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Roni Mikel Arieli

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# Between Apartheid, the Holocaust and the Nakba: Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Pilgrimage to Israel-Palestine (1989) and the Emergence of an Analogical Lexicon

Roni Mikel Arieli

APARTHEID-STOPS ERC Project and Mandel Scholion Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ora, Israel

## ABSTRACT

On 22 December 1989, the anti-apartheid activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu conducted a Christmas pilgrimage to Israel and the Occupied Territories. Tutu used his visit to relay political messages in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle and to criticize Israeli-South African ties, and his statements evoked severe criticism on the part of Zionist Jewish constituencies. Through a tighter focus on Tutu's various public statements and their reception in the years leading up to the visit, this article traces the history of different sets of interlocking analogies in Tutu's thought, positioning his 1989 visit to Israel-Palestine—neglected thus far in the critical literature—as a landmark in his thinking. In so doing, it offers a critical analysis of another instance of the Israel-apartheid analogy in the political struggle against the Israeli occupation. At the same time, it points to the genesis of the analogy in Tutu's ongoing engagements with the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## Introduction

On 22 December 1989, on the eve of the second anniversary of the First Intifada, the anti-apartheid activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Desmond Tutu conducted a Christmas pilgrimage to Israel and the Occupied Territories. Tutu, then Archbishop of Cape Town, used his visit to relay political messages in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle and to criticize Israeli-South African ties.<sup>1</sup> In the final statement of his visit, made at the Yad Vashem National Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, Tutu called upon the Israeli people to “pray for those who made it [the Holocaust] happen, help us to forgive them and help us so that we in our turn will not make others suffer.”<sup>2</sup> Like many of Tutu's statements of the time, this statement met with criticism on the part of Zionist Jewish constituencies as being pro-Palestinian and antisemitic. However, an in-depth exploration of

**CONTACT** Roni Mikel Arieli  ronimikel@gmail.com  APARTHEID-STOPS ERC Project and Mandel Scholion Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Geffen 259, Ora, Israel

<sup>1</sup> Alan Cowell, “Tutu, Visiting Jerusalem, Backs Palestinian Statehood,” *New York Times*, 24 December 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Cowell, “Tutu Urges Israelis to Pray for and Forgive Nazis,” *New York Times*, 27 December 1989. See also David Landau, “Jews Stunned by Tutu's Suggestion Holocaust Perpetrators be Forgiven,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 27 December 1989; John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu* (New York: Random House, 2012), 387.

Tutu's statements reveals that while Tutu was indeed pro-Palestinian, his remarks at Yad Vashem memorial were not a performance of antisemitism but rather an expression of his evolving lexicon of protest in relation to local memories of suffering and victimization arising both from apartheid South Africa and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

This article traces the history of different sets of interlocking analogies in Tutu's thought, positioning his December 1989 statements in Israel-Palestine as a landmark in what I refer to as his "analogical lexicon": a series of comparisons Tutu makes throughout his life, between the Holocaust and current human rights abuses, namely apartheid and the Israeli occupation.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the late 1970s, Tutu would draw analogical links between the Final Solution of the Nazi Regime and the apartheid regime. From the early 1980s, Tutu would also allude to the historical connections between Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa and Nazi Germany in the context of Israel's close ties with the apartheid government. During the course of the 1980s, these associations evolved into a comparison between Jewish asylum-seeking during the Holocaust and in its aftermath, and the Palestinian plight following the 1948 Nakba ("The Catastrophe" in Arabic), eventually leading to a fully-fledged analogy between Israel and the apartheid regime on Tutu's part.

Keith Feldman argues that an analogy is never perfect, because two given events are never identical.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, he continues, "the 'likeness' or 'parallel' [...] juxtapose[s] unique historical formations, ideological concepts, or geographies—relations not objects—which are then linked together via the radically unstable 'like' or 'as.'"<sup>5</sup> Feldman recognizes that at the core of the analogy sits a difference "always on the verge of collapse into identity, socially produced under contextually specific conditions that are always on the verge of conflation." However, it is these permanent conditions that "holds an analogy together and produce its rhetorical effectivity."<sup>6</sup>

Tutu's analogical lexicon is indeed a rhetorical weapon in his struggles for justice. Moreover, it is an explicit expression of the conflict between two opposing master narratives of the twentieth century, as outlined by Charles S. Maier: the Holocaust narrative and the postcolonial narrative.<sup>7</sup> As Maier argues, "both narratives claim current relevance, and they are often intertwined."<sup>8</sup> However, while the Holocaust narrative "focuses on the Holocaust and/or Stalinist Communist political killing as the culminating historical experience of the century," the postcolonial narrative, by contrast, argues that "the domination of the West over the massive societies of what once could be called the Third World established the preeminent historical scaffolding of the century."<sup>9</sup> While the Holocaust narrative is perceived as a story in which the western democratic states founded the main principles of human rights based on the most barbarous instance in human history, the postcolonial narrative, by contrast, demonstrates how the very same modern liberal democratic

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<sup>3</sup> For scholarship on the Israel-apartheid analogy, see Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs, *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015); Keith Feldman, *A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Feldman, *A Shadow over Palestine*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 825–828.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 827.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 826.

states were themselves responsible for human rights violations.<sup>10</sup> Tutu perceives apartheid, and later the Nakba, as direct expressions of the destruction brought about by colonialism. Within the parameters of this analysis, Tutu offers innovative imaginative links in his emphasis on the illegitimacy of the alliances between Jerusalem and Pretoria that strengthened apartheid, and those between Zionism and the West that led to the Palestinian Nakba.

Apartheid South Africa constituted an unstable and frequently changing historical context in which Tutu's analogical lexicon evolved throughout the years of his opposition to the regime. At the same time, it is important to realize that his lexicon was also shaped by what Louise Bethlehem has termed the "restlessness" of apartheid as a political signifier. Through charting what she names the "global itinerary" of the term apartheid, as well as the diffusion of anti-apartheid expressive culture beyond South Africa, Bethlehem interprets apartheid as a heuristic through which struggles over race and social justice might be interpreted in a transnational setting. Her model alerts us to the importance of tracking the itineraries of opponents of apartheid as they operate in the global cultural sphere, an insight that is certainly relevant to understanding the force of Tutu's statements issued from Israel-Palestine. As an intellectual working from this very context, Bethlehem's own research efforts have partly been concentrated on tracing the "social etymology" of the word apartheid in Hebrew — a phrase that Bethlehem takes from Anne Laura Stoler, also encompassing what Bethlehem formulates as discursive or "non-agential form[s] of circulation that [surface] when the term 'apartheid' grounds analogies in political struggles outside of South Africa."<sup>11</sup>

Building on such efforts, this article poses Tutu's 1989 visit to Israel-Palestine – neglected thus far in the critical literature – as a milestone in his thinking. While this article offers a critical analysis of yet another performance of the Israel-apartheid analogy in the political struggle against the Israeli Occupation, it also points to the genesis of the analogy in Tutu's ongoing engagement with the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust. Through a tighter focus on Tutu's various public statements and their reception in the years leading up to the visit, the article repositions Tutu's religious visit to Israel-Palestine as a prominent political event in his ongoing struggle against apartheid, and as one that is formative for his articulation of what he viewed as a parallel struggle: that of the Palestinians against Israeli Occupation.

## Desmond Tutu and the Evolution of an Analogical Lexicon

Born in 7 October 1931 in Klerksdorp, a town in the southwestern Transvaal province, Tutu rose from an impoverished childhood to become one of the leading Anglican figures in South Africa.<sup>12</sup> He was drawn to Anglican theology after moving to Johannesburg with his family at the age of twelve. Under the guidance of the British Anglican priest, Trevor

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 827–828.

<sup>11</sup> Louise Bethlehem, "Apartheid: The Global Itinerary: South African Cultural Formations in Transnational Circulation 1948–1990," ERC research proposal, 2013. For an example of such research conducted within the parameters of Bethlehem's project, see Shimrit Baer, "Resistance in Circulation: Zionist and Anti-Zionist Mobilizations of Apartheid" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016). On "social etymology" in the analysis of imperial formations, see Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan, "Refiguring Imperial Terrains," in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter Perdue (Santa Fe: School of American research, 2007), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Gish, *Desmond Tutu: A Biography* (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 4.

Huddleston, who arrived in South Africa in 1943 to become a leading anti-apartheid activist, Tutu's awareness of the damaging impacts of apartheid on blacks was sharpened.<sup>13</sup>

The apartheid government enacted many oppressive measures during the early 1950s, including the destruction of Sophiatown, the Johannesburg neighbourhood which was home to approximately 60,000 Africans, Indians and coloured citizens, under the Group Areas Act (1950); and the establishment of a new public schooling system of downgraded education for Africans, under the Bantu Education Act (1953). In protest, Tutu, who had trained as a teacher, decided to resign and turned to theology. Although the subsequent periods in Tutu's life were devoted to studying theology in England, he was always attentive to the developments in his homeland.<sup>14</sup>

Tutu broke many glass ceilings throughout the 1950s and 1960s, which were spent largely outside of South Africa, without however playing an active role in the emerging anti-apartheid movement at this stage.<sup>15</sup> His theological orientation was further developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Anglican Church established the University Christian Movement, a Christian student movement which eventually became the vehicle of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> Tutu, who believed that the context of apartheid required a specific type of theology, saw Christianity as "a religion of liberation," and argued that "Christians of all races needed to speak for the weak and meek, to expose evil and seek to end it."<sup>17</sup> For him, the Bible was perceived as "on the side of the black struggle for liberation and life in South Africa,"<sup>18</sup> and he constantly called for the commitment of whites and blacks alike to the liberation movement, stating "you (whites) will never be free until we blacks are free."<sup>19</sup>

This brief reflection on the theological impulses underpinning Tutu's thought is crucial for an understanding of the evolving patterns of his analogical lexicon. Such patterns began to appear soon after Tutu's appointment in March 1978, as the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), a position which brought him to prominence in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle.<sup>20</sup> The SACC was an affiliate of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and represented all major Christian churches in South Africa, apart from the Dutch Reformed Church and the Catholic Church.<sup>21</sup> Under Tutu's leadership, the SACC became a strong force in the revival of mass action against apartheid.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it was in this position that Tutu first used the analogy with Nazism to articulate his opposition to apartheid.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–22.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel W. Crompton, *Desmond Tutu: Fighting Apartheid* (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 30.

<sup>16</sup> Gerald West, "The Legacy of Liberation Theologies in South Africa, with an Emphasis on Biblical Hermeneutics," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36 (2010): 157–183.

<sup>17</sup> Gish, *Desmond Tutu*, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches*, (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1983), 124–129.

<sup>19</sup> Deane W. Ferm, *Third World Liberation Theologies: An Introductory Survey* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publications, 2004), 66.

<sup>20</sup> Crompton, *Desmond Tutu*, 164, 167.

<sup>21</sup> Hendrik J.C. Pieterse, introduction to *Desmond Tutu's Message: A Qualitative Analysis*, by Hendrik J.C. Pieterse and Peer Scheepers (Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill, 2001), 11. For more scholarship on the World Council of Churches and its role in the anti-apartheid struggle, see Tal Zalmanovich, "What Is Needed Is an Ecumenical Act of Solidarity: The World Council of Churches, the 1969 Notting Hill Consultation on Racism, and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle," *Safundi* 20, no. 2 (2019): 174–193.

<sup>22</sup> Mac Maharaj, "South African Council of Churches," in The O'Malley Archive, <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv03445/04lv03446/05lv03499.htm> (accessed 17 May 2019).

In 1979, Tutu issued a statement protesting the enactment of the new Group Areas Act, an amendment of the original law passed in 1950 authorizing the government to remove Africans from urban areas and to relocate them in desolate and unproductive tribal areas. He described African life in the squatter camps as “the government’s final solution to the African problem,” and argued that the policy of the P. W. Botha’s administration “was deliberately designed to have the Africans starve to death, not because there was no food, but because it was the policy the government had defined and was now pursuing.”<sup>23</sup> Tutu was not the first to use the Nazi analogy in the struggle against apartheid. As Shirli Gilbert argues, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, activists’ rhetoric focused on pointing to parallel policies of racial discrimination on the part of the apartheid and the Nazi regimes.<sup>24</sup> These parallels were strengthened by the actual connections between Afrikaner Nationalists and the Nazis during the 1930s and the 1940s, a historical legacy that would inform the evolution of Tutu’s thought.<sup>25</sup>

The South African United Government decision of 6 September 1939, to ally itself with Britain and to declare war against Nazi Germany, gave rise to division and conflict within the ruling party. At that point, the country was led by a coalition which was formed by the National Party (NP) and the South African Party (SAP) in 1934. The then Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog, preferred that South Africa remain neutral in the war, and his deputy, J. C. Smuts, wanted to fight alongside the Allies. When the decision to join the war on the Allies’ side was made, Hertzog resigned as prime minister and was succeeded by Smuts.<sup>26</sup> This was followed by an increase in right-wing and proto-fascist pronouncements, accompanied by distinct pro-Nazi support within the Afrikaner community.<sup>27</sup> As Patrick Jonathan Furlong points out, in the Transvaal province, where Tutu grew up, the impact of such extreme right-wing thought derived from Nazism abroad was particularly evident.<sup>28</sup>

David Brock Katz suggests, “the ANC [African National Congress], traditional chiefs, and church groups saw the war as an opportunity for blacks to gain equal rights and ease racial policies by squeezing concessions from the government during wartime,” drawing many black youngsters to join the United Defence Front.<sup>29</sup> In his biography, Tutu, who was only an eight-year-old child at the outbreak of the war, nostalgically recalls waving goodbye to the soldiers who were on their way to the front.<sup>30</sup>

During the war years, the black communities in South Africa mostly supported the war efforts, and in the post-war period, the emergent anti-apartheid movement used anti-fascist and anti-Nazi rhetoric to emphasize the urgency of the struggle against apartheid. In its June 1945 “Declaration of the Nations of the World,” the Non-European Unity

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<sup>23</sup> Dickson A. Mungazi, *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Desmond M. Tutu and Abel T. Muzorewa* (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger, 2000), 92.

<sup>24</sup> Shirli Gilbert, “Jews and Racial State: Legacies of the Holocaust in Apartheid South Africa,” *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 34.

<sup>25</sup> Milton Shain, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930–1948* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015); Patrick Jonathan Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1991), 16–20.

<sup>26</sup> Shain, *A Perfect Storm*, 232–236.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 236–237.

<sup>28</sup> Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, 101–102.

<sup>29</sup> David Brock Katz, *South Africans versus Rommel: The Untold Story of the Desert War in World War II* (Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2017), 17.

<sup>30</sup> Allen, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 24.

movement invoked an extended comparison between the life of blacks, Indians and Coloured in South Africa and the life of Jews in Nazi Germany;<sup>31</sup> That same year, black leaders in the Non-European Unity Movement drew up a document informing the United Nations (UN) of the similarities between South African race policies and Nazism;<sup>32</sup> and in 1946, the Transvaal Indian Congress similarly invoked the Nazi analogy when it tellingly named the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill as the “Ghetto Act.”<sup>33</sup>

Over the years, such parallels were further elaborated by anti-apartheid activists in exile, such as Brian Bunting in his book *The Rise of the South African Reich* (1964) which systematically compared the Nuremberg Laws and apartheid legislation.<sup>34</sup> The Nazi camps, however, were rarely represented in detail and the Jewish genocide was only cited as a warning of what apartheid might become if left unchallenged.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the systematic extermination conducted by the Nazis had no equivalent in South Africa. However, as Tutu argued, what distinguished the Nazi final solution from apartheid were merely the means employed to achieve the goal of genocide. While “the one was not a carbon copy of the other,” there were substantial similarities.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to position Tutu’s “final solution” analogy from the late 1970s onward, in the context of a wider international debate on the definition of genocide. The UN’s “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” adopted on 9 December 1948 against the background of the extermination of the European Jews by the Nazis, aimed at preventing future genocides and at prosecuting genocide perpetrators.<sup>37</sup> The Convention came into effect in 1951, at a time when European policy toward colonial Africa was on the cusp of a dramatic change. The Bandung Conference of 1955, which gathered representatives from twenty-nine decolonized countries as well as dozens of activists from sub-Saharan Africa in a six-day “Asian-African” convention, was the first public international move toward a regional alliance in the global South.<sup>38</sup> Three years later, most African colonies had become independent states, and established the African Group in 1958 to co-ordinate all matters of common concern to the African states at the UN.<sup>39</sup> South African apartheid was a prominent concern of the group, which constantly promoted anti-apartheid sentiment on UN podiums.<sup>40</sup>

Apartheid was annually condemned by the General Assembly as contrary to Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter of the United Nations from 1952 until 1990; and was regularly condemned by the Security Council after the Sharpsville Massacre of 21 March

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert, “Jews and Racial State,” 39.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Milton Shain, “South Africa,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, and Charles H. Rosenzweig (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 680.

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert, “Jews and Racial State,” 39.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1964).

<sup>35</sup> Shirli Gilbert, “Anne Frank in South Africa: Remembering the Holocaust During and After the Apartheid,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (2012): 366–393.

<sup>36</sup> Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal and Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Reconciliation Through Truth* (Cape Town: David Philip Publications, 1997), 132–133.

<sup>37</sup> Dominik J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer, “Introduction: The Origins of Genocide – Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence,” in *The Origins of Genocide: Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence*, ed. Dominik J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer (London: Routledge, 2009), 9–10.

<sup>38</sup> Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3–6.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Taylor and A. J. R. Groom, *United Nations at the Millennium: The Principal Organs* (London: Continuum, 2000), 237.

<sup>40</sup> Irwin, *Gordian Knot*, 3–8.

1960.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, an ad hoc group of experts appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1967 to investigate the torture and ill treatment of prisoners in South Africa extended its mandate into a preliminary examination of the South African government on charges of genocide.<sup>42</sup> Although UN institutions officially moved away from associating apartheid with genocide, this investigation ultimately led to the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, fashioned after and referencing the Genocide Convention.<sup>43</sup> In summary then, the Genocide Convention which was established against the background of the Holocaust, and the Apartheid Convention which was established within the context of the ongoing implementation of apartheid in South Africa, created general definitions for two distinct atrocities, providing a framework for the discussion concerning apartheid's genocidal characteristics on the one hand, and the characteristics of apartheid that might emerge outside of South Africa, on the other.

Tutu's frequent use of the Nazi analogy in his public statements fuelled a media campaign against him in the national press. A report in the conservative South African newspaper *The Citizen*, of 4 July 1984 stated:

The use of the South African – Nazi analogy has become almost standard practice by the SACC and its officials, especially its general secretary, Bishop Desmond Tutu [...] After referring to the scale of Hitler's crime – the elimination of 6-million Jews, he said: "South Africa is almost halfway there. Three-and-a-half million already disposed of by resettlement and another 2-million to go - half a million short of Hitler's total."<sup>44</sup>

In a critical manner, the article concluded, "although we do not agree with relocation and resettlements, forced or otherwise, that cause great suffering to those who are moved, we cannot see how anyone can suggest that this is like the extermination of 6-million Jews by Nazi Germany."<sup>45</sup>

Despite such criticism, Tutu continued to raise similar arguments in international forums. In an interview to the US television network ABC, on 16 October 1984, Tutu argued,

I believe that apartheid has reached a stage in its development where one can speak about the final solution when they are stripping us of our South African citizenship and turning us into aliens in the land of our birth and uprooting stable communities, destroying them to satisfy a racist ideology. They are doing nothing less than what the Nazis did and if you say, where are the gas chambers, I would say, I mean, that the gas chambers are probably more efficient and more clean, because if you put children in places where you know they are going to starve, you are as guilty as those who filled up the gas chambers.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Yehonatan Alsheh, "The Apartheid Paradigm: History, Politics and Strategy," in *Law, Minority and National Conflict*, ed. Raef Zreik and Ilan Saban (Tel Aviv: Law, Society and Culture, Tel Aviv University, 2017), 166. [Hebrew].

<sup>42</sup> Commission on Human Rights Report on the Twenty-Fourth Session, 5 February–12 March 1968, Economic and Social Council Official Records: Forty-Fourth Session, Supplement No. 4, United Nations, "Report of the ad hoc Working Group of Experts on the treatment of political prisoners in the Republic of South Africa," 2 (XXIV).

<sup>43</sup> International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, November 30, 1973, UNGA, Resolution 3068 (XXVII).

<sup>44</sup> "Nazi Analogy," *The Citizen*, 4 July 1984, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 13 (12 July 1984), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> The interview was conducted by Peter Jennings on the day Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. An extract from the interview was published in the January 1985 issue of the magazine of the Conservative Party of South Africa, *Die Patriot*. See: "South Africa compared to Nazi Germany," *Die Patriot*, January 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No.1 (24 January 1985), Rochline Archive, Johannesburg.

Notably, Tutu reiterated these claims during his Nobel lecture, delivered on 11 December 1984, stating: “Blacks are systematically being stripped of their South African citizenship and being turned into aliens in the land of their birth. This is apartheid’s final solution, just as Nazism had its final solution for the Jews in Hitler’s Aryan madness.”<sup>47</sup>

Needless to say, the white national press criticized Tutu’s speech, arguing that it was a result of “political megalomania brought on by the award,” and stressing that “whatever one might think of the relocation [...] the policy cannot be equated with the annihilation of the Nazis of six-million Jews.”<sup>48</sup> The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Pik Botha also condoned Tutu’s analogy asserting: “to compare us with the Nazis is an insult to the more than 100,000 South African of Jewish origins who came to this country, and to our forefathers who fought with the Allied powers against Nazi Germany.”<sup>49</sup>

The South African Jewish community perceived Tutu’s “final solution” analogy in a similar vein. *The Jewish Herald* newspaper stated,

The Bishop was deliberately exploiting an emotive memory to evoke international horror in simple, or ignorant, minds which will equate South African’s policies with Hitler’s systematic mass murder of six million Jews. The government of Mr. P. W. Botha has not drawn up any plans for the final extermination of the black population. There are no Dachaus, Auschwitzes, Treblinkas or Maidenecks in South Africa. There are no gas ovens. Soweto, Kwazulu and Lebowa are not the Warsaw ghetto.<sup>50</sup>

The reaction of the Jewish community is indicative of their adherence to the principle of the uniqueness of the Holocaust adopted by many Jews and others in the period following the 1967 War in Israel.<sup>51</sup> This perception is based on the claim that the Holocaust is a unique event in human history, and therefore, any comparison of the Holocaust to other events was perceived “as a reductive, tasteless, or even morally and politically questionable banalization of the topic.”<sup>52</sup> The position concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust grew stronger in the 1970s and 1980s, when Zionist communities around the world, and especially in Israel, began to focus their efforts on the need to prevent antisemitism, to prosecute war criminals and to fight against Holocaust denial.<sup>53</sup> This process was well represented in South Africa, where Zionism and the State of Israel were integral to the Jewish community’s ethnic identity.<sup>54</sup> As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the connections drawn between the Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel, which were central to Israel’s Zionist nationalism, were constantly employed by the Jewish community in South Africa as

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<sup>47</sup> “Desmond Tutu- Nobel Lecture,” December 11, 1984, *The Nobel Prize*, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1984/tutu/lecture/> (accessed on 17 May 2019).

<sup>48</sup> “Comment,” *The Citizen*, 4 January 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No 1. (24 January 1985), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>49</sup> Botha’s statement was given in the course of a discussion with Tutu, which was televised on the News Focus on SATV, and later reported in *The Star*. See “Pik and Tutu Clash on SATV,” *The Star*, 19 March 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No 5. (21 March 1985), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>50</sup> “Jewish Herald Responds,” *The Star*, 2 January 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No 1. (24 January 1985), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 154.

<sup>52</sup> Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, “Introduction” to *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Syntax of History, Memory, and Political Thought* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2019), 6.

<sup>53</sup> Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 154; Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 26–27.

<sup>54</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 4.

a means for alerting local white communities to the antisemitic dimensions of the Holocaust, while ignoring its relevance for local expressions of racism.<sup>55</sup>

The strongly Zionist South African Jewish community tracked Tutu's actions and statements attentively—and with anxiety. In addition to his frequent use of the Nazi analogy, Tutu repeatedly voiced criticism of Israel's close ties with the apartheid regime, speaking mainly in American Jewish circles. In a speech at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York made in 1984, Tutu declared: "we cannot understand how Jews can cooperate with a government many of whose members were sympathetic to Hitler and the Nazis and who for a long time refused Jews membership in their political party because they were Jews."<sup>56</sup> Here Tutu alludes to the direct connections between Afrikaner Nationalism and Nazi Germany, while acknowledging the centrality of the memory of the Holocaust as a core memory of the Jewish-Zionist world and of Israeli nationalism, in order to criticize the Israeli state for its relations with the apartheid government.

The 1967 War proved to be the turning point in restoring good diplomatic relations between Israel and South Africa, after two decades of instability due to Israel's continued anti-apartheid votes at the UN, and due to Israel's expansion of bilateral diplomatic relations with decolonized African states.<sup>57</sup> When the Yom Kippur War broke out in October 1973, South African defense minister P.W. Botha declared his solidarity with Israel in its struggle against "communistic militarism,"<sup>58</sup> and described Israel and South Africa as two vital "gateways between East and West," both sharing vigilance against communism.<sup>59</sup> As Sasha Polakow-Suransky argues: "As an uneasy peace settled over the Middle East in November 1973, Israeli and South African defense officials quietly began to lay the foundations for a lucrative and far-reaching alliance."<sup>60</sup>

This diplomatic alliance was immediately evident in Israel's voting on anti-apartheid resolutions at the UN.<sup>61</sup> From the early 1970s, reports on the growing relations between the two countries occupied the press worldwide. However, details on explicit economic and military cooperation only became known to the public after March 1974, following the decision of the Israeli government to upgrade its diplomatic mission in South Africa to an embassy. Suspicious of these developments, the UN's Special Committee Against Apartheid prepared a special report on the recent strengthening of ties between the two countries.<sup>62</sup> The report, adopted on 8 September 1976 and submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council, focused on the intensification of political, economic, military and other relations between Jerusalem and Pretoria, while condemning "the unholy alliance between South African racism and Israeli imperialism."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Roni Mikel Arieli, "Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State: Cultural and Discursive Aspects of Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy (1994–1948)" (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Desmond Tutu and John Allen, *God is Not a Christian* (London, Sydney, Auckland and Johannesburg: Rider, 2011), 87.

<sup>57</sup> Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 154–156.

<sup>58</sup> Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance- Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Random House, 2010), 70.

<sup>59</sup> Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 156.

<sup>60</sup> Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 73.

<sup>61</sup> Since 1973, Israel has either been absent, has abstained or has voted against all resolutions against apartheid South Africa, as indicated in the UN Special Committee against Apartheid report on relations between Israel and South Africa, adopted in 13 September 1976. See: "Relations between Israel and South Africa: Report of the Special Committee against Apartheid," 13 September 1976, United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 74.

<sup>63</sup> "Relations between Israel and South Africa," 3.

The report came out at a critical time for both Israel and South Africa in the UN arena. It was only two months after the 1973 Apartheid Convention had come into force.<sup>64</sup> As already noted, this convention was a product of the international struggle against apartheid in South Africa. However, it defined the crimes of apartheid in general terms as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them,”<sup>65</sup> making it relevant to other cases of racial persecution. In many ways, this general definition set the ground for the UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 which was adopted in November 1975, determining that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.”<sup>66</sup> The two separate resolutions created two major tributaries of public discourses, providing a strong basis for drawing similarities between the two countries’ racist tendencies.<sup>67</sup>

The wording of the resolution itself also provided such basis with some actual references to apartheid in South Africa. The resolution recalled the General Assembly’s condemnation of “the unholy alliance between South African racism and Zionism” from 14 December 1973, and quoted from the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace from 1975, which stated that “international cooperation and peace require the achievement of national liberation and independence, the elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, Zionism, apartheid and racial discrimination in all its forms.”<sup>68</sup> In the wake of the UN resolution of 1975, such similarities were also deployed with particular intensity in Muslim circles in South Africa. Inspired by the student uprising in Soweto in 1976, radical Muslim youth movements emerged with a distinct emphasis on anti-Zionism.<sup>69</sup> The Muslim weekly *Muslim News* also regularly addressed the Zionist enterprise, accusing the Jews for Israel’s support of the apartheid state.<sup>70</sup>

It is not surprising then, that from the mid-1980s, in addition to his critique of the Jerusalem-Pretoria ties, Tutu became very critical of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian people. At the same 1984 speech to the New York Jewish Theological Seminary, Tutu also declared, “I am myself sad that Israel, with the kind of history and traditions her people have experienced, should make refugees of others. It is totally inconsistent with who she is as a people.”<sup>71</sup> For the first time, Tutu directly addresses the Nakba, the Palestinian deportation from Palestine, and the loss of their homeland in the 1948 War. Yet again, he turns to the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, focusing on the resultant outcome of Jewish statelessness in order to restore empathy in American Jewish circles for the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

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<sup>64</sup> International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, November 30, 1973, UNGA, Resolution 3068 (XXVII).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly 3379 (XXX). Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, 10 November 1975, United Nations.

<sup>67</sup> Alsheh, “The Apartheid Paradigm,” 173–174.

<sup>68</sup> Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly 3379 (XXX).

<sup>69</sup> Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1995), 122.

<sup>70</sup> For example, in March 1984, an editorial stated “Zionists in South Africa are allowed a free hand to strengthen the colonialist, racist, imperialist usurper state of Israel, whilst no Muslims were or are allowed to do the same for the Palestinians.” See: “Muslim News on Zionism and Apartheid,” *Muslim News*, 9 March 1984, Press Items of Jewish Interest No.6 (25 March 1984), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>71</sup> “Nobel Prize Winner Praises Jewish People As ‘a Light into the Nations’ but is Also Sharply Critical,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 28 November 1984.

Here we can observe a shift at work as Tutu reorients his focus on Jewish suffering during the Holocaust as an analogy for black suffering in apartheid South Africa, to concentrate instead on how the Jewish statelessness during the Holocaust and in its aftermath resembles the Palestinian plight following the 1948 Nakba. This shift invites a deeper reflection on two contested narratives – the Holocaust for Jews and the Nakba for Palestinians – as two national narratives of suffering and victimization.<sup>72</sup> Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg have recently argued that “these two narratives collide head-on when it comes to Palestine/Israel, as the Palestinian national narrative is constructed within the larger framework of the anticolonial metanarrative.”<sup>73</sup> On the one hand, the Palestinians perceive the Nakba as the last crime of European settler colonialism. On the other, the Jewish Zionist narrative focuses on the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis as an unparalleled event in human history and as the ultimate reason for Jewish nation building in Israel.<sup>74</sup>

Tutu was aware of the two contested narratives of suffering and victimization and he consciously draw parallels between them, in order to create a space for the construction of commonality between the two peoples. Nonetheless, such parallels were perceived as a blatant anti-Jewish manifestation in both American and South African circles. The *Business Day* newspaper reported: “invited to address a faculty of students of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, he [Tutu] exploited the opportunity to condemn Jews for not being what the Bible requires of them: ‘A light unto the nations.’”<sup>75</sup> In an interview published in the *Sunday Star* Tutu was confronted with allegations of being antisemitic. He responded saying, “Rubbish, after all, the Jews put us in business,” but also added, “you know, most blacks in South Africa have a problem with Israel. We cannot understand how a country of people with such a history of persecution themselves can collaborate with this Government to support apartheid.”<sup>76</sup>

These antisemitic allegations did not deter Tutu, and by the end of the 1980s, a direct equation was drawn by him between Israel and apartheid, bringing two existing discursive configurations into intersection. When questioned regarding his definition of Zionism, Tutu stated: “where you exclude people on ethnic grounds, or other grounds, over which they, in a sense, have no control, and you penalise them. I mean, it’s always to their exclusion. Apartheid is also the politics of exclusion.”<sup>77</sup> This analogy, linking Zionism with apartheid, was also drawn by Tutu on a visit to New York in January 1989, in his address to the audience at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, where he received the Reform congregation’s George Brussel Jr. Award for his struggle against apartheid in South Africa. He stated: “I am a black South African, and if you changed the names, the description of what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank could be a description of what is happening in South Africa.”<sup>78</sup> The statement implies similarities

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<sup>72</sup> Bashir and Goldberg, Introduction to *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> “Tutu- Baiting,” *Business Day*, 3 December 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 22 (12 December 1985), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>76</sup> “Bishop Tutu,” *Sunday Star*, 10 November 1985, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 20 (14 November 1985), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>77</sup> Tzippi Hoffman and Alan Fischer, *The Jews of South Africa: What Future?* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988), 16.

<sup>78</sup> Allen, *Rabble-Rouser for Peace*, 384–385.

between the Palestinian Intifada and traumatic events in South Africa such as the Sharpeville Massacre (1960) and the Soweto riots (1976), where black demonstrators were violently dispersed by government forces. The remarks were followed by Tutu's repeated condemnation of Israel for collaborating with South Africa's leaders on security and nuclear matters. "We blacks cannot understand how people with your kind of history (can) allow the government of Israel, as distinct from its people, to have the kind of relationship" it has with South Africa, Tutu said.<sup>79</sup>

Tutu's statement caused a stir in New York Jewish circles, as reports in both South African and the American Press recorded.<sup>80</sup> Tensions were further exacerbated when, in October 1989, Tutu met with Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) leader, Yasser Arafat, in Cairo. At the meeting, the two discussed issues including the situation of Palestinians in Israeli occupied territories, the similarities between the plight of the Palestinians and that of black South Africans, and the recognition by Arafat and the PLO of Israel's right to exist.<sup>81</sup> While Tutu's critique, equating the Israeli occupation with apartheid, unsettled huge segments of the Jewish world, his repeated acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist did not rehabilitates his image among the Jewish communities in South Africa, the US, and Israel, where he was frequently accused of being anti-Jewish.<sup>82</sup> The news of his upcoming visit to the Holy Land was thus received with predictable ambivalence by the Israeli authorities.

### **Desmond Tutu's Pilgrimage to Israel-Palestine (Christmas, 1989)**

On 4 December 1989, the Israeli Government Press Office Director, Yossi Olmert, wrote to a variety of government representatives:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is about to visit Israel and the occupied territories [...] The Archbishop is, to put it mildly, not a friend of Israel and the Jewish people [...] His visit [...] which coincides with Christmas and with the second anniversary of the Intifada [...] is likely to become a media event on a global scale that can seriously damage the image of the state of Israel. The South African connection bears a special sensitivity, precisely now, following the Prime Minister's visit to the US.<sup>83</sup>

The special sensitivity Olmert refers to here alludes to the ambivalence of the Israeli policy towards the apartheid regime at the time. On the rhetorical front, the sanctions package approved by the Israeli cabinet and adopted on 16 September 1987, outlawed all new investments in South Africa and officially allied Israel with international sanctions against apartheid. However, the sanctions had had hardly any impact on the flourishing trade between the two countries, especially in the defense sector, where contracts

<sup>79</sup> Andrew Sllow Carroll, "Tutu Says He and Elie Wiesel can 'Mediate' Mideast Peace," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 31 January 1989.

<sup>80</sup> "Tutu on Link Between South Africa and Israel," *Sowetan*, 8 February 1989, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 3 (10 February 1989), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>81</sup> *The Star*, 25 October 1989; *Business Day*, 24 October 1989, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 20 (27 October 1987); *The Daily News*, 3 January 1990, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 1 (19 January 1990), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>82</sup> Marjorie. N. Feld *Nations Divided: American Jews and the Struggle over Apartheid* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 125.

<sup>83</sup> "Archbishop Desmond Tutu Visit in Israel- End of December," a Letter from Yossi Olmert, Director of the Israeli Government Press Office to the Prime Minister Office, 4 December 1989, file ISA-PMO-GPO-000hkin, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. [Hebrew].

signed before 1987 remained in effect.<sup>84</sup> Prime Minister, Yitzchak Shamir, who since 1987 had assured the US administration in Washington of his pro-sanctions approach, was actually playing a double game. By 1989, the Americans were already pushing him into the corner, given Israel's ongoing aid to the South African missile programme.<sup>85</sup>

Yigal Antebi, then director of the African department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, prepared a thorough report for the Ministry which included a brief paragraph on Tutu's biography, his views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jews and Zionism, information on the relations between Israel and South Africa, and a list of questions whose goal, in Antebi's words was "to attack the guest when necessary."<sup>86</sup> Based on these reports, Olmert called for the establishment of an ad-hoc committee to prepare an appropriate Israeli response for the "unwanted" upcoming visitor.<sup>87</sup> While the Israeli administration predicted that the visit might become "a spectacular anti-Israeli blitz in the world media," it acknowledged Tutu's international status and offered to "strangle him with love" through creating convenient moments for positive media coverage of the upcoming visit.<sup>88</sup>

The committee's proposals included a meeting of Tutu with a delegation of Jewish Ethiopian immigrants; with the then mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek; with the interfaith committee operating in Jerusalem; and with members of the Anglican Church who were sympathetic to Israel. The committee also suggested a scheduled visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.<sup>89</sup> However, in practice, Tutu, who was hosted by the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, Samir Kafity, declared in response that his visit was private and religious in nature.<sup>90</sup> He refused to participate in most of the proposed meetings from the Israeli side, and spent most of his time in East Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Beit Sahur.<sup>91</sup>

Tutu's visit began with a round of visits to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim holy places. At the compound surrounding the Al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine, Tutu told senior Muslim clergymen and Palestinian nationalists: "We support your struggle for justice, peace, statehood and independence." While he emphasized that he "bears no animosity to the Jewish people," he stated: "We call into question the policies of the Israeli government."<sup>92</sup> During a visit to the Roman Catholic Patriarchate, Tutu similarly declared: "We say that the Palestinians have right on their side when they say they want an independent state. In the same breath we affirm the right of Israel to its independence and territorial integrity."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 204.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 206–218.

<sup>86</sup> "Archbishop Desmond Tutu visit in Israel 22–26/12/89," 21 December 1989, a letter from Yigal Antebi, director of the African department at the Israeli Foreign Ministry to the Prime Minister Communication Advisor, p. 2, file ISA-PMO-GPO-000hkin, Israeli State Archives, Jerusalem. [Hebrew].

<sup>87</sup> "Archbishop Desmond Tutu Visit in Israel- End of December," a Letter from Yossi Olmert, Director of the Israeli Government Press Office to the Prime Minister Office, 4 December 1989, file ISA-PMO-GPO-000hkin, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. [Hebrew].

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> "Tutu's Visit," a Letter from Yossi Olmert, Director of the Israeli Government Press Office to the Prime Minister Office, 13 December 1989, file ISA-PMO-GPO-000hkin, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem. [Hebrew].

<sup>90</sup> "Desmond Tutu will arrive in Israel for Christmas services," *Maariv*, 20 December 1989, 2, Historical Jewish Press of the NLI & TAU.

<sup>91</sup> David Landau, "Tutu Speaks of Israeli Repression but his Rhetoric is taken in Stride," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 25 December 1989.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Cowell, "Tutu, Visiting Jerusalem, Backs Palestinian Statehood."

Tutu spent Christmas Eve at a carol service at the chapel of the Shepherd's Field, outside the village of Beit Sahour near Bethlehem.<sup>94</sup> Beit Sahour, a mostly Christian village under a constant siege by the Israeli army, played a key role in the First Intifada, with local activists pioneering nonviolence resistance practices.<sup>95</sup> It became known for its community's acts of civil disobedience during the summer of 1989, which manifested as a tax revolt in protest against the Israeli occupation, under the slogan "No taxation without representation."<sup>96</sup> Tutu's attendance turned the service into a major political event as thousands of Palestinians gathered outside the Church and demonstrated in support of the PLO and the ANC.<sup>97</sup>

Tutu opened his sermon with a reflection on the Christian belief that shepherds tending their flocks were the first to receive word of the birth of Jesus. He stated, "Our people in South Africa love that story because it says shepherds are actually more important than the world thinks [...] Or even more wonderfully, the story says that God has a special caring for those [...] whom the world oppresses."<sup>98</sup> In his statement, Tutu again asserted his support for Palestinian nationhood, but added, "the Jews have a right to their independent state as well."<sup>99</sup> This particular event was performed as a traditional Christmas service, but the substance was notably political and the tone defiant. It positioned the "two-state solution" as the Palestinians' blueprint for resolving their conflict with Israel and translated the South African context into the Israeli occupied territories.

On his last evening spent at St. George's Cathedral in East Jerusalem, Tutu met Israeli and Palestinian journalists and talked about the two-year uprising by Palestinians protesting Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He compared Israel to South Africa stating: "In the methods of resistance used by Palestinians, and in the ways the Israeli government deals with resistance, we experience an extraordinary sense of being at home."<sup>100</sup> Of the Israelis criticism of his statements, he said: "I'm saddened because I like to be liked. But I will certainly not change one iota when I say I believe something is wrong."<sup>101</sup> When asked by an Israeli reporter to say whether his condemnation of violence included the violence of Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli soldiers in the occupied territories, he answered, "Except for David and Goliath, I have not heard that a stone killed a soldier. I condemned all violence but if we condemn then we have to condemn those who break bones and who use bullets."<sup>102</sup>

Tutu's statements above reflect his attitude towards non-violent struggle in his own country. As General Secretary of the SACC, Tutu's position demonstrates the line taken by the SACC towards violence, which combined "an understanding of the reasons for taking up arms with a blanket condemnation of all violence, from whatever side it came."<sup>103</sup> This line of policy evolved directly from the WCC's changing position towards the turn to an armed struggle in South Africa by the ANC. As Tal Zalmanovich argues,

<sup>94</sup> Tutu and Allen, *God is not a Christian*, 92.

<sup>95</sup> Noah Berlatsky, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012), 186.

<sup>96</sup> Georg Martin and James Manney, "Report from the Beit Sahour: Tax Strike for Justice—Building Autonomy," *Commonweal* January 26, 1990, 36–38.

<sup>97</sup> Berlatsky, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 186.

<sup>98</sup> Tutu and Allen, *God is not a Christian*, 92–93.

<sup>99</sup> Allen, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 386.

<sup>100</sup> Alan Cowell, "Tutu Cool to Pretoria Offer to Join Talks," *New York Times*, 26 December 1989.

<sup>101</sup> Cowell, "Tutu Cool to Pretoria Offer to Join Talks."

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Allen, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 172.

from the early 1960s, “although some of the members of the WCC were still struggling with how to react to the inherent violence of racism, many called for an active response to the suffering endured by those living in racial domination.”<sup>104</sup> Zalmanovich demonstrates the ways in which this shift in WCC policies facilitated “the South African regime’s capacity to limit the activity of the WCC in the country, accusing it of supporting violence,” on the one hand, and forced the South African churches, and the SACC in particular, “to clarify their positions and to commit to their stand against apartheid,” on the other.<sup>105</sup> This shift is clearly discernible in Tutu’s statement of 1989. Here he stated, “Apartheid is in and of itself violent. Apartheid is in and of itself evil, totally and completely. There is no way in which you can use nice methods. It has, *ipso facto*, to use methods that are consistent with its nature.”<sup>106</sup>

The only Israeli official to meet Tutu during his visit was the then Minister of Religious Affairs, Zevulun Hammer who was from the religious Mafdal Party, which of all the Israeli political parties most resembled the South African National Party (NP) in its core ideology. At the meeting, the Minister confronted Tutu on his criticism of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, arguing that Tutu showed “a simple lack of understanding toward the problems of the Middle East.”<sup>107</sup> He stated,

We [the Jewish people] were never received by the Arabs as people returning home [...] we returned home to the homes of our forefathers that we had prayed for for 2,000 years, and you [Tutu] have to see this if you want to contribute to peace.<sup>108</sup>

Tutu responded, “I still feel that some of the things that I have seen on the occupied West Bank are things that I have seen at home.”<sup>109</sup> He further explained, “when I find injustice and oppression anywhere in the world, whoever perpetrates it must know that I will condemn it. If I am accused, as I am often accused, of being antisemitic, tough luck.”<sup>110</sup> However, at the same time, he stressed that he understood the anxieties and fears of the Jewish people,

I have articulated that time and time again, saying that it is important for the Arabs, the Palestinians, to recognize Israel’s right to a sovereign statehood; but equally, I would hope that the Israelis would hear the anguish and the cry of the Palestinians to equal recognition of their aspirations for sovereign statehood.<sup>111</sup>

As already noted, on the last day of his visit, Tutu was taken to the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem. The Israeli official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust was established in 1953 on the western slope of Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, according to the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law.<sup>112</sup> Under the Israeli legal protocol, visits to Yad Vashem are mandatory for all diplomats visiting Israel for the first time, since, in the words of a Foreign Ministry document of protocol, “you cannot understand Israel [...] without visiting

<sup>104</sup> Zalmanovich, “What Is Needed Is an Ecumenical Act of Solidarity,” 185.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 186–7.

<sup>106</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu quoted in: Asmal, Asmal and Roberts, *Reconciliation Through Truth*, 42.

<sup>107</sup> “Tutu Defends Criticism of Israeli Policy: Middle East: South African prelate is assailed for condemning treatment of Palestinians in visit to area. He calls nation’s former leaders terrorists,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 December 1989.

<sup>108</sup> Ann Peters, “Tutu Visit Jerusalem Holocaust Memorial,” *United Press International*, 27 December 1989.

<sup>109</sup> Tutu and Allen, *God is not Christian*, 95.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> The Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance (Yad Vashem) Law 5713–1953, *The Statute Book*, no. 132, 8 Elul 5713, 19 August 1953.

the Holocaust.<sup>113</sup> As Idith Zertal argued, the law “made the crucial, exclusive link between Holocaust memory and the State of Israel, between the Holocaust and Jerusalem, the only place that could house this memory, according to the official Israeli narrative.”<sup>114</sup> Presumably, the proposal for an official visit by Tutu to Yad Vashem was related to the fact that he was already considered an influential figure in the Christian world and in the international arena in general. Since the Israeli internal reports on Tutu’s visit present the many concerns that accompanied the organizers on the Israeli side, regarding possible anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian statements on the part of Tutu, it is safe to assume that the visit to Yad Vashem, which clearly links the Holocaust to the rebirth of Israel, was meant to soften Tutu’s views.

Some members of the Anglican church in East Jerusalem tried to talk Tutu out of visiting the Yad Vashem memorial, arguing, “the Holocaust is not the other side of the story. We [the Palestinians] were not responsible of the Holocaust.”<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, Tutu was not dissuaded from his plans. In his personal account of his experience at the Yad Vashem memorial Tutu recalls,

I visited the Holy Land over Christmas 1989 and had the privilege during that visit of going to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. When the media asked me for my impressions, I told them it was a shattering experience. I added that the Lord whom I served, who was himself a Jew, would have asked, “But what about forgiveness?” That remark set the cat among the pigeons. I was roundly condemned. I had also expressed my dismay at the treatment meted out to the Palestinians, which was in my view quite at variance with what the Jewish prophets taught and what the Jewish rabbi that we Christians followed demanded from his followers.<sup>116</sup>

In Israel, Tutu’s Yad Vashem statement was interpreted as another pro-Palestinian manifestation. He was again charged with being antisemitic and graffiti appeared on the walls of St. George’s Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem, with the slogan: “Tutu is a black Nazi pig.”<sup>117</sup> When Tsvi Gov-Ari, Israeli Ambassador in South Africa, published an official statement on Tutu’s visit to the South Africa press, he referred selectively to Tutu’s pro-Palestinian sympathies and to his repeated comparison between Israel and apartheid, without specifically addressing the Yad Vashem statement.<sup>118</sup>

The incident met, however, with outrage on the part of the official representatives of American Jewry. The New York Community Relations Council, as well as the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, the American Jewish Congress and the anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith issued statements criticizing Tutu’s remarks at Yad Vashem as profoundly insensitive.<sup>119</sup> Elie Wiesel, the renowned 1986 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Holocaust survivor stated: “No one has the right to forgive except the dead themselves, and the dead were killed and silenced by their murderers. For anyone in Jerusalem, at Yad Vashem, to speak about forgiveness would be, in my view,

<sup>113</sup> Sara McDowell and Maire Broniff, *Commemoration as Conflict: Space, Memory and Identity in Peace Processes* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 111–112.

<sup>114</sup> Idith Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 86.

<sup>115</sup> Allen, *Rabble Rouser for Peace*, 387.

<sup>116</sup> Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 203–204.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>118</sup> “Israel Ambassador on Archbishop Tutu,” *Cape Times*, 6 February 1990, Press Items of Jewish Interest, No. 3 (16 February 1990), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>119</sup> Allison Kaplan, “Behind the Headlines: Jews Disagree Whether to Protest Tutu’s Appearance at Inauguration,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 28 December 1989.

a disturbing lack of sensitivity toward the Jewish victims and their survivors. I hope that was not the intention of Bishop Tutu."<sup>120</sup>

A stronger reaction came from Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, then the largest Holocaust study institution in the United States. He saw Tutu's call for prayer and forgiveness of those responsible for the Nazi genocide as "a gratuitous insult to the Jews and victims of Nazism everywhere. Bishop Tutu showed the arrogance of an ancient crusader who had come to Yad Vashem with a bag full of Christian morality. The bishop surely knows where that Christian conscience was when millions of Jews and others suffered at the hands of the Nazis."<sup>121</sup>

When Tutu arrived again in the US in January 1990 to participate in the inauguration ceremony of David Dinkins as New York's first black mayor, he was the target of a water-bomb tossed at him by Jewish protesters; and in May that year, he received a hostile reception from Jewish activists protesting in Pasadena, California, against his recent statements made in Israel declaring his support for the right of the Palestinians. The protesters shouted: "why do you hate Jews?" as he left the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena.<sup>122</sup> The protestors' actions were deplored by a group of American Jewish leaders who issued a joint statement after meeting with Tutu in Cincinnati. However, while distancing themselves from allegations that Tutu was antisemitic, they expressed their belief that his criticism of Israel was asymmetrical, stating "Jewish community leaders and Archbishop Tutu differed on whether comparisons could be drawn between the policies of the South African and Israeli governments."<sup>123</sup>

In South Africa too, the Jewish community was troubled by Tutu's statements throughout his visit, albeit without specifically addressing Tutu's controversial call for forgiveness. At the Cape Committee meeting of the Jewish Board of Deputies, held in January 1990, Rabbi Arthur Seltzer, chairman of the South African Association of Progressive Rabbis, said that he had been very disturbed by the recent pronouncements made by Tutu. He argued that any leader who uses Jews and Israel to "push" his own political power, should be stopped, and called on the Board to issue a clear and vigorous statement to that effect.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, in an article in the *Sunday Times* from 14 January 1990, Rabbi David Hoffman of Cape Town wrote, "Respecting the real suffering of the victims and appreciating the burdens borne by the survivors becomes difficult when blurring over the historical uniqueness of the Holocaust and equating the suffering of its victims with the suffering caused by other situations."<sup>125</sup> Hoffman referred specifically to Tutu's visit to Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, stating,

Admittedly biased toward a certain simplistic concept of how peace in the Middle East might be attained when he entered the Archbishop would not allow his encounter with Yad Vashem to deter him from his mission or his message. To do so would have meant to challenge himself at the very core of conviction and being, to really consider the way that Jews everywhere bear

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<sup>120</sup> Landau, "Jews Stunned by Tutu's Suggestion Holocaust Perpetrators be Forgiven."

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> "Hostile Reception for Tutu in US," *Sowetan*, 23 May 1990, Items of Jewish Interest No. 10 (1 June 1990), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.; "Archbishop Tutu," *The Daily News*, 31 May 1990, Items of Jewish Interest No.11, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>124</sup> South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Cape Committee Activities report, November 1989-January 1990, 7-8, Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

<sup>125</sup> "Blurs Historical Uniqueness," *Sunday Times*, 14 January 1990, Press Items of Jewish Interest, No. 1 (19 January 1990), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.

witness to the Holocaust and to allow that testimony to challenge his own Holocaust theology and the gaps in his knowledge.<sup>126</sup>

While Tutu's statement was critically received in the Jewish-Zionist world, the arguments of the critics reflect insufficient consideration of his eclectic theological orientation based on elements of African spirituality, black liberation theology and Anglican humanism, all informed by the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Tutu's goal was liberation from apartheid and throughout his struggle he repeatedly declared to the Jewish-Zionist world, "[opposition to apartheid] is not a political issue, it is our faith and it has very deep roots in your history, your tradition."<sup>127</sup> Tutu draws on the concept of *Ubuntu*, the Southern African word for humanness that is often used to encapsulate sub-Saharan moral ideals, and which he defines as meaning "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours, [...] a person is a person through other persons."<sup>128</sup> He states, "if social harmony is for us the summa bonum- the greatest good, then the primary aim when dealing with wrongdoing [...] should be to establish harmonious relationships between wrongdoers and victims."<sup>129</sup>

This convention, which was clearly echoed in Tutu's controversial call at Yad Vashem, was also used as a yardstick to evaluate South African society during the transition from apartheid to democracy. Tutu maintained that, through ubuntu, democratic South Africa should deal with apartheid-era political crimes by seeking reconciliation or restorative justice. In his address to the first gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on 16 December 1995, Tutu stated,

We are privileged to be on this Commission to assist our land, our people to come to terms with our dark past once and for all. They say that those who suffer from amnesia, those who forget the past, are doomed to repeat it. It is not dealing with the past to say facilely, let bygones be bygones, for then they won't be bygones.<sup>130</sup>

From this perspective, Tutu's call for Jews to forgive the Nazi perpetrators was not a call for a Jewish amnesia or for a general amnesty, but rather a call for the Jewish nation to rise above its historical tragedy in order to empathize with and to prevent the suffering of others. Viewed retrospectively, the position Tutu adopts in Jerusalem in 1989 is consistent with his approach to transitional justice in South Africa six years later, which aimed at helping South Africans to come to terms with their past and laid the foundation for reconciliation and for social cohesion.<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

An exploration of Tutu's analogical lexicon reveals the gradual evolution of different sets of analogies from the late 1970s onwards. The focus on Tutu's various public statements and their reception in these years invites us to reposition Tutu's religious visit to Israel-Palestine as a prominent political event in his ongoing struggle against apartheid, and as one that is

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Feld *Nations Divided*, 125.

<sup>128</sup> Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>130</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Address to the First Gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," 16 December 1995, TRC press release.

<sup>131</sup> Ziyad Motala, "The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, the Constitution and International Law," *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 28, no. 3 (1995): 338.

formative for the emergence of his use of the Israel-apartheid analogy and his articulation of a parallel struggle: that of the Palestinians against the Israeli Occupation.

In his book *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999), Tutu explains the decision to pursue the path of truth commissions in South Africa, rather than Nuremberg style criminal trials. He states: "In World War II the Allies defeated the Nazis and their allies comprehensively and were thus able to impose what has been described as 'victor's justice.'"<sup>132</sup> However, the situation in South Africa, he argues, was different as there was no decisive military victory in the struggle against apartheid. More importantly, he emphasizes, "[w]hile the Allies could pack up and go home after Nuremberg, we in South Africa had to live with one another."<sup>133</sup> Therefore, Tutu saw it imperative not to seek "revenge against the perpetrators but a healing for their traumatized and divided nation."<sup>134</sup>

As demonstrated throughout the article, this was also the message Tutu wished to foreground during his controversial visit to Israel-Palestine. For him, the Holocaust and the Nakba must be viewed as inseparable traumatic events bearing intertwined traumatic memories. Reading Tutu's analogical lexicon through Maier's discussion of the "two opposing master narratives of the twentieth century" and the work of Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg relating specifically to the Holocaust and the Nakba, offers a way of understanding how and why the memory and moral urgency of certain key instances of mass violations of human rights are invoked and deployed in the context of ongoing political struggles. Where Israeli nationalism positions the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust as the trigger for the establishment of the State of Israel, Tutu cumulatively argues for the moral implications of this catastrophe for a quite different group of victims—the Palestinians. As a black South African addressing the Nazi genocide, the Israeli political context imbued Tutu's acts and statements with relevance, opening a path for considering the destructive characteristics of apartheid, construed in the broader sense both inside South Africa and beyond its borders.

Tutu's politics of comparison can contribute to the understanding of a recent debate on analogies. In 17 June 2019, Democrat representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez described migrant detention facilities at the southern US border as concentration camps during an Instagram live stream.<sup>135</sup> Following up on Twitter, she repeated the "concentration camp" analogy describing the facilities conditions as dehumanizing. Two days later, a post on Yad Vashem Twitter account encouraged Ocasio-Cortez to educate herself about concentration camps,<sup>136</sup> and not long after, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) joined Yad Vashem's denunciation and issued a statement rejecting "efforts to create analogies between the Holocaust and other events, whether historical or contemporary."<sup>137</sup>

An open letter to the Director of the USHMM, Sara J. Bloomfield, was delivered on 1 July, by 375 scholars from around the world, stating:

By "unequivocally rejecting efforts to create analogies between the Holocaust and other events, whether historical or contemporary," the United States Holocaust Memorial

<sup>132</sup> Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 22.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>135</sup> Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Ocasio-Cortez Calls Migrant Detention Centers 'Concentration Camps,' Electing Backlash," *The New York Times*, 18 June 2019.

<sup>136</sup> "Yad Vashem tells Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to 'learn about concentration camps'" *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 20 June 2019.

<sup>137</sup> "Statement Regarding the Museum's Position on Holocaust Analogies," 24 June 2019, Press Releases, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Museum is taking a radical position that is far removed from mainstream scholarship on the Holocaust and genocide. And it makes learning from the past almost impossible.<sup>138</sup>

A similar claim was made by Tutu's spokesman in an official statement to the press in November 1989:

The Holocaust is always the one supreme example the Archbishop uses in talking about massive atrocities and evil things that governments do to people. If they say one might not refer to the Holocaust as an illustrative point, then by the same standard one should not refer to Idi Amin's massacres in Uganda and the massacres inflicted on Cambodians by the Pol Pot regime. This would severely hamper a preacher's ability to illustrate a sermon with examples of evil.<sup>139</sup>

The critical reception of Tutu's analogical lexicon in the Jewish-Zionist world serves as another manifestation of discourses rooted in the supposed uniqueness of the Holocaust. It is yet another indication that the use of the Holocaust as an analogy for other genocides, mass atrocities and human rights violations is long-standing, even if it remains highly controversial. When analogies become illegitimate, the question left is: How can we learn from the past if we are prevented from reflecting on its relevance for the present?

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## Notes on Contributor

**Roni Mikel Arieli** is a Scholion postdoctoral fellow, as a member of the research group "In Someone Else's Shoes: An Interdisciplinary Research Group for the Study of Empathy in History, Society, and Culture," at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She wrote her PhD dissertation, "Remembering the Holocaust in a Racial State: Cultural and Discursive Aspects of Holocaust Memory in South Africa from Apartheid to Democracy (1948-1994)," in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a member of the 2014 class of the Hoffman Leadership and Responsibility Fellowship programme and holds a PhD fellowship in the European Research Council (ERC) project "Apartheid: The Global Itinerary: South African Cultural Formations in Transnational Circulation 1948-1990," under the direction of Professor Louise Bethlehem.

<sup>138</sup> "An Open Letter to the Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum," *The New York Review Daily*, 1 July 2019.

<sup>139</sup> "Response from Archbishop's Office to Letter," *The Sunday Tribute*, 19 November 1989, Press Items of Jewish Interest No. 23 (8 December 1989), Rochlin Archive, Johannesburg.