and serve as a vehicle for the fight against bondage, dissolved into nothingness.” (pp. 26-27)

Although his dislike of Zionism was at first fuzzy, over the years Tamares recognized that “renewal of the world would not come at the hands of sly politicians or a clever rearrangement of society – but rather through the refinement of moral-aesthetic taste, a sense of discernment between good and evil.” (p.34)

Tamares considered the Zionist goal of nationhood to be a new form of idolatry. He predicted that this “newest idol called ‘Jewish nationalism’ [would] set idol against idol, defending themselves against the strange abominations of others by their own insane abomination.” (p. 113) He maintained that “there is no need for us either to thrust ourselves into the midst of alien, idolatrous worlds, as assimilation urges, or to drag these alien idols into our own world, as nationalism urges.” (p. 118)

Until reading Tamares’ teachings I had considered the claim of ‘people chosen by God’ to be arrogant. However, what really happened is that God called and Israel responded; “at the time of the renowned Revelations at Mt. Sinai, the hour had arrived for the Creator of the Universe to give to the world His Torah, i.e. to give to the world below the Divine Emanations of Faith in and cleavage to God.

“The Jewish people responded to His call by hastening to express its willingness immediately in these words: ‘We will obey and we will hearken’. Therefore the Torah was conveyed to the Jewish People, creating a firm bond and covenant between the People and the Holy One, blessed be He.” (p. 152) Because they responded to Yahweh’s call, they were chosen to be God’s instruments to purify the world.

There were temptations and wanderings from Yahweh’s way. During the biblical history of Kings, Israel “established for itself a sovereign political life ‘like all the nations’.” (p. 153) Moses had warned against becoming too comfortable and forgetting their Covenant with God.

But Israel wanted kings and it got kings. It competed and fought with neighboring nations. King David subdued the last of the competing nations. Then he wanted to build a temple as a center of

worship but that task was not meant for him. The temple would be built by his son, the so-called 'peaceful king'.

“But a king, even if he be peaceful, is still a king. And if, by virtue ... he be slack in waging new wars which would demonstrate further the prowess of his sword” he could still express his nobility “in more gentle ways: by extending a ‘humble’ hand to his submissive neighbors and by going about with them ‘like a brother’.” (p. 154)

Solomon built the temple. He consulted other kings to make it look like a common project. Then he celebrated the completion of his monument to God. He also celebrated his own esteem for being such a great king.

In summary, “when that people which had accepted the Torah, the Jewish people, had taken possession of a land and was leading the political life, appointing kings and waging wars like all the other nations, and settling accounts with the Torah by enclosing it in a Sanctuary in the midst of such pomp and external display ... at this time the nations came to realize that they really need not tremble so before the Torah.

“Thus fated the Torah of Moses all the while that Israel sat upon its land, its king upon its neck, and the Temple atop both ... In that measure to which some of its customs with external glitter, suitable for political officials, made their way in the world, to that degree did the Inner Spirit flee from the Jewish nation itself; and the materialistic craving for the tastes and temptations of the nations grew apace.” (p. 155)

Not everyone fell prey to this activity. “The prophets, men of great souls and inspired intellects, the Teaching of the Lord in their mouths, their hearts filled with the Intimate Presence from Mount Sinai – great was their sorrow over the foolishness of their people, and they stood warning the children of Israel that they were drawing ever nearer the precipice beyond which lay nothingness.” (pp. 155-156)

The prophets were persecuted and slain, their warnings ignored. “Not for this had the Holy One, Blessed be He, selected the children of Israel when He brought them forth out of Egypt and gave them the Torah on Mount Sinai ... He would soon lay hold of severe means to drive His people toward the goal He desired ... [He] would raze the palaces of kings, pull down the Temple, and exile Israel from its land. ... The prediction of the prophets came to pass.

“Then, in those first days after the catastrophe, the children of Israel would suffer terrible; but from that darkness would shine forth a great light for them; from their bodily woes would be raised and established their spiritual world. Then would the Torah return to its proper lodging; in a parched desert was it given, and to the desert of Exile it would return. And there, in its traditional home, it would blossom forth in the hearts of people. ... It is clear from this that Exile was not exclusively or even primarily a punishment for the past, but rather, and essentially, a constructive measure for the future ...” (p. 156)

The Diaspora began with the Babylonian Exile in 586 BCE. It stepped up significantly when the Jewish nation was ended in 70 CE, the Temple was destroyed, and Rome forcibly evicted Jews from the Promised Land. Even in exile the Torah Jews maintain their tradition. They refused to be assimilated into capitalism, or communism or any other ism. They remained faithful to their “mission to be ‘a light unto the nations’ [which] is not less likely to succeed in exile – it is more likely than ever.

“... the reason we were exiled from our country and scattered among the nations was that so we could mentor them in the spiritual sciences ... [so] that we could first be a light unto *ourselves* and internalize the lesson the exile was supposed to teach us, and only at a later time and as a corollary, would we be ‘a light unto the nations.’ ... at the right time the gentile nations will open their eyes and observe the intrinsic worth of the eternal nation (the Israelite nation) dwelling in their midst and emulate their conduct.” (p. 176, emphasis his)

Bearing this witness “does not require of us to actively mentor these nations *per se*. ... the enlightenment of the nations is their business, not ours. ... our job is to maintain equanimity and spiritual steadfastness. It was for this reason and for this reason only that our nation was shown favor. ... The aspect of our exilic treatment that *is* our active responsibility is to enlighten ourselves.

“Our testament ‘to be a light unto the nations’ does not place any burden or responsibility upon us to act or direct any thought toward the gentile nation ... this light should be internally focused ... our light to the nations will inevitably appear when they finally open their eyes and observe the splendor of our world.” (pp. 176-177)

To nourish this inner focus “‘Exile’ and [study of the Torah were] two wonderful catalytic agents for the Jewish people ... [and those agents] were interdependent ... [Torah study] without Exile would not have survived, for its light would have been extinguished by the thick shadows of sovereignty and state; and Exile without [Torah study] also could not have existed, for its subject, the people in Exile, would not have survived. That is to say, a people without a Torah – and many such people suffered exile – yields to the indomitable power of its conqueror and becomes assimilated ... When Torah and Exile are joined, great wonders are born in the soul of their bearer.” (p. 160)

“And thus it was that between two fires – the flaming light of Torah ... and the flaming eyes of the wolves outside – for two thousand years [since 70 CE] there was ceaselessly cast a singular and unique culture, one without parallel anywhere in the world: a culture soft as wax in material interests and hard as iron in matters of the soul.” (p. 161) This culture also demonstrated that caring communities need not be confined to one geographic location.

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But at first there was not the higher unity needed ‘to be a light unto the nations’. It was the 70 CE razing of the temple and driving the Jews into exile that triggered the higher unity in the Covenant which is now shared by Torah Jews. Exile and the Diaspora were necessary to make a

truly global movement without borders. Tamares indicated two criteria for this higher unity now experienced by Torah Jews.

First, they will not be assimilated into existing political structures. The new world they envision is not a political structure. Their new world is one of true ‘freedom’ and ‘self-awareness.’ In a political system, ‘freedom’ is something one must fight for, and ‘self-awareness’ is the courage and daring required for that fight – that war. Both are loaded words used as deceptive propaganda to raise emotions in the culturally-enslaved to seize the sword, rise up against the oppressor, and so free themselves.

True freedom is a matter of inner freedom. “True freedom, hence, rests in one’s own hands ... when one’s eyes are opened to recognize one’s own essence and self, one is already free, and one needs no further declaration of independence or formal emancipation from others. ‘Self-awareness’ is, therefore, not the mere preparation for freedom, but the very freedom itself.” (p. 164, edited for gender neutrality)

Secondly, Torah Jews will not seek nationhood. As discussed above, nationhood is institutionalized idolatry. Citizens of a nation have “confused ‘arrogance’ and ‘haughtiness’ with ‘freedom,’ and ‘recognition of strength and power’ with ‘self-recognition’ (p.171) Nationalism results in competition with and exploitation of other nations for land, cheap labor, an natural resources. This, as we have seen in 21<sup>st</sup> century history, leads to perpetual war and an overriding war economy in which the rich prosper and the poor suffer.

“As for the sword waving which goes on in ‘national’ wars, where the individual is dragged in without choice, how much more in such cases is it based on slavery (and on the real slavery; the defilement of the soul of the enslaved). The rooting out of such sword-waving can come only through inner freedom.

“... It is not written, ‘man shall not lift up sword against man,’ but rather ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation.’ For it is this sword, the collective sword forcibly placed in the hand of the individual against his will, which presents the greatest danger to the world today ...

“... the Exilic people of the Torah, carries within its bosom the seeds of the prophetic ideal; ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation,’ for it includes within itself both the foundation of freedom and the basis for the soul’s refusal to perform evil in the face of whatever command.” (p.171)

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There is more history involved but this summary will suffice for the purpose on my musings here. This story about the children of Israel catches my attention because the Jewish people are the first and only humans in history (to my knowledge) to have a Global Constructive Program – the Torah; God’s plan for planet Earth. They are also the first nation without borders or a political structure. And their higher unity is in the Covenant with Yahweh.

Two other critical aspects of the Diaspora is the Torah Jews refusal to be ‘assimilated’ into an inferior culture or to become ‘nationalized’ which would defeat the purpose of Exile and violate the Covenant by having a false god – patriotism to a national government. There is a difference between love of country (the land that is our home) and patriotism.

Every day I receive emails from nonviolence organizations suggesting that I “tell Congress to do such and such;” or that I should “ask Biden to whatever,” This is pleading for the ego to correct itself, which has never produced meaningful improvement. It is working within the system. It is ‘assimilation’.

It is also reacting to an existing problem rather than being proactive to prevent a problem before it happens. The Global Satyagraha Movement should use reactive nonviolence judiciously in some instances to alleviate wrongful situations; to lessen suffering, hunger, and destitution. The Catholic Workers and other caring organizations do a good job at this. But we should be very discriminating about how much reaction is necessary. For the most part global satyagrahis must be proactive.

I recognize a few proactive programs today. In Chapter 12 of *The Goodness Field* I describe how the ‘Charter for Compassion,’ the ‘Nonviolent Cities Project,’ and ‘Sanctuary Cities’ are proactive programs. They stimulate goodness thoughts about more fulfilling ways of living together. Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping is also proactive – it stimulates humane thinking in both opponent and observer. These projects avoid assimilation by transcending the system.

Regarding nationalization, I have read all kinds of books, articles, essays, and papers describing how the economic system, the US government, the United Nations, and other entities can be modified, realigned, or otherwise changed to be more peaceful and just. But in the end, even if all the altruistic changes could be made, we would still have nations and politics and the wrong definitions of ‘Freedom’ and ‘Self-Awareness.’

In real life those altruistic realignments of existing structures is illogical. The arguments are all logical as far as they go, but they fail to address the ultimate motivating force behind the “filthy, rotten system,” as Dorothy Day called it. They don’t have a plan for overcoming the obstacles of greed and power. They don’t address *egothink*. Tamares’ reminds us that “renewal of the world would not come at the hands of sly politicians or a clever rearrangement of society – but rather through the refinement of moral-aesthetic taste, a sense of discernment between good and evil.” (p.34) Politics and political borders align with neither moral-aesthetic tastes nor discernment between good and evil

I believe the dictum of science philosopher Thomas S. Kuhn that major breakthroughs don’t happen by building on old theories. “The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition ... can emerge is far from ... extension of an old paradigm. Rather it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalizations ... (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 84-85) He arrived at this conclusion through an extensive study of scientific breakthroughs.

I devoted the first third of *The Goodness Field: A Guidebook for Proactive Nonviolence* to developing recognition that our opponent in the struggle for peace and justice is not a person, an organization, or any material entity. Our opponent is the selfish thinking generated by greedy egos – *egothink*. This selfish thinking then motivates wrongful behavior with all the bad consequences we face today. Until our minds can be controlled by our inner goodness, rather than our egos, we will continue to have selfish thinking generating wrongful behavior and border walls.

Even if revamping governments were feasible, which it isn't, it would take the same higher unity as establishing a world without border. I say that because the same greed and corruption – all the wrongfulness of nationalism – would still have to be overcome. But even then, a benevolent and peaceful nation is an oxymoron. I prefer a world without borders.

I am anxious for the transition to begin. Perhaps a trigger event is necessary. What that event might be and the severity of it is anyone's guess, "but from that darkness would shine forth a great light for them; from their bodily woes would be raised and established their spiritual world." (p. 156)

In the meantime, those of us who have declared 'Global Satyagraha against *Egothink*' can prepare for that trigger event. We can consciously rebut the pressure to be assimilated and the tendency to rebuild nationhood. We can intentionally design our personal and organizational activities to help those trapped in the 'Culture of Entertainment' recognize and consciously understand the truthfulness of their inner goodness and the fickleness of their ego.

A world without borders is no more 'pie in the sky' than any other option I have heard of. A world without borders is a viable, real-life goal. We Global Satyagraha pioneers must arouse the passion in enough people to start the process of achieving it; and in doing so, give that goal priority for action and resources.

These musings and loving criticisms are my feelings about *Global Satyagraha* and *proactive nonviolence*.

In peace and love, Bob Aldridge