

## Dancing With The Devil

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Is there something evil, pernicious and suspect about Jewish leaders, especially those characterized as right-wing, getting paid to visit Qatar or to be foreign agents for Arab regimes? To paraphrase Albert Einstein, "It's all relative."

It was not very many years ago that one of my close high school friends made Alayah and began making money reaching out to American Evangelical Christians. We all thought he was crazy. Some of us denounced our former friend and suggested that he was aiding the efforts of missionaries who either wanted to convert Jews or create a worldwide catastrophe as a precursor to encouraging the return of the Christian Messiah. A lot in the world has changed since then. The Christian Evangelical community has evolved to the point where many Evangelicals, though not all, are genuinely supportive of the Jewish community and the security of the State of Israel.

The question of American Jews sidling up to Arabs who may also give their money to Hamas and support terror regimes is the latest question to confront the complex history of Jewish-Gentile relations. Many Jews, especially those of Sephardic origin, have a much warmer and more nuanced view of Muslims and Arabs than the Jews of Ashkenazi flavoring.

One of my favorite Rabbis was the Moroccan-born Maklouf Portal, may his beloved soul rest in peace. I once asked him, in a quiet reflective moment, whether he was intuitively more comfortable with Christians or Muslims, given that he had grown up in a Muslim country. He instantly answered "Muslims." He then told me the story of when, as a boy, he was surrounded by some Arab kids who told him to pledge faith to Allah or they would hit him on the head with a rock. He refused their demand, got hit in the head, and went home bloody, crying to his mother. His mom said, "You should have told them what they wanted to hear; it wouldn't mean that you believe in Allah."

Places like Great Neck, New York, with heavy Farsi Iranian communities, detest the current regime in Iran but love the heritage and culture of their former home. They have even named some of their favorite restaurants in Great Neck after restaurants in Iran that they could never go to.

The Israeli government itself is somewhat bifurcated on the issue of dealing with Arab and Muslim nations. There are those in Israel who see an opportunity for relationships with the Arab world that might very well undermine the murderers of Hamas, Hezbollah, Teheran, Damascus, and other places. Some Israelis see efforts by American Jews to communicate with and, "yes," even accept money from Arab regimes as a good thing. Others are suspicious and ask, "What is being purchased by the Arabs from these Jewish leaders and their organizations?"

The enemies of Morton Klein, long time beloved President of the Zionist Organization of America, who generally do not like his perceived Republican-leaning politics, are now denouncing him for accepting \$100,000 from Joey Allaham. They conveniently forget that as soon as Allaham's connections to Qatar were revealed, the money was returned. That is not good enough for *The Forward* and those on the left who have been professional Morton Klein haters for a long time.

The real question is whether it is good or bad for American Jews to form financial and other connections with Muslim-Arab regimes? The answer might be "no" if those regimes are also supporting terrorism, and the answer might be "yes" if those nations can act as a moderating influence in the Arab world. That still leaves unanswered the question as to what Qatar and other Arabs want in return for the money they give to Mort Klein or Alan Dershowitz. As with any payment of funds by national players to powerful individuals, what is sought may be terribly evil but is usually "access." Every politician in the United States who accepts enormous amounts of political action committee money are selling themselves in return for access. It does not matter if the politician is Barack Obama or Donald Trump; all political people in the United States need tons of money to run for office and to hold office. Some American politicians are selling their souls to the devil, and others are merely selling access.

For the most part, totalitarian regimes like those of Qatar do not understand how democracies work. They believe that people like Morton Klein or Alan Dershowitz control the government. Arab propaganda loves the forgery, *The Protocols Of The Elders of Zion*, because it suggests that the Jews run the world. Societies like those which control Qatar and much of the Arab world are imbued with anti-Semitic stereotypes that suffuse how their public relations money is spent.

By the same token, those who love Israel are constantly looking for ways to protect the Jewish people from the latest plot, whether it comes from the left or the right. Anyone who knows Morton Klein, for example, knows that he has a passionate dedication to the safety of Israel and a secure future for the Jewish people. That may mean working with Evangelical Christians, those on the left-wing of the American political spectrum, and perhaps someday Muslim-Arabs who make policy in the Arab world.

Before we rush to judgment on the Morton Kleins of the world, perhaps we need to listen and let people like Klein have their say so that we can make our own decisions. We correctly wonder why Joey Allaham, the American-Jewish restaurateur, turned paid-foreign-agent in the United States. We do not know much about what or who he is and what his goals are, other than making money in ways much easier than running a kosher restaurant business. Nevertheless, it is proper to ask questions, seek answers, and carefully tread where angels fear to go.

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