

History and Geopolitics: The Controversial Haavara Transfer Agreement, Analysis by the Jewish Virtual Library

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Today in "historical context you won't get from the Race Lady at MSNBC or former AIPAC intern Wolf Blitzer at CNN" – the provision of which is the value of independent outlets like Armageddon Prose – via [Jewish Virtual Library](#):

"Haavara [was] a company for the transfer of Jewish property from Nazi Germany to Palestine. The Trust and Transfer Office Haavara Ltd., was established in Tel Aviv, following an agreement with the German government in August 1933, to facilitate the emigration of Jews to Palestine by allowing the transfer of their capital in the form of German export goods.

The Haavara Agreement is an instance where the question of Jewish rights, Zionist needs and individual rescue were in deep tension. Jewish organizations outside of Germany had declared a boycott against German goods and hoped to delegitimize the Nazi regime. The Zionists saw this agreement as a way of attracting Jews to Palestine and thus rescuing them from the Nazi universe even if that meant cooperation with Hitler. For a time the Nazi program of making Germany Judenrein and the Zionist policy of seeking olim coincided. The amounts to be transferred were paid by prospective emigrants into the account of a Jewish trust company (PALTREU – Palestina Treuhandstelle zur Beratung deutscher Juden) in Germany and used for the purchase of goods, which the Haavara then sold in Palestine. The proceeds, in Palestine currency, were paid to the emigrants living in Palestine. The rate of exchange was adjusted from time to time by the Haavara according to the disagio, necessitated by the subsidy which the Haavara granted the Palestinian importers, to make up for the steadily deteriorating value of the Reich mark, so the German goods could compete with other imports.

The ensuing disagio, borne by the emigrants, accordingly increased from 6% in 1934 to 50% in 1938. The major part of the transfer proceeds provided the 1,000 Palestine Pounds (then \$4,990) necessary for a “capitalist” immigration certificate of the Mandatory administration, but also for other categories of immigration, such as Youth Aliyah, students, and artisans as well as for the transfer of public funds. The transfer weakened the boycott of German goods declared by many Jewish organizations around the world, and thus met with considerable opposition. The controversy was settled at the Zionist Congress in Lucerne (1935) which decided by a vast majority in favor of the transfer and placed the Haavara under the supervision of the Jewish Agency.

The Zionists sought to attract immigrants to Palestine, most especially the affluent German Jewish immigrants and the Germans sought to get rid of their Jews, increase their exports and a propaganda victory by dividing the Jews regarding the boycott. The Haavara continued to function until World War II, in spite of vigorous attempts by the Nazi Party to stop or curtail its activities. The total transfer amounted to LP 8,100,000 (Palestine Pounds; then \$40,419,000) including LP 2,600,000 (then \$13,774,000) provided by the German Reichsbank in coordination with Haavara. The Haavara transfer was a major factor in making possible the immigration of approximately 60,000 German Jews to Palestine in the years 1933–1939, and together with the money invested by the immigrants themselves, in providing an incentive for the expansion of agricultural settlement and for general economic development. It also served as a model for a similar arrangement with the Czech government and the immigration of several thousand Jews on the eve of World War II.”

The Haavara Agreement has long been a thorn in the side of Zionist historical canon because of the obvious narrative difficulties it presents. As a result, pro-Israeli media is forced to come up with rationales for how the Third Reich funneling money to fund the creation of Israel (the literal definition of Zionism) wasn’t *actually* a Zionist endeavor.

Via [The Independent](#):

“Claims that Hitler was a Zionist, or supported Zionism, before his anti-Jewish policies turned into murder and extermination flare up at regular intervals. They usually cite the controversial Haavara Agreement (Transfer Agreement) of August 1933 as the most potent evidence of a wilful cooperation between Hitler and the Zionist movement. When viewed in a certain way, this deal does superficially seem to show that Hitler’s government endorsed Zionism – but just because it was a mechanism to help German Jews relocate to Palestine it does not imply it was ‘Zionist’.”

The salient point here is not to conflate Zionism and Nazism — which are obviously divergent ideologies — or the Israeli state and the Third Reich, or whatever simple-minded reactionary smear one would expect from the American mainstream media for shining light on such unsavory historical facts as above.

Obviously, Nazi Germany and the Zionists of the day in the early-to-mid-20th century had only briefly intersecting political agendas — the tenuousness of which were evidenced by the agreement’s controversial nature among the constituencies of the relevant factions.

Rather, the relevant revelation is one I have previously tried to make: Zionism is a political project that ultimately has only a superficial relationship to Judaism. The purported relationship between the ancient Abrahamic religion called Judaism and the political project

called Zionism is drummed up by many parties, both hostile and friendly to the state of Israel, for practical and ideological purposes.

The Israeli propaganda machine is very adept at conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, a tactic it has employed with greater force — but, thankfully, receding effectiveness — recently than ever before in a veritable PR blitzkrieg as it scrambles to drum up international political support for its campaign in the Gaza Strip.

Israel is, and always has been since it was first imagined several hundred years ago in Europe, an *explicitly political project*.

In general, the purview of *Armageddon Prose* is geopolitics, not ancient theological beefs. No volume or intensity of accusations of “antisemitism” or censorship at the behest of the Israel lobby is going to budge me off of the acknowledgment of reality.

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This article was originally published on the author’s Substack, [Armageddon Prose](#).

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Featured image: Jews on selection ramp at Auschwitz, May 1944 (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 de)

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