



Review

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En Route, A Perpetual Need for New Origins: A Three-Book Cycle

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Abstract

Having written two books in the main focusing on the Kurdish poet and author of modernistic narrative, namely Salīm Barakāt, the present writer just submitted a third book on relevant scripture, that is on the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’ān, and Mazdaism. The tentative title of the third book is The Tradition of the First Temple. The link between each book has nowhere been explained. And nor is there anywhere an explanation as to why these books follow one and other. The following brief paper attempts just that, as well as trying to explain our overall human attraction to a violent Middle Eastern civilization, and the writer’s own inability to detach her existence from Jacob, known as “Israel” and meaning something like ‘he who is a leader towards a righteous existence and defense of UrShalem the City of Peace.’

Keywords: Aviva Butt on Salim Barakat, Aviva Butt on scripture, the cyclic return of the theme, the ongoing poem finds a new myth, the deluge that purifies the land

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Introduction

The publisher of academic books can only “hurry” to publish a new book when his “expert” anonymous reviewers find time to try and decipher a new book on a difficult subject researched by a writer who has discovered a “new origin” to give expression to the never-ending unspoken poem driving his productivity. . . The reviewer might scratch his head (so-to-speak) and say (to himself due to the confidentiality of the matter) something like “where did the writer find something like that? Could the writer or the writers have possibly written it themselves, or is it stolen (?), and if so, but from where? And so the matter drags on.

My most recently drafted book is with the prospective publisher. It has done the full circle of going back to origins, the start of and inspiration of our written literature and perpetuated culture, that is to say, scripture. For people from the Middle East, that means the Hebrew Bible, the written Torah, which is to say, the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets from Joshua until the last of the prophets, the minor prophet Haggai, and the Writings (three sections)—and in the mainstream, the Qur’ ān, as written down and recorded in Arabic.

The repeated injunction from the biblical Prophets of *Do not fear* meaning something like ‘press on ahead,’ with the minor prophet Haggai indicates a break-away from the traditions of the First Temple, and also a separation within the Kurdish nation of those who came out of Egypt along with Moses their leader, the Bnei Yisra’El. Haggai’s *Do not fear* becomes a sort of pivot, a turning point in the poesy of the ongoing narrative and indicates a new beginning:²

אֶת-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-כָּרַתִּי אִתְּכֶם, בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְרוּחִי, עֹמֶדֶת בְּתוֹכְכֶם—אֶל-תִּירָאוּ

Speaking of the matter I agreed on with you, when you came out of Egypt.

My presence remains in your midst. Do not fear. [Haggai 2:5]

² The below translation from the Hebrew Bible, and any forthcoming quotations from either the Hebrew Bible or the Qur’ān are translated by the present writer, unless otherwise acknowledged—A.B.

Translations of the biblical *Book of Daniel* are taken from Aviva Butt (2024), *The Tradition of the First Temple*: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York USA—her most recent book submitted for consideration toward the end of 2024.

With the return to the deserted First Temple in UrShalem, the City of Peace, whose traditions the visionary Daniel had tried to rescue and perpetuate, not only were the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the “box” with the Divine Presence not recovered, but also the urgency of returning to the Mazdaism of the First Temple was set aside. The worship of OhrMazd (Mazdaism) had meantime been transformed by the prophet Zarathustra to worship of Ahura Mazda (Zoroastrianism), creating a new determinate ritual.³ However, the myth and folkloric account of the creation of civilization with a line of kings responsible to a heavenly King remained part of the order of things in the consciousness of the Middle East,⁴ and remained as told to Daniel in his vision. Deception / Evil / Sin symbolized by “the reptilian” as we learn in Chapter Nine towards the end of the *Book of Daniel* had crept onto the foundation of the First Temple. Therefore Daniel’s visions was of a Temple, repairs underway, but utterly destroyed in 70 CE so that Evil could be washed away by another great flood or floods comparable to or worse than the deluge in Noah’s time. “The reptilian” only then would be removed from the Temple site:

And [as for] the city and the sanctum, the coming empire shall destroy it /

ALTERNATE READING Let us say the next powerful nation, and its end shall be in flood,

Unto the end of the conflict utterly laid waste [9:26]

And He shall affirm the Brit with the multitude, one week. And half the week,

He shall halt the sacrifice and the offering, and on the wing of the wasteland,

*The **reptilian**, irrevocably resolved, will dissolve due to the desolation [9:27]*

The Temple site needed to be purified [with water] over a long period of time, and a new folkloric account of another kind would be written and recorded in the Hebrew Bible. The

³ See Mary Boyce (2001), *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd. (2nd rev. ed., imprint Routledge).

⁴ See the *Book of Daniel*, Chapters 7 and 8 in which Daniel was obliged to inform the temporal king of his fate:

I watched the visions at night

And behold [along] with the clouds in the heavens, a sort of human-being was coming

And he came as far as the Ancient of Days. And advancing he was brought before Him [7:13]

To him [the earthly king] is granted dominion and glory and a kingdom

All the peoples, nations, and language [groups] shall pay homage to him.

His dominion [of the Ancient of Days] shall be eternal, and not be eradicated.

His kingdom shall not be destroyed [7:14]

“reptilian” of Daniel’s vision (Daniel 9:27 quoted above) became the serpent who sat in a tree in Paradise and misled Adam before the tragic fall of humankind downwards to sempiternity. This account is confirmed in the Qur’ān with the story of the tragic fall of Iblīs, who after all is said and done made a bad mistake. Yearning to return to Heaven, Iblīs was banned. Contemporary Kurdish poet Salim Barakat writes that Iblīs’ fall from grace was nevertheless a boon to him as a poet. In the opening lines of Barakat’s poem “The Obscure,” (*al-Mu‘jam*), Iblīs finds refuge in the poet’s bed:⁵

*Light’s talons, and the predators swoop down shivering from the shocks of the boon.
But do not fear. You are safe in my bed.⁶ Your muscle is soft. I shall bite your wrist
Since you fear my mouthpiece, the mouthpiece for the artful ruse in my outpouring*

Daniel’s book was included in the third and last section of the Hebrew Bible, the “Writings,” only after much dispute among the learned “Rabbis” in Tiberias in the first and second centuries of the Common Era, that is, after the downfall of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The prayer and ritual to be observed in what would become known as the “Exile,” and the memory of the Land of Israel divorced from its reality became the pre-occupation among a dispossessed people. Prophet Mohammed, who visited the ancient Prophets in their heavenly abode above UrShalem, the City of Peace would provide the Middle East with another scripture in another “holy” language, namely, Arabic—inspiration for our Middle Eastern culture, our civilization, and a new starting point for a return, a link with the traditions of UrShalem, the City of Peace.

Eventually a compassionate and warm welcome to Jewish survival was extended to the long-suffering Jewish Exile by the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire Bayezit II (1481-1512) in the fifteenth century:⁷

⁵ For an English translation of the entirety of Salim Barakat’s poem *The Obscure*, see the Anthology in Aviva Butt (2021). *Salim Barakat, Mahmud Darwish, and the Kurdish and Palestinian Similitude: Qamishli Extended*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 270 pp. (From May 2023, available as paperback).

⁶ *But do not fear. You are safe in my bed.* Both sentences allude to the Qur’ān. Barakat’s entire poem is ta’wīl (inner interpretation of the Qur’ān).

⁷ See: “The Fifth Centenary of The First Jewish Migrations to The Ottoman Empire” by Salâhi R. Sonyel. In: [Türk Tarih Kurumu](#). 2024. Diğer Dergiler: [Belgeler](#) · [Höyük](#). <https://belleten.gov.tr/tam-metin/2217/eng> DOI: 10.37879/belleten.1992.207. <https://www.ttk.gov.tr>

The Sultan (Bayezit II, 1481-1512) even sent his own ship in order to speed up their rescue operation. Bayezit was particularly well disposed towards them. He encouraged their immigration and settlement throughout the empire, and issued a decree enjoining their good treatment in his dominions. Soon the Maranos, those who had outwardly become Catholic Christian in order to escape persecution in Spain, returned to Judaism.

This mass Jewish exodus is a landmark in Jewish history. It had a profound effect on the Ottoman Empire. Many of the exiles from Spain were allowed to settle along the Golden Horn (Haliç), in the capital, on favourable terms. As Spain had been, for centuries, the most advanced centre of Jewish life, they brought with them skills, knowledge, and some wealth. A number of them entered the Ottoman service while retaining their previous religion. . .

The compassion of the Muslim Ottomans remains a characteristic of today's Türkiye, as when Türkiye sheltered 3 million displaced and homeless Syrians since about 2011 until 8 December 2024,⁸ and other refugees. In the mind of the present writer, Türkiye is a warm and most welcome and welcoming friend. Longstanding historical ties with the extensive Kurdish population in modern Türkiye, and in neighboring Syria and Iraq are especially welcome now at a time when the young State of Israel is again facing a surge of anti-Semitism throughout Europe—as well as bursts of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and racism coming to the fore in the “New World” of the U.S.A., NATO, the United Nations, and even in laid-back countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

Daniel's description of the origins of our Middle Eastern civilization in an ideal world does not deal with issues of evil and good, but rather of the creation of the natural order of life in a Middle Eastern setting: rule, ethics and justice, and even aesthetics. Soran Hamarash refers to the cities of Mesopotamian civilization together with UrShalem as the Triangle of Human Civilization, UrShalem being the Triangle's outreach if not the outreach to Heaven itself. At the beginning of his now long career as a writer and poet-prophet, in 1970 Salim Barakat wrote a poem entitled “Lineage” (*Niqabat al-Ansab*) that could be understood as affirming the above connection between UrShalem and the Kaaba. The poet seems to consider Hamarash's theoretical Triangle

⁸ It is hoped now that these refugees will have an option to return to Syria in peace.

as being joined by a line that went from UrShalem to the Land of the Two Rivers, then lengthened as Mecca struggled to draw an advanced but corrupted civilization into its own vortex. The poem opens with an allusion to the strife in Syria, and the warring in the Middle East that extended to the Kaaba which instead of being a refuge had been set on fire. The second verse of the poem starts out as follows:

*With no shoe, I travel towards the realms of the Persians and the city of Rome
And I lift my face in the darkness at their questions
And I ask my bloodied feet about the enigmatic land. And the heavenly bats murmur.⁹
And in any confrontation with banishment, I shout:
War horses whinny at the doors of the Kaaba, O Tribes of Shalim¹⁰*

The poet remembers another such confrontation. When the Second Temple was just barely underway and Mesopotamian civilization's 'heavenly bats murmured,' the poet-pilgrim might have called upon the ancient idol "Shalim" to help out. By way of sound symbolism the word "Shalim" hints at the City of Peace. The poet informs us that the Temple and Middle Eastern civilization needed protection from the sophistication of the Greek conqueror and the barbarism of the ancient Romans. Most likely according to the poet and definitely according to Soran Hamarash, at that time a united Kurdish-Jewish kingdom arose. Hamarash writes:

The alliance with the Jews was a significant geopolitical move for the Adiabenian Kurds. The Kurds sought to establish a large kingdom from Adiabene (Kurdistan) to Israel with the formal religion of Judaism. The Adiabenian royal family's participation in the Jewish war against the Romans aimed to repel them from the region and strengthen the kingdom they aspired towards. The event was significant for the Kurds, so much so, that during the 10th century, after exactly ten centuries after their reign, the Kurds still recalled this event. They claimed that the king of the

⁹ *Bats*: sculpted into the stone of ancient Persian architecture.

¹⁰ *War horses whinny*: in the aftermath of the death of Prophet Mohammad, when the Umayyad army defeated the Meccans and Medinans, as a result of the fighting, the Kaaba was damaged by fire.

Shalim: an ancient Canaanite god mentioned in the Ugarit inscriptions found at Ras Shamra in Syria.

Jews, Talut (Saul), was a Kurd who helped the Israelis [descendants of Yaqub]. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the united Kurdish-Jewish kingdom occurred during the 1st century CE.¹¹ The genealogy of طالوت romanized as Tālūt (Arabic) / Shā'ul (Hebrew) / Saul (English) is known (see I Samuel 9:1, 3) and substantiated to be Kurdish.

As an aside, it occurs to me that the above geographical proximity between Kurds and Kurdish Jews might substantiate a claim that the grammar of the Hebrew / Aramaic languages influenced Kurmanji Kurdish—a Kurdish language (a dialect?) that otherwise does not look anything like Hebrew.¹²

Conclusion

Each book of the present writer's three under discussion (her book of 2021, 2024, and *The Tradition of the First Temple* awaiting publication) reads like a coherent whole; it has a beginning and an end. However, the reality of the situation is that each book returns to its place in the “mind” of its creator, and “the end” means that it is time to start again. In the case of scripture, each “book” should be considered as a whole, a coherent whole, but within the whole of the entire book, e.g. the Hebrew Bible or the Qur'ān. Are there really scholars that think their work is done when they study verse (*pasūk*) after verse in the Bible, or verse (*ayah*) after *ayah* in the Qur'ān, and without considering the overall section and then the sections in the entire written and recorded coherent work, and the entire written and recorded work—as a whole? And even then. . . that is not where it ends.

The present writer composed two books, leaning vicariously on the writings of the great poet-scholar Salim Barakat: *Qamishli Extended* (2021) and *Sages of Darkness* (2024). Then the third book in this cycle, *The Tradition of the First Temple* describing Middle Eastern civilization was left hanging in the air—unpublished. The third book is an overt return to scripture from whence

¹¹ Soran Hamarash (2022). *The Lost and Untold History of the Kurds: Rediscovering the Beginning of the Western Civilisation and Origin of the Indo-European Languages ca. 10000 BC-1300 CE*. (Slemany, 1st Edition): 277.

¹² In most cases, the English version of names is supplied, since this paper is written in English. However, to answer a few people who have queried this, I would answer: The value of the English language is as a “lingua franca.” These days English takes over where once French reigned on the international scene. English was legitimized as a language *per se* due to the writings of the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (died 1400 CE) who preceded William Shakespeare. In any case, English is a European language similar to French, German, and Italian. Its role is somewhat similar to Aramaic in the Middle East.

literature and ‘the many books’ draw their inspiration; it draws on the present writer’s own understanding enriched by her own experience and surrounded by the current warring world. May the publisher find readers and publish it soon!—Meantime, as Mahmud Darwish wrote for Salim Barakat:¹³

And I glanced towards the wind /

- *Have a good night*

- *Have a good night*

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MISCELLANEOUS

The Hebrew Bible: See e.g. <https://www.mgketer.org/tanach/> (includes Midrash).

The Qur’ân: See e.g. *The Noble Qur’ân* (Darussalam Publications).

¹³ A quotation from Mahmud Darwish’s poem of 2004 for Salim Barakat, entitled “The Kurd Has Only the Wind”—See the Anthology in Aviva Butt (2021), *Qamishli Extended*.