

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Events...

**Tuesday January 28, 8:00pm**

Daniel Pipes, Director of the Middle East Forum, will be speaking at Beth Tikvah. Price: \$20; Students \$5.

**Sunday February 2, 8:00pm**

Boston Globe Columnist Jeff Jacoby will speak on "Who's Afraid of the Christian Right?" at BAYT.

### Commentary...

**Asking for Death** Jerusalem Post Editorial

The soldiers who pursued two terrorists who had infiltrated Netzarim in the Gaza Strip on Saturday night probably thought the attack they were attempting to foil was like any other. It was, except for this: the attackers were children, aged 14 and 17.

The children had walked through the main gate of the settlement and began by attempting to stab a 12-year-old boy. The two were quickly caught and are being treated in an Israeli hospital for minor wounds.

How is it that an eighth-grader ends up armed with a mission to kill and be killed?

The first thought that may come to mind is that this is some freak occurrence, a tragic but haphazard result of ongoing war. It is not. As impossible as it may be to believe, it is the result of a systematic attempt to indoctrinate a generation of children to love death even more than they love life.

For over two years, official Palestinian television, newspapers, and textbooks have taught children as young as six years old that the greatest aim of their life should be to become a shahid (martyr). The footage that has been broadcast on a daily basis by Palestinian television must be seen to be believed. Anyone interested - and every UN and European agency that funds the Palestinian Authority should be - can see the following broadcasts at Palestinian Media Watch (<http://www.pmw.org.il>):

\* scenes of children playing and of dead children, ending with a screen that reads, "Ask for death, the life will be given to you."

\* the story of a schoolboy who goes to school, leaving his father with a letter that is set to music. The letter reads: "Do not be sad, my dear, and do not cry over my parting, oh my dear father. For my country, shahada [martyrdom]... How sweet is shahada, when I embrace you oh my land!" The clip ends with the boy falling dead and "embracing" the land.

\* a film of a child actor playing Muhammad al-Dura, the most famous child victim of the fighting. The narrator says "How sweet is the fragrance of the shahids, how sweet is the scent of the earth, its thirst quenched by the gush of blood flowing from the youthful body." The child is waving and a caption says, "I am waving to you not to part, but to say follow me."

The phenomenon of suicide bombing is generally associated with groups that are supposedly at odds with the Palestinian Authority, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. But the fact is it is the PA that has been pummeling Palestinian children with a constant, multi-layered message that martyrdom is their highest calling. In addition to the idealization of death on official television, the PA's official textbooks, teachers, parents, religious leaders, and Yasser Arafat himself have all joined behind this common aim.

Fifth-grade textbooks depict dead children draped in a Palestinian flag, with a poem to death: "... I hasten my step toward it ... this is the death of men, and who asks for a noble death, here it is."

A teacher is quoted in the PA newspaper about a ninth grader who is killed: "Wajdi asked me to give out cake if he becomes a shahid ... his classmates swore that they would continue in the path of shahada."

On January 15, 2002, Arafat gave this message on PA television to Palestinian children, "This child [Faris Ouda, 14] who is grasping the stone facing the tank, is it not the greatest message to the world when that hero becomes a shahid? We

are proud of them." Arafat continued to refer to Ouda as an icon for emulation, "Oh children of Palestine! The peers of Faris Ouda ... represent this immense and fundamental power that is within, and it will be victorious" (PA TV, August 18, 2002).

In addition to the Palestinian media, political and religious leaders who extol martyrdom, and even the child's last refuge, the parents, have been drafted to

the cause. Palestinian media highlight every parent who celebrates the death of their own children - including clips of a mother sending off her 17-year-old son who later killed five Israeli teenagers, and explaining afterward, "How? Because I love my son and want to choose what is best for him."

Child abuse is normally thought of as among the most abhorrent crimes. There are examples of abuses committed on a society-wide basis. It is hard to imagine another society in history, however, that has so systematically attempted to brainwash its children into loving death and murder. A society that condones transforming its own children into weapons has reached new depths of evil. It is unclear how this society will react not only to losing its war to destroy Israel, but an entire generation dedicated to that project. (Jerusalem Post Jan 13)

**Terror Attack on the Mind and Soul** By Amnon Lord

Last week, talking to a friend about a meeting I had had with a group of 15 academics, mostly Jews from the Boston area, I said I had come out of it feeling worse than after a massive terror attack. Two days later I was able to check this out. Sad to say, but a massacre in south Tel Aviv left me less shocked than that meeting did.

The group's contact person in the US is an economics lecturer from the San Francisco area called Amnon Hadar. His brother, Uri, is a Tel Aviv University psychologist. They hail from Kibbutz Gan Shmuel. In Israel, their contact person is Hannah Knaz, also from Gan Shmuel and active in Women in Black. To her credit, she also saw fit to introduce her clients to people such as Eyal Megged, Caroline Glick and myself.

This group calls itself "Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace." But here's the shocking thing: "Peace" today, always and without exception, conceals a relativistic approach to terrorism, if not actual support of it.

We went to the meeting, at the American Colony Hotel in east Jerusalem, with a feeling of impending confrontation. While Megged was speaking, there were questions like: "Don't you think Israel is on a suicide course?" Megged said that in the last two years he has found himself mobilized to defend Israel's cause, mainly against leftist propaganda, mainly from the Israeli Left.

"What is Israel's cause?" asked a man from Johns Hopkins University. "Why the roadblocks?" "Do you think the settlements contribute to Israel's security? How?"

At the end of the meeting one participant, Prof. Ramon Greenberg, a psychiatrist from Harvard Medical School, shoved a paper into my hand. It consisted of impressionistic ruminations about guest speakers at two events, one at Harvard: "The lecturers were Isla Jadd, a professor from Bir Zeit University, and Lev Greenberg, an [anti-Zionist Marxist] professor from Ben-Gurion University. Both portrayed a picture of Israel's actions in the occupied territories that was truly chilling... it was such a different picture from what we are used to hearing in the US."

It appeared that the day before the group had heard the full story of the 1948 expulsion from Ilan Pappé.

"What do you think about what Pappé says?" an MIT lecturer asked me. I said that the "new historians" presented no new facts, and that the facts were undisputed.

"That is not what he says. He argues the opposite," she told me. And she knows. Ilan Pappé told her.

The asides from Prof. Ramon Greenberg were disturbing: "What Sharon is doing to Israel today is worse than what he did in 1982. Since he came into office there have been many more suicide attacks and many more casualties."

"Don't you know the extent of the terrorism?" I asked him, "how many Israelis have been killed?" "More Palestinians have been killed," he answered. I went back to the basics. "But Israelis are being deliberately murdered."

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"The Palestinians are being deliberately murdered, too. Nine just yesterday," he said, referring to the armed terrorists liquidated in Gaza. For Greenberg, nine armed terrorists are the same as Masouda and Rachel and Tamar and Haim and Moishe and another 10 children together.

I was intrigued by Greenberg and by his friend, who kept on about Israel being on a suicide course. I told them that regardless of one's political views, this is an existential confrontation, and so it is important that Jews particularly pay attention to every analysis, every proposal. That was why I wanted them to tell me what it was about Israel's behavior that indicated a suicide course. What Israel was doing, they said, would have severe implications for the fate of Jews worldwide. One promised to explain the argument to me by e-mail.

It didn't happen. I thought Israel had entered on a suicide course with the Oslo Accords.

But they had something else in mind.

When we were talking about the numbers of casualties, somebody asked: "And how many children have you killed?" I gave the figure from the most official security authorities: 174 children under 16.

"That's not true! It's much more. I have the true number here!" he said, rummaging wildly through his bag.

The fact that about half of the dead Israelis are women meant nothing to them, even though it is the best proof of the Arabs' desire to strike at the least protected civilians.

It's hard to explain, but the bad feeling didn't engulf me immediately as I went out into that cold New Year's night. Only gradually did I come to feel that these people, supposedly talking about Israeli-Palestinian peace, were conveying no message of encouragement or peace, but one of doom and a sealed fate.

Their reactions to mass murder are automatic. As Jews, they see us Israelis as a nuisance.

*The writer is the author of The Israeli Left, from Socialism to Nihilism and a columnist with Makor Rishon.* (Jerusalem Post Jan 10)

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#### **Pulling the Plug on Democracy** Jerusalem Post Editorial

Not since the 1980 New Hampshire Republican Party primary has the decision to turn off a politician's microphone caused as much uproar as did Justice Mishael Cheshin's edict last Thursday halting live coverage of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's press conference. But just as the New Hampshire incident set the stage for Ronald Reagan to surge ahead of the pack and capture the presidency, last week's drama may very well prove to have a similar galvanizing effect for Sharon and the Likud.

Reagan, at the time, was fighting for his political life after George H. W. Bush had upset him by a narrow margin in the Iowa caucuses. Prior to the start of a debate in Nashua, New Hampshire, Reagan argued that the other four Republican contenders should be allowed to participate alongside himself and Bush. When the moderator ordered a technician to turn off the microphone, Reagan grabbed the mike and snapped, "I paid for this microphone, Mr. Green!"

Though he got the moderator's name wrong (it was Breen, not Green), Reagan's performance struck a chord with the voters, and he went on to defeat Bush in the primary by more than a two-to-one margin.

Sharon, too, last week found himself struggling for his political future, as he sought to stave off accusations of personal and familial corruption. A secret document leaked to Ha'aretz asserted that the Justice Ministry had requested the assistance of its South African counterpart in an attempt to investigate allegations concerning a \$1.5 million loan made to Sharon's sons by his long-time friend, Cyril Kern. With the report threatening to further harm the Likud's chances in the upcoming elections, Sharon took the unusual step of calling a press conference to rebut the charges.

After launching into a blistering and lengthy attack on Labor Party chairman Amram Mitzna, in which he pointed out his rival's own alleged misdeeds, Sharon finally began to address the specific charges that had been hurled against him. And then, much to the amazement of viewers and listeners across the country, the three television channels and two radio stations airing the press conference suddenly interrupted their broadcasts, citing instructions they had received from Cheshin.

As chairman of the Central Elections Committee, one of Cheshin's responsibilities is to oversee enforcement of the Elections Law, which bars the airing of propaganda during the 60 days prior to balloting. As he watched Sharon's speech in his office at the Supreme Court, Cheshin reportedly became furious, ordering his aides to phone the media outlets and shut down the prime minister's broadcast forthwith, since he believed it constituted unlawful propaganda.

In doing so, however, Cheshin was also effectively pulling the plug on Israel's democracy. As Prof. Ariel Bendor, Dean of Haifa University's Law Faculty, rightly pointed out, Cheshin's decision was "unprecedented." "Enforcement of the law by stopping a broadcast does not make sense and is likely to deny relevant information from reaching the public," he said.

To be fair, the law barring propaganda is itself antiquated and badly in need

of change. It is largely unenforceable, as the numerous complaints reaching the Central Elections Committee regarding its repeated violation clearly demonstrate. Moreover, defining the boundaries of what constitutes propaganda versus what is considered information of vital public interest is itself a nearly impossible task. And it is hard to understand why politicians should be limited in marketing their ideas before an election, when that is precisely what an election is supposed to be all about.

Nevertheless, Cheshin's decision seems even stranger when one considers that it was only after Sharon had completed the political section of his speech, and had just begun to address the corruption allegations, that the plug was finally pulled. As Shalom Kital, CEO of Israel's Channel 2 News, put it, "There was clearly electioneering in the speech, but we were waiting for him to reach his responses to the accusations. Oddly, when he finally reached the relevant information, we were asked to turn off the broadcast."

Given the extraordinary circumstances of Sharon's press conference, and the fact that the Israeli media have been devoting lopsided attention to allegations of Likud corruption while virtually ignoring similar alleged shenanigans in Labor, it would have been prudent and fair to allow Sharon the opportunity to explain his side of the story. If Cheshin was so concerned about possible infractions of the elections law, then he should have made those concerns public before Sharon's speech, and not during it.

Instead, the result was a mockery of the law and an affront to common sense. For it was only a few hours earlier that very same day that the High Court of Justice ostensibly upheld the right to free speech of Ahmed Tibi and Azmi Bishara, allowing them to proceed with their candidacies for the Knesset despite their expressions of support for anti-Israel violence. So within the span of a single day, Israel's democracy showed just how lenient, as well as small-minded, it can be.

By silencing the premier in mid-sentence, the letter of the law might have been upheld, but its underlying spirit was certainly trampled upon. Ironically enough, just as Reagan rode a similar incident into the White House more than two decades ago, Cheshin's attempt to silence Sharon may just prove to be Sharon's most formidable propaganda coup yet. Stay tuned. (Jerusalem Post Jan 12)

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#### **The Threat from Syria** By Nissan Ratzlav-Katz *Not so isolated an incident.*

On Wednesday, January 8, gunmen opened fire at Israeli soldiers from the Syrian border on the Golan Heights. The troops returned fire and gave chase, killing one of the attackers and capturing another. During the exchange of gunfire, Syrian soldiers manning a watchtower also began shooting at the Israelis.

The attack from Syrian territory was the first event of its kind in over 15 years. But an IDF spokesperson called the shooting "a localized incident," indicating that Israel will not treat it as an act of war initiated by the Syrian government.

The reason behind the IDF position on the shooting attack is that the Syrian border has been quieter than all those borders currently protected primarily by peace agreements. From Egypt, smugglers bring in weapons for PLO forces in Gaza, as Egyptian soldiers turn a blind eye. There have been several terrorist incidents along the Jordanian border, despite active cooperation between Jordanian and Israeli forces. Apparently, peace in the Middle East is best preserved when Israeli tanks sit on a ridge in sight of the enemy's capitol city, as they do on the Golan Heights, not when the enemy believes that Israel is restrained by a fictional "peace process."

On the other hand, the IDF-enforced peace along the Golan has forced Syria to act on its hostile intentions towards Israel through surrogates. For that purpose, it is widely recognized, Syria supports and shelters many Arab terrorist organizations. In fact, the U.S. Congress's Gilmore Commission classified Syria as the largest sponsor of terrorism after Iran. Syria is also included in the U.S. State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism, primarily for playing host to the leadership of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and for its backing of the Hezbollah. Without Syrian collusion, the Hezbollah would not be able to operate at all in Syrian-occupied Lebanon.

Ever since Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon, under former prime minister Ehud Barak, the Hezbollah has been testing and probing Israeli defenses and reactions. The organization has kidnapped and killed Israelis, fired rockets at Israeli targets, laid mines along the border, fired anti-aircraft missiles and provided assistance to the PLO in its terrorist war. Hezbollah is suspected of involvement in procurement of the weapons captured on the Palestinian Authority's Karine A smuggling ship, in the bombing and missile attack on Israeli targets in Kenya, and in a March shooting attack in the western Galilee that took the lives of six people. In effect, Syria has been waging a low-intensity proxy war with Israel for years, and Israel, true to form, has been reacting with "restraint."

On Monday, Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz addressed a forum of leaders from communities along the northern border. He reassured them that

in the event of a major Hezbollah attack, even during an American offensive against Iraq, Israel would no longer be able to show restraint. The Hezbollah, he noted, has several hundred long-range missiles in place in southern Lebanon. With them, the organization could effectively cover northern Israel — from the Lebanese border to Haifa. "If we find ourselves in a situation where Hezbollah opens a second front and uses long-range missiles, Israel will have no choice but to fulfill its responsibility to defend its citizens," Mofaz said. The subject was Hezbollah, but the intended audience was Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

However, despite clear evidence regarding Syrian involvement in anti-Israeli terrorism, Britain's prime minister Tony Blair hosted Assad last month in England, and listened politely when the Syrian leader said that his country does not support terrorism. Damascus, Assad said, was only home to the public-relations offices of several Arab organizations from the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, it's not just Britain — the United States is also adopting a conciliatory policy regarding Syria. On Tuesday, January 7, Syria and the U.S. held unofficial talks in Damascus, sponsored by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. The meetings, which included the participation of Pennsylvania Republican Senator Arlen Specter (D.), were meant to improve bilateral relations. That's right — to "improve bilateral relations" with a state classified by a congressional study as the second-biggest sponsor of international terrorism in the world.

The West cannot win the war on terrorism while coddling a terrorist regime. Such an inconsistent policy encourages Assad, and through him, Hezbollah, in their attacks on Israel. (National Review Online Jan 10)

*The writer is opinion editor at [www.IsraelNationalNews.com](http://www.IsraelNationalNews.com) who frequently writes for NRO.*

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### **Israeli Restraint Makes Terrorism More Likely** By Jeff Jacoby.

Even by the grim standards of recent years, the suicide bombings in Tel Aviv this week were horrific.

The terrorists, members of the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade (a wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization), positioned themselves at opposite ends of a busy street and blew themselves up 30 seconds apart. That was to guarantee the maximum number of casualties - as terrified pedestrians fled the first explosion, many ran directly toward the bomber waiting to set off the second.

The attack resulted in the death of 22 civilians and wounded more than 100, many of whom will be maimed for life: The bombs were packed with nails and metal shards so that shrapnel would shred skin and muscle, leaving survivors with agonizing internal injuries.

It was the third worst terror attack in Israel in the past quarter-century, and Arafat's spokesman issued a statement in English expressing "total condemnation of these terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians."

But at about the same time, the Fatah Web site posted another statement - in Arabic - celebrating the attacks: "With faith in the calling of holy jihad," it said, "two suicide attackers... succeeded this evening to infiltrate the Zionist roadblocks and to enter the heart of ... Tel Aviv and carried out two consecutive suicide attacks.... These suicide attacks caused a large number of fatalities and casualties in the center of the Zionist occupation of our land. We swear before our people that additional suicide operations will occur."

Note the description of Tel Aviv, a city founded by Jews in 1909 and laid out on the empty sand dunes north of Jaffa: "the center of the Zionist occupation." To Fatah - which is to say, to Arafat and the Palestinian leadership - the borders of the "occupation" are not those of Gaza or the West Bank. They are the borders of Israel.

Similarly, ArabicNews.com datelined its story on the Tel Aviv attack "Palestine-Israel," and reported that the bombings had killed "23 Israeli settlers." This despite the fact that none of the dead were residents of the settlements. Nearly one-third, in fact, weren't Israeli at all; they were non-Jewish guest workers from Europe, China, and Africa.

Israel reacted to Sunday's slaughter not with a devastating military assault on Palestinian positions but with mere gestures: Combat helicopters fired on a weapons factory in Gaza, Palestinian delegates were barred from travelling to a conference in London, and some West Bank colleges were temporarily closed.

But mere gestures are not going to wipe out terrorism, nor are they going to turn Palestinian hearts and minds against the terrorists. Mere gestures can only feed Palestinian contempt for Israeli weakness and reinforce the conviction that violence pays.

For years now, violence has paid. In the 1970s, the PLO's hijackings and mass murders won it international recognition and attention. The mayhem of the first intifadah yielded the Oslo agreement, which legitimized the PLO and gave Arafat and his lieutenants a dictatorship in Gaza and the West Bank. The stepped-up terrorism of the Oslo years - the years of the grossly misnamed "peace process" - culminated in former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's astonishing offer of full sovereignty, dismantled settlements, and shared control of Jerusalem. The bloodshed inflicted by Hezbollah led to Israel's unilateral retreat from southern Lebanon.

It is no wonder that so many Palestinians believe that terror and violence will

eventually lead to the end of Israel and the creation of a 23d Arab state. The wonder is that Israel doesn't use its tremendous military power to disabuse them of that belief once and for all.

In fairness it must be said that Israel is not entirely free to act in its own best interest. It is under intense pressure from the US government to do nothing that might roil the Arab world in advance of the American invasion of Iraq. But why shouldn't Israel be permitted to deal with Palestinian terrorism as the United States is dealing with Al Qaeda? Why should Washington's plan to oust Saddam Hussein and transform Iraq into a democracy prevent Israel from ousting Arafat and working a similar transformation of Palestinian society?

After all, President Bush himself stressed last June that just such a sea change is a prerequisite for Arab-Israeli peace. Nothing is more crucial, he said, than replacing the cruel Arafat-Hamas regime with "a new and different Palestinian leadership," one "not compromised by terror." Only when Palestinians can sustain, in Bush's words, "a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty" will it make sense to demand even more concessions from Israel, or to talk about Palestinian statehood.

To demand "restraint" of Israel now - to insist that it voluntarily suppress its right to self-defense - is to make bloody atrocities like last Sunday's not less likely but more so. Like the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Palestinian Authority and the murderers it has supported must be crushed. That is the plain meaning of the Bush Doctrine and the essential first step to peace. (Boston Globe Jan 9)

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### **Kill Jews, Get Your Own Country** By Jackie Mason & Raoul Felder

How does the value of an Israeli life become so cheap, that we accept the idea that we have to sacrifice hundreds of lives on a yearly basis in order to exist in the state of Israel?

Not many years ago, when one Israeli life was innocently lost, Israelis were shocked and there was a sudden hush in the atmosphere and wonderment in our voices.

Why is it that now we think of it as an unavoidable sacrifice, as if there are certain questions for which there are just no answers?

Why was the loss of an Israeli life so inconceivable before and so acceptable now?

Since the Arabs could not tolerate the presence of Jews in their neighborhood they tried to destroy us whenever they could put an army together.

Every time they lost a war they couldn't understand it, and they couldn't believe that they wouldn't win the next war.

Like the Americans in Vietnam and the Russians in Afghanistan, the Arabs possessed such a huge advantage of resources, population and power that they couldn't accept the experience of defeat by the tiny state of Israel.

As we were winning more and more victories we were paying a bigger price and getting more and more tired of victories in the battlefield at the cost of losing so many of our young Israeli lives.

We became so weary and fearful of the next possible war, that we blinded ourselves into believing all the fraudulent gestures of the Arabs about making peace.

We never realized the extent of our self-delusion until Prime Minister Barak offered the Arabs 98% of what they demanded and we were answered with an avalanche of suicide bombers taking more Israeli lives than ever before.

Since then, we have become involved in futile efforts to solve the problem by retaliating more decisively than ever before, which has served as a great release from our frustrations, but it has always left us helpless again from the next attack from more and more suicide bombers.

Somehow we have become helpless in the face of death as if there were no possible solution to this problem.

For the first time in fifty years we have again become a lost, confused, helpless and paralyzed people. Somehow we have resigned ourselves to suffer the constant killing of our people, like another but slower Holocaust.

We have paralyzed ourselves by our sickening irrational fear of "World Opinion," which is why we find it impossible to face one simple fact.

We will never win this war unless we immediately threaten to drive every Arab out of Israel if the killing doesn't stop.

It is no accident that the Arabs are not concerned with public opinion while killing our people, but we are terrified of public opinion before we dismiss them from our country.

Somehow, we have become intimidated into believing that we are obligated to give them a place to live, and we have no right to throw them out just because they are killing our people.

It is about time we realize that public opinion is nothing but publicly expressed anti-Semitism and appeasing public opinion makes as much sense as Chamberlain's appeasement of Adolf Hitler.

Jews dying in Israel disturbs them as much as watching your neighbor

killing a cockroach, even if it doesn't fill you with pleasure you certainly don't feel remorse about it.

That is why when suicide bombers kill hundreds of Jews not a word of protest is ever heard, but when we try to defend ourselves by retaliating against our killers the U.N. immediately is called in an emergency session to protect our assassins.

We are brain-dead if we accept the idea that we have to guess which Arab is our next killer.

We are not obligated to victimize ourselves by letting the Arabs play Russian roulette with Jewish lives.

Israelis are constantly asked the same obnoxious question "How can you throw the Arabs out, where would they go?"

The answer is if they don't care whom they kill, why are we obligated to care where they go?

If a gang of killers lived across the street, would you allow them to keep throwing bombs through your window until you can find them another apartment?

Are we morally obligated to become a real estate agent for every Arab suicide bomber?

We are not obligated to accept a new, slower Holocaust as the inevitable fate of our people.

Jordan did not take a poll of world opinion and neither did Kuwait before they routed the Palestinians out of their countries.

America did not wait for public opinion to take whatever action was necessary to protect their country, and there is no reason why we should be afraid to do what is necessary to protect the state of Israel.

(JewishWorldReview.com Jan 9)

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## **An Ancient People Who Have Lost Their Biblical Tongue**

By Shmuley Boteach

*The language of good and evil is utterly lacking from Israeli political discourse*

Let us deal with the mother of all Middle East questions. No, not "Why do the Arabs hate Israel?" That one is easy. Israel's existence and military supremacy is a humiliation to Arab pride. Israel serves as a permanent reminder of Arab impotence and Islamic infirmity.

The Arabs still operate on a severely outdated view of human greatness, one predicated on mortal conquest rather than moral courage. To the Arab mind, strength and honor result from gaining the upper hand over an enemy, rather than extending the hand of friendship to a former foe.

The heroic action of overcoming age-old prejudices counts for little when placed alongside overcoming an adversary's tanks. So long as the Arabs continue to embrace a Homeric model of valor, where glory is won through the gore of terrorism and splendor through the spilling of blood, there will never be peace in the Middle East. When the day comes that the Arabs feel more embarrassed by having suicide bombers than having Israel in their midst, only then will they reclaim their former greatness.

Until that day comes, we have to contend with far more vexing questions: How is it that half a billion hostile Arabs have managed to successfully portray themselves as the victims of five million Israeli Jews?

How did more than a dozen Arab tyrannies successfully portray Israel, the region's lone democracy, as the bad guy in the Middle East?

And how did the Palestinians, whose contribution to civilization is the suicide bomber, ever garner the sympathy of the world?

Many cite the world's ignorance of the Middle Eastern conflict as the solution to this riddle. Indeed, in a recent national assessment test, only 30 percent of American high-school seniors correctly identified NATO as a military alliance, and 87% couldn't locate Iraq on a map. In a world of such breathtaking ignorance, it is easy to see why continued Arab lies could gain credence.

When I debate the Middle East question with friends who are opposed to Israel and point out that the Arabs rejected, among others, the Peel Commission partition proposal of 1937 that would have given them a state three times Israel's size, the UN partition plan of 1947, and Ehud Barak's magnanimous (and reckless) offer of 97% of Gaza and the West Bank and a land swap within the Green Line for the rest, they are convinced that I'm pulling a fast one on them. They are also unaware that there has never been, in the history of the world, a Palestinian state.

Others in the Jewish community maintain that Israel's horrible PR is a no-brainer. Are we surprised that a world that has been murdering Jews for two millennia is prejudiced against Israel? No doubt there is truth in the belief that anti-Semitism animates much of the hostility toward Israel, particularly in Europe.

Still, it would be more honest for the Jewish community to look internally for some of the answers to Israel's horrendous PR, rather than wallowing in victimhood and self-pity.

I believe that the primary blame for Israel's PR should be laid at the Jews' own doorstep. What Israel has failed at utterly is framing the conflict with the Palestinians in moral terms. This is not a dispute over land. Rather, it is a conflict

between good and evil, between democracy and tyranny, between those who sanctify life and those who glorify death. It is a conflict between those who believe in due process and those who believe in summary execution. In choosing the depravity of dismembering civilians, Palestinian murderers have cast off the image of God. While Israel has always been prepared to negotiate a settlement with the Arabs, they have instead made a pact with the devil.

INSPIRING murderers to blow up teenagers is not an abrogation of a treaty signed in Norway. It is the apogee of wickedness. Teaching schoolchildren that one goes to heaven for killing Jews is not irresponsible. It is evil. Blowing up teenagers outside a disco is not merely morally repugnant. It is satanic. And Palestinian leaders who justify these bestial means are not desperate, they are satanic.

Whatever grievances the Palestinians claim to have against Israel, choosing to settle them by maiming and murdering innocent men, women, and children is a crime against God and a sin against humanity. The Jews were put into ghettos and turned into piles of ashes by the Nazis. But they never retaliated by machine-gunning German schoolgirls.

More than a million Armenians were slaughtered by the Ottomans in World War I. But they never responded by blowing up coffeehouses.

China completely overran and occupied Tibet. But the Dalai Lama never called upon his monks to bomb kindergartens.

Only the Palestinians have chosen this course and in so doing they have gone over to the dark side. But because my lines above cause discomfort among Jews is the primary reason that we have failed to win over the decent people of the world to our side.

The average person living in Australia, confused by the complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict, needs to hear a simple moral message. This is not a battle between moral equals. One is right, the other is wrong. Case closed.

And if we are afraid of firmly stating the justice of our position, if we are unsure of our own moral standing, is it any surprise that others are as well?

Many readers will tell me to crawl back into the synagogue with my religious simplifications of complex geopolitical issues which they maintain is utterly unrealistic. Religious language doesn't belong in political discourse. But when president Ronald Reagan wanted to sum up the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, did he go into lengthy polemics about how the US is free while the septuagenarian tyrants of the Russian politburo ruthlessly rein over unwilling subjects? Or did he simply call them, in his most memorable speech, an evil empire?

When President George W. Bush wished to boldly declare to the world that Iraq, Iran, and North Korea pose a threat to the peace of the world, did he speak of their political corruption? Or did he label them an "axis of evil"?

Yet, not one Israeli prime minister has referred to Yasser Arafat, the father of international modern terrorism, as simply being malevolent, wicked, and evil.

On the contrary, the most memorable thing that Ariel Sharon, to whom we are all indebted as Israel's greatest warrior, said of Arafat was that he was "irrelevant." Is that a term that inspires clarity? Can one see Bush calling Kim Jong Il or Saddam Hussein "irrelevant"?

And would the president of the United States have galvanized the allies of the United States to join in a war against Iraq with such morally neutral terms?

The language of good and evil is utterly lacking from Israeli political discourse and government pronouncements.

While the Greeks built a civilization with the power of their ideas, and the Romans ruled the world with the muscle of their legions, the Jews shook the world with the weight of their words. But in reconstituting the ancient Jewish republic, how is it that we have lost the biblical tongue upon which our commonwealth was built? Where is the modern-day Amos exhorting us to "hate evil, and love good, and establish justice."

The greatest American of the 20th century, Martin Luther King, Jr., used the pregnant words of the Bible to shame the world into granting his people justice: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." (Amos 5:24)

Can the prophet's words not stream forth from a Jewish tongue? Imagine how the world would contrast our own religious calling to life and righteousness with the Muslim's modern call to murder and mayhem.

It seems, however, that not only are Israel's secular politicians incapable of galvanizing the power of biblical morality in establishing the justice of Israel's cause, but even its religious politicians have failed at doing so. About the only biblical words we got from the leaders of Shas last week at a rally of 10,000 people in Tel Aviv was the reference to Yosef Lapid as a dog, which was later corrected by Shas spokesman Yitzhak Sudri to "a pig." And while both terms do indeed appear in the Bible, I'm not convinced that either of these characterizations will help Israel to either win the war of words with the Arabs or heal its own increasing - and damaging - internal rift. (Jerusalem Post Jan 9)

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