

Is Israel's future brighter despite serious challenges?



Reza Pahlavi's historic visit to Israel on April 18, 2023, at Jerusalem — illustrative: The-defense minister Benny Gantz's state visit to Azerbaijan.

FIRST: A historic visit to Israel by the heir to the Persian Empire, Reza Pahlavi, conveying Iranian support and solidarity with Israel.

History tells us that Iran of 539 B.C. (pre-Arab attack) was the most inspiring and joyful time. Those of different faiths who lived side-by-side shared rituals, and often persons of one denomination, inspired by the season or festive activities, exchanged gifts and participated in other faith joyful ceremonies.

The arrival of Arab and Arab Islam in Iran meant an end to culture, cultural diversity, and interfaith harmony.

Arab Islam in Iran has been openly and in direct conflict with Judaism, Baha'ism, Christianity, Sunni Muslims, and Zoroastrianism.

In 586 BCE, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered and destroyed the (First Temple), also known as 'Solomon's Temple, and the kingdom in Jerusalem. The population of the Kingdom of Juda was expelled from their homes and taken to Babylon. A few years later, the emperor of

Persia, *Cyrus the Great* (600 BC-530 BC), conquered Babylonia and freed the Jews and facilitated their return to their homeland, and ordered the rebuilding of their temple in Jerusalem. The *Purim* celebration is Esther's feast, rejoicing the Persian Jews' deliverance from the hatred of Haman, the 'Agagite or Haman the evil.'

Archeological excavations in the ancient city of Babylon in 1879 discovered a clay cylinder bearing a long inscription in Akkadian. The description included a plea by King Cyrus to the Babylonians, declaring that he had acted on behalf of the Babylonian god Marduk.

"I, Cyrus King of Babylonia – Marduk the Great Lord – blessed me – and I built for them a permanent Temple. I gathered all their inhabitants and restored their place of residence."

The Hebrew Bible mentions **Cyrus the Great** as the patron and deliverer of the **Jews** several times. This archeological discovery strengthened the view that Cyrus supported all the people under his rule and that the Declaration appearing in the Bible reflects history.¹



The Cylinder of Cyrus appears in the foreground of the stamp, with decorations inspired by Persian art in the background. (Photo courtesy of © The Trustees of the British Museum)

The Arabs of the sixteenth century brought *two* distinct historic dilemmas into Iran as their only gift to the host nation, the 'anti-Semitism,' and the 'Shi'a/Sunni conflict.

In my school days in the 1950s Ahvaz, Iran, I noticed the harsh treatment against Jewish and Christian students for no apparent reason. One day, I innocently asked our (mullah) Shari'a teacher, "Over the year, you have told us to hate and not associate with Jews and Christians yet never told us why?"

His answer was, "Are you sure you are a good Muslim? You would never ask such a question if you were a good Muslim." The mullah made me feel like I violated decency or religious codes.

In 2014, I surveyed and asked Iranian communities, "Which do you prefer, Arab or Israeli, as your neighbor? In the United States, surprisingly, the result was 78% in favor of Israelites, and inside Iran, under the strict control of Arabs, I got nothing.

In the 1979 Arab takeover, Khomeini cut off all diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel. The Islamic government also declared that it does not recognize Israel's legitimacy as a state, thus, a complete about-face from Shah's government of 1952's recognition of the State of Israel. What's more, Khomeini designated Israel as Iran's top enemy that must be destroyed; whether Iranians approved of it or not, Iranians had no say. It was all the Arabs doing.

The Islamic Revolution reversed many of the Shah's positive achievements, and the nation watched helplessly. The regime ransacked the Israeli Embassy in Tehran. A few days later, the building was refurbished, staffed by Shi'a mullahs, and handed to the Palestinians, with the nation bearing the cost.

The Arab clerics forced Iranians to ally with foreign Arab people such as Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and Arab ayatollahs. History attests to the reality that most timorous Iranians never came to support their Jewish, Christian, Baha'is, Sunni Muslims, or Zoroastrian citizens in their time of need. What is worse is the horrible silence of Muslim Iranians when their citizens of other beliefs are systematically discriminated against and persecuted.

Today, with all the propaganda by Iran's Arab Shiite leaders against Israel and the world Jewry, Iranians stand against anti-Semitism and in solidarity with Israel.

SECOND:

The Times of Israel reports Israel is gaining rapid recognition and support from Islamic countries such as *Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan*, and other Islamic nations, which seemed impossible a few years ago.



Foreign Minister Eli Cohen meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, April 19, 2023 (Shlomi Amsalem/GPO)

In December, Azerbaijan announced the appointment of its first-ever ambassador to Israel, less than two months after approving the opening of an embassy in Tel Aviv.

At the time, Deputy Foreign Minister Azerbaijan Fariz Rzayev said that following his country's decision to open an embassy in Israel, "the sky is the limit" for the two countries bilateral ties.

Some of these nations will undoubtedly enable Israel to build bases on their soil to launch reconnaissance flights over Iran since most are less than 50 miles from Iran's border.

This news is welcome by Iranians, much disturbed by China building military bases in the Persian Gulf and controlling the Middle East.

Internationally recognized as an expert in Islamic matters, GEORGE H. HASSANZADEH, born and raised as a Shi'a Muslim in Iran, is the author of 'Iran: Harsh Arm of Islam' and the newly released book 'First Comes The Mosque.'

Hassanzadeh is a renowned historian and an authority on Shi'a, Shari'a, and the infallible Arab Shiite clerics forcing medieval rule and a system of mind control in the 21st century.

George H. Hassanzadeh is a U.S. Army Veteran and lives in California.

