



# DO YOU PASS THE ISRAEL TEST?

## GEORGE GILDER

How do you respond to people who excel you in invention, creativity, and wealth? Do you envy them? Do you feel their success somehow diminishes you? Or do you admire what they've achieved and try to emulate it?

These questions sum up what I call "The Israel Test."

In the 1880s, European Jews settled in mandate Palestine and wrought an agricultural miracle in that desolate territory, then sparsely populated by a few score thousand Jews and a couple hundred thousand Arabs.

The Jewish settlers drained malarial swamps, leached salt from the soils, terraced the barren hills, and planted millions of trees. They massively expanded the capacity of the land and enabled it to support a substantial Arab population.

In the two decades between 1921 and 1943, Jews quadrupled the number of enterprises, multiplied the number of jobs by a factor of 10, and increased the level of capital investment a hundredfold. Far from displacing Arabs, they provided the capital for a major expansion of Arab farms and enabled a sevenfold rise in Arab population by 1948, to a level of 1.35 million, the largest in the long history of Palestine. In other words, the Arabs came to what would be soon be the State of Israel because of the Jews.

By comparison, Trans-Jordan, now known as Jordan, with the same geological endowment and four times the land but no Jews was able to sustain a population density only one tenth of the population density of Palestine.

Crucial to Israel's accomplishments were world leading technological advances in the recovery of water through desalinization, drip irrigation, and sewage recycling.

Over the past fifty years, Israel has increased its population tenfold, its agricultural production sixteen fold and its industrial production fifty-fold while actually reducing net water consumption by ten percent since 1948. This huge expansion of effective water resources enabled the land to support not only more Jews, but also millions more Arabs.

Today the state of Israel with its astonishing achievements in computer science and other high tech fields distills both the genius of the Jews and the misdirected anger of the failed states that surround her.

The great divide in the Middle East is not between Arab and Jew but between admiration of

achievement, along with a desire to replicate it, and envy accompanied by violent resentment.

People who admire success, who pass the Israel Test, tend to be wealthy and peaceful. People who resent achievement, who fail the Israel Test, tend to become poor and violent.

So, again...

How do you respond to people who excel you in invention, creativity, and wealth?

Do you envy them? Do you feel their success somehow diminishes you?

Or do you admire what they've achieved and try to emulate it?

The Israel Test is the central divide in the world today.

How you answer it as an individual and ultimately how we answer it as a nation is a test of our own will to triumph over enemies who hate us, as they hate Israel, for what is best within us.

I'm George Gilder -- a non-Jew who has passed the Israel Test -- for Prager University.