

Sons of Hellenists, sons of Zion: Divisive Zion

The UK Guardian's Helena Smith reported on an Anglo-Greek team documenting a huge underwater ancient Greek city. They think they might have found Plato's mythical Atlantis. The Greek city has been seen there for a long time in shallow water, yet it takes an English-led team to excavate it. Whereas Greeks are pursuing a modern future having left behind their distant past, Anglo-culture sees the Ancient Greek culture as their foundation, and they have done so for over 200 years. That English excavation in Greece is about Anglo-cultural history is demonstrated by the English refusal to return the Elgin marbles from the Parthenon.

Anglo-led expeditions, often sponsored by Anglo-Zionists, have come to the Middle East for nearly 200 years digging up another of the Anglo cultural foundations; the Bible.

Anglo culture is quintessentially Western culture. Until the new 'reality' of Israel after the 9-11 terrorist attacks on America the two foundations of Western culture, Ancient Greek texts and the Bible, seemed not to be in conflict, at least on the surface.

Twenty years ago Israel was in the Australian newspapers every other day. But at that time the tone was detached. Reporting is not detached now. Partly that may be due to a shrinking world and a globalized media, but fundamentally I sense Zion matters more than 20 years ago.

There are two phenomena; fear expressed of the power of anti-Israel global opinion, and outreaching at every level from synagogue to international aid. It is because, to the people who matter in the world, Zion matters.

The fundamentalist Islamic clerics from Iran to Gaza have made the existence of Israel matter to the world. They have used force to underline their desire for their belief in the non-existence of Israel to be reality.

The great Western nations, the Quartet, know Israel exists. They were involved in the original partition that gave birth to Israel, and, if the Arabs had chosen it in 1948, an Arab nation. But they know, by experience, that the Islamic Arab world exists also. They have sought a compromise, where no compromise is possible; to divide Israel, again.

This has existential implications.

I don't just mean to Israel, which is a given. This issue of whether to divide Israel or not is divisive from Murmansk to Mawson, from Sweden to India. It is even divisive, if they would admit it, in the Arab world. The divide line is unexpected. The divide is between religious Jew and secular Jew, between fundamentalist Christian and orthodox Christian, and even between those who value liberty and those who value diversity. The issue of Jerusalem is dividing the world.

This divide is between the sons of Zion and the sons of Greece (Hellenists). It has nothing to do with country of origin, or the title of someone's religion. It is an existential attitude to the global cultural inheritance from the Bible. And the sons of Zion are a minority.

Twenty years ago, when the world was divided between West and East, it would have seemed nonsense to predict the people of the world would be divided on the issue of Zion. It is as if the global West and East divide, that shifted to a North and South divide, located its centre through Israel. In the recent past it would have seemed nonsense that there would be a clear global division in the modern world between sons of Zion (including non-Jewish supporters of Zion) and cultural

sons of the ancient Hellenists (including secular Jews).

The idea of the divide between the son of Zion and Hellen is not original. As with so much of Israel's modern history, it is already written.

Rejoice greatly, Fair (daughter) of Zion! Shout, Fair (daughter) of Jerusalem!

Behold, your King is coming to you. He is victorious (Tzadik) Yet humble riding on an ass... He shall call on the nations to surrender.. (JPS Zechariah 9:9)

In the lead up to this event it is written,

And I will arouse your sons, O Zion Against your sons O Javan and make you like a warrior's sword. (JPS Zechariah 9:13).

Javen was a son of Japheth (son of Noah) who settled the isles (Genesis 10:2-5). In Hebrew 'Javen' means 'watery, miry clay' (Psalm 69:1-2). But the Javan called themselves the 'Hellen'. The modern world calls them Greeks. The Hellen (Ancient Greeks) referred to those who became Hellenised as 'Epigonoï' which means "offspring" or "sons".

Hanukkah: Remembering Sons of Zion versus Hellenists

Did Zechariah when speaking of the sons of Zion and the Tzadik King miss his era?

Long ago Antiochus IV Epiphanes, by enforcing Hellenistic culture on his polyglot dominions and banning Jewish worship caused the sons of Zion to revolt. From 166 BCE the sons of Zion fought the sons of Yavan (Greece). By 165 BCE they had liberated the temple and re-dedicated it. It should be noted that some Jews were Hellenists. By 143 BCE, the Maccabees had fully established independence. But there were still Jews who were culturally sons of Javan (Hellen) in their midst. But the context of Zechariah requires events to be at a time when a Tzadik calls on the nations to 'surrender', not just give the Zionists limited independence.

Zechariah used the term 'sons of Javan', in the same way the Hellen did, where people not genetically descended from the Hellen tribes, were called Epigonoï. They were not Hellen (Greeks), but were 'sons' by a cultural inheritance. And some Hellen were Jews.

Zechariah also speaks of the daughters of Zion. A daughter lives in the house, and the term was often used of people living in Israel (Isaiah 4:4). The sons might not need to 'live in the house', but be sons by cultural inheritance.

Defining the culture of Zion

Zion is the name that David gave the citadel conquered from the Jebusites (compare 2 Samuel 5:7, 1 Kings 8:1). Zion means a 'monumental pillar', a 'waymark' or 'sign'. Zion is not merely an alternate name for Jerusalem, it is a name that makes a point. Jacob when he sees angels ascending sets up a pillar and calls the place 'the house of El' (Genesis 28:18). The 'pillar' or gate to the dwelling of God (El) is explained in a psalm,

For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation.

This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. (Psalm 132:13-14)

Therefore Jerusalem was called 'Zion' by David to indicate it was the place of the sign of the habitation of God. When the temple, was lost, due to the Babylonian destruction Jeremiah laments, How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! (Lamentations 4:1-2)

The sons of Zion are those who make the sign of the presence of God's habitation their hope. When the physical Sanctuary of Zion is lost the sons of Zion are not strong gold but weak clay. The sons of Zion see their strength and glory only exists in the Presence dwelling in the Temple. All the glory

of Israel as a nation was bound up in the temple and the temple service, or in other words in the idea of Zion.

The influence of the culture of Hellen

The Enlightenment brought to the fore the study of ancient Greek Classical works in popular culture from Russia, to Scandinavia, to France, Holland, England and then to America. In England, especially, to be 'educated' came to mean one had an education in the 'Classics'. In the expansion of the English language after 1600 many of the new words had Greek origins. Today, despite only 5% of English words coming from Greek directly, about 25% have Greek origins. Ironically, Ancient Greek words used for scientific and technological items in English have gone back into modern Greek as new words.

Philosophers and historians from both England and the Continent found in Greek culture and ideas the origins of what they called 'Western' civilization. Others wrote that the origin of 'Western' philosophy was in Greek Philosophy. Some trace the origin of the Enlightenment to Descartes' 1637 *Discourse on the Method*. Descartes approach came from late Aristotelianism, a 16th century revival of Stoicism and Augustine. In other words Descartes was a son of Hellen (Greece), as were those who followed him.

The result of the study of ancient Greek works was a new era of Greek art and architecture. There came to be more Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns outside the former Greek Empire than in it. One reason for this was the removal of them from Mediterranean lands to Northern European and American museums, the other was the prolific construction of Greek inspired edifices, from banks to Parliament buildings and even churches.

In more practical terms, the Enlightenment began an era of Democracy in politics, which was undoubtedly a Greek idea. Revolutionary France, and the Greek culture inspired Thomas Jefferson who was an author of the Declaration of Independence (1776). From his stay in Paris he brought back to America an appreciation of the classical style and a belief that Greek style most represented American democracy. Even as recently as the 1980's America led a revival in Neo-classical-post-modern references in fashion, films, art and architecture. If classical architecture and the ideals of democracy are evidence, the sons of Hellen can now be found throughout the Western world, and beyond.

Was Zechariah relevant in speaking of the sons of Greece existing in the time of Mashiach's coming? But who in the world isn't, by cultural inheritance, a son of Hellen? Who are the sons of Zion?

When the sons of Zion fought the Hellenists and rededicated the Temple

The ancient Hellenistic culture was diametrically opposed to the sons of Zion. The Hellen worshipped many gods, whereas Jews worshipped one. The Hellenistic culture promoted material possessions, the Jewish did not. The Hellenistic culture valued the representation of the naked human form, a problem for Jews. The Hellen in their thinking separated soul and mind, whereas Jews believed they were united. The Hellen thought there was an immaterial world that was perfect, whereas Jews, only had one good world, the physical one. The Hellen valued abstract philosophic discussion, whereas Jews valued focussed study of the Law and wisdom in action. Lastly the greatest difference which could not be disguised was that the Hellen elevated human thinking, whereas Jews subjected human thinking to the Torah.

The sons of Zion of the Selucid era were tolerant, to a point. It took the Hellenist's action of taking control of Jerusalem and desecrating the Temple to 'stir them up'.

And I will arouse your sons, O Zion Against your sons O Javan (*Hellen*) and make you like a warrior's sword. (JPS Zechariah 9:13).

How is this occurring in the modern world full of Hellenists? That is written too,

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. ...Yea, and what have you to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon (Lebanon), and all the coasts of Palestine? will you render to me a recompense? and if you recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; Because you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have you sold unto the Hellenists, that you might remove them far from their border. (Joel 3:1-6)

There are two issues 'the people and heritage' of Israel and that they 'parted' the Land. Lebanon and Palestine are rebuked because they 'sold' Judah and Jerusalem to the Hellenists. Who are the Hellenists, who seek to divide the land of Israel? It is a neat description for the collection of nations who have more Greek columns in their capitols than on the Acropolis, also known as the 'Western' world. The American President, Obama, speaks from beneath classical columns, and, he seeks to divide Judah and Jerusalem. Russia has recently returned to its Byzantine Greek roots, with their President speaking from truly awe inspiring classical spaces. The symbol of the European Union is actually the Brandenburg gate, a classical edifice, and, the European Union now seeks to divide Jerusalem.

At Hanukkah it is appropriate to remember the end of the events that stirred up the sons of Zion. From the Haftarah there is the vision of the lampstand and the two sons of oil, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, said the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

In the time of the Selucids, the sons of Zion won independence. But there will be another yet greater victory of the sons of Zion to remember in the future. Zechariah also says,

Rejoice greatly, Fair (daughter) of Zion! Shout, Fair (daughter) of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you. He is victorious (*tzadik*) Yet humble riding on an ass...He shall call on the nations to surrender.. (JPS Zechariah 9:9)

Ezekiel is told of a time when he would be involved in the cleansing and dedication of the Temple, And **you** (*Ezekiel, see context*) shall give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, says the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering... thus shall you cleanse and purge it...

Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. ...it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you. (Ezekiel 43:19-27).

I'd like to point out to the sons of Hellen that Plato's Atlantis is still a myth, and no more real than Moore's Utopia. By contrast even Josephus pointed out that Jewish scripture is "justly accredited as divine". On this issue the world is divided. It is the issue embodied in Zion. May the real sons of Zion shake off the shackles of Hellenistic myth and step forward.

Hellenistic thinking may have prevented scientific advancement see here