

From The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, Oct. 2001,
a eulogy to Dr. Israel Shahak, by Allen C. Brownfeld:

"After being liberated from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945, Israel Shahak and his mother emigrated to British Mandate Palestine. He went on to have a distinguished career as a professor of chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and was repeatedly voted as the most admired teacher by students.

Following the 1967 war, Shahak became a leading member of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights and was elected chairman in 1970. He devoted the rest of his life to opposing Israel's inhumane treatment inflicted upon its Arab citizens and upon Palestinians in occupied territories.

While American newspapers, both Jewish and general, completely ignored the death of Israel Shahak, a July 6 obituary in The Guardian of London by Elfi Pallis notes that, "Shortly after the 1967 six-day war, he [Shahak] concluded from observation that Israel was not yet a democracy; it was treating the newly occupied Palestinians with shocking brutality. For the next three decades, he spent all his spare time on attempts to change this. He contributed to various small...papers, but when this proved to have little impact, he decided to alert journalists, academics and human rights campaigners abroad. From his small, bare West Jerusalem flat poured forth reports with titles such as "'Torture in Israel,' and "'Collective Punishment in the West Bank.' Based exclusively on mainstream Israeli sources, all were painstakingly translated into English.

Shahak Never Let Up, He Never Became Blasé!

"World coverage gradually improved, but Shahak never let up, he never became blasé. Watching him read out a small news item about an Israeli farmer who had set his dogs on a group of Palestinian children was to see a man in almost physical distress. Shahak came to believe that these human rights incidents stemmed from Israel's religious interpretation of Jewish history, which led it to ignore centuries of Arab life in the country, and to disregard non-Jewish rights. Confiscation, every schoolchild was told, was "'the redemption of the land' from those who did not belong there. To Shahak, this was straightforward racism, damaging both sides."□

Israel Shahak's vision can perhaps best be found in his books, *Jewish History*, *Jewish Religion* (Pluto Press, 1994) and *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (Pluto Press, 1994) written with Norton Mezvinsky. (See Mezvinsky's remembrance of Israel Shahak in the Aug./Sept. issue of the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, p. 11.)

In *Jewish History*, *Jewish Religion*, Shahak points out that while Islamic fundamentalism is vilified in the West, Jewish fundamentalism goes largely ignored. He argues that classical Judaism is used to justify Israeli policies which he views as xenophobic and similar in nature to the anti-Semitism suffered by Jews in other times and places. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly, in his view, than in Jewish attitudes to the non-Jewish peoples of Israel and the Middle East.

Shahak draws on the Talmud and rabbinical laws, and points to the fact that today's extremism finds its sources in classical texts which, if they are not properly understood, will lead to religious warfare, harmful to men and women of all religious beliefs.

This book, Shahak wrote, "is, in a way, a continuation of my political activities as an Israeli Jew. Those activities began in 1965-66 with a protest which caused a considerable scandal at that time: I had personally witnessed an ultra-religious Jew refuse to allow his phone to be used on the Sabbath in order to call an ambulance for a non-Jew, who happened to have collapsed in his Jerusalem neighborhood. Instead of simply publishing the incident in the press, I asked for a meeting with the members of the Rabbinical Court of Jerusalem, which is composed of rabbis nominated by the State of Israel. I asked them whether such behavior was consistent with their interpretation of the Jewish religion. They answered that the Jew in question had behaved correctly, indeed piously, and backed their statement by referring to a passage in an authoritative compendium of Talmudic laws, written in this country. I reported the incident in the main Hebrew daily, *Ha'aretz*, whose publication of the story caused a media scandal." □

The Talmudic World View

In the end, Shahak reported, "Neither the Israeli, nor the diaspora rabbinical authorities ever reversed their ruling that Jews should not violate the Sabbath in order to save the life of a Gentile. . ."

[End of Excerpt]

JD: When the Christ of God came to this Earth, nearly 2,000 years ago, He encountered the same inhumane vitriol from the ungodly religious hypocrites of His day, who tried to stone Him for healing the sick on the Sabbath. So, we see that, although Israel Shahak may have considered himself an atheist, he was truly one of God's chosen people, a man who truly deserved the name "Isra-El," prince-of-God, for he acted with the same love as did God's anointed One, nearly 2,000 years before him, who consequently condemned those religious leaders as being "whited sepulchres" or nicely painted tombs, "full of spiders and dead men's bones." Israel Shahak has left this fleeting existence of ours, yet I believe that he will be honored by God with glorious, joyful, and everlasting life, "in a new Heaven and a new Earth wherein *righteousness* shall dwell," to quote the Apostle Peter. To paraphrase the Lord Jesus, Christ of God, in one of His parables:

He who says I will follow God, but does not, is not blessed with the Spirit of God, but he who says I will not follow God (an outward atheist), yet does the work of God . . . that person is surely blessed with God's Spirit deep in his heart, despite his unawareness. And after exiting this fleeting existence, that pseudo-atheist will be rewarded with eternal joy.

Notice this declaration from Paul, the great Jewish apostle to the Lord Jesus Christ, in Romans 2:14:

"For when Gentiles [heathen, atheists], who do not have the law, by nature, do what the law requires, they are a law unto themselves, even though they do not have the law [The Torah taught to them]."

In closing, whether or not you know our Creator/Saviour, The Great Lawgiver, I believe that you too are a child chosen by God. You too are Isra-El a prince-of-God, for you "hunger and thirst for righteousness," and He says, therefore, "You are blessed" with the Spirit of God deep inside your heart, and your existence will be everlastingly joyful.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDCbJ4vnMNg>