

Bashert Encounters of the High Holiday Season

By Gerald A. Honigman



Iudea [Judea] Capta coin

Due to painful Family matters, as fate would have it, I found myself living in Rockville, Maryland to be near my son in 2024.

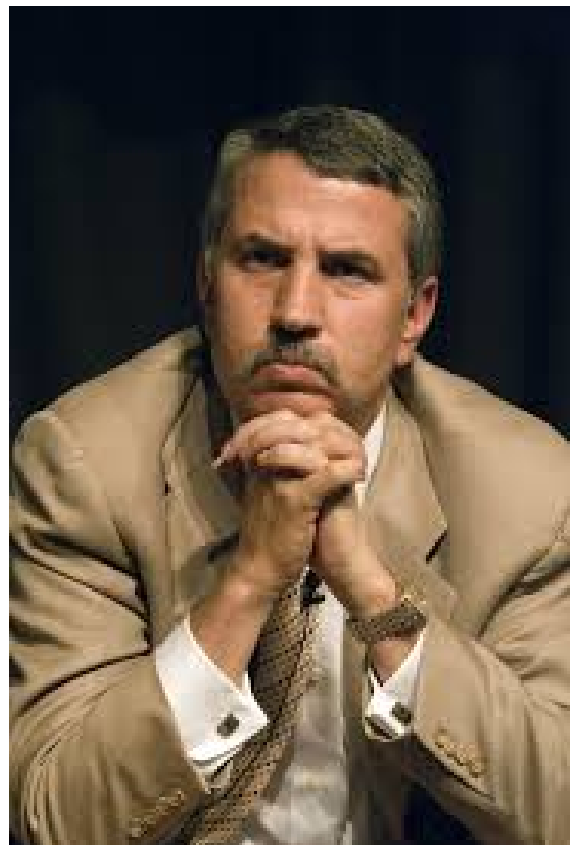
Looking for a new spiritual home for the High Holiday season, as luck would have it, there was a beautiful Conservative synagogue about 5 minutes via Uber from the apartment I now rent after leaving my beautiful home in coastal Florida.

It was about sixty stones's throws away from a beach where sea turtles nest each season, right whales bring calves in a very clean part of the Atlantic Ocean, manatees swim amid humans

(one came up to explore me while surf fishing), sharks thrive (had close encounters with them too), and I had wonderful other great fishing close to my home. The barrier island on which I lived for almost forty years is just about one block wide where in Ormond-by-the-Sea.

When I arrived to shul for services the eve (erev) of the beginning of Rosh HaShanah, I read the brochure the synagogue had and noticed two names which looked very familiar, but I simply thought that it was a coincidence so just put this in the back of my mind.

Somehow the Ten Days of Awe and deep soul-searching, about what I needed to do differently and better to make things right before the “eyes” of both God and man, flew by and Yom Kippur, the day of final reckoning arrived.



Thomas Friedman

Well, to my unbelievable surprise, THE Dennis Ross and Thomas Friedman of public fame, gave their annual post-Yom Kippur

service joint lecture afterwards.

Having been involved professionally as a specialist consultant for a much better led ADL in the '70s while doing my masters and doctoral work in Middle Eastern and National Security Policy Studies, and guest lecturing on dozens of university and college campuses in the three state region I was responsible for at the same time, I had become very familiar with both Ross and Friedman.

Dennis's role as, among other things, as key advisor to President Bill Clinton and partial architect of the infamous Oslo Peace (of the grave) Accords, in which the more Israel was forced to concede, the more blown apart dead and maimed Jews and other Israeli citizens it got in return was very indeed all too familiar to me.

Oslo gave Arabs lots of land, including places in historic Judea and Samaria (not renamed "West Bank" until the mid 20th century) like Bethlehem.

Question: do the Gospels say that Yehoshua/Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea or the "West Bank"... or is the coin atop this [link](#) (and at top) an Iudea [Judea] Capta coin or a Palaestina Capta one ... get my drift? King David was born in Bethlehem too, and my book is in use at Bethlehem University as well ... despite now being in the control of Fatah's Palestinian Authority.

I followed the columns of *NYT* columnist Thomas Friedman, usually with disgust, for decades and used to dream of a chance to confront him in person regarding his duplicitous writings on Middle Eastern issues and his presumptive sense of all knowing wisdom on all things regarding this troubled region.

Well, by bashert (it was somehow meant to be), I was sadly away from most of my family and friends in Florida, and in Kol Shalom synagogue in Rockville, Maryland when both gentlemen

gave their presentations.

I listened very carefully, and there about 300 members who remained behind after services to attend this annual event.

As honored members of the shul (synagogue) themselves, they both had many personal friends in attendance. I was a lone stranger amongst them all.

During the Q & A session afterwards, I waited patiently to hear what kind of questions would be asked—especially of the self-anointed font of all Middle East knowledge, Friedman.



Dennis Ross

Among other things, Tom considers himself the architect of the wonderful Saudi Peace Plan. Said plan involves the return of Israel basically to its 9-15 mile wide 1949 Auschwitz/armistice lines and its inundation by numerous alleged Arab refugees raised from infancy, whether in Hamas or Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah territories, to hate and slaughter Jews and to also just see the entire region of MENA as being solely "purely Arab patrimony." And to hell with anyone else's aspirations—be they scores of millions of stateless Kurds, Assyrians, Copts, Jews (at least half of whom in Israel are from refugee families who fled Arab and other Muslim countries), black Africans in Sudan and elsewhere, Amazigh/Kabyle/"Berbers," native pre-Arab conquest Lebanese, and other indigenous peoples as well.

About two decades ago, Friedman infamously wrote about Kurdish

aspirations for freedom and independence from their Arab, Turkish, and Iranian murderers, “what part of “no” don’t you understand? You will not separate...”

Who is Friedman to make such a judgement?

Here’s one version of my response to his duplicitous venom below.

Remember he’s the same *New York Times* columnist who repeatedly pressures Israel to make suicidal, one-sided concessions to Arabs, be they Hamas (keep in mind that it, with its charter to eradicate Israel and its Jews was freely elected to power by Gazans supervised by former President Jimmy ‘Apartheid Israel’ Carter), or the “pay to slay/all negotiations with Israel are just a Trojan horse” alleged moderates of the latter day Arafatians-in-suits of Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah/PA .

Please also consider how some 40 million TRULY stateless Kurds, who’ve been America’s best allies in the region besides Israel, and have died fighting ISIS and other Arab Islamists for us, feel about such utterly disgusting and immoral treatment...

After I [quoted](#) his disgusting duplicity to him, he could only squirm and ask me for my name—which I gladly provided. No other comment...

Dennis Ross then sensed trouble for his buddy and with a sickening smirk responded that, to paraphrase him, “ life’s unfair and Palestinians” are the cause celebre these days.

Many in the audience, their adoring fans, just wanted me to leave that afternoon. I had upset them. It was the usual “Sha Shtil” response of Jews not wanting to make waves or upset their comfortable apple carts. They just wanted to hear remarks and questions like their own, involving updates of Israeli news they could easily get on at least some television stations.

While there are some exceptions, if this was a Reform Temple, usually just filled with predominantly one-sided "Progressive" Hebrews, who consider anyone thinking differently than themselves as being right wing extremists, I would have expected this. I had people turning around to me with daggers coming out of their eyes, trying to silence my questions which included supporting comments.

Keep in mind that no one else asked anything but casual questions—none involving Friedman or Ross's policies or penmanship. In many ways, the pen is indeed mightier than the sword. Words count.

Perhaps if Kurds and other non-Arab peoples, who had their lands conquered and forcibly Arabized from them, often having their own native languages and cultures outlawed, had media and academia support, there'd be independent states for them too now. A Kurdish state was promised after WWI, but a collusion of British petroleum politics and Arab nationalism nipped it in the bud after the League of Nations Mosul Decision in 1925.

If I made Kol Shalom's very warm, nice rabbi feel uncomfortable in my questions and "back and forth" with both *NYT* columnist Tom Friedman and President Clinton's former point man on the Middle East, Dennis Ross, I apologize.

But as I looked around after the two finished their presentations, and realized that this was just going to be a love fest with Friedman promoting his new book, I realized that if I didn't call them out, politely but unabashedly, about what they wrote or the policies they promoted, no one else was going to do this.

It was bashert that I would be there on Yom Kippur 2024.

Well, looks like I'll probably be looking for a new shul during my sojourn in Rockville ... a shame, since it's close to where I live now.

G'mar chatima tova...