

Alive and Well and Living in Tuscany
By Michael Ben-Gad

An Israeli historian of Italian origin has revived "blood libel" in an historical study set to hit Italian bookstores on Thursday. Ariel Toaff, son of Rabbi Elio Toaff, claims that there is some historic truth in the accusation that for centuries provided incentives for pogroms against Jews throughout Europe. Jerusalem Post, February 7, 2007

February 7, 2009, Florence, Italy. My interview with the famous but controversial Israeli economist, Michael Ben-Gad took place in a café overlooking the graceful Piazza del Carmine. Two years have passed since the controversy first ignited by Ben-Gad---then a little-known economics lecturer at the University of Haifa---with the publication of his best-selling treatise, *Jews and Money*. It was in this work that he first publicly claimed that strong evidence exists supporting the age-old contention that the entire world financial system is controlled by a secret Jewish cabal.

Interviewer: Why did you choose to leave your position as an economics lecturer in Haifa? Were you being persecuted for your scholarly work?

Ben-Gad: Absolutely, conditions for people who express views like mine have become intolerable in all the institutions of higher learning in Israel/Palestine. I simply had no choice but to leave when people began making faces at me in the hallway--- my academic freedom was being threatened. Since then I have been forced to wander from research center to research center, from Biarritz to Venice, from Florence to the Swiss Alps, in order to pursue my work.

Interviewer: So you did not leave Israel willingly?

Ben-Gad: No, in the past I, and others like me, always felt that it was essential that we remain, despite all the hardships, because we were the last people who dared to uphold the values of academic truth in an otherwise racist and colonialist society. In fact, I was often told by others (especially my mother), that Israeli academia was far too small and provincial for a soaring talent like my own. Nonetheless I remained committed to staying put, as long as I was afforded the opportunity to teach classes with up to 400 noisy undergraduates at a time, and to grade dozens of poorly written student papers each year. The low pay was another benefit, as an economist I valued the opportunity to hone my budgeting skills.

Interviewer: So then you have paid a heavy price for your choice to speak out, to be a dissident?

Ben-Gad: Not just me, all of us who have bravely challenged the privileged status of the Zionist narrative at Israeli universities. There is the guy who proved that during the 1948 so-called War of Independence, the Zionist forces often stooped to firing live ammunition at the opposing side, and the other one who demonstrated that the blood of sacrificed virgins is the secret ingredient in chicken soup with kreplach. By speaking out, people like us have been forced to give up the quiet lives we built for ourselves as obscure academics back in Israel. Now, as celebrity academics, life is not easy. All the traveling from conference to conference, each dedicated to discussing

your work, the media attention, the endowed chairs in London, Paris and Rome, the cheering crowds at political rallies, the constant harassment by nubile young female activists; how much of that can one balding, overweight, middle-aged economist take?

Interviewer: Of course your thesis remains controversial, that the entire world financial system is controlled by a secretive group of rabbis who meet for coffee and danish, once a week, over a Brooklyn dry cleaner. How do you answer your critics who claim that you have not been able to substantiate your claims? How do you answer the allegation that you are nothing but a self-hating Jew?

Ben-Gad: Look, my claims are hard to prove because world Jewry and their Zionist agents are so skillful at hiding the truth. They, for their part, have not been able to prove, despite all the resources at their disposal, that my allegations are false. Furthermore, who else but they, have such a strong interest in keeping the facts hidden? On the other hand, here I am, not only a Jew, but an Israeli as well. I even look Jewish. So if even someone like me is willing to lend credence to such a long-held suspicion, then obviously it must be true. Why would I lie? As for the bit about being a self-hating Jew, well those are just the usual Zionist smear tactics. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Look around, here I am, a Jew, and look at these beautiful surroundings. Clearly, I do not hate myself; it's just the rest of you back home, I don't particularly like.

Interviewer: How did you discover the existence of the hidden cabal?

Ben-Gad: It was a slow process of realization that already began when I was still a conscript in the Israeli Army. After a few years of service, I very gradually began to discern a certain pattern---all the tanks are painted green! Soon after, I realized the uniforms are green too. That's when I had my epiphany: we must really be fighting for the sake of the almighty dollar. There were other signs that came later, but I only began to really put the pieces together once I grew older, got married, had children; in fact when I started paying rent and raising a family on an Israeli academic salary. That led to frequent trips to the bank to deal with my growing overdraft. The banks were all Israeli, and the clerks and customers were nearly always Jewish. The more frequent the trips to the bank became, the more I began to see how everything fit together. My research program was born.

Interviewer: What are your future plans?

Ben-Gad: Fortunately the world is full of forward looking people interested in truth for its own sake. I have been approached about helping to set up a new university somewhere south of Tehran---some place called Natanz. Mostly, I plan to devote my energies to building my new research center in the south of France, made possible thanks to the generous funding of the Ibn-al-Saud Foundation for Economic Research and the Ayman Al-Zahiri Social Science Trust. From there I plan to lead world-wide efforts to boycott Israeli academic institutions until they stop....

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