

# Jewish FRONTIER

April-June 2002

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Jay Eidelman on the forked tongue of Israel  
and its friends and adversaries

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Bennett Lovett-Graff on revelations since  
Operation Defensive Shield

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anti-Semitism from Michael Landsberg, and thoughts on  
war, peace, and dialogue from Ariel Jankelson and  
Senator Robert Torricelli.

# JEWISH FRONTIER

A Labor Zionist Journal  
Since 1934

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June 2002

Dear Chevre,

There is nothing like a second issue to test an editor's mettle, and personally, I feel pretty well tested after the last few months.

At *Jewish Frontier*, we continue to turn new corners, adding fresh voices and points of view to our pages. Many of this issue's contributions reflect the latest events, which have no doubt troubled us all. New questions have been raised. Is there a viable Palestinian partner in the peace process? Why has Europe turned so vehemently on the Jewish state? Do Arab states truly seek peace between Israel and the Palestinians? Are secure borders with a Palestinian state a fading vision? Why has the United States shown such staunch support for Israel?

In at least two of the pieces presented here, "Double Talk" and "True Colors," I and Jay Eidelman take many of these matters head on. Our other contributors offer insights from different angles of vision. Michael Landsberg explores the new and perhaps more virulent anti-Semitism that has taken root among Arab states; M.J. Rosenberg debunks one of the most commonly circulated arguments among right-wing opponents to the peace process; Ariel Jankelson, a voice from Australia, rightly argues that even among combatants there must always remain the possibility of dialogue; and Rabbi Elliot Gertel entices us to look more closely at the Koran, if but to note its emphasis on the continuity between Judeo-Christian and Islamic scripture.

And yet there is so much more to say. A great deal has come to the fore during the last few months that calls out for more extensive analysis and commentary. One such is the international response to Operation Defensive Shield, which threatened to unbalance Arab nations and compelled Saudi Arabia, of all nations, to take the lead in proposing a peace arrangement (regardless of its shortcomings). Often we hear about the threat of destabilization—from the American intervention in Afghanistan to India and Pakistan's mass mobilizations along the line of control. But is

destabilization always a bad thing? Can it be a political strategy for achieving results? Some of the consequences of Operation Defensive Shield beg for such an analysis.

Another political reality in dire need of examination is the abject failure of the political left in Europe, which has adopted positions that fly in the face of good judgment and fair dealing, and show a disturbing disregard for human life. In short, despite legitimate criticism that we may all have of Israel's continued occupation and heavy-handed administration of the territories, nearly all of the European left has accepted violence against noncombatants as a legitimate form of resistance. (This is except, of course, when it affects themselves in Northern Ireland, the Spanish Basque region, or Corsica.) Moreover, the European left has for some reason placed the the pursuit of autonomy before, rather than side-by-side with, that of democracy. This no doubt explains why Palestinian independence continues to be a cause celebre while millions in Zimbabwe defrauded of their right to free elections have been blessed with a deafening silence.

Finally, a more detailed look is surely needed at the strange reality I describe in this issue of the separate tracks that seem to be evolving in Israel's future relationship with the Palestinians. The mass movement in Israel to fence off the territories and the Palestinian clamor for internal reform raise questions about how each is bound to affect the other. Will the first stall the second or accelerate it? Such an important set of developments demands an analysis that treats them in relation to one another.

These are some of the issues calling out for further exploration. Perhaps you, dear reader, might consider making such a contribution or offer one of your own choosing that speaks to the important issues that concern each of us today. Whatever form your response, we welcome it.

Hoping for Peace,

Bennett Lovett-Graff  
Managing Editor

In his recent article on the Lindberghs, Hal Derner wrote, “Anne, undoubtedly brighter and more sensitive, appears to have been aware of the long-term implications of her husband’s anti-Semitic fervor, although she regrettably never saw fit to repudiate it publicly.”

Never saw fit? She also never saw fit to raise her five children in a part of the state where Jews were, at the very least, allowed to live. Darien, Connecticut, is the location of Laura Hobson’s *Gentleman’s Agreement* and the subject of a chapter on American antisemitism in James Loewen’s recent book *Lies Across America*.

Hal Derner, like every other writer who mentions Anne’s supposed regrets over *Wave of the Future*, also fails to give any citations for these imaginary apologies to the American Jewish public. I have been doing research for over six years and have never come across any such statements made by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, so I would really like to know where, exactly, Mr. Derner learned this elusive fact.

To my knowledge, Anne agreed with her husband about Jews. Not only did she willingly raise her children in a Jewish-restricted town, but their closest friends were the Sikorskys—another family that refused to repudiate anti-Semitic acts by a famous relative. Igor Sikorsky’s father was a wealthy and prestigious psychiatric professor and the “expert” witness against Mendel Menachem Beilis at his 1911 blood libel trial in Kiev. Igor’s father testified at the notorious trial that Jews kill Christian children for their blood.

And we never heard a peep of repudiation from any Sikorsky yet. But, I am sure that if it ever becomes known to the public that the Sikorsky clan can always do what the “brighter” and “sensitive” Anne Lindbergh did to cover up the bad news, namely hire A. Scott Berg to write a biography of the despicable old Jew-hater, then who knows? Spielberg might even be duped into making a movie about them.

**Ronelle Delmont**

I have been affiliated over many years with Labor Zionism and a reader of the *Jewish Frontier* for at least 35 years. In the past ten or fifteen years I had given up on it as a meaningful and informative publication. It was simplistic, doctrinaire, and irrelevant

to current events and problems. Reading Ari Chester’s “The Jewish Problem” in the first 2002 issue was unbelievable. The article was magnificent.

In the past feature writers wrote as if it were Poland in 1927, and their ideas reflected the situation then. Israel with all its wars and turmoil was treated as if Ben Gurion were about to rise from the dead and lead the Labor party again.

I commend Mr. Chester on his article. It reflects my beliefs and understanding. I hope his position as executive director of the Labor Zionist Alliance will bring a new day and vitalization to an organization that seemed to have been becoming moribund and antiquated. A few years ago in Chicago I attended a meeting of Labor Zionists that felt more like a reunion of first World War veterans. I hear that this chapter, too, has had an infusion of new blood, and I only wish there were such a chapter here in Naples, Florida.

Mr. Chester, I am happy to know that you are in charge; I wish you all the luck. Even now I wonder how you ever got the old guard socialists and Yiddish nostalgics to accept you.

**Herbert Herman**

**Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Habonim Dror North America  
Workshop Program**

*From the staff of the  
Jewish Frontier and the  
membership of the  
Labor Zionist Alliance*

## Double Talk

It is hard to remember a time when doubletalk wasn't part of Mideast politics. Lately, however, obfuscation and duplicity have become so blatant in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that it is almost impossible to tell fact from fiction.

As Israelis buried their dead from a series of Palestinian attacks, supporters of Israel continued to rage at what they perceive as the Arab/Muslim world's duplicity. Yassir Arafat, notorious in Jewish circles for saying one thing in English and another in Arabic, continued to incite violence at home while playing the peace card abroad.

Moreover, such duplicity underscores the purposeful ambiguity that characterizes calls for the "liberation of Palestine." Certainly, when the few Palestinian moderates left speak of it, they mean the West Bank and Gaza. But when groups like Hamas talk about it, they mean all of historic Palestine. And when Arafat speaks of it? Well, no one really knows.

As for what will happen to the Israelis when Palestine is liberated—whatever that means—I don't think Hamas, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad, or even the radicals within Mr. Arafat's Fatah Party are above genocide. Ultimately, Israel and the Israelis will simply have to leave or be eradicated. Perhaps that is why Yassir Arafat betrayed the strong support of President Clinton by rejecting the Camp David compromise. Without the promise that Arafat was seeking for the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, the Palestinians could not unleash the demographic bomb that would eliminate Israel once and for all.

Nor is this penchant for doubletalk limited to Arafat. Take the Saudi peace plan adopted by the Arab League at their meeting in Beirut. While seemingly a step in the right direction for its offer of full normalization of relations with Israel, the plan is little more than the old maximalist Arab position that Israel has already rejected. Again the sticking point is the so-called right of Palestinian return. Those closer to the situation recognize that not only is the return of Palestinian "refugees" impossible if Israel is to survive as a

democratic Jewish state, but all the palaver about restoring Palestinians to their homeland is merely a smokescreen for the threat they pose to the growing volatility in Arab states. The reality is that Arab governments are itching to relieve themselves of their Palestinian populations, once a thorn in Israel's side, now a thorn (as Lebanon had discovered) in their own.



*I don't think Hamas, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad, or even the radicals within Mr. Arafat's Fatah Party are above genocide.*



It is a shame that Arab governments could not muster the courage to offer full normalization of relations with Israel at the start of the peace process. Here, too, double talk abounds. This is apparent in how greatly the Arab League's peace plan differs from that outlined earlier by Crown Prince Abdullah in conversation with the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. While you can't blame the Prince for the wheeling and dealing of a summit, the fact that his plan was initially floated in English and not in Arabic has led many to question its sincerity. As Norman Podhoretz pointed out in an opinion piece on National Public Radio, if peace with Thomas Friedman was the Arabs' objective, it could have been achieved long ago.

The double talk in Europe has also gained traction as politicians fell all over themselves to denounce Israel's inhumanity in the territories while anti-Semitic violence kicked up its heels throughout the continent. Not suprisingly, France—with its large Arab population, strong economic interest in Iraq, and history of malevolent indifference to Jews—led the call for European Union sanctions against Israel. Meanwhile, France's Jews experienced a series of outrageous anti-Semitic demonstrations and hate-crimes. Indeed, things got so bad that France's President and Prime Minister actually commented on the matter. Meanwhile, European intellectuals, pooh-poohing any charge of anti-Semitism, rushed about trying to

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delegitimize the state of Israel by branding Israeli scholars academic outlaws. I guess labeling any Israeli action, regardless of provocation, as state terrorism clears Europe's conscience for the millions of Jews murdered on its soil over the centuries. You can imagine the Europeans saying: "See, those Jews weren't really so nice after all."

Even the United States has spoken with a forked tongue about the Arab-Israeli conflict. For a short while even I considered Dubya "our man on Israel," that was until the "Crawford Oil Summit," where Poppy, Dick and the Saudis issued new marching orders. Don't get me wrong, of course, the United States is undoubtedly still Israel's best friend. And the Arab/Muslim world is correct when it argues that America favors Israel. Israel, after all, is more culturally familiar to Americans and a more trustworthy ally. But the United States' failure to see the recent Palestinian attacks in Israel as part and parcel of the terrorist threat that America has committed itself to eradicate has many Israelis and supporters scratching their heads. The United State can overrun entire nations when attacked but Israel must sit on its hands to appease Arab dictatorships and Western oil interests.

**E**ven Israel and its supporters have become mired in their own form of double talk. Witness Ariel Sharon's labeling of Yassir Arafat as "irrelevant" during the height of the attacks in March. Presumably, the move was meant to delegitimize the Palestinian leader and bring about a change of regime in the Palestinian Authority. Strategic benefits of this plan aside, it seemed a bit strange for Sharon to then turn around and call upon Arafat to personally stop Palestinian attacks. Clearly, the statements were awash in contradiction; is it any wonder that the whole effort came off looking immature, if not disingenuous? More to the point, the episode reflected denial on the part of the Israeli leadership to accept the inevitable reality of a Palestinian State, most likely with Yassir Arafat at its head. Had anyone doubted that, the Likud party, with Bibi Netanyahu taking point, went so far as to reject any Palestinian State no matter its borders. Sometimes denial is the greatest form of affirmation.

Clearly, Israel and its supporters have deluded themselves into thinking that somehow they are in control of the Palestinians, that theirs is a benevolent occupation, and furthermore, that the only path to

security is through an ever-increasing show of military might. Though Israel has seen a reduction in suicide bombings since the Israeli incursion, attacks have not stopped and may well be on the rise again. Deterrence continues to come at an enormous human, spiritual, and political cost. It certainly looks as if current tactics will fail to bring a permanent end to Palestinian incursions or lessen Palestinian determination. Despite the iron fist, Israel is still at a loss to find a way out of this morass.

These misapprehensions have led some of us to believe that somehow we can put off the inevitability of a Palestinian state and more of us to think that that we can dictate the nature of that state-in-the-making. Presently, even those who accept the idea of a Palestinian state want to impose any number of preconditions: the future Palestinian state must be demilitarized; Israel must control its borders; Israel must control its aquifers; Jerusalem must never be divided, and so forth. The past few months, however, have demonstrated that this approach is wrongheaded and ultimately self-defeating. Sure we can make demands that reflect our best interests, but these are only opening bids in what is going to be a long negotiation.

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Trying to control the Palestinians seems to me an exercise in futility. First, they will see any meddling by Israel as repression, which will ultimately lead to more attacks. Of course, if the Palestinian state is completely demilitarized, it will not be able to protect itself from internal threats such as those posed by Hezbollah and Hamas. This, in turn, can only endanger Israel, just as the degradation of the Palestinian Authority's security forces exacerbated the situation in the past few months. Is Israel going to forever police Palestinian internal security? I hope not. Nor is this story any easier with respect to water and borders. Let's be realistic, how much can Israel control and still expect peaceful cohabitation?

I am certain that there will be an independent Palestinian state sitting alongside Israel. The Palestinians want it, the United Nations including the United States

*Continued on page 28*

## True Colors

It has been a most unusual period since the last issue of *Jewish Frontier* appeared, and the Israeli incursion—Operation Defensive Shield—that paralyzed world politics since then has done much to reveal the clichéd “true colors” of the participants in this drama.

Most damaging is what captured files from the offices of the Palestinian Authority revealed. In short, documents detailed the involvement of nearly the entire Palestinian Authority in attacks against Israeli civilians and military checkpoint personnel. Although this revelation was initially buried under media reports of a supposed massacre in Jenin, enough now know that the real tragedy behind the incursion is the unmasking of a partner who is no partner at all. Even the Arafat alternatives, such as Jibril Rajoub, who had held some form of credibility with the Israeli government and the American intelligence community because of his sometimes vicious crackdowns on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, is under suspicion. This is a bad sign all around since it has made evident to the Israelis, United States, European Union, and Arab States that the Palestinian Authority has become a “loose cannon” on the world political stage, constantly undermining American diplomatic efforts, the stability of Arab regimes, and even the European Union’s ostensible pro-Palestinian humanitarian efforts.

Of course, revelations of the PA’s complicity in attacks on Israel had little effect on changing the view on the street in the Arab world, which is so mired in disinformation that no mountain of evidence can persuade Arab peoples of anything other than what they wish to believe. Palestinian officials have mastered the art of the outrageous claim, from the Israeli fabrication of evidence of PA support for suicide bombings to the massacre that never happened in Jenin. Sadly, the Palestinians have joined the rest of their Middle Eastern brethren, who devised such classics as the Mossad planned the destruction of the World Trade Center; footage intimating Osama bin Laden’s knowledge of the attacks were American (or again Israeli) creations; video

of Palestinians dancing in the streets after the September 11 attacks was old footage from their celebration of Iraqi attacks on Israel during the Gulf War; and my personal favorite: recent suicide bombings have been the work of Israeli rightists seeking to sabotage diplomatic efforts. It hardly seems worth the time combating these laughable assertions in the Western press were the political left not so desperate to believe anything that can justify a cause that continuously embarrasses them and the Arab press looking for ever greater heaps of dirt to throw on Israel for lack of anything useful to say about their own pathetic regimes.

Most interesting is the way Operation Defensive Shield has played out in the world of Arab internal politics and foreign affairs. The very extremism that Arab governments have fomented among their peoples and even export to one another has come back to haunt them. Arab peoples have for years seen their plight reflected in that of the Palestinians, which their own oppressive governments have always succored by letting them express their anger towards the “Zionist entity” on the streets of Amman, Riyadh, and Cairo. It made for the perfect distraction from the real woes of their present regimes. But now this tool of manipulation has come to haunt the Arab world, forcing moderation upon it. Despite the Saudi plan, it is becoming apparent that Arab states would probably be willing to accept any terms for peace in the region, if but the two parties would actually engage in such a process. Alas, with Sharon and Arafat at the helms, neither of whom they control, it appears that they are out of luck, and so have resorted to their last tactic, pressuring the United States to bear down on Israel. Unfortunately, they have run into another wall that perhaps they had not anticipated: George Bush and the Republicans.

George Bush’s support of Israel has been both invigorating and worrisome. Certainly the Jewish community has been surprised by the loyalty of the Bush administration, and it suggests not mere politics but a question of personality, too. Bush cannot stand Arafat. His inclination to lie, particularly about the

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Karine A episode, and his purposeful jeopardization of White House plans to remove Saddam Hussein have become slaps in the face of the most powerful world leader. One senses that Bush has taken this personally—and perhaps rightly so. But there are more wrinkles than this. One such is that the Bush administration has expressed a significantly stronger commitment to democratic regimes, including the imposition of them by force, if necessary, than prior administrations. Notwithstanding the rotting influence of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, no one can argue the fact that the country is still the only true democracy in the region and responds as a democracy to opportunities and crises; the same cannot be said of its neighbors and even of the the so-called “democratically elected” Yassir Arafat (who is still commonly referred to in Palestinian circles as “chairman,” which reveals a great deal about the Palestinian Authority’s utter lack of commitment to true democracy). Even calls for reform of the PA are viewed with increasing skepticism by all—including the Palestinians.

Moreover there is a cultural disconnect that has placed Bush in Sharon’s corner rather than Arafat’s. As one *Wall Street Journal* guest editorialist had put it, the key disjunction between Americans and Palestinians is quite simple: they don’t share the same set of values for how one enacts political change. The path of the gun and the explosive belt, no matter how right the cause, has won few, if any, American hearts, whether we’re talking about the Palestinians, the IRA, the Tamil Tigers, or Abu Sayyaf.

**B**ush’s detestation of Arafat and American disgust with Palestinian tactics are not the only factors either. Politics always has its role, too, and Republicans, as a result of the crisis, have uncovered opportunities to advance their causes. Anyone who knows the world of political lobbying rightly recognizes that political action committees give to both sides. In this case, the Republicans have found in siding with Israel an opportunity to capture money that AIPAC often gives to Democrats. Moreover, they’ve nosed out another in moving Jewish voters and political money towards the support of increased domestic oil drilling. Intimations of Arab threats to withhold or curtail oil supplies may well give that courtship some momentum—enough such that even the most liberal Jew must give pause and ask him or herself what is more

important: the preservation of the Jewish state or a rare bird species in Alaska? With Bush’s unabashed support of Israel, a new friendship—and loss of a democratic constituency—could be in the making.

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Alas, no opportunity comes without a threat. The latest to-do over Cuba is illustrative. Former President Jimmy Carter’s plea for easing trade and travel restrictions to Cuba has underlined how beholden Republican and Democratic administrations have been and remain to the Cuban-American community and, more importantly, Florida’s electoral votes. The heightening of Florida’s importance in the last presidential election has placed enormous power in the hands of a potentially new one-issue swing vote: the state’s elderly Jewish population. Certainly the butterfly-ballot debacle of 2000 has the Bush administration thinking about its political vulnerability in Florida, especially among this class of voters whom that catastrophe disproportionately affected. What better way to respond than showing an unswerving loyalty to Israel?

And then there are the Europeans. Their reactions to recent events have been among the most revealing and perhaps the most disheartening. The spate of anti-Israel rallies that swept European capitals, the vicious acts of anti-Semitism that reared their ugly heads in France and Belgium, and the threat of European boycotts against Israel do more than raise old specters. They reveal the paralyzed politics of a Western Europe that has not shed the extremism of right and left that has characterized the behavior of its citizens for so many centuries. Indeed, Europe’s growing population of disaffected Arab voters unveils how beholden these nations have become to this new swing constituency—particularly France, where that population has grown by leaps and bounds. In short, despite the many noises European leaders have made regarding the newfound openness of their



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immigration policies, they will say just about anything to gain the vote of the very people whom their nations systematically discriminate against. This crass manipulation of political sentiment not only bespeaks the bankruptcy of European politics but of the Left in particular, underscoring how willfully Europe has ignored its own silent majorities. No surprise that the rightist Le Pen beat out the socialist Jospin in recent French elections, creating one of the more interesting ironic twists in European left politics and for the Arab constituency it is trying to woo. Having viciously attacked the only democracy in the Mideast, the very Arab Europeans that demonstrated so vehemently alongside the Paul Boves of this world found themselves thrown into the same pit as the Jews by the fascistic Le Pen, who would like nothing more than to see Jews and Arabs alike ejected from a more Christian France.

Finally, one comes to Israel itself. Sharon has always purported that, as a hawk, only he can make the peace that Israel needs to guarantee its security and future prosperity. However, he has shown himself to be something of an old ideologue, trying to recreate a situation in the 1980s that is no longer the reality of the twenty-first century. Support for Defensive Shield has been vigorous in Israel, and not surprising in light of the revelations concerning the Palestinian Authority. But even the lowest nitwit recognizes that continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank is a recipe for disaster on nearly every front possible: it jeopardizes the lives of Israeli settlers and soldiers; frustrates any progress for peace with the Palestinians, regardless of leadership; compounds the worsening threat of Islamic insurgency in Arab nations that have sought to moderate; provides additional leverage for Palestinian extremists; drains the military of its effectiveness; costs money better spent elsewhere (anywhere, in fact); and so on *ad nauseum*. Sharon, however, appears to have found a friend in Bush only inasmuch as Bush has found few real real friends in the Arab world, between Arafat's duplicity; Saudi Arabia's continued export of Islamic extremism; Egypt's utter economic and political inefficiency; the terroristic behavior and support of such by Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates; the encouragement of hatred for the United States by Al-Jazeera and for Israel among the panoply of government-controlled Arab newspapers; and so forth. Indeed, at this point in time, the argument among the Jewish left that Sharon must be reined in, particularly

on the issue of settlements, has almost nothing to do with worrying about the withdrawal of American aid or pandering to Arab cries of outrage and everything to do with the deleterious effect of such a policy on Israel's soul as a nation and integrity as a democracy.



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This leads us in the end to the position of the Jewish left, which has been paralyzed the last year and looks to be so for the next few years. With respect to the far left, notwithstanding the well-intended excoriations of the Meretz crowd, there is little patience in Israel (and even less among generally rightward-leaning American Jewish community) for criticism of Israeli government policy in light of the duplicity, nay-saying, corruption, propagandizing, and terroristic behavior (or support of such behavior) among Palestinians and other Arab nations. The hope that the Palestinian leadership could distinguish itself from other Arab national entities—in light of the initially secular, pluralistic, and highly educated population within the West Bank—by acting that much more enlightened has been dashed, corrupted by Arafat's traditional tactics, the very same that nearly destroyed Jordan in the early 1970s and did wreck the fragile balance of pre-Syria-controlled Lebanon in the late 1970s. For the center left, the picture has been more troubling. Palestinian attacks have given Labor the cover to participate in the ruling coalition, while permitting it—within reasonable limits—to position itself as a restraining influence on its more bellicose Likud partner. This restraining hand is dubious at best and some have argued—such as Labor Zionist Alliance president, Jeffrey Mallow—that certain red lines must be drawn for continued Labor participation in the government. The more extreme of the two that Mallow has identified is the vicious suggestion of forcibly transferring Arab populations. The second—namely increasing the number of settlements—is the more complex of the two for the simple reason that Labor itself oversaw significant increases in the number of

*Continued on page 28*

## Fearing Fear Itself

*April 17, 2002, Jerusalem, Israeli Independence Day.*

Today Israelis and Jews around the world should be celebrating the 54th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. As is the tradition in Israel, yesterday was the national memorial day for Israeli's fallen soldiers. Although this is always a difficult day for the family members of the over 20,000 Israelis who have been killed while in uniform, this year has proven especially difficult for the entire nation. With the great number of Israeli victims of the intifada—both civilians and soldiers—the number of Israelis who attended funerals of loved ones this year was significant. It was hard to watch the fireworks over Jerusalem last night. Although the celebrations are meant to be a sign of defiance—a refusal to let terrorists ruin our national holiday—it also seemed like some kind of sick joke. As if there were not enough explosions in this region, particularly Jerusalem! Even though we all knew the loud explosions going on all night were only fireworks, I'm certain that I was not the only Jerusalemite waiting for the one explosion that would be followed by the sound of sirens to which we have become all too acclimated.

This year's Independence Day celebrations were filled with pain and irony. Israel has entered the second year of the Al-Asqa Intifada, and prospects for any kind of resolution to the conflict seem dimmer than ever. While in the first few months of the intifada, many Israeli peaceniks could reminisce about the glory days of Oslo and reflect on "how close we were" at Camp David, that all appears as ancient history now. After the terror attacks during Passover, followed by the Israeli army's reoccupation of the West Bank, peace has never felt further away, and not merely as some kind of intellectual critique of the political situation but on a viscerally emotional level experienced by both Israelis and Palestinians. One does not need to read opinion

polls to sense how much Palestinians and Israelis now despise each other. We live in that boiling cauldron of rage every day, born of Israelis too scared to ride public buses and Palestinians in fear of the next IDF incursion into the supposedly autonomous Palestinian "Area A."

It is still quite amazing how successfully the right wing has succeeded in gaining political power and attaining virtual hegemony over the Israeli political spectrum. During the 2001 Barak-Sharon race, the Labor Party ran a controversial ad, an hypothetical fictional newscast following Ariel Sharon coming to power. The campaign ad, which seemed sensational at the time, suggested a future in which ultra-right wingers Avigor Liberman and Rehama Ze'evi would find themselves invited to become part of the Israeli cabinet, and Israel would suffer wave after wave of terrorist attacks, the army would recapture sections of the West Bank under Palestinian control. The item that drew the most attention, however, was the army instituting an emergency call-up of reserve soldiers. Reflecting on this ad over a year later, it is hard to believe that each of these "shockers" has long since become a reality. The only significant gap in the dire newscasts was the participation of Labour party in the fantasy scenario with which it had sought to scare the Israeli public.

After a year of continual humiliation, claiming it has been, if anything, restraining the right-wing militarism of Sharon and other cabinet hawks, the Labor party leadership reminds me of a battered spouse. It threatens to leave if things get any worse but is ignored because the threats go empty. Meanwhile the abusive spouse continues to wreak havoc. The pseudo-dovish Labour Party claims the important cabinet positions of Foreign Minister (Shimon Peres) and Minister of Defense (Benjamin "Fuad" Ben-Eliezer), but the party and its leaders have remained virtually mute for at least the past month, if not longer. Perhaps even Peres and Fuad have finally

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abandoned the delusion that their presence in the cabinet has any moderating effect on Sharon's bloodthirstiness. Surely everyone else in Israel has long given up on the Labor party. Since the escalation over Passover—the Netanya seder bombing; the attacks in Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv; and finally the IDF's Operation Defensive Shield—Fuad and Peres have held their peace. Perhaps they finally realized that no one was listening to what they have been saying anyway.

**W**hile sitting in Jerusalem on the anniversary of the creation of the state, strange feelings have gathered around the news of anti-Semitic attacks throughout Europe and the acts of vandalism against synagogues in even Canada and Australia. Here I am in Jerusalem, the sovereign capital of the Jewish state that nonetheless seems under siege. The sight of soldiers on street corners or roadblocks on random roads is no longer surprising. Virtually every commercial establishment—restaurant, supermarket, movie theater—now has at least one security guard checking everyone at the entrance. On a daily basis every Jerusalemite reassesses the situation and decides what risks are worth taking over the course of the day. Is it a good day to visit the bank downtown or better to wait until next week? Should I do my shopping at a small store that is unlikely to be a target or at the shopping mall, which although the more obvious target has far more security in place? How many days has it been since the last attack? Does that mean today there is more or less of chance to be another?

Whenever there is an attack, everyone goes on high alert, presumably making it harder for the would-be bomber to reach the target. But then again, these attacks come in waves, so who knows if the next wave is not on its way? And when there is a relatively calm period (in this town a full week without an attack seems like a long time), then maybe things are finally improving. Or then again, maybe they aren't, and we are growing dangerously complacent.

To varying degrees, these are the thoughts that hold every Jerusalemite hostage every morning before leaving the house. Every individual seems to set different personal limits. Some refuse to step foot on Yaffa Street or the Machaneh Yehuda; others try to beat the bombers, reducing their risks by shopping on weekdays instead of Friday afternoon or frequenting restaurants on any other night but Saturday. Indeed, many Israelis

now refuse to set foot in Jerusalem, while a few defiant ones insist on eating at their favorite restaurants and cafes, as a way to prove the terrorists have not stopped them from living as they would.

The cycle of violence has indeed spun out of control. Militants and hatemongers, who now wield much more power in the Israeli government and have come to exert a far greater influence on public opinion in the Israeli and Palestinian street, keep raising the level of violence while the international community fails to intervene. The most painful and lasting results of the escalation of the conflict will have been the planting of the seeds of hatred in another generation on both sides. While in the 1990s, caught up in the hope and excitement of the Oslo Accords that peace might just be around the corner, there were numerous attempts at dialogue—bringing groups of Palestinians and Israeli Jews together. This sort of activity has stopped completely. Both sides are too busy burying their dead to waste time on sympathy or understanding. Even if there were time, the divide has grown too great to bridge.

**E**very Independence Day, there is an annual national candle-lighting ceremony on Mount Herzl. This year 4,000 people attended, accompanied by 1,000 security personnel. I did not attend the official celebration. Instead, I participated in an alternative candle-lighting ceremony sponsored by Yesh Gvul, the organization of Israeli soldiers who refuse to serve over the Green Line. This ceremony, held under Israeli flags across from the Prime Minister's Office, honored those who I have come to see as the real Israeli heroes: social activists working to make Israel live up to the lofty ideals of equality and social justice inscribed in its Declaration of Independence over half a century ago. Unfortunately the state of Israel has a long way to go. And yet seeing these social activists working to end the occupation of the West Bank and religious coercion of the Orthodox rabbinate, fighting for equality and civil rights for Israeli Arabs, struggling to eliminate discrimination againsts women, gays, and lesbians gives me hope that despite the dire situation in which Israel finds itself, there is a glimmer of possibility. As long as there are people who believe in the vision of Israel as an embodiment of social justice and equality, and as long as these people are willing to put in the hard work to make this vision come true, then there is hope that this dream can come true. □

## Joseph on the Way to Meet His Brethren

While on the way to his brethren  
A new dream rose in Joseph's mind  
That as a blossom in spring  
Is beautiful and kind.  
And as he happily walked by  
A hill stony and tall  
He greeted warmly his brethren  
Grazing the sheep on a grassy mall.  
But no smiles were on their faces  
Nor friendly outreach of hands.  
From their mouths rise  
A sarcastic, mean yell:  
"Here is the man of dreams."

And like dogs attacked him,  
Pulled down from his body  
The pretty shirt father Jacob  
Gave him with love  
And threw him into a deep pit...  
Joseph lay degraded, abused,  
And bitterly cried: "A whole morn  
"I dreamed of friendship and peace  
"But the brethren did against me bait  
"With sarcasm and hate..."  
Then a dove appeared on pit's edge  
And softly cooed:  
"Do not cry beloved dreamer.  
"Rejoice for a caravan is coming  
"And on this very morning  
"They will bring you up  
"From the pit's depth  
"To your brethren's stunning!"

## A Rabbi Wrestles With the Koran

The Koran is part of my story. We Jews have known it well. Those who lived within the reach of the vast Muslim lands knew that not only their Jewish culture but their very lives depended on how the Koran was interpreted. Preeminent Jewish teachers and scholars, as well as merchants and traders, periodically expected to move from one side of the Islamic empire to another as extremist understandings of the Koran cropped up in one place or another.

The Koran is a book of 400 or so pages, consisting of 114 surahs or chapters, some of them 30 pages in length, some of them only a few lines. These surahs usually deal with many subjects, one after another, from points of religious law (pertaining to charity, divorce, inheritance and much else) to beautiful prayers, from retellings of biblical stories in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures to vivid calls to war. The surahs may have been the speeches of Muhammed, whom Muslims regard as the greatest and last of the prophets of God or Allah (Arabic for “El” or “Elohim”).

Muhammed (570-632) was a merchant, a gifted speaker and a thinker who could neither read nor write. He was nonetheless deeply interested in the religious narratives of Jews and Christians whom he had met in the marketplace. He felt called by God to reveal certain words, in beautiful Arabic, to his people and to all pagan nations, urging them to submit to the will of the One God and to worship only God. (The word, “Muslim,” means one who submits to God; Islam is the name of the religion of such submission.) Muhammed’s inspired words became the surahs that were gathered into a single book, much like the gatherings of speeches from the Hebrew Prophets.

The word Koran recalls the Hebrew *koreh*, to read. Koran means sacred reading, much like the Hebrew word for scripture, *Mikra*, and such expressions as *Keriat Shema* (the reading of the Shema) and *Keriat Ha-Torah* (the reading of the Torah), terms for scriptural passages read at Jewish services. Muslim services consist largely of readings from the Koran.

The Koran has been a most effective book, to say the least. Between the time of Muhammed’s death at age 60, in 632, and, within just over a hundred years, by 750, Islam had spread from the Middle East to Afghanistan and even to Spain, beginning with Muhammed’s conquest of Mecca and then with a series of leaders, caliphs, and generals who followed in his wake, all inspired by the Koran. By the tenth century, Islamic culture had encouraged Jews to refine their way of reading the Torah with respect to grammar and musical notations (or tropes) and develop an intellectual tradition that actively competed with the Koran-inspired Arab interest in poetry and philosophy.

My first encounter with the Koran occurred during Hebrew High School in a class in comparative religion. The teacher showed enormous respect for Islam, thus giving us a deeper appreciation of it. For background he used as his textbook an introduction to Islam by Abraham I. Katsch of Dropsie College. Years later, at the Jewish Theological Seminary, I and my fellow students learned much about the history of the Jews under Islam and how Jews had thrived during the Golden Age of Spain. One of the great scholars, Professor Moshe Zucker, was an expert in tenth- and eleventh-century Jewish philosophy under Arab influence and Jewish culture in Arab lands. He pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle fragments found in the Cairo Geniza of Saadia Gaon, the first major Jewish philosopher after antiquity, who wrote in Arabic. In light of his research, Professor Zucker argued forcibly that “You can’t be a scholar of Judaism without knowing Arabic.”

One must acknowledge at the outset that Muslim nations and provinces were among the kindest to and most tolerant of Jews during the medieval era. Some countries, like Turkey, became veritable havens for Jews. Arabic culture in medieval Spain enabled and inspired Hebrew culture to flourish. Even so, life in the Muslim world proved at best a mixed blessing. While respected and tolerated alongside Christians as “People of the

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Book,” their Muslim hosts also treated Jews as second-class citizens, often resenting them for their “stubbornness” in clinging to their peculiar covenant with God.

### JEW: BELIEVERS OR INFIDELS?

**S**o what does the Koran, in fact, say about Jews? This is a pressing question in today’s climate and justifiably deserves some scrutiny.

Muslim countries typically imposed restrictions and special taxes on Jews. More crushing still was the judgment, based on passages in the Koran, that Jews are unbelievers and hypocrites, betrayers and plotters, even against God (3:54). They were also less capable of friendship and good will than the Christians (5:82). The Koran further adds that Muslim believers should not take either Jews or Christians as friends because “they are but one another’s friends” (5:51).

All of this sounds a lot like the problem of three friends constantly playing one against the other. But there is something reassuring about it because we recognize the kind of contradictions that Jews and Christians have in their holy books, too. And sacred oral traditions teach all three faiths that the seeming contradictions are an opportunity given by God to interpret the sacred book in a holy way, to advance peace and to exalt God’s name.

In Islam, as in Judaism, certain passages have been interpreted to refer to one period in history only and not to all time, just as Christian churches have interpreted certain verses as referring to some Jews in Jesus’ time, but not to Jews for all time. There is a very powerful passage in the New Testament in which a Jewish mob is depicted as taking upon themselves and their descendants all culpability for the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:25). Many modern Christian scholars regard this verse as added later by a disgruntled early Church. The Catholic and other churches absolved contemporary Jews of the sin of deicide. And yet this verse will always be taken literally by pious Christians somewhere.

Similarly, the Koran refers to the “wickedness of certain Jews...[who] turn many from the way of God” (4:160). Such passages can be disastrous once interpreters arrogate to themselves the power to decide which are the “certain Jews.” The good news is that the Koran also describes a “certain number” of “the people of Moses”

who guide others with truth, and who practice what is right according to it”(7:159). So Muslims are told to expect to encounter a number of righteous and inspiring Jews whom they can admire.

Criticism of Jews in the Koran is more complex still. It describes Jewish tribes that conspired against Muhammed and provoked violence against him out of objection to his teachings. But one wonders whether the Jews ever had that kind of power. Muhammed quotes extensively from biblical stories and rabbinic legends that he had heard from Jews. But he became angry at the Jewish community when it would not trade in its religion to follow his teachings. His complaints against Jews run the gamut from their not embracing his revelation as God’s last word to their not accepting the miracles attributed to Jesus. The Koran accepts the virgin birth through Mary as a “sign” and test of belief, but denies that Jesus is anything but an “apostle” or “messenger.” “Believe in God and His apostles,” the Koran teaches, “but say not, ‘Three’ [that there is a Trinity].’ Far be it from His glory that He should have a son! His, whatever is in the heavens, and whatever is in the earth! And God is a sufficient guardian” (4:171).

◆  
*Muhammed quotes extensively from  
biblical stories and rabbinic legends  
that he had heard from Jews.*

◆  
As a Jew, I admire the Koran for defending pure monotheism. But must such affirmation of the One God of Abraham and Moses go along with condemnation of Jews for believing that their covenant with God is full and binding and not in need of Islam to complete it? Sometimes Muslims use Koranic passages to criticize Christianity’s concept of God, defending, in essence, the beliefs of Judaism, only to cast Jews as “unbelievers” in relation to Christians. Yet this view need not bind the Muslim since the Koran itself recognizes that Jews have a Book by which they are to be judged—what the Koran calls the “portion of the Book of God of which they [the Jews] were the keepers and the witnesses” (5:44).

The purpose of the Koran is to establish a monotheistic faith intent on converting the world. The Koran does not dote over the Jewish people, nor ought we expect it

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to do so. Implied in its very program is a call to all the families of the earth to join a universal belief system that has expanded the playing field far beyond Jews or Christians.

The Koran insists that Abraham was not really a Jew, nor were the Hebrew Prophets. They were, in fact, Muslims, namely, those who submit their wills to God as guided by the Koran. Muslims thus regard the Koran as having remained in Heaven as a Divine blueprint until it was given to the last and greatest of the Prophets, Muhammed. "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian," said Muhammed. "But he was sound in the faith, a Muslim; and not of those who add gods to God" (3:67). Ironically, some of these beliefs adapt the rabbinic teaching of 2,000 years ago that the Torah had been created before the world came into existence as a blueprint and remained in Heaven until it was delivered to Moses at Mount Sinai.

The Koran allows the Jews to persist in their beliefs but stops short of endorsing Judaism. It sighs that the "People of the Book"—Jews and Christians—will be stubborn until God's Day of Resurrection (4:159). Yet it also says that "they who believe, and the Jews, and the Sabeites, and the Christians—whoever of them believeth in God and in the Last Day, and does what is right, on them shall come no fear, neither shall they be put to grief" (5:69). This latter passage does give hope for peace and understanding, though the political and ideological outlook and systems of most Islamic countries have yet to exemplify it in discernable ways.

## VIOLENCE OR WARNING

Having looked at the Koran's attitude toward Jews (and Christians), one can't help asking what it teaches about a society like America, where there are many monotheistic non-Muslims as well as Muslims, and many who have other beliefs or no belief. Is the Koran inexorably hostile and murderous as some have charged?

Various media discussions have made Westerners familiar with the frightening words in the Koran: "Take therefore none of them [the infidels] as friends, till they have fled their homes for the cause of God. If they turn back, then seize them, and slay them wherever ye find them; but take none of them as friends or helpers" (4:91); "When ye encounter the infidels, strike off their

heads till ye have made a great slaughter among them, and of the rest make fast the fetters" (47:4).

As many pundits have rushed to point out, the Hebrew Bible also has several passages about holy war against the Canaanites and others, and in the Christian scriptures Jesus speaks of having come to bring a sword when necessary (Matthew 10:34). Are all scriptures potentially an incitement to violence? Is the Koran more violent than the others?



*The Koran insists that Abraham was not really a Jew, nor were the Hebrew Prophets. They were, in fact, Muslims, namely, those who submit their wills to God as guided by the Koran.*



It all depends upon how scriptures are interpreted. Judaism is not a religion that believes in conquering other peoples, either spiritually or politically. The Torah has no mandate to spread Judaism to the nations, whether by gentle persuasion or by violence. Yet there are many passages in our Scriptures that speak of the need to destroy the nations who have been in the Promised Land, and to take the land from them. The Hebrew Bible argues that the original residents lost their right to the land through idolatry and were to be wiped out. This even holds true, however, for the Israelites, who are to lose the land, to be "vomited out," as the Torah puts it, if they do not follow God's teachings: "In the towns...which the Lord your God is giving you as a heritage, you shall not let a soul remain alive. No, you must proscribe them [wipe them out; the term is *herem*, holy war]—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they mislead you into doing all the abhorrent things that they have done for their gods and you stand guilty before the Lord your God" (Deut. 20:16-18); "Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt—how, undeterred by the fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear....Therefore...you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!" (Deut. 25:17-19).

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Does that mean that I, as a Jew, am obligated to open my telephone directory and look up “Amalek,” and “Jebusite,” and, if I find a Joe Amalek or a Joanie Jebusite I am obligated to ring that person’s door bell and then kill him? Not at all. The rabbis decreed two thousand and more years ago that these laws applied to the time of Moses alone. Furthermore, the Bible itself provides an out. It explains why those people were always around, even after the Israelites, who were commanded to wipe them out, were long settled in the Promised Land. Two reasons are given. These nations could be evicted only “little by little,” lest the Israelites be invaded by wild beasts (Deut. 7:22), and they were to be kept around to test the loyalty of the Israelites to their own religion (2:22-23; 3:1,4).

Jewish scriptures and Jewish history have designs for one land. But they also allow for that land to be occupied by others while Jews are living there. Our interpreters have, in the main, by and large, read the commandment to displace the nations around Israel as limited to biblical times. But in a growing *haredi* or fundamentalist population in Israel, these verses are being interpreted as a call to physically remove the Palestinians. These voices are still those of a minority, but it is a growing group, fueled by tensions in the region.

**T**he question now is whether the Koran will be interpreted in such a way as to fuel further fundamentalist attacks against Israel and the West. Like Judaism, Islam believes in the importance of an oral tradition in the interpretation and application of God’s revelation in sacred scriptures. Most of the classic interpreters of the Koran have said that the calls to war that appear in many a surah were limited to the time of the prophet. Indeed the reader of the Koran comes across eye-catching and noteworthy statements over and over again. For the Koran describes itself, its purpose, in a most remarkable and instructive way: “This Koran is a manifesto to man, and a guidance, and a warning to the God-fearing” (3:138). “In truth the Koran is no other than a warning or reminder to all creatures” (38:88; see also 16:43-44 and 50:2). The Koran is an “easy” warning because it was given in a tongue understood by its people (44:58); it is “no other than a warning for all creatures” (68:52). The Koran is most impressed with the story of Noah, at least as it was related by the Rabbis. For Noah was seen as building the ark to warn

the people of *God’s* judgment—for nearly a thousand years, according to the Koran (29:14).

Thus the Koran regards itself, as scripture, to be a warning to humanity, and not necessarily a war cry to destroy others. Many passages in the Koran *do* leave the final judgment to God, and to God alone. “As to those who believe, and the Jews, and the Sabeites, and the Christians, and the Magians, and those who join other gods with God, of a truth, God shall decide between them on the Day of Resurrection; for God is witness of all things” (22:17).

### WHO FEARS GOD?

**H**aving outlined what the Koran says about Jews and about battling the world, we might ask what religious insights it offers to those of other faiths. When it speaks of the heart and soul of religion, it speaks beautifully. It echoes the words of the Hebrew prophets and even of the rabbinic traditions. It has prayers for “the patient, and the truthful, the lowly, and the charitable, and they who seek pardon at each daybreak” (3:17). “And who has a better religion,” says the Koran, “than he who resigns himself to God, who does what is good, and follows the faith of Abraham in all sincerity” (4:125).

But if it reverberates with the familiar words of Hebrew Prophets, it also resonates for many Americans who read it now with the sounds and images of September 11: “And how many cities which had been ungodly, and whose roofs are now laid low in ruin, have We destroyed! And wells have been abandoned and lofty castles” (22:45). “We will strike them with terror” (17:60). It should be noted that the “We” referred to here is God in the divine royal plural, which is common in the Koran and found in the opening chapters of Genesis. These passages are not a call to *human* terrorism and destruction of buildings and cities and airplanes. They affirm that God will ultimately judge and punish.

How will the leaders of Islam, in the academies and in the mosques, interpret these passages? The Koran commands believers not to treat individuals or their property with disrespect; believers are not to commit suicide or, as some have read the passage, not to kill one

*Continued on page 29*



## The Real Facts About Terror

*This article was circulated on April 26, 2002, by the Israel Policy Forum, a nonpartisan think tanks devoted to exploring Israeli policy matters.*

Remember the term “fuzzy math.” It’s back. At least, it should be, because discussions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are full of it. Unfortunately, and sometimes even offensively, the math is essentially a body count used by all sides to explain their position. Apologizing in advance, this column is about those numbers.

An op-ed piece by Yoram Hazony in last Friday’s [April 19, 2002] *New York Times* relied on numbers to bolster the argument that the Oslo process has been a disaster from its inception. In fact, without the math—in this case the number of Israelis killed in acts of terror before and after Oslo—there is essentially no argument at all. All that is left is the opinion of the writer.

Hazony writes: “Israeli casualties at the hands of Palestinian terrorists since the Oslo agreement amount to 774 dead and 10 times as many wounded—numbers that dwarf anything Israel has ever known. At the height of Yasir Arafat’s terror-state in Lebanon from 1970 to 1982 (the years of the Munich and Ma’alot massacres and the Entebbe raid), Palestinian terrorists claimed only 162 Israeli lives. In the last 18 months alone, terrorists have taken 469 Israeli lives.”

Hazony’s point is simple, and if the math supported him, would be unassailable. Oslo produced terror. The peace process, designed to end violence, increased it.

The facts tell a different story.

Hazony’s figures of 162 Israelis killed in acts of terror from 1970-1982, and 774 since Oslo, are correct. But then comes the fuzzy math, when he says that “in the

last 18 months alone, terrorists have taken 469 Israeli lives.” In other words, 469 of the 774 deaths occurred not during Oslo but after the failure of the Camp David summit, Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount, and the outbreak of the Al Aqsa intifada. That means that most of the 774 (all but a still horrific 305) were killed not as a result of Oslo but as a result of Oslo’s collapse.

The question then is when the 305 were killed. After all, Prime Minister Rabin embraced the Oslo process, in large part, because he believed that Israel would only be able to end terrorism once and for all when it had Palestinian partners (i.e., the PLO) working with Israel in that fight. The Oslo agreement was in essence a trade: the Palestinians got the territories (or most of them) for joining Israel in the war against terror.

That was no small task. During the early years of Oslo, as today, Islamic Jihad and Hamas were dedicated to thwarting any Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and to destroying Arafat. They believed that terror against Israelis would cause the Israeli government to end its partnership with Arafat and would eliminate the “threat” posed by peace. Under Oslo, the Palestinian Authority had the responsibility to fight them. And they did—no responsible Israeli government official ever claimed they did not.

But it was slow going until Prime Minister Netanyahu insisted that the American CIA monitor PLO compliance and instruct it on how to improve its tactics. At that point Israelis and Palestinians began meeting, under CIA auspices, to adopt and implement a clear antiterror strategy. Within a very short time, Israeli and Palestinian security officials were working so closely together that the American role became almost superfluous.

It is at this juncture that Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation succeeded in thwarting the terror operations which Islamic Jihad and Hamas were launching with regularity. The Palestinian Authority both tipped the Israelis off on operations before they happened or stopped the operations themselves. *Ha'aretz* and the *Jerusalem Post* both reported that the PLO's confrontations with Hamas and Islamic Jihad were so intense that they raised the specter of civil war.

And, according to the Israeli government, between September 1997 and the outbreak of the Al Aqsa intifada in November 2000, not a single Israeli civilian died in acts of terror. (One soldier was killed in 1998.)

In other words, there was a three-year-period when Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation succeeded in securing Israel from terror. That period ended with a car bombing perpetrated by Islamic Jihad 4 months after the failed Camp David summit and 5 weeks after Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. By then, Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation was over. The Israeli-Palestinian partnership was history.

**T**oday it is hard to imagine three years without terror in Israel, but back then it was almost taken for granted, along with the booming economy, expanded trade and diplomatic ties with formerly hostile nations, and hotels bursting with tourists.

Sometimes, depressed about the situation in the Middle East, I allow myself to recall the memory of those days. I remember an afternoon our family spent in Tel Aviv in February 1999. After visiting the fascinating Ben Gurion museum in north Tel Aviv, our little group strolled over to the beach. It was a wonderful sunny day, the kind of day in which Tel Aviv has the aspect of winter days in Miami Beach or Santa Monica. We found an outdoor café right near the Dolphinarium, ordered lunch—including wine and beer—and sat talking and laughing in the sunshine for three hours.

Involved in the cause that is Israel is my entire life, and having visited dozens of times, I knew enough to savor the moment even as it was happening. Israel had never felt that gloriously safe. Peace was here. It would finally be possible not to worry about Israel. My wife, born in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany after World War II, recalls wishing that her parents, Holocaust survivors who never knew an Israel at peace, could have lived to see the day.

It started getting dark and a little cold. We gathered ourselves up and headed back to the hotel. Tomorrow would be another day. □

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## The Challenge of the Left

Today it seems that being left of center or even the slightest bit critical of the status quo is met with scorn, disdain, and usually generous servings of ignorance. This is troubling and I thought I would explain by relating some personal experiences representing the leftist cause and then try to analyze why it has been and continues to be such a challenging predicament.

By far the most complex period has been these last few years that I have believed in, and spoken on behalf of, the Israeli left. For those who know me, they will not be surprised that I have been involved in countless arguments that pit “right vs. left” or, as I sometimes like to call it, “right vs. right.” Among others things, I have argued against settlers, settlements, targeted assassinations, bulldozers, and the occupation. I have simultaneously argued for dialogue, peace, borders, cooperation, and human rights. I find, in almost every argument with fellow Zionists that I am cornered into defending the Palestinians and, as a consequence, accused of being self-hating or even supporting terrorists and suicide bombers.

This is obviously not true. I am a Zionist. I support and love Israel. And when I speak against something that Israel does, it is not because I do not care. It is precisely the opposite; it is because I care so much. Israel exists, and it is our job as Zionists to do two things. First, to ensure the continuation of the state; second, to ensure that *our* country is the kind of country we want and expect it to be. For me, this is a country that respects human rights for all human beings, loves peace, promotes egalitarian ideals, and is something of which we can all be proud. When I see something with which I disagree, something that I believe runs contrary to

what I hope for in Israel, I am obligated as a Jew and a Zionist to speak up.

So what does it mean to be leftist today? For me the answer is fairly straightforward and lies at the heart of the leftist ethos: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you! Try to understand others rather than judge them. Listen and hear them before you tell them that they are wrong, guilty, or evil. Try to ask yourself how you would act under similar circumstances. By looking at only one side of the story it is easy to become biased, subjective, and clouded. Furthermore by looking principally at one side alone you will necessarily become angry, disillusioned, and upset with the other. By taking a holistic approach, however, I believe that a more moderate and sensible view will emerge.



*I support and love Israel. And when I speak against something that Israel does, it is not because I do not care. It is precisely the opposite; it is because I care so much.*



Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is no doubt that the history of this conflict can be viewed from at least two, if not several, points of view. By viewing one side and not the other, one necessarily adopts that one side’s argument: its pain, its triumphs, and its defeats. One will also be blinded to the plight of the other. This perhaps explains differing views of an event like the Israel’s declaration of independence in 1948, which is seen by Jews as the culmination of the Zionist dream and by Arabs and Palestinians as *Al Nakba*, the Day of Catastrophe. So is one right and one wrong? The answer

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must be a resounding no! Both narratives reflect the feelings, emotions, and points of view of the sides involved, and no conflict is capable of resolution without at least trying to listen to the other side and understand its point of view. From this point only can discussion with that other side begin on a mutually agreeable solution. It is my belief that if this were done but a couple of times in human history, much today might be different and the better for it.

So where does one go from here? When I present my views to others they often tell me, "I agree with you in principle, but matters have gone too far. Your solutions might have worked thirty years ago, but they are irrelevant today!" To this, I always respond that we must listen to one another, since only doing so can ultimately reinforce the message of nonviolence, peace, and eventual reconciliation. Consider Australia's relationship to the Aborigines. The most groundbreaking event affecting interracial relations there was the delivery of a court-case judgment that did not so much reconcile differences as simply recognize that Australia was not an empty land before the English arrived. It was this admission that began the difficult process of reconciliation that continues today. For me the same applies to Israel and the Palestinians. Both are afraid to take responsibility for their actions, past and present. Both, in turn, need to admit to having made mistakes. They must focus less on the guilt of the other and admit that just because they have wronged one another does not mean either has the right to continue acting wrongly. Peace begins with changes in how we act now, not after meeting conditions that depend solely on our own grievances.

**A**n old proverb states that the best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend, and as usual the wisdom of old sayings proves wise again today. The best way to get rid of a terrorist is not to kill him; it is to take away his motivation for wanting to use terror. The greatest tragedy on both sides of this horrible conflict is that previously marginalized voices like Hamas and Islamic Jihad—or alternatively Kach and fundamentalist Israeli groups—have received growing support. There will always be those who oppose peace, but we can choose whether they are viewed as the enemy of both sides and of important, peaceful progress or as the heroes of their cause. We must remarginalize these voices in the hope that those who continue to call

for peace, nonviolence, and reconciliation will once again be heard, and that we can all truly move forward towards solving a conflict which I believe is solvable and must be solved!

Thus I return to the original question: why does everyone seem to deplore the left? With what I have argued, is it now because we are too optimistic and unrealistic? I don't think so. I think it is because everyone hates to admit they were or are wrong. No one wants to take responsibility for their actions and make the more difficult choice of acting contrary to popular sentiment. It is always easier to play the victim, ignore the other side of the argument, point the finger, and try to hurt your opponent. Well, to the Palestinians and Israel I say: "Grow up! Get off your moral high-horse and deal with the issues at hand. Neither of you has clean hands."

**W**hile both have their points, neither is listening to the other. Or rather, both are listening, but neither is hearing. It is time to hear and it is time to act. It is time to stop asking who started it and start asking who is going to finish it. It is time for both sides to stand up and say, as Yitzchak Rabin had, "Enough." Neither nation can afford to continue in this way. The *only* way forward is *shalom, salaam*, and peace!

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As an epilogue I would like to discuss some comments made about this piece when first presented:

Some have commented that it lacks a practical, tangible element to it. But that is the point. I wanted to present a challenge to the underlying, ideological basis for the decisions and actions being taken by those on both sides. Clearly no one expects parties involved to shake hands and be friends. But a very basic level of acknowledgment must occur without conditions.

Others have mentioned that my ideas are too idealistic, perhaps too optimistic. This article, however, is not a solution. It is but an attempt to open up dialogue on topics not discussed often enough. Solutions and change are rarely logical and never easy; they always involve painful sacrifice and compromise. They also require vision and healthy doses of idealism. □

## The Palestinian Authority and Congressional Doubt

*The following remarks were delivered on the floor of the United States Senate by Senator Robert Torricelli, Democrat of New Jersey, on May 15, 2002.*

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**M**r. President, throughout all of my adult life, I have traveled frequently to Israel. I have had the honor of knowing almost all of Israel's principal leaders. As many Americans, though I am of the Christian faith, I have always felt a strong identity with the struggle of the Jewish people and the survival of the Jewish State.

I believe the American relationship with Israel is complex: Our sense that Israel represents the edges of Western civilization; the identity of a struggling people simply desiring to survive; the sense of humanity's obligation to the Jewish people who have survived the Holocaust; and, of course, an inevitable American identity with a democracy, a pluralist state that shares our most basic value.

Through this association, I have witnessed Israel in many struggles. Years ago, all Americans marveled at Israel's ability to overcome extraordinary military adversity in the 1967 war facing overwhelming conventional arms against them. In 1973, a similar array of armed forces having entered the very heart of Israel and being turned back was a demonstration of remarkable courage and sacrifice by the Israeli people. In the years that followed, there was the conventional conflict in which Israel's triumph was matched by her ability to stand down mounting strategic armaments

from the Syrians, the launching of limited missiles from Lebanon.

In each of these conflicts, courage, determination, guile, and skill allowed Israel to survive. None of these things, however, would have prepared any of us for the conflict in which Israel is now engaged. Previous generations overcoming strategic weapons and conventional weapons and the guerrilla warfare of the war of independence are in some ways little preparation for what the current generation of Israelis are experiencing. It is the ultimate test of any Western society. It goes to the heart of the ability of any country to be able to endure when terrorism strikes the center of our cities, destroys our families, interrupts our means of transportation, denies the ability of our economies to function, our democracies to vibrantly engage in debate in the prospect of such terror.

It is a conflict not simply between two sides but two centuries, two concepts of life, two abilities to organize society. I felt confident in Israel's previous wars, despite the odds, the overwhelming weapons, or the disparity of manpower because courage and intellect would dictate the result. There is no amount of courage, no amount of intellect that can face down a terrorist bombing. This is a different war. It is dangerous.

**M**y concern is amplified by the voices in Asia and Europe that were once so sympathetic to the struggling Jewish State that are now at best silent and often giving comfort to Israel's enemies. Those Europeans which shared American responsibility for the children of the Holocaust somehow have

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forgotten. Those in Europe who admired the courage of the Israelis in building a democracy are silent. Those Europeans who in every case would reach out to another democratic society with an identification, a brotherhood of pluralist democracies, now seem to fail to find any identity in Israel.

There are so many emotions that this brings forward for Americans. It should thus be said at the outset, if in this struggle Israel and America must stand alone, then Israel and America never stood in better company.

In this struggle, victory will not be by the numbers. We will not be intimidated by the coalitions or silenced by the critics. This is a fight about principle. And the strength of the Jewish cause in Israel may best be defined by its objectives. Jews want to survive in their own homeland. This is not a struggle about conquest or wealth or national pride; it is survival. Jews stay in Israel or they die with their backs to the sea. That is what the struggle is about.

I recognize that many of our European friends, for their own economic or political reasons, may no longer identify with Israel. They may have made their arrangements elsewhere.

History has a short memory. To them, the obligations of the Holocaust or the promise to the Jewish people of their homeland may be a distant memory. Maybe Israel and America will fight alone, but it should not be forgotten that we may fight alone, but this is not our fight alone.



*This is not a struggle about conquest or wealth or national pride; it is survival. Jews stay in Israel or they die with their backs to the sea. That is what the struggle is about.*



If terrorism succeeds in Israel, who among us would doubt that its next battlefield will be Europe? Certainly no one in my State of New Jersey doubts that it will be America. We have seen terrorism. Woodrow Wilson once said that America's two best friends were the Atlantic and the Pacific. They have become very little friends. Terrorism in another part of the world, halfway around the globe, offers no comfort to any American by its distance; it can be here tomorrow.

The fight for Israel's security is the fight for the security of every free nation, whether they are aligned with Israel, whether they wish Israel well. She fights our fight, and her fate is our fate.

There are many obstacles to a peaceful resolution in the Middle East. I believe profoundly that there will never be a military answer to the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. These are two people of some common ancestry who live in a shared land. Both will learn to live together.

**A**s profoundly as I believe in a peace process, I am also convinced that unless the Palestinian Authority understands that terrorism will not succeed, that there is no military answer, and that at all costs Israel will survive, no negotiated settlement is possible.

There are those who may think that their military operations at the moment give them advantage in negotiations. There are others who believe their military operations hold not the promise of the West Bank and Gaza as a Palestinian State, but the destruction of the Jewish State in its entirety. To them, there is not a Palestinian State envisioned in the West Bank and Gaza, but in Haifa and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

I have never represented any cause in the Middle East other than a negotiated settlement. I believe profoundly in the peace process as essential to the survival of Israel and in the interest of the Palestinian people, but I refuse to counsel Israel that it should negotiate with people bent on its destruction, or that it is of any value to engage in peace negotiations as long as their adversaries believe that a military victory is possible and Israel's entire destruction conceivable.

It is almost axiomatic to declare that peace negotiations and peace settlements are historically nothing but a reflection of the realities on the battlefield. The reality that Americans and Israelis see is two people in a common land who need their own homelands. That makes peace negotiations by Americans or Israelis not only possible but inevitable. But no nation can negotiate with itself, nor can peace be unilaterally declared.

Unless the Palestinians, and not simply the Palestinian Authority but important elements of the society, recognize that such military outcomes are impossible, only then will peace negotiations be meaningful.

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There are those in America who genuinely believe that by pressuring Israel not to respond militarily, not to seek terrorists in their own territory, we are giving good advice to the Israeli Government.

**I**t is a difficult argument to understand in an American context. Who in this Senate would be counseling the U.S. government, after a terrorist attack, to exercise restraint? Which member of the Senate would suggest to our own military, if Chicago or Miami or Los Angeles were to fall victim to a terrorist attack, that we should not respond? Which part of the American arsenal would you withhold if it were American cities experiencing bombings, American buses being destroyed, American children losing their limbs?

I dare to say there is not a member of this Senate who would urge restraint or withhold a single weapon in our arsenal. The Palestinians may believe there is little for them to be grateful for today. Their cities are being destroyed. The Israeli Army has occupied parts of the West Bank. Gaza awaits an invasion. There is something, however, for which they should be grateful. If it were the United States of America that endured these attacks and not Israel, the response they have experienced from the Israeli Army would be a small shadow of the problems that would be visited upon them.

Finally, there are those in the Senate who wonder, with Israelis having to respond with their lives, the Israeli economy in shambles, what is it any American can do? How is it that in this moment of crisis we can exercise true fidelity with Israel in its fight for survival? Our words are important. So is our presence in Israel.

Nothing would demonstrate more our commitment to Israel than members of Congress, like the American people themselves, being present, exhibiting courage, showing our commitment.

In this Senate, we 100 have a different opportunity. The fight for Israel's survival is not only militarily decided, it is also economically decided. The Clinton administration 18 months ago, after the withdrawal from Lebanon, pledged Israel \$450 million for supplemental assistance. It was to compensate for the withdrawal, to help recreate a security zone in the north of Israel, and for missile defense.

That money was never provided. Regrettably, the Bush administration never even included it in its recommendations for the Congress this year. At a time when Israelis look across the sea to America for confidence of their own survival, broken American promises are not helpful. Indeed, they are troubling. The first thing this Congress can do is ensure that every commitment is kept, all resources are given. In the current stage of this fight against terrorism, despite all the sacrifices of September 11 and the courage of our soldiers in Afghanistan, at this moment most Americans are not asked to sacrifice with their lives. We have experienced that before. It may come again. At this moment, the sacrifice is Israeli. The least we can do is help them with the means to win this war.

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All of us look for the words telegraphed around the world to those who believe that the Jewish state was both created and will die in a single generation, words to put at rest those who are committing their energy and their resources to this war on terrorism against Israel. Here are mine: Israel is forever. As long as there is a United States of America, there will be an Israel. It took 2,000 years for the Jewish people to get home. They have been there for a single generation. They are not leaving. Those in Europe who would counsel or comfort her enemies, those in the Middle East who are bent on her destruction, would do best to accept that reality.

There is land enough for all peoples to decide their own governments and design their own futures. Let there be no question, for those who respect the will and the power of the United States of America, one of those peoples will be Jewish and one of those countries will be Israel.

I yield the floor. □

## Anti-Semitism Arab Style

### THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM

At the beginning of the third millennium, the Jewish people face a familiar argument, one that is being articulated in a new form across the globe, one that's nothing less than a new form of anti-Semitism. In the past Jews had been accused of killing Jesus and of continuing this sacrificial practice by killing Christian children. Today these accusations come cloaked in anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric.

Throughout history, Christian countries refused to recognize the right of Jews to live freely as equals among the nations. They often cast them as parasites thriving on the success of humanity. This view was reinforced, in particular, by St. Augustine's theological prescription that Jews occupy a downtrodden place in Christian society so that they might humbly witness the supercession of Judaism by the "True Israel," Christianity.

Today, 2,000 years after the exile of our people from our historic land and the astonishing revival of our nation, the Jewish people have found a political solution to its national-ethnic-human condition. However, the predominant view of the state of Israel around the world is of an artificial state created by Western colonialist powers. This is the meaning of the phrase "Zionist entity" typically circulated in the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic writings.

This phenomenon, by which an ancient people is deprived of the right to a physical, political, cultural,

and spiritual existence, has no parallel in history. Only religious intolerance has this historical pattern. Therefore, what we are witnessing at the beginning of the twenty-first century as the rhetoric of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiment is but anti-Semitism by another name.

During the last few years, the attempt to dehumanize and delegitimize the state of Israel has grown to unprecedented levels. Consider the following examples:

### DOWN IN DURBAN

The official UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism, which took place in Durban, South Africa, was held in an atmosphere that sought to portray Israel as a racist state that practiced "apartheid." Tragically, a conference intended to examine effective mechanisms to combat racism and promote understanding and awareness of this important global problem became instead a stage for its own form of racist baiting. Draft resolutions initiated by the Arab states and Palestinian delegation and promoted by a majority of the over 3,000 NGO representatives attending the conference accused Israel of conducting systematic racist crimes, including war crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. These drafts were acts of incitement against Israel, aimed at providing a foundation to the presumed lack of legitimacy of the Jewish state. Developing countries and NGOs alike selected Israel to fulfill the role of ultimate evil in our



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world, casting it not only as an illegal entity but an immoral state whose very existence endangers world stability and security. Without a “solution to the Jewish problem,” said the Nazis, the world cannot be saved from itself. Without a solution to Israeli colonialism, argued the participants in Durban, the world can fare no better. The Zionists, they claim, will destroy it. And yet how reminiscent this sounds of Nazi doctrine.

## REVISING ZIONISM

How many today are aware of the growing ties between Western Holocaust deniers and the Arab world, which came to light in December 2000, when the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) announced that its 14th revisionist conference would take place in Beirut, Lebanon, in early April 2001? In previous years the IHR held its conventions closer to home, in places like Orange County and Los Angeles, California, a state famous for the outspokenness of its neo-Nazi groups. More interestingly, and in another break with IHR tradition, the Beirut conference was to bring together historical revisionism and Zionism. The IHR was assisted by its Swiss counterpart, Association Vérité et Justice, founded by Jurgen Graf. Scheduled speakers were to include Roger Garaudy, Robert Faurisson, Fredrick Toben, and Mark Weber. The IHR also pointedly announced that no one—including journalists—whose passport contained an Israeli entrance or exit stamp would be permitted to attend.

Soon after the conference was announced, several Jewish organizations voiced their concern about the possibility that the conference would lead to increased anti-Semitism in the region. The Simon Wiesenthal Center went so far as to urge the Lebanese government to intervene in the matter, saying that in the interests of regional peace, the conference must not go on. “There is a wide range of viewpoints as to how peace can be reached in your region,” the Wiesenthal Center wrote to the Lebanese ambassador, “but certainly the introduction and acceptance of Holocaust denial into the mainstream of Lebanon and the Arab world is not one of them. It will only poison hearts and minds of the uninformed and further fan the flames of hate and mistrust in the region.” Others also urged the Lebanese government to ban the conference, including, according to reports in the Arab press, the U.S. State Department.

French news organizations announced that 14 independent Arab intellectuals had also denounced the conference, including Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Lebanese writer Elias Khoury, and Palestinian-American professor Edward Said.

By the end of March 2001, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri had announced that his government would not permit the conference to take place. “Lebanon has more important things to do than holding conferences that hurt its international standing and smear its name,” al-Hariri said. News of the ban was applauded by Western politicians and writers, many of whom expressed the hope that the ban presaged growing cooperation between Israel and Arab countries. On March 30, IHR and Vérité et Justice officially announced that the conference was called off, though some free-speech advocates in the West decried the decision.

The cancellation inspired another group, the anti-normalization Jordanian Writers’ Association (JWA), to host a conference of its own, whose theme was “What Happened to the Revisionist History conference in Beirut?” Scheduled speakers included Lebanese, Jordanian, and Syrian writers, one of whom pledged to read the paper Robert Faurisson had intended to give at the Beirut conference. Though the Jordanian authorities postponed JWA’s conference at least twice, the conference eventually took place in Amman on May 13, 2001. According to one of the organizers, Ibrahim Alloush, the participants resolved to condemn the fourteen Arab intellectuals who had opposed the Beirut conference and to establish an “Arab Committee of Historical Revisionism.”

## BLOODTHIRSTY JEWS IN THE ARAB MIND

In a national broadcast of the Abu-Dhabi television, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is depicted as a vampire, drinking with pleasure blood of young Palestinian boys, hated by God and humanity.

On March 10, 2002, the government-run daily newspaper *Al-Riyadh* in Saudi Arabia published an article claiming that on Purim, Jews bake cookies made with the blood of Christian or Islamic adolescents; on Passover, the author claimed, Jews use the blood of children under ten years old to make matzah. This latest

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representation of the age-old blood libel was condemned by the United States government, which issued an editorial on the State Department-run Voice of America radio broadcasts, stating, "No one who is not blinded by hate for Jews could ever believe such nonsense." The editorial implied that the Saudi newspaper was lending an air of credibility to this blood libel, which was neither common sense nor "moral sense."



*Without a solution to Israeli colonialism, argued the participants in Durban, the world can fare no better. The Zionists, they claim, will destroy it. And yet how reminiscent this sounds of Nazi doctrine.*



The repetition of the age-old blood libel in a newspaper published in the holiest land in Islam continues a phenomenon that began in the 1930s. Blood libel charges originated in Europe, with the death of the young Christian, Hugh of Lincoln, in 1209. It comes out of the belief in medieval Christianity that the Jews killed Jesus, the "child" of God. It then extended the link to Passover because of its proximity to Easter. The blood libel was adopted by Christian Arabs in Syria in the nineteenth century, with the famous 1840 Damascus Blood Libel. Then, during World War II, as an expression of anti-Western and anticolonialist feelings, Arab leaders sided with the Nazis, adopting their propaganda, including the most base anti-Semitic charges and images ever to be leveled at the Jewish people. None of this rhetoric is of Islamic origin, and ironically it runs counter to Islamic tradition, which teaches tolerance toward Christianity and Judaism and establishes a special status for Jews and Christians within Islamic society. This fact is reflected in non-Arab Islamic countries, which have not incorporated Christian anti-Semitic images. Only Arab countries and Iran have adopted these attitudes.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, these charges were transferred from Jews themselves to Israel

and Zionism. Thus, Israel as a Jewish state located in the heart of the Middle East is the center around which modern anti-Semitism throughout the world revolves, using anti-Semitic literature and propaganda in mass media.

After the September 11 terror attacks on the United States, familiar charges emanated from this region. These arguments reveal the depth of the hatred Israel and the Jewish people. They include the claim that the Israeli Mossad committed the terror attacks of September 11, that Osama bin Laden triggered the attacks because the United States favors Israel in the Middle East conflict, and that even if Israel is not to blame for the attacks, Israel's behavior threatens the American-led coalition against terror.

I had the pleasure to serve as member of the Steering Committee of the Sixth International Conference of Jewish Ministers and Members of Parliament, which took place in Jerusalem in January 2002, and to moderate a panel on the "Struggle against Anti-Semitism" there. My recommendation then were as follows:

- Increase awareness in the world and in Israel about the phenomenon of anti-Semitism.
- Take effective action to prevent turning the Arab-Israeli conflict into a religious one by, among other things, building a coalition with moderate Muslim leaders.
- Reestablish ties with the community of human rights organizations.
- Take measures in the field of education and law enforcement, especially where local legislation permits, as in Rio de Janeiro, where an internal police department for anti-Semitic harassment and anti-Semitic activities was established.

The threat of anti-Semitism is not a chimera. It is real, and it has heated up significantly because of the increased tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. We must not let this become an opportunity to stoke fires of Jew-hating that swept Europe during World War II. We must attack this disease directly and root it out. There is no place for this type of hate when we all so eagerly seek peace. □

## In the Wake of Violence: Some Israeli Encounters

*The National Committee for Labor Israel works to build support for and educate the public about the achievements of Israel, especially its labor sector. It is committed to strengthening ties among the Jewish community, the labor movement and Israel, and to help Israel fashion a society based on peace, social and economic justice, and equality of all of its citizens.*

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### THE MIDDLE EAST: VIOLENCE AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

In the last few years, Israel has undergone tremendous economic changes. It is still in the process of a radical transformation from a planned, centralized economy to a free-market economy. The policies of all governments in the same period, whether right or left, were designed to divest the state from direct involvement in the economy and to privatize an array of state-owned companies. At the same time a process of “rationalization” of industrial units was put in place, whereby units of production were to become separate entities responsible for their own profits and losses. As an unforeseen consequence, however, this led to the loss of secure jobs. In a twist of fate it also led to an increased reliance on outsourcing and an expanded reliance on manpower companies providing temporary employment.

At virtually the same time Israel began to suffer a major recession. In the food sector alone a steep decline developed in production, reflecting the loss in purchase power of many families. As a result factories were forced to close or were consolidated, and within a short period of time over 4,000 workers became unemployed.

To complicate matters, the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor in Israel, went through a traumatic change process of its own. Once viewed as a general

social and economic movement involved in all facets of life, a role it played before Israel’s proclamation of statehood, it began to concentrate on its central task as a federation of 21 separate trade unions, with 30 regional branches scattered throughout the country.

The most serious of the changes took place in 1994, when the decades long link between Histadrut and the major, nationwide health service, Kupat Holim Clalit, was severed by law. This led to a dramatic decline in membership, from 1.6 million to approximately 700,000. Many Histadrut members, such as retirees, could now opt to enroll in Kupat Holim directly, without paying dues to the labor federation.

An eroding political and security situation further complicated matters. Beginning in September 2000 a severe economic crisis slowly unfolded in the wake of the launching by Palestinians of what was initially described as the “Al-Aqsa Intifada.” Within months armed violence mounted, marked by Arab bomber murders and Israeli military responses.

Today, Israel is suffering from a severe recession, with unemployment hovering at approximately 230,000, or 10% of the work force. Some sectors were especially hard hit by recent developments, with tourism a major victim.

Rated as one of Israel’s major industries, tourism provided work to thousands of Israelis and Palestinians. The nationwide network of hotels alone reportedly employed more than 36,000 people.

The widely broadcast acts of violence caused by Palestinian murder bombers led to a precipitous decline of about 75% in the number of tourists arriving in Israel. This led to a loss of \$2.6 billion in revenue, a major factor in the rapid decline of Israel’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from \$9.2 billion to \$6.4. The evaporation of about \$2.8 billion is attributable to

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the tourist industry and is more than a two percent decline in overall economic growth.

Many hotels throughout the country were forced to close and 16,000 workers were fired immediately. The remaining workers had their salaries cut by 20% to 50%.

The Histadrut, together with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, quickly agreed on short-term measures, and persuaded the government to help alleviate the situation. Among other things they secured job guarantees for 5,000 workers scheduled to be fired and enabled them to take three months of unpaid leave, while receiving unemployment benefits and vocational retraining. The arrangement committed employers to continue paying workers' benefits, and to rehire them at the conclusion of the unpaid leave.

By the end of May of last year the security situation had not improved, while the grace period had ended. To prevent a near disaster the Chairman of the Histadrut, MK Amir Peretz, and the General Secretary of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, Rachel Abanayim, requested that the Ministers of Finance and of Labor extend the unpaid leave by an additional three months. They also suggested that the Histadrut and the Government try to encourage tourism and enlisted local labor councils for this purpose. At the same time employers were to agree not to fire workers. Within a month the Government ratified the agreement and massive layoffs were prevented.

In the wake of the September 11 attack on New York's World Trade Center and the heightened waves of terrorist attacks inside Israel, the hotel and tourist industry seemed to be heading toward rock bottom. The hotel workers union and the Associations of Hotels, aware of the possible impact on the country, signed an additional agreement early this year that diverted additional massive layoffs. As a result 2,000 workers were fired, instead of an anticipated 7,000. An additional 400 workers accepted early retirement, while 11,000 out of 18,000 workers agreed to reduce some benefits, such as holiday payments. They were rewarded, in part, with a reduction in union dues.

An unexpected blow to the hotel industry was the fallout from a softening of Israel's high-tech exports.

Executives and workers in this sector had been accustomed to meet in hotels for workshops and conferences, and for recreation. A sharp decline in income caused them to halt this practice.

Also hit hard was the food sector whose members suffer from a severe loss in income caused, to a great extent, by the decline in tourism. This was aggravated by the loss of \$250 million resulting from the virtual halt in trade with the Palestinian Authority.

## IMPACTING THE HISTADRUT

The economic decline during the last year and a half has been painful for all Israelis. It has had a profound affect on the financial position of its unions, including the central federation.

The decline in the food and tourism industries has led to a serious erosion of income for the labor federation that depends heavily on affiliation fees. Ironically, the losses to those unions suffering from severe deficits came at a time when their members needed additional assistance to help overcome a decline in wages and benefits.

For the Histadrut the security and economic situation prompted an aggressive effort to increase membership. To facilitate this goal, help was promised by expanding legal services to members, designed to guarantee the status of workers in an era of globalization and privatization. Among other things, counselors were made available for the 30 regional branches of the Histadrut, and legal advice expanded to include members in places of work that are not organized. The use of legal aid has, in fact, already been brought into vigorous use during the current crisis.



*In the wake of the September 11 attack on New York's World Trade Center, and the heightened waves of terrorist attacks inside Israel, the hotel and tourist industry seemed to be heading toward rock bottom.*



In addition, the Histadrut and its affiliated unions have reached out to all workers to organize and join their ranks, with working women as a special target.

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A situation room was created to help prepare the Histadrut deal with events on the ground, either as a coordinating body or to initiate and mold policy. It also acts as staff headquarters providing support for the organization and management of the new campaign. Furthermore, the strike-fund was reinforced so workers could campaign for their rights, without drawing upon funds needed for living.

In a departure from old patterns the Histadrut's accelerated organizing activity includes extensive marketing through the electronic and print media, street posters, personal encounters, telemarketing, and the wide deployment of union representatives in all working places.

Another target was the protection of temporary workers who use manpower companies. The expanded reliance on these workers to fill long-term positions had been a sore point for years. The Histadrut maintained that many employers, including government agencies, were taking advantage of the security crisis and rising unemployment to expand the use of unprotected workers.

The Chairman of the Histadrut, a Knesset member, initiated legislation to change the relationship of manpower companies to new workers. Any person from a manpower company employed in the same work place for a maximum of nine months may now become permanent and be eligible for a full and equal basket of benefits. During this period they will have the same rights and receive the same benefits enjoyed by permanent employees. It is anticipated that this will end the practice of limiting the rights of temporary workers, who will now find improved conditions from the start.

#### ASSISTING THE PALESTINIAN WORKERS

Labor unions, traditionally, are proud of their adherence to the principle of international labor solidarity. Since the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, the Histadrut had focused most of its energies on working with the PGFTU (Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions). It also supported programs at the International Institute-Histadrut in Kfar Saba that brought participants to Israel for specialized training, from over 100 countries. This included many eager candidates from the Palestine Authority.

The framework Agreement for Cooperation signed on March 5, 1995 between the PGFTU and the Histadrut leans heavily on the support that both organizations gave to what was then an unfolding peace process. They also agreed that efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace would be based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 to help secure the well being of Israelis and Palestinians.

The Agreement also dealt with fund transferences from the Histadrut, with specific goals to help support PGFTU trade union activities. The PGFTU and the Histadrut agreed to the direct transfer of funds from the Israeli Occupational Services Office to PGFTU. These funds were to come from the organizational dues of the Palestinian workers in Israel, with 50% to be transferred to the Histadrut and the other 50% to the PGFTU. According to the Histadrut, the PGFTU received \$2,287,518 between 1995 and 2001, an amount the PGFTU claims is much too low. A recent rupture in relations has prevented accurate adjudication of the issue.

Other examples of solidarity include the following:

1. Attorneys were assigned the responsibility of handling the legal needs of Palestinians employed in Israel. While they maintained legal offices in Israel, they worked directly with the PGFTU and its members in the West Bank and Gaza.

The range of legal claims were primarily for severance pay, delayed wages, and other rights covered by Israel's Labor Law, such as annual vacation pay. They also covered such issues as convalescence pay, clothing stipends, social allotments, and disputes with the National Insurance Institute. This level of cooperation was especially helpful in assuring benefits for the Palestinian workers.

2. A joint workshop for Israeli, Palestinian, and German garage workers, held in Tel Aviv and financed through a fund established by Japanese trade unions. The venture focused on health and safety issues, and was rated as highly successful, from a professional and personal point of view. It was also an effective means to enhance relations between unionists in a global economy.

3. A variety of training programs aimed at building the civil society and strengthening democratic unions were organized with the PGFTU at the International

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Institute-Histadrut, in Kfar Saba. This study program was supported by Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Virtually all union activities and contacts have been halted, following the deterioration in relations between Israel and the Palestine Authority. Formal meetings were prohibited either in Israel or in the Authority. Furthermore, workers covered by the arrangement between the Histadrut and the PGFTU could no longer be employed in Israel.

It remains unclear what the future will bring, and whether Israel and the Palestine Authority will soon return to the negotiating table. In the meantime the Histadrut recognizes that meaningful links with the PGFTU are unlikely to resume until peace and cooperation are restored in the region. □

## Double Talk

*Continued from page 4*

have called for it, and Israelis themselves recognize that it must be so. But what kind of state will the Palestinians have? That's a mystery that will only begin to be worked out when that state comes into being. This leaves Israel two choices: it can delay the inevitable and endure untold years of bloodshed and internal struggle, or Israel can accept this reality and prepare itself for it. As it stands now, however, Israel seems unable to move beyond tit-for-tat retribution.

So, what should Israel do now?

The first thing it should do is stop indulging in the type of double talk that depends on playing the end game at the beginning. Israel must accept that it cannot predict the future and focus instead on the present—what will improve the situation right now. Next Israel must find creative, near-term solutions. Those calling for unilateral separation are presenting one such solution. I am not necessarily advocating it, but at least it represents something beyond the current cycle of violence. Another idea would be for the Labor Party to formally declare the Allon Plan dead, thus differentiating itself from the Likud and sending the world a message that not everyone in Israel believes settlements are a solution. Finally, Israel must find leadership that can offer the Palestinians something they want more than revenge.

Negotiation is a two-way street. If Israel genuinely wants peace and security, only initiatives that improve conditions for the Palestinians themselves will bring it about.

In the end, once we get past the delusions that surround this conflict, Israel peaceniks face a fundamental question that no amount of double talk will do away with: Do the Palestinians want real peace? I'm not sure, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't give it to them. Iron may be strong but it is also brittle. To win this round of the conflict we must show the flexibility of steel. □

## True Colors

*Continued from page 7*

settlements and has shown little willingness to break away on this issue.

Amos Elon, in a May 23, 2002 *New York Review of Books* article, clarifies that matter, illustrating how beholden democracies can become to bad policies because of swing votes. In the case of Israel, that swing vote comprises those who even if they don't support settlements, at least oppose their dismantling. This inevitably raises the issue of whether Labor has the strength of spirit to break from the government on this matter, risk possible election loss, and assume the role of a vocal opposition. Present signs indicate that it neither has that strength nor, without a significant change in the behavior of the Palestinian leadership, has even good reason to leave the government. In the end, this suggests a troubling scenario. Palestinian advocacy of violence—official or unofficial—has essentially deprived the Israeli left of the political strength to stand in the way of further settlements. Of course, Palestinians may well argue—and rightly so—that a Labor government never did much in the first place to curtail settlements, raising the even scarier specter that the Israeli left has not even the strength of spirit to counteract its own worst instincts should it be given the opportunity to lead again on this matter.

Today the talk is of unilateral separation and democratization of the Palestinian Authority. These two move along separate tracks raising another set of

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questions concerning intentions. Might not unilateral separation provide Arafat with an excuse not to democratize since such a separation puts an end to the need for a more democratic PA to negotiate with? How does a security fence along the Green Line address the presence of settlements and the vast tracts of unoccupied land around them that Israeli forces continue to hand over to settlement dwellers? Is it not more likely that the fence Sharon ultimately wishes to build will surround Palestinian cities rather than the West Bank itself, thus creating islets of trapped Palestinians whose movements are continuously subject to Israeli permission? Unilateral separation—fence and all—only makes sense with the removal or abandonment of settlements and their inhabitants (if they refuse to leave). Democratization of PA only makes sense if the ultimate goal is to further negotiations for a bilateral arrangement. Much has been revealed since Operation Defensive Shield. But much remains unanswered, and so it appears that not all true colors have come to light. □

## **A Rabbi Wrestles With the Koran**

*Continued from page 14*

another (4:29). Can this be applied to treatment of non-Islamic nations? Does it explicitly prohibit suicide bombing? Does Islam have a concept akin to the Hebrew Bible's notion of "fearing God," of having a basic respect for life, the term applied to the Egyptian midwives who would not kill babies when Pharaoh commanded them to do so (Exodus 1:17)?

I would suggest that Islam has this concept because it has the Hebrew Bible behind it. The Koran affirms and cites the Hebrew (and Christian) scriptures repeatedly. And yet, my personal experiences have led me to wonder whether rank-and-file Muslims in the United States and around the world have a contempt for and hatred of Hebrew scripture. When I was chairman of the Broadcasting Commission of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, I was involved in the production of an interfaith talk show, called *The Sunday Chronicles*. During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, we called together Jewish, Christian, and Muslim clergy and congregants to

discuss the situation. Each group invited rank-and-file members from its churches, synagogues, or mosques to speak.

While I expected some of the usual anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian rhetoric from the liberal Christians and Muslims, and the old Christian canard about Old Testament justice versus New Testament love, I was taken aback at the utter, unmitigated contempt for the Hebrew Bible and for Judaism shown by the Muslim representatives, who were not extremist spokespeople but your typical congregant at an American mosque. They nodded in approval as one of their members said that Islam is the most peace-loving of religions and that Jews are a bloodthirsty, tribal people who have no sense of peace, and that the Hebrew Bible is a "bloody" and base book.

**B**ut that Hebrew Bible is the basis of many of the teachings of the Koran, including a fundamental principle that one does not "fear God" unless one has an underlying respect for human life and an unshakable aversion to taking human life. To trash the Hebrew Bible as antipeace is, for Muslims, to scrap the very concepts and concerns in that revered Book to which the Koran constantly refers. It is to bloody—or to dismiss as bloody—the living waters of reverence for life that flow into the Koran from Hebrew scriptures.

The Koran itself understands this. It refers to the biblical story of the sons of Adam, Cain, and Abel. It envisions Cain, angry that God did not accept his offering, threatening to slay his brother Abel. Abel replies: "God only accepts from those that fear Him." He goes on to explain what he means by "fearing" God: "Even if thou stretch forth thy hand against me to slay me, I will not stretch forth my hand against thee to slay thee. Truly I fear God, the Lord of all worlds" (5:27-28). Here, as in the Hebrew Bible, being "God-fearing" means anything but acting murderously.

Indeed, the well-being of the entire world may depend on whether a reverence for the Hebrew Bible will inform interpretation of the Koran with respect to Jews, the modern State of Israel, warfare, and the spreading of the faith. In the words of my favorite passage from the Koran, a prayer attributed to Abraham: "My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon it its fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and in the Final Judgment" (2:126). □

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Camp Na'aleh in Milford, PA (near Port Jervis, New York) serving New York, Northern New Jersey, and New England, contact 1-800-646-1277 or [naaleh@aol.com](mailto:naaleh@aol.com) or visit our website at [www.naaleh.org](http://www.naaleh.org)

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