

# The cemetery

**Emanuel Gluskin**

Email: gluskin@ee.bgu.ac.il

The Hebrew 'El' (as in *Emanu-El*) and Arabic 'Allah', meaning 'God', originate from the same ancient word, but what will be the future of the new cemetery in Kfar Saba situated close to Kalkilya? Can the background of the problematic political situation, inevitably involved, be touched on here in understandable and acceptable terms and even with an optimistic relation to the artistic side? *Yes*, and some important physical and philosophical problems relevant to the whole of humanity can thus be touched on and deeply discussed.

**M**odern academic sciences and studies, including Art History, become more and more sophisticated, detailed and specific. They thus become distant from the general culture of the wider public, i.e. less and less understandable and appreciated by simple people who naturally tend to see academia as a mere place for one's personal job or business. In order to regain real respect and attention, some simple philosophy relating to the subjects being studied should be added in order to express these matters in understandable terms.

Of course, this approach or thesis is inherently very limited, because the professionals are able to find philosophy and even poetry in academic constructions presented in specialized terms. However, despite the anticipated, legitimate skepticism with regard to this thesis, the gap between the formalistic line and the need for the general public to pay favorable attention to academia should be closed. At all events, a trend in semi-popular scientific writing will presumably be developed in the future as a remedy against over-specialization. At least, the statement that it is desirable to encourage and develop (educate) one's ability to well describe one's immediate impressions, can hardly be objected to.

I thus start an analysis of the impression caused by a particular, unusual view, by also applying some "architectural" terms somewhat unusually. The "academic" point here is that the art of architecture includes the ability to select the most appropriate site, so that the surrounding view and the general panorama are properly impressive. However any impression depends on an understanding of the seen, and the latter can depend on the history of the place and its general importance, as far as one can understand it. Thus, we have also to touch on human psychology.

## The cemetery and the view

The new cemetery in Kfar Saba is very close to Kalkilya, a town within the Palestinian Authority. The cemetery is thus also situated before the Shomron mountains (Samaritan hills) if one looks eastwards, so that the view over Kalkilya is uninterrupted and attractive.

To the right of Kalkilya, another rather big Muslim settlement is seen, forming a row with Kalkilya in the North-to-South direction, and at a distance, in the background, one more row of similar Arab settlements is seen, which are situated higher up on the hills. This whole view therefore creates the impression of sea-waves coming to the shore where you are standing still, with the first wave the largest one.

This view is inevitably associated for me with the known and difficult political situation of the "West Bank". However, even when one is in the open sea and faces a threatening wave flowing towards him – one may ask God to save him, but would never ask God to destroy the sea – the real source of the danger from the wave, because it is a part of nature.

Albert Einstein [1] once left a written request to burn his body after his death and to spread the ashes over the sea, which was done. I would say that the great scientist wanted to become (in the physical sense) a part of nature, which he had always “served” and interpreted so well.

However, God created *two* worlds, --that of nature in the physical sense and that of human psychology. These worlds coexist within us, because the human perception of the physical world is not only via the physiological senses, but also via our understanding of the meaning of what we see.

Philosophically, the similarity of the two worlds is well seen, for instance, if one considers or interprets marriage as the readiness of each side to pass alone, and in almost full darkness, through the jungle that represents the other side, while having the courage to meet, together with the attractive things, all the possible difficulties. No less courage, determination, good will, and patience are required to do this successfully and create a successful, sound family, than to go for a trip in a real jungle, and young people should be properly educated to be sufficiently strong for all this. God, who creates each of these “jungles”, helps us to develop such education, and, as a rule, the ability of one to accept a person near him actually means one’s ability to accept the whole world.

That these worlds are also very different is clear from the fact that it is more difficult for one to *quietly* enjoy the company of another human being than to enjoy gazing at a view of nature; regretfully, we are able to bore each other more quickly than we are bored, say, by the blue sky with white clouds. Perhaps just because of this painful distinction, we much prefer it when the view associated with something that we build impresses us not only by the beauty of its physical nature but also by something good associated with *human* nature. The latter is the formal “academic” point of the present note.



### **The impression**

When, recently, I was at a funeral at this new cemetery, I was exactly *thus* impressed with the view over nearby Kalkilya, which opened up before me. I felt myself positioned before the huge Islamic World, which, in the sense of the comparison between the two above-mentioned basic worlds created by God, can be compared to a sea. The easily-imagined huge scale, the quietness and confidence of the power, and the *patience* that so impress us when we look (as Einstein once did) at the sea, --all this was before me at this moment, via the direct sense of sight and a deeper, but no less sharp internal manifestation of human psychology.

This gorgeous view of the great world of Islam to which we are so close, particularly, because of our monotheistic religion (it is even written in the Koran that we Jews have to follow

the Torah received by Moses/Musa at Mount Sinai), impressed me more than any view of the sea. I felt at this moment that it is, in fact, an *honor* for one to lie in this cemetery before this living patience, silence, and spiritual power, – just as it was an attractive prospect for Einstein to become a part of the sea.

Just so that I may be correctly understood, – I do not idealize anyone or anything, certainly not the Jihad idea. But, it is precisely in view of the psychological tensions between humans that I decided, --through this specific “architectural” argument — to build up this firmly-held, long-term position which indicates *our deep respect* for this Muslim Sea in which Israel is just a very small island.

Of course, many opportunities to show this respect were missed. For instance, special institutes for studying Muslim culture and in particular Arabic literature had to be founded in Israel. Indeed, why not, if such great poets as our Yehuda HaLevi and Ibn Gvirol had been learning from Arab poets in Spain? Why not, if the main feature of poetry is not logic, but the “throwing forward” a word so that it causes numerous desired associations *in an optimal manner* (as if one always feels where the “center of gravity” of the reader’s *intuitive* attention is), as with the style of Koran? Why not to know Arabic, if the written Arabic words with the vocalization signs look like flying frigates and caravels, i.e. they are written with a lot of love?

However, who can say that it is easy to be generous when your very life is in danger? “The Palestinian woman is our atomic bomb”, Arafat once said, meaning the demographic aspect, and even now many things in Israel have to resemble the sword of Saladin.

## **The challenge**

Did these intuitive feelings against the large scale view also include an evaluation of personal daring? Probably yes, because when looking at the world’s outstanding thinkers I see that the specific feature of the Jewish thinkers was always the unexpectedness of the very theme of their contribution, and thus their greatness became obvious relatively late. Indeed, isn’t it true that only now are we starting to see Reuter (Israel Beer Josaphat, 1816-1899), the founder of the first news agency using initially electric telegraphy and carrier pigeons [2], as one of the greatest figures in history? The world-scale information media are most helpful in the expansion and wide-scale practice of education. One can see in these media, for instance, the important photographs of the melting (decreasing) mass of ice around the North Pole, and start to understand the danger of global warming. That is, one understands that after the melting is completed, the Earth’s heat-supply will cause an increase in the temperature around us. (Think about heating water with a piece of ice in a glass.) The information media sympathetically represent a suffering Palestinian girl, which undoubtedly helps her. From the historical perspective, all this is made possible by one whose original given name was “Israel”. Though any genius is (I use Kant’s expression) “ein Ding an sich”, his *initiative* belongs to his nation, and I have the right to stress this.

It is the greatest problem of the twenty-first century to find a “formula” instructing us how to preserve the important *moral* principles of Islam, while allowing Muslims to learn what is needed for surviving and flourishing in this rapidly changing world, and the point I am thus making is that I believe that the person able to find this formula will originate from Israel.

In order to understand the difficulty of the formulated challenge, one has to see that a person (read “Islamic World”) who is strong in the true sense, does not wish to have a sympathetic individual in his company because he does not wish to be “infected” with this unnatural sympathy, which, in fact, weakens him – just as nobody wants to be infected with, say, dysentery.

Another objective, physical, problem is that switching a huge population onto the route of modern development will further increase industrial pollution, i.e. further destroy the ionosphere that protects us (all of us!) against harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun, and will cause further heating of the earth. Alas, the humanity passed over its childhood, and we are starting to sense the borders (boundaries) of our world and our abilities, which must change our ambitions and tendencies. Particularly in the Middle East, the shortage of drinking water will soon become severe, because of the steep increase in the population (the population of Gaza doubles itself every 30-35 years, but the Israeli, including the Jewish and Arab population is also increasing rapidly). One does not need be a specialist in system theory or in mathematical physics in order to see that the time processes depend on the spatial conditions.

Just as in learning how to live with each other, how to pass through the jungle of coexistence is the main point. The problem of coexistence is, however, not only a warning. It is also very interesting. Thus, I think, that it will some time lead to the development of a personal electronic card called “the map of the brain” showing the connections (mutual influence) of the main brain centers, dominant in a person, in order to decide/check whether or not his collaboration with another person will be successful. Psychological tests will be involved for revealing the brain ‘connections’.

Certainly, these challenges and initiative are reserved only for a man of great intellect, spirit and good will, a real genius able to produce new instructive ideas for achieving rationality and control, mutual understanding and peace. The great prophets of the past gave a high moral code to large groups of people, but these large groups, created from small groups, are also able to confront each other more effectively, which is very dangerous. None of the great Prophets of the past had the powerful tool of the information “media”, to enable them to achieve understanding on a world scale, which became absolutely necessary.

## **The son**

As was noted, it is written in the Koran that Jews are obliged to obey the Torah’s orders, and the Torah requires us to be *here* [3]. It is also worth noting that the Hebrew ‘El’, or Eloah [4], and Arabic “Allah” (which existed as a word before Islam [5]) originate from the same (unknown) ancient Semitic word. Jews and Arabs have the same father, Abraham, who was the first monotheist, a believer in God. Naturally, Jews of Yatrib (now Medina) supported the monotheistic doctrine of Mohammad.

However, I cannot know how this cemetery is seen from the other side. Is this proud huge “sea”, with its concealed but here acutely felt, fighting spirit able and ready to pass through the “psychological jungle” that the Jewish state represents for them, and come to a successful coexistence?

To help one with this, and also for the sake of justice, permit me to focus also on *my side*, my nation, using the sentimental terms most close to me. Thanks to Reuter and the above-mentioned Palestinian girl, sentimentality has become a huge force in the world, a key to human understanding, and the great man and the girl are of help to me now.

The following Hassidic-type story about a Jewish son appears in the Talmud. Whether or not the Reader will like this story, let us accept its minimal “political” moral – that fathers should die *before* their sons.

To start with, this story could relate to a country where pogroms, followed by raping of women, had been occurring. However the troubles of the boys’ mother are not the point.

“I have to say to you that only one of our/my sons is yours” – said his wife and died, and he does not know which of the boys is his.

And his time came, and he went to his Rabbi and said:

--I want to leave my house to my son, but I do not know who he is.

--So, write: “To one of you”.

--But how will they know?

--Just write.

He wrote thus and died, and the boys came to the Rabbi and asked: --Who receives the house? --It is very simple; each of you go to the grave, knock at the stone, and ask: “Are you my father?”. The one to whom he answers: “yes” receives the house.

In two weeks, the boys returned and said: --We knock at the grave all the time, but no answer comes. --*This cannot be*, --said the Rabbi --Really *all of you* went to the grave? --No. One of us did not come for some reason. --Bring him immediately!

They brought the boy, and the Rabbi asked him: --Why didn't you obey my order? --Not for any profit, and not even for the house, shall I strike at the grave of my father! – said the son.

When we are alive, we see our connection/relation to God by ourselves. When we are dead, our relation to God is seen by others. These others can be different, but all the dead become equal in rights.

God takes the souls and keeps them for the new generations appearing on the Earth, and, maybe, also in another world invisible to us that is created by Him somewhere in cosmic space. Each of us dies in order the whole of humanity to exist, but the fact of the matter is that there are different nations, one of which is “the chosen”. It becomes clear that “being chosen” does not have to mean “being happy”, rather to be a screwdriver in His hand when He wants to change something in this world.

Having completed these philosophical reflections, I have just to note that human imagination and prayers associate every cemetery with Paradise, and in the “architectural terms” of one's naïve psychology, the cemetery reflects Heaven, as a small lake would do, the gravestones being like the swans on the lake's surface – the swans intended one day to take an aging Ugly Duckling on their joint flight. Be assured that he will put all his soul into this flight, just as he puts his soul into all that he writes and does.

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