

# Color Blind - TheJ.ca

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## The State of Israel is color-blind to the skin color of its incoming returnees, insisting only that they claim to be Jews.



This past May, Acting Chairman of The Jewish Agency Yaakov Hagoel met with Ethiopian children about to make Aliyah. (Photo: Maxim Dinshtein)

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Color blindness is a condition of the eyes and brain well known in human medicine whereby individuals have not/have lost the capacity to perceive the colors of the spectrum. Sometimes the condition is limited to an inability to perceive just some colors.

In human affairs there is a well-known condition that many people have been known for in that they do differentiate in the way they treat other people based on the color of their skin. This is a condition well known regarding some members of the human race, although there are others, who consider themselves members of the so-called white race.

It was a feature of life at one time in South Africa when the government was held tightly by Whites, excluding the Black majority. It was a feature of life in the United States for centuries, even after the slavery of Black people was abolished, as it was in Europe as well. Many people recognize that slavery continues to be alive as well in some countries of the Middle East and Africa.

What has this got to do with the price of rice in China?

In 1948 a Jewish state was re-established in the ancestral home of the Hebrews. That began an ingathering of the exiles from the many countries of their dispersion. Originating as a unified Kingdom ruled by David from Jerusalem around 1000 B.C.E., the dispersion began when the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom were sent into exile by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. Their identity has been lost to antiquity, with few remains identified. But the southern kingdom persisted as Judea under several overlords, and even experienced a period of relative independence. Eventually it fell under the rule of imperial Rome.

Beginning with the year 70 C.E, the Romans crushed numerous revolts by the Judeans, and sent most of the peoples of the southern kingdom into exile over the next seventy years, as it made the territory a Roman province called Palestina, (i.e. the Philistines,) to erase the Hebrew connection.

Nevertheless, the community structure, built by the Jews around their monotheistic creed for almost a thousand years in their own land, allowed some of them to persist with a consciousness of their identity, even in exile, despite competition from Christianity and later, Islam. They faced centuries of persecution in retaining this identity.

Some Jews revived the idea of actually returning to their ancestral home in the late 1800's. There had always been a Jewish presence in that land, and in fact Jews were a majority in Jerusalem at that time. Many additional Jewish settlements were built.

The British Mandate was established by the League of Nations after World War I to prepare the country for the creation of a Jewish National Home, on territory taken from Ottoman Turkey, on both sides of the Jordan River. The aim was to resolve the bloody nature of the Jewish experience in the diaspora.

After World War II, the United Nations partitioned the land between Arabs and Jews, the British withdrew, and the Jewish State was declared on a tiny fraction of the territory. The small Jewish community fought off invaders during three wars to establish Israel in its current territorial state, containing Arab-administered enclaves.

When large numbers of Jews returned to their land from Europe as Holocaust survivors, as expellees from the Middle Eastern countries, from Russia, from Latin America, from North America, from Africa and from China, they came with skins the color of the rainbow.

Whatever their color, they were all welcomed as Jews in spite of the economic hardship involved. Jews around the world contributed financially to the effort.

The State of Israel is color-blind to the skin color of its incoming returnees, insisting only that they claim to be Jews. This year a new contingent of Jews came from Ethiopia, along with those from other countries. The ingathering process is ongoing.

From an original 800,000, Jews now number over six and a half million out of a total population of about nine million. The rest are mainly Arabs of the Islamic persuasion, descendants, mainly, of those who arrived during the British Mandate period, attracted by the economic impact of Jewish settlement activity on the region during that time. About two percent are Christians of Arabic background. It has been speculated that some of these people could have originated as Jews who converted to Christianity, as followers of Jesus from earliest times.



The Abraham Accords Declaration states: “We seek to end radicalization and conflict to provide all children a better future. We pursue a vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and around the world.” (Image: state.gov)

In spite of decades of hostility from its neighbors, Israel has established a certain level of acceptance in the environment dominated by the Arab countries of the region.

It is now being favored by the support of several Arab countries primarily oriented to the Sunni Islamic sect.

The expansionist activity of the Iranian Shiite regime, and Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, may have fostered an interest in Israel’s military and technological prowess on the part of some of its neighbors.

Along with all the wonders the State of Israel has contributed to the general welfare of the world through its technological and medical science achievements, it is also providing a model for how a multi-colored, multi-cultural society can function and thrive as a democracy

in a hostile world. Although it has benefitted from American patronage, that is an ongoing struggle.

It is a tragedy for many of us that the support by many Jews for advancing the causes of social justice and equality in America for non-whites, even at the cost of Jewish lives, has not led to positive attitudes toward those of Jewish ethnicity, and for Israel, in general, by organizations like Black Lives Matter, and the Nation of Islam.

They are not color-blind after all but we are allies in the fight against racism.



Max Roytenberg is an author, poet and blogger, with many published articles in Jewish periodicals in Dublin, New York, Winnipeg and Vancouver. After a career as an Economist and Executive in the Food Industry, in Canada and abroad, he writes, and lives with his Bride, in Vancouver. He has children and grandchildren in the US, Canada, China and Israel. His last book, “Hero In My Own Eyes”, is available through major booksellers and on Amazon.