

**AN ANTI-ZIONIST ACADEMIC, WWII HEROES & SCANDALS, AND  
A REVIEW OF THE ALEPPO CODEX**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, December 18, 2015

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**STEVEN SALAITA'S 'HONORABLE' ANTI-SEMITISM**

*Asaf Romirowsky*

[\*Middle East Forum\*](#), Nov. 14, 2015

Steven Salaita, whose anti-Zionist/Semitic tweets and uncivil rants cost him a position at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), used a recent appearance in Philadelphia to portray himself as a victim of the Zionist lobby. The lecture was co-sponsored by Jewish Voice for Peace, which the Anti-Defamation League calls "the largest and most influential Jewish anti-Zionist group" in the U.S.

An audience of about forty attended the rambling lecture at the Wooden Shoe, a dingy, dirty anarchist bookstore that sported pro-Boycott/Divestment/Sanction (BDS) and other far left propaganda, including a poster of the brutal Marxist killer Che Guevara. Salaita's claim to fame rests on UIUC's 2014 decision not to install him as a professor of Native American studies. He and UIUC announced a settlement on November 12 that awards him \$600,000 and legal costs; he will not seek or accept employment at the university.

Despite his ostensible field of specialty, the bulk of Salaita's work consists of attacks on Israel, often under the guise of comparative history. It will surprise no one familiar with Salaita's ideas that his most cited work, *The Holy Land in Transit*, which offers a "comparative analysis" of Native Americans and Palestinians, portrays American colonists, ancient Hebrews, and modern Israelis as brutal colonial settlers who engaged in genocide.

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Now ensconced as the Edward W. Said Chair of American Studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB) for the 2015/16 academic year, Salaita told his Philadelphia fans that he is someone "who just got fired" because academe is not really about "true" academic freedom. Were this not the case, he could not have fallen prey to the "Zionist lobby." He proceeded to mock and mispronounce the names of pro-Israel philanthropists Haim Saban and Sheldon Adelson. To great applause, he described as "kickassery" the efforts of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Faculty for Palestine, and other pro-BDS groups who publicly defended him and lauded Jewish Voice for Peace for their PR work on his behalf.

Settling into what is clearly a well-worn routine, Salaita claimed that while he won't be the last victim of the lobby, because "the Zionists have lost the argument in the public sphere - it's done," he and his groupies can win the hearts and minds of the American public. He said that his case represented the point at which all oppressed groups could unite and proclaim, "F— this! We have been put down long enough and we are not going to be afraid to utter the words Palestine."

Moreover, he asserted that "academic Freedom never fulfilled its inherent promise" because it doesn't allow for individuals like himself to express their views. Institutions pressured by Zionists are criminalizing his views, which he claims—against all evidence—are "scholarly" and "objective."

The enthusiastic audience hung on every hackneyed cliché Salaita fed them, especially his repeated attacks against Zionists, whose actions he deemed so indefensible that they must resort to the purely defensive tactic of deflection. He added, mendaciously and mockingly, "You will never find a group of people who love China and Tibet more than the Zionists." He is obsessed with Jews, and his phraseology revolves around "Zionists" as connoting an anti-Semitic trope and not merely Israel, whose legality as a nation state he persistently downplays and questions.

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Salaita's alleged martyrdom is the subject of his newest book, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom*. Yet his repeated insistence that academic freedom does not apply to "pro-Palestinian" voices is simply absurd. Both overt hostility to Israel and anti-Semitism under the guise of anti-Zionism have for years dominated the field of Middle East studies, a fact illustrated by the standing ovation Salaita received at the 2014 annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), which also voted to affirm the right of individuals and organizations—including MESA—to support BDS resolutions.

Salaita's meteoric rise as a left-wing cause célèbre rests precisely on his vitriolic views, grounded as they are in anti-Semitic conspiracy mongering rather than rigorous, objective scholarship. No one has a "right" to tenure, nor to freedom from the consequences of his behavior. When professors who substitute agitprop and rank propaganda for scholarship are seen for the charlatans they are rather than the principled victims they pretend to be, academe can start down the long road to reclaiming its integrity.

*Asaf Romirowsky is a CIJR Academic Fellow*

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**105-YEAR-OLD WWII HERO HONORED AT KKL ITALY  
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[Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 13, 2015

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**On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, KKL Italy held a special event attended by 250 members of the Rome Jewish community, including community leader Emanuel Segre Amar. The guest of honor was Georges Loinger, a French Jew who has attained the remarkable age of 105 and who kept his listeners riveted with the tale of his extraordinary life. Georges Loinger's life history is bound up with the story of the establishment of the State of Israel.**

**Mr. Loinger was born in Strasbourg in 1910. During the Second World War he was captured by the Nazis, but managed to make his escape and return to France, where he joined the French Resistance movement. Working together with his cousin, the renowned pantomime artist Marcel Marceau, he saved around one thousand Jewish children from the Nazis.**

**After the war he was recruited by the Mossad for Aliya Bet operations (clandestine immigration into Mandatory Palestine in defiance of the British White Paper restricting Jewish immigration) and was involved in the operation of the Exodus. Later Ben Gurion appointed him to be the first director of Zim Shipping Lines in France, a position he retained until his retirement.**

**President of KKL-JNF Italy Rafi Sasson opened the event by welcoming Georges Loinger and the other guests, and drew their attention to the fact that this particular date (November 29<sup>th</sup>) had been chosen especially to mark the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN resolution for the founding of a Jewish state.**

**Those present listened attentively to the fascinating and moving story that Georges Loinger had to tell. He also spoke of the current situation in Europe - and in France especially - and remarked optimistically that after everything he had seen throughout his long life, he was not unduly concerned by the latest wave of terrorism, as he was sure that this, too, would pass. When asked the secret of his**

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perpetual youthfulness, he explained that he spends forty-five minutes every day performing special exercises that engage all his muscles. The event was attended by Gal Shaham, CEO of Zim Italy, who congratulated Georges and presented him with a gift on behalf of the company's board of directors.

The day after this memorable event the staff of KKL Italy accompanied Georges Loinger on a visit to the Jewish school in Rome, together with his youngest son, Daniel Loinger, who is himself eighty-five years old. Georges spoke to fifty senior students at the school who were thrilled with this remarkable opportunity to hear him recount his experiences first hand. The youngsters posed a great many questions, to which Georges responded very patiently.

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### **'HMT DUNERA,' THE SCANDAL AND THE SALVATION**

*Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg*

[Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 12, 2015

On Hanukka in December 1940, the Australian public was finally told the whole awful story of the HMT Dunera, the British troopship (HMT stands for Hired Military Transport) in which several hundred enemy aliens, mainly German Jewish refugees, had been deported to their country from Great Britain.

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England in 1940 was in the grip of a great panic over the possibility of an invasion by Nazi Germany, whose troops were just across the English Channel, only 35 km. from Dover. In England, European and German foreigners were all seen by Britain as potential spies and agents provocateurs, who would join with the enemy if and when the Nazis invaded. As a result the British government ordered all adult German subjects to be rounded up and interned, even though the majority were German Jewish refugees who had recently escaped from Nazi Germany and who were implacable enemies of the Nazis.

The majority were sent to the Isle of Man, offshore from the mainland to the west of Liverpool, where they could do little harm, but heavy suspicion fell on those men of military age, from 18 to 65, who were seen as highly dangerous. They were sent further afield, all the way to Australia; in its nervous panic Great Britain thought them to be a real threat. It was thought that if they stayed in England they might form a fifth column if and when the Germans invaded. In its panic, the British government had even ordered the removal or obliteration of all direction signs and placenames that might have helped any German invaders.

Those deported to Australia had to be kept under surveillance for the journey, and the British navy was able to supply a suitable troopship, the HMS Dunera. It was a secure military vessel and had originally been designed and equipped for 1,600 troops, but now was to be filled with 2,542 refugees, besides the crew and the army warders, so everyone was cramped and hugely uncomfortable. Of the internees, over 70 percent were Jewish refugees who had managed to escape from the Nazis and had come to England via Holland and Belgium well before the outbreak of the war.

On board the ship, the internees were all very badly treated by their British army warders, who were under the command of Lieutenant John O'Neill, who did nothing to reduce the brutality of his men. They had all been led to consider the internees to be Nazi spies and, as the army warders searched them, they stole their watches

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and rings, any loose money, change and notes, as well as other valuables and precious items. They also searched and looted their personal luggage, and threw much of it overboard, to the consternation of the internees who were left with hardly anything except the dirty and skimpy clothes they were standing in.

Later, when the internees had been imprisoned in Australia, they were able to normalize their lives to some extent and they published a weekly magazine, which often contained their favorite song, one that they had sung regularly on board the ship, to a tune they had learned from their British warders: "My luggage went into the ocean, My luggage went into the sea, My luggage was thrown in the ocean, Oh, bring back my luggage to me!" When the internees arrived in Australia, the government kept their arrival secret and immediately sent them all off to a prison camp at Hay, a place in New South Wales. It was 750 km. west of Sydney in a treeless and arid grazing area that was both hot, rainless and above all, completely inhospitable. The internees suffered from the horrible climate and the abundance of stinging flies that had suddenly found new bodies to feed on. The internees had little or no opportunity to escape and anyway there was nothing nearby to escape to. Like the British, the Australians also considered the internees to be potential dangerous enemies.

They kept them imprisoned under harsh conditions, and at first kept their internment and location a secret from the public, for fear of causing alarm and panic. The internees gradually made a somewhat civilized life for themselves, organized talks, lectures and seminars; many were scholars and professors, and they applied from time to time to be allowed to emigrate to the United States and other more friendly countries. This was not unwelcome to the Australians, who were keen to reduce their numbers, and many internees eventually found their way to countries in South America, countries that were not unwilling to take them. Many who went were in the end able to apply from there for a visa to the US, the "Goldene Medina" that most of them saw as the true land of promise and the one to which they wished to emigrate.

The refugees retained unpleasant memories of their original deportation by



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troopship to Australia, on which they had been scandalously treated by the British army warders - but there was one positive and amazing thing to be thankful for, of which they only became aware much later.

The Dunera had been followed by a Nazi submarine, of which the crew were not aware. The U-boat was eager and ready to torpedo what it thought was a warship carrying many British soldiers. But the U-boat crew soon became aware of the considerable amount of debris that had been thrown off the boat by the warders, and picked up some of it to inspect it.

When they saw that it contained much in the way of German letters and literature, they concluded that the military boat was not carrying troops to Australia but rather German POWs, and the U-boat commander decided to spare the ship. Thus the boat, the lives of its crew, the warders and the internees were all saved thanks to the harsh and scandalous treatment that had been meted out to the internees by the British army warders.

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**THE ALEPPO CODEX IN ISRAEL**

*Perry J. Greenbaum*

[Book Review](#), Dec. 7, 2015

**Book Review: *The Aleppo Codex*, by Matti Friedman (Algonquin Books, 2013)**

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The Aleppo Codex, known as the keter (כֶּתֶר) or crown in Hebrew, is considered by scholars to be as accurate a copy of the Hebrew Bible as there can be, a bound book of approximately 500 pages that dates to the tenth century, and which was safely and securely housed in Aleppo, Syria, for six centuries before being transferred to Israel in late 1957. Tradition and modern scholarship says that Maimonides studied and used the codex in the 12th century to publish the Mishneh Torah (Hebrew: מִשְׁנֵה תּוֹרָה), a code of Jewish religious law. His praise of it forever established its reputation and made it more valuable and venerable.

It is housed in the Israel Museum (at the “Shrine of the Book”), in Jerusalem, but access to it is controlled by the Ben-Zvi Institute, founded by Israel’s second president, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. He is an important figure in this story, as are a few others, including Asher Baghdadi, sexton of the great synagogue at Aleppo; Moshe Tawil, the chief rabbi of Aleppo who decided to send the codex to Israel; Murad Faham, the Aleppo cheese merchant who smuggled the codex to Israel; Shlomo Moussaieff, a jewelry tycoon and buyer of ancient artifacts and manuscripts; and Meir Benayahu, an aide to Ben-Zvi and the institute's first director.

Two months after its arrival in Israel, in February 1958, the codex was at the centre of legal proceedings, where the Aleppo Jews sued the government of Israel for the rights of ownership; the court was the Jerusalem Rabbinic Court. Matti Friedman writes: “The hearings were held before three rabbis, instead of judges, but otherwise followed the recognizable formula of a trial” (116). After a long trial, the Aleppo Jews had to concede defeat and there was, in 1962, “an out-of court settlement” (137). The trusteeship agreement, Friedman writes, “gave the community theoretical part ownership of the manuscript, while effectively ensuring that it would remain in the hands of the state and would never leave Ben-Zvi’s institute” (137-8).

With this agreement, the Aleppo Jews lost control of a book that they had held for centuries, but did so unwillingly. How and why this book was transferred to Israel

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has everything to do with events that happened shortly after November 29, 1947, when the United Nations made a historic vote. Friedman explains the story in a succinct paragraph in an article (“The Continuing Mysteries of the Aleppo Codex;” June 30, 2014) for *Tablet*:

In 1947, in a riot that followed the United Nations vote on the partition of Palestine, the codex disappeared, surfacing 10 years later in mysterious circumstances in the new state of Israel. The codex is currently held in the Israel Museum, in the same building as the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is controlled not by the museum, however, but by a prestigious academic body, the Ben-Zvi Institute, founded by Israel’s second president, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Somewhere along the way in the mid-20th century, 200 priceless pages—around 40 percent of the total—went missing. These include the most important pages: the Torah, or Five Books of Moses.

These form the heart of the Torah, the Hebrew Bible. What remains of the original codex is what Friedman refers to as a “mutilated codex” (143). It begins with the impending death of Moses found in the Torah’s last book, Deuteronomy, and where Moses, forbidden by G-d to enter the land, gives a farewell address to the People of Israel, which includes both blessings and curses (chapter 28). The mutilated codex does not contain the blessings, but gives warnings of what will happen to the nation of Israel should it deviate from the right path (“derech”) of G-d’s commandments:

It continues with a list of curses:

Cursed shall be the issue of your womb and the produce of your soil, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock. Cursed shall be in your comings, and cursed shall you be in your goings.

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**The Lord will let loose against your calamity, panic and frustration in all the enterprises you undertake, so that you shall soon be utterly wiped out because of your evildoing in forsaking me.**

**One can read into this as much (or as little) as one wishes, but it is hard to deny the power of the words and how these relate to what happened to the codex. That these words are now the first words of the mutilated codex says much, perhaps too much.**

***The Aleppo Codex* is part a story of historical preservation and continuity, interwoven with the re-birthing of the state of Israel; it is also a moral lesson of greed and monetary remuneration and how the two can come together when something of great value is placed in front of you. It is also a fine detective story on what might have happened to the 200 missing pages. There are possible answers, evidence pointing in a particular direction (270-71), but nothing proven, nothing conclusive. Powerful and influential political and religious figures have built a wall of silence, thus preventing the facts from leaking out (266-70) .**

**Today, there are two versions of the event (“the missing 200 pages“): the first and official version (posted on the Israel Museum site) is that the 200 pages were burned during the Aleppo riots in 1947 and that the codex was delivered to the Israeli government incomplete; the second version, which the author suggests is the more likely story, is that the book was delivered intact, except for a few pages, and that the missing pages were in fact later sold to a dealer or to many dealers who seek to buy such ancient artifacts and manuscripts. The book is as much about the murky (and sometimes deadly) world of the buying and selling of ancient artifacts as it is about the ethical ideas of why the public ownership of such documents is sacred.**

**Faith and obsession, words that can be used to describe religious feelings, can also be used to describe non-religious feelings, or secular emotion, as well. These**

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are human emotions, human values. To possess something rare, which no one else has, is something that some people not only feel is important and necessary, but is something that they receive some pleasure in doing. Even if in the doing it is not particularly ethical or, broadly speaking, not in the public interest. In such cases, it is not too far-fetched to talk about a breach of public trust.

Such thoughts or ideas do not seem to take much prominence—if at all—in the minds and consciousness of such individuals when such decisions are made. The Aleppo Codex contains an inscription, Friedman writes (9), saying:

**Blessed be he who preserves it**

**and cursed be he who steals it**

**and cursed be he who sells it**

**and cursed be he who pawns it.**

**It might not be sold and it may not be defiled forever,**

Until recently, this admonition was taken seriously.

***CIJR Wishes all our Friends & Supporters: Shabbat Shalom!***

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## **On Topic**

**[The Oldest Video Footage of Jerusalem You Will Ever See: Israel Video Network, Dec. 12, 2015](#)**—This video is a segment of the full 70 minute documentary “Jewish Life in Palestine”, filmed by Noah Sokolovsky of the East Odessa Company in 1913 to be shown at the 11th Zionist Congress.

**[Amazon Under Fire for Allowing Sale of Nazi Paraphernalia: Rosa Marchitelli, CBC, Dec. 14, 2015](#)** — Nazi flags, Hitler Youth knives, and running shoes with swastikas on them are just some of the items for sale on Amazon's U.S. and Canadian websites that have a long-time customer calling for a boycott of North America's largest online retailer.

**[AJC Critical of New Vatican Document on Catholic-Jewish Relations: Jewish Press, Dec. 10, 2015](#)** —Rabbi David Rosen, AJC's International Director of Interreligious Affairs, was disappointed at the Vatican's failure to recognize the value of the Land of Israel to the Jews, even as it was attempting to heal very old wounds between the two religions.

**[Pope Francis, 'Suffering Fuels Terror'? Look at the Jews: Gheula Canarutto Nemni, Times of Israel, Dec. 2, 2015](#)** —Rabbi David Rosen, AJC's International Director of Interreligious Affairs, was disappointed at the Vatican's failure to recognize the value of the Land of Israel to the Jews, even as it was attempting to heal very old wounds between the two religions.

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