

# Magnificent,                      Miraculous Israel

**The Downfall of Iran, The Rise of Persia**

**By Phyllis Chesler**

And so—Israel is doing the heavy lifting for the rest of the world. It's what Jews do.

Israel's pre-emptive and technically accomplished strike on Iran is the stuff of legend. Given how close Iran was to nuclear weaponry, Israel could wait no longer. Our tiny homeland is always under siege, always defamed, and always endangered. It is also the bravest country on Earth. Israel is, truly, a miracle. How much is due to human genius and how much does God play a hidden role? I really cannot say, but I began reciting psalms. The Israeli chief rabbis have suggested Psalms 20, 21, and 130. Despite everything, no matter Israel's external enemies and the rift between Israelis—it is an honor to belong to such a people.

And now, some personal memories.

I was first in Iran/Persia/Shushan in 1961. Arrogant wealth co-existed with the most profound poverty and yet, middle- and ruling-class women went about with bare heads, naked-faces, and wore expensive Western clothing. Over the years, I have written about that visit in articles and in *An American Bride in Kabul*.

Iran next came into my life when Reza Baraheni, an Iranian intellectual, and the then head of CAIFI, Students Against The Shah, came to call. That was back in the mid-seventies. He told me he'd been tortured, he moved around a lot, he yearned for the Shah's downfall—and for "Revolution." After Khomeini took power, Reza rushed back, ecstatically, to his home

country. At first, he invited Kate Millett to lecture in Tehran on International Women's Day. She gladly, foolishly, went. Khomeini arrested her. I was beside myself: How could we few Western feminists free her? Luckily, and strangely enough, Khomeini just let her go.

Reza then promptly invited me to speak on the next International Women's Day. I told him that I'd learned enough about a woman's likely captivity when I was in Kabul and that I'd never come to Iran under the rule of the mullahs—at least, not without a full battalion of Marines, and every conceivable special-force operatives. At first, Reza was disappointed, then he mocked me.

Within a few years, he, too, fled Iran for Canada. He was, after all, an Azerbaijani Turk. The mullahs were closing in on him and on any Marxist notions he may have held about secular "liberation."

I encountered Khomeini's very aggressive gangs of black female ghosts very soon, at a 1980 UN conference in Copenhagen. They were there to accuse Israel falsely of crimes, and they very happily made common cause with the Soviets and the Arab League against Israel and against America. I met their like again at a conference in NYC when I stood with the bravest Iranian and Afghan women, who called them out and actually shamed them into leaving the room.

Oh, how we all lived through the subsequent events—Khomeini's kidnapping of American diplomats, their anti-woman and anti-dissident purges, arrests, tortures, murders, their hanging people from cranes, their raping of female prisoners before they executed them, their persecution of prostituted women, their murders of women who did not want to wear hijab or whose hijab slipped a bit, their terrorization of an entire people. Always, always, they talked about exterminating the Big Satan (that's America) and the Little Satan (that's Israel). They were very clear about this.

By 2003-2004 I was also very clear. Iran was the “head of the snake,” and together with Qatar, was the world’s major funder of terrorism and global Jihad. I said so. I wrote about this. I kept hoping that America, the greatest military power in the world, would stop such funding and end their nuclear program.

Despite countless attacks against American soldiers stationed in the Middle East, no American President did this. Yes, President Reagan got the American Embassy workers out, although Carter did not. In the 21st century, Bush, Obama, and Biden did not.

Over the years, I’ve been in touch with many Iranian women, such as Manda Ervin and her daughter, Banafsheh Zand. Ervin founded the Alliance of Iranian Women. She also wrote a book about the pre-Iranian Mother-Goddesses of Persia. It is titled: *The Ladies’ Secret Society: The History of the Courageous Women of Iran*. Manda’s husband was a political prisoner under the mullahs. He was tortured, perhaps driven out of his mind. Finally, he jumped out of a window. We all worked together at the First Islamic Dissident Conference in St. Petersburg and then again in Rome, at a G8 conference.

I read all the books I could find by Iranian women. Most notably, by Azar Nafisi, Roya Hakakian, Marjane Satrapi, as well as American Betty Mahmoody’s tale of being held captive in Iran—but nothing compares to Freidoune Sahebjam’s story of *The Stoning of Soraya M*. It is about a small Iranian village—Kupayah—in which an Iranian demon-husband makes false accusations about his innocent wife and the village turns out to stone her to death. The husband wanted their little house for himself and for his intended new bride. It is a great and very painful true story—and I used it many times to illustrate gender apartheid under Shari’a, atrocities not caused by Western imperialism. Cyrus Nowrasteh made a brilliant film about this story.

Nothing compares to the bravery of Iranian women. Nothing.

Very recently, a group sent me their (pirated) translation of my book *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman* into Farsi. Their cover design is so good that I've framed it and hung it where I can easily see it while I write. But more—these brave souls insisted that we meet on a Zoom call. I told them: But I'm a well-known "Islamophobe" and a Zionist to boot. They said: They did not care. They wanted to discuss the book with me.

And so we met. Iranian women still in Iran, and Iranian feminists and dissidents around the world.

They—unlike the American college students who voluntarily wear hijab—risk losing their lives for refusing to do so. They have my eternal admiration.



May the people in Israel be spared all and any retaliation. May the soldiers on the ground in Gaza and in Israel's North all come home safely. May the extraordinary Israeli pilots who are attacking multiple nuclear facilities in Iran (in Tehran, Natanz, Isfahan, Kermansheh) return home alive and in glory.

Am Yisroel Chai.

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