

The Holy Obstacle

Imagine, if you will, a people scattered across the globe for nearly two thousand years, relentlessly excluded from mainstream society, facing near extinction, and then against all historical precedents, reclaim their ancient ancestral homeland.

How does such an improbable event, that not only redefines their own national identity but ended up positioning it at the centre of the world stage?

And how did the endurance of this people, with little more than a story, maintain its identity and fulfil its destiny and at the same time effect the course of history itself.

We will look at various perspectives on what it truly means for a nation, not just to exist, but maybe, to act as an anchor to others in the grand narrative of history. We're going to consider the concept of Israel's exceptionalism and then introduce a profound, frankly quite unexpected idea, The Holy Obstacle.

Let's step back from the daily headlines, to momentarily set aside the often-heated political debates about this region. Instead, let us focus on something truly singular, the sheer fact of Israel's existence.

What if its very presence, its remarkable endurance, is part of a larger, maybe even sacred design?

It's certainly a perspective that challenges our usual way of thinking about cause and effect in global affairs. It asks us to examine historical facts at a much deeper theological and geopolitical level and brings us inevitably to the question: is there a divine purpose behind human events, even the turbulent, contested, and seemingly chaotic ones?

While it may unsettle those used to purely secular historical analysis, this approach pushes us to explore connections we might otherwise miss.

Let's start with that foundational premise because it truly is a historical anomaly. The Jewish people after nearly 2,000 years of exile were restored to their ancestral homeland. Again, set aside any debates over rights and wrongs, borders, justice. Instead, let's focus on the sheer undeniable fact of it.

Think about the context. 1948, a people scattered enduring centuries of persecution, inquisition, pogroms, and then the horrific industrial scale evil of the Holocaust. The Jews living in Palestine and with much international supported declared independence. Within months, The United Nations accepts them into the community of nations. That development alone, was unprecedented. No other stateless people after such a long traumatic exile had

ever achieved that. It's unique in modern history. But what followed was something even a secular observer might struggle to explain without using a word like miraculous. Year after year, decade after decade, despite immense pressure, military, economic, existential threats, Israel didn't just endure, it thrived. Despite neighbouring nations vowing its destruction, it survived. And more than that, in that survival, nations that had sworn never to acknowledge its legitimacy slowly, over decades, came to accept its right to exist. Diplomatic ties, economic links were established with countries that had previously vowed its extinction. It was indeed a reversal of historical trends.

It's crucial to acknowledge this huge shift, of Israel coming into statehood. It came at a significant cost and involved the displacement of a large number, millions of Arabs as the borders shifted. This often-unavoidable occurrence in the birth of nations, is a very human consequence and needs to be noted.

Following on and immediately after Israel's independence, the reaction from surrounding Arab nations was swift, unified, and completely uncompromising. From Morocco to Iraq, Cairo to Damascus, Israel's right to exist was met with a loud unified—No, and done so militarily too.

While that resistance has softened in some places over time, it has hardened in others area. Israel, like many new countries sets its survival as its most foundational and unshakable priority.

We really have to grasp this point when looking at their actions and worldview since becoming a state. It must be accepted as a primal, deeply ingrained instinct of any people who have collectively chosen to form an independence state. When we think about their collective memory, their persecution, the time factors involved in their exile, the absolute horror of the Holocaust—for a people to emerge from that, their existence, their security, their ability to defend themselves, becomes paramount. And if a degree of paranoia is observed by some in their disproportionate response to attack, then it must be balanced against these historic realities.

This historical trauma and the ongoing fight for sheer survival against overwhelming odds fundamentally shapes Israel's exceptionalism. It's an exceptionalism born not of superiority, but of this unparalleled drive for self-preservation over millennia—their unique historical journey. It defines their national character, their strategy, their whole operational ethos. And this leads us right to what may be the root of the current impasse regarding finding a way forward. The sheer improbability of Israel's birth emerging against impossible odds and how it was so freighted with prophetic overtones—the fulfilling of

ancient prophecies—that it naturally fostered a deep belief, within the nation, in its own exceptionalism.

This exceptionalism, the conviction that has emerged from surviving impossible odds, encourages them to press on until every promise is fulfilled. It's understandable—and that's all we are dealing with here for the moment—it is understandable to hold such a view when you have defied history and witnessed what looks like divine intervention operating in your favour. It's natural to feel destined for more—to feel the work isn't done until every historical or spiritual goal is met. If Israel is on such a roll and if it is like other gamblers—it can be extremely hard to coax it back to consider the laws of probabilities and failure.

This very belief, this exceptionalism, this relentless drive perhaps blinds the nation to a deeper truth. What has been achieved is already enough to stand as testimony to God's faithfulness.

Let them consider this: the miracle, the ultimate fulfilment, isn't in completing some grand vision of expansion or total dominance, but in the sheer fact of the return itself having been achieved. What if the most significant divinely ordained chapter has already been written and the rest, the fullness of the vision, might simply not be for this generation to complete?

It suggests avoiding a spiritual overreach in Israel's present approach to its future. Their striving, even if well-intentioned might be missing the core divine message in that—it has already happened.

Can this not become a realization of: Enough!

This isn't just about political or military limits. It's suggesting a divine constraint on human effort, even if that effort feels spiritually mandated.

If we connect this to the bigger picture, it forces us all to consider a deeply challenging idea. What if fulfilling the vision for their nation, is not for this generation to complete? It directly challenges that human impulse to finish everything now to push relentlessly. It makes us question divine timing versus human ambition, especially where faith is involved.

It suggests there might be wisdom, maybe even a higher purpose in pausing, in restraint, even when the goal seems close. This idea, this sacred check adds a complex theological layer to geopolitics. This concept of a sacred check leads perfectly into the core almost poetic idea of The Holy Obstacle.

We will introduce this concept through a dialogue.

Monica and Christopher Dialogue

Monica, inquisitive, formerly devout, asks Christopher, an introspective Jewish man, an existential question.

She asked him, "Why are you still here? Statistically, spiritually, politically, shouldn't the Jews have vanished like the rest of the ancient tribes?"

Monica has noticed, as we have mentioned above, how many ancient peoples and mighty empires, far bigger and stronger, have just disappeared? Yet the Jewish people, often landless, always a minority, often persecuted, have endured.

"It's an historical puzzle"

Christopher's first reply is enigmatic but insightful. "What solves one problem often solves another".

When Monica pushes him on this, he elaborates,

"Every time the world refuses to tidy up its chaos, we appear not as the answer, but as the constant—in the equation the world refuses to balance."

His response is fascinating, he's saying their very existence, their persistence, serves a purpose, a fixed point the world can't just ignore or wish away even when it wants to. It's an uncomfortable truth for those seeking to avoid consequences, seeking a world without inconvenient historical reminders—an immovable object.

Christopher's explanation goes deep, leading Monica to think deeply.

He continues, "They were never meant to triumph, only to anchor."

This is where The Holy Obstacle really take shape.

"Anchor what?" Monica asks.

Christopher clarifies—"Hubris. The Gentile's genius, its fire, its rage, its unquenchable drive. Someone has to keep it from becoming a flood.

Then Monica hits on this phrase, "So God's chosen people are a Holy Obstacle." And Christopher's reaction after thinking, he says, "We never called ourselves that, but it fits."

It suggests a truly unique and frankly heavy role. The Holy Obstacle isn't about dominance or conventional power. It's about being a perpetual check, a divine speed bump, a boundary against unchecked ambitions. This Gentile's genius, as he calls it, innovation, progress, can sometimes be destructive overreach. Fire, rage, an unquenchable drive toward control or self-destruction. The Holy Obstacle's role is to keep that powerful current from flooding everything.

It's a fascinating reinterpretation of having been chosen, not to privilege, but to a kind of sacrificial responsibility for historical balance. It makes us remember how often human ambition nearly lead us to catastrophe.

And Monica's next question is so natural, "But isn't that cruel"?

It's a valid point. To be chosen for such a difficult, painful role, a constant irritant, a reminder of forgotten debts, a target for frustrated ambitions. It sounds like an excruciating burden.

Christopher's response is equally deep. Reaching back to covenant, to inherited responsibility, he says, "We agreed. Abraham agreed. Not with full understanding, but he offered his son, and we've been bound to it ever since." This speaks to an inherited pact predating current generations but still shaping their destiny. It's a profound sacrifice, an unwavering commitment across millennia. A heavy legacy.

Monica asks: "And why does the world punish them for this role?"

Christopher's answer is stark. "Because we remind them of God, of conscience, of debts they'd rather forget. The world hates being held in check."

This is where The Holy Obstacle gets really provocative. It's not just physical or geopolitical. It's spiritual and moral. The Jewish people by their existence, their adherence to ancient laws, distinct customs, unwavering monotheism. They act as this inconvenient mirror reflecting back the world's forgotten spiritual obligations, their moral compromises and their desire for autonomy free from constraint.

It's the ultimate uncomfortable truth, and uncomfortable truths often provoke hostility.

Monica then asks: "If God himself changed his methods?"

Christopher strongly agrees, outlining this fascinating shift in divine strategy. "God began with fire, the sword at Eden's Gate, the flood, the brimstone at Sodom. These were overt, devastating interventions, direct destructive punishment. Then he changed."

Christopher says “He chose a people not to lord over others, not to destroy empires outright, but to restrain, not to obliterate people, as He did in the beginning.

This is presented as a key shift from blunt force to a more subtle enduring influence. Instead of obliteration, God introduces a persistent living check. A different kind of intervention. A people, a chosen people.

And Christopher gives concrete examples. “Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome”. He explains “these vast empires were all unchecked until The Jews became the grain in their eye, too small to remove, too irritating to ignore. Think about Rome demanding emperor worship. Think how a people with strict monotheism refusing to call the emperor divine and in doing so became an inherent obstacle just by existing and following their laws. They weren't a military threat to legions, but a persistent philosophical spiritual challenge to imperial absolutism. Their distinctiveness, their adherence to a different spiritual path was a constant irritant, a living testament, challenging the dominant worldview. They defied the totalizing ambition of Rome simply by being themselves”.

This extraordinary role, however essential it might seem in the bigger picture, clearly comes with an immense human cost. Christopher admits his ambivalence when Monica asks, “If he resents it”.

“Some days, yes, other days, I see the necessity”, he answers.

That captures the complex burden. It's not embraced with joy. It's a heavy responsibility. Sometimes feeling like a curse bringing centuries of suffering. Yet at other times its crucial function becomes clear, he admits.

“But even you forget sometimes”, says Monica in a whisper.

And he adds a crucial humanizing point. “We are human. Even the obstacle if beaten long enough will pick up a stick”—that speaks volumes about the pressure, the suffering.

Even the designated restrainer of others has limits and will react to persistent persecution. It hints at the evolution of Jewish self-defence in modern day Israel. He notes the challenge of this awareness.

Christopher says “Yes sometimes we forget. Sometimes we don't even realize we're meant to be the obstacle”.

That's key. The very people fulfilling this role might not be consciously aware of its larger purpose. They're just living, surviving, reacting like anyone else. Christopher clarifies with a powerful image.

“We're not the river, not the storm, just the banks that keep it from becoming a flood”.

It's vivid. The banks don't fight the river, but their steadfast presence directs and contains its potentially destructive power.

This beautifully encapsulates the subtle yet powerful role of The Holy Obstacle. It now hits a poignant forward-looking climax with Monica asking with hope, maybe even guilt—this radical idea, : “And the rest of us Christians, Muslims, atheists, can we choose you back?”

This opens up a possibility of reconciliation, a new paradigm, a different relationship between The Holy Obstacle and those it's called to check.

Christopher's response is full of hope and uncertainty.

“That would be something new, maybe the very thing we've all been waiting for.”

This suggests a different relationship might evolve, mutually recognized, even appreciated and moving resentment to appreciation. It's a call to empathize, to re-evaluate history and consider who has been paying the price for humanities prosperity.

What if...

Now we consider another important perspective on the past and see how The Holy Obstacle as a concept, can easily fit straight into 20th Century, Middle East geopolitics.

Let's consider if Israel had not been reborn in 1948, the map of this region might today be littered with the wreckage of Arab nations consumed by one another—a bold claim. It asks us to seriously consider this possible, potentially far more chaotic, bloody reality. It should make us pause and think. It reminds us starkly that the new states emerging after the world wars, especially after the Ottoman Empire fell, were often young. Their boundaries were drawn by other hands—European colonial powers often ignoring existing tribal sectarian loyalties.

The internal cohesion within some of these emerging countries was weak; loyalties were still fluid. and crucially, sometimes old tribal sectarian and ideological views, risked re-igniting into full scale war. Basically, they were

artificial constructs inherently unstable, lacking deep national unity, ripe for internal conflict. The stage was set for implosion. So, how was this potential internal combustion postponed?

For a critical period, these newly formed Arab states didn't turn their militaries and political energy on each other despite internal rivalries. Instead, their collective focus, weapons and rhetoric were fixed almost upon a single point. This is where Israel, the Jewish state, became effectively the central point around which Arab political energy revolved. It became, quite starkly, the unifying enemy—albeit a negative unifier. This concept is crucial. It was this unifying external threat—Israel's existence—that postponed the blood feuds that might otherwise have burned through Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Riyadh.

Imagine the potential destruction, multiple internal conflicts and civil wars. Israel's existence and the unified opposition it provoked acted as this powerful external force that temporarily diverted internal rivalries.

This gave these states a crucial period to develop, however imperfectly, to build institutions without immediately collapsing into civil or inter-state war.

God has often stayed the hand of violence by setting an obstacle where men expected an open road. It suggests deliberate divine intervention through Israel's existence, a sort of geopolitical engineering diverting violence outwards. It's a powerful almost Machiavellian take on divine providence where a common enemy fosters fragile unity and God achieves two things at once.

Presenting Israel as an obstacle was not to flatter the Arabs nor to flatter Israel. It's not about praise or blame. Its purpose was perhaps to hold back the tide until countries could learn the weight of their own statehoods. The external pressure served a teaching function, forcing these young nations to coalesce around a common, albeit negative cause. It inadvertently strengthened their identities and gave them a kind of purpose. And if it chafed their pride, so much the better. It bound them, however unwillingly, to a cause beyond their own quarrels. This shows a deliberate strategic function. The irritation, the grain of sand in the eye, the perceived injustice, all set to prevent internal implosion. It offered a measure of stability, however fragile, to a region otherwise poised for self-destruction.

In moving from the colossal punishments prior to Abraham's Covenant, God's aim was less death and destruction. So, when we analyse the past, we must consider what if this was indeed the way of least destruction.

Jerusalem

Let's shift now to an enduring symbolic example, a contemporary manifestation of an obstacle.

The Temple Mount or The Al-Aqsa Mosque dispute in Jerusalem. This contention has been going on for more than a thousand years—a flash point—immensely significant spiritually. Judaism's holiest site, Islam's third holiest site and deeply relevant to Christians, too. Its contested status is a constant source of conflict, a microcosm of fundamental differences carried down to the present age—an impasse.

Jewish sovereignty over the mount, their site for their third temple, may not be a political failure at all. It can be reframed. It can be seen as the deliberate act of God to keep all his people from overreaching. Instead of seeing the unresolved dispute as diplomatic failure or weakness, it can be interpreted as a divine act of restraint, a purposeful limitation to prevent any one group achieving total dominance. It's a living, breathing example of a sacred check on ambition played out on the most sensitive stage.

The very difficulty of finding a solution—its near impossibility, is a tension that can be interpreted as part of a larger divine purpose.

And what is the purpose of this specific obstacle, if it is divinely orchestrated?

Could it be there to force Jew and Muslim and Christian to grow in spirit before their vision is fulfilled. This frames the ongoing conflict, the enforced waiting, not as a curse but as a crucible for spiritual development—a challenge to patience, humility and interfaith understanding.

It suggests immediate triumph might actually prevent the necessary internal growth needed for all sides to grow spiritually. Growth through restraint.

This perspective radically reframes the waiting. Seeing the Temple Mount as a representation of a holy obstacle is not surrender. Instead, it's accepting that the miracle of the return of The Jews—already achieved against all odds is not diminished by waiting longer. The waiting may be the final act of obedience that ensures the promise is not corrupted by pride.

Immediate human-driven fulfilment, especially, if fuelled by ambition or triumph, might distort a sacred intention. Whereas patient restraint, deferring complete triumph, shows deeper awareness.

Humility needs to prevent pride from undermining a gift.

It's about ensuring the means don't corrupt the vision. The Temple Mount becomes a constant, a constant to remind us of a divine limit, an invitation to a higher spiritual resolution.

Provisional Solution: A holy obstacle to The Holy Obstacle

And this brings us full circle back to the national character of Israel, forged not just in victory but in self-restraint. History shows that nations like individuals are tested as much by their restraint as by their victories. This fundamentally challenges the idea that strength is only shown through conquest or asserting power. True strength involves self-control, wisdom to pause, humility to wait. A different kind of strength.

Building on this truly bold revolutionary action—for Israel—to pause not for a year or a decade, but for a generation or more would not betray their hopes—it would preserve them. This radically redefines upholding their sacred promise. It suggests deferring a perceived divine imperative.

Imagine the power of a public declaration such as this:

“We will guard the sacred places without forcing the hand of God. We will wait for his appointed time.”

It's not weakness or abandoning claim. It is a profound self-limitation born from a deeper spiritual understanding—shift away from humans striving, to divine reliance. Such a declaration would not only transform the conflict but also solidify Israel's moral authority before the world. Instead of being seen as aggressor or occupier by some, Israel could be seen as an exemplar of spiritual maturity, strategic patience, ethical leadership. This could bring the first genuine cessation of hostilities in living memory, not through force, but voluntary restraint.

Imagine the global impact if this major flash point was diffused by patient sacred waiting. It would be unprecedented. This leads to the conclusion about redefining Israel's exceptionalism. It's not about abandoning the belief. No, it need not be abandoned. It must go deeper and be redefined. Away from the right to take every hill and fulfil every vision, toward the ability to recognize when God himself has said, "Stop here and wait for me."

This is counterintuitive strength—strength with restraint—would not be weakness. It would be the most difficult, most disciplined and most exceptional act of all. It's about demonstrating a higher purpose rooted not in human might or immediate gratification, but in spiritual wisdom.

Understanding that some promises are fulfilled best, through divine timing and embracing the profound, in the unsettling wisdom of The Holy Obstacle.

So, let's recap, from Israel's miraculous rebirth to its role as The Holy Obstacle, a break on ambition, a unifying force, a divine test of patience, especially at the Temple Mount. It challenges us to look beyond immediate politics and consider a deeper, sacred historical story.

If we connect this to the bigger picture, it challenges our conventional ideas about power, victory, success—for individuals and nations. It suggests, sometimes true strength lies not in conquering but in waiting. Not fulfilling every desire now but understanding a deeper, sacred timing.

To reject this opportunity will be to reject a real, spiritually, sourced solution that costs nothing—only grace—and God will provide that if we ask.