



Jerusalem 4:24; Toronto 4:57

## Commentary...

### Diplomat as Performance Artist

By Calev Ben-David

In 1974 a young artist named Tony Shafrazi spray-painted the words "Kill Lies All" onto the canvas of Pablo Picasso's famous mural Guernica as it was hanging in New York City's Museum of Modern Art. Shafrazi said he was doing it as a protest against American policy in Vietnam, although choosing a great antiwar painting decrying the German bombing of a Basque town during the Spanish Civil War seemed a curious, if not outright perverse target.

Fortunately, Guernica was not seriously damaged. As for Shafrazi, despite the widespread outrage at his action he did find some backers in the cultural world; one band of artists dubbed the "Guerrilla Art Action Group" argued that he was "completing," not defacing, Picasso's masterpiece.

Indeed, he later became one of the hippest gallery owners in Soho, raking in big bucks promoting the work of – who else? – graffiti artists. While Shafrazi may have been at heart little more than a shameless and unethical self-promoter, the notion of creating new art by vandalizing other artworks (at least in reproduction) does have historical precedent.

The most famous example is Marcel Duchamp's work "L.H.O.O.Q.," in which the artist drew a mustache and beard on a replica of the Mona Lisa. Duchamp's comrades in the Dada movement, the avant-garde "anti-art" art movement that sprang up in Switzerland and France during World War I, carried this spirit further by disrupting cultural events that offended their (un)esthetic sensibilities.

The Dadaists were forerunners of today's so-called "performance artists," and although the term brings to mind an image of young bohemian types more than sober, veteran diplomats, I think the actions last weekend of Israel's ambassador to Sweden, Zvi Mazel, are best viewed as a work of performance art.

This observation is not meant to trivialize, condemn or condone Mazel's disruption of an installation artwork in a Stockholm museum that appears to sympathetically view the terrorist murderer of 22 Israelis. But it is intended to provide a framework in which to appreciate the ambassador's act as a work of political art that is far superior, both morally and esthetically, to the target of his outburst, Snow White and The Madness of Truth.

The creators of that work, Dror Feiler and Gunilla Skold Feiler, have reacted with indignation to the fact that an artwork clearly meant to provoke and shock its viewers clearly succeeded in doing just that with at least one of them.

The Feilers now claim the intention of their piece was more to promote sympathy and understanding between the warring sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Exactly how the depiction of Maxim restaurant suicide bomber Hanadi Jaradat as a "Snow White" floating above a sea of blood, with no mention of the Jewish and Arab men, women and children she butchered, helps inspire such conciliatory feelings is presumably one of those ineffable mysteries of art.

EVEN SOME of those who criticize Mazel's and Israel's stance in this affair aren't buying that line. The Danish newspaper Information, for example, editorialized that "the installation worked... The Israeli ambassador to Sweden... reacted in accordance with our esthetic consensus and confirmed the provocative qualities of the work of art."

But, the paper added disapprovingly, while Mazel's reaction was understandable as a private individual, "it is unacceptable as government policy."

Is that so? First off, it is futile to deny that Mazel's act had official imprimatur. The ambassador, previously known as a prudent career diplomat, has admitted his actions were premeditated, discussed beforehand with other Foreign Ministry officials.

His critics would be correct in condemning him if the real target of his wrath was the Feilers' installation. But that's clearly not the case. After all, there are plenty of equally provocative pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli artworks on display in museums and galleries all over Europe – and for that matter, even here in Israel

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too.

What so incensed Mazel and his superiors was not the piece itself, but that the Swedish authorities had apparently reneged on a specific promise to Israel that Snow White would not be displayed at the Museum of National Antiquities last weekend in conjunction with an international conference on preventing genocide.

Mazel's real target then, was not so much this specific work but the sense that European nations like Sweden have grown dangerously indulgent in allowing legitimate criticism of Israel to slip over the border into outright incitement and anti-Semitism.

This is confirmed by the subsequent supportive reactions expressed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: "Mazel behaved properly. The phenomenon [of rising anti-Semitism] is so outrageous that it could not be ignored without a response. I hope – and am sure – that everyone joins me in backing Mazel up"; and of Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom:

"Ambassador Mazel's actions must be understood as an outcry from all of us. If it enabled the ambassador to draw attention to the issue of double standards held against Israel and the indifference to the suffering of Israeli citizens from Palestinian terror, that is good."

Mazel's deliberate outburst then, was clearly a more general protest act against this dangerous trend. As such, it was a bold, creative gesture in expressing our national indignation, and far more effective in grabbing the media and public's imagination than the usual dull diplomatic protest. Would that more of Israel's hasbara efforts were so clever.

And if this incident brought a little extra, undeserved, publicity to the Feilers' banally obvious work, so be it. Rather than being insulted by Mazel's assault on their art, perhaps they should take a page out of Duchamp's book. After the artist's masterpiece glass sculpture Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors was severely cracked in transit, the Dadaist is said to have declared, "Now my work is complete."

Likewise, Zvi Mazel's protest against Snow White has lent this offensive piece of art a profundity it doesn't deserve. (Jerusalem Post Jan 21)

This week's issue is dedicated

לזכר נשמת

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### Universalism Triumphs

By Jonathan Rosenblum

Natan Sharansky deserves credit for calling attention to the vulnerability of Jewish students on American university campuses. Ditto initiatives like Aish HaTorah's Hasbara Fellowships, which have already trained over 400 students in

pro-Israel advocacy on campus, and the recent conference in Jerusalem of Jewish university students to discuss campus anti-Semitism.

Alas, all the campus pro-Israel advocacy initiatives in the world are unlikely to have much impact: The battle is usually lost long before Jewish students reach campus.

Sharansky himself called attention to the widespread apathy of Jewish students after a recent tour of 13 university campuses. Only 10% of Jewish students are involved in any type of Jewish activity, he estimated.

"The problem is not that Jewish students lack the facts," writes Shachar Yanai, director of the student arm of WIZO, "it's that they don't care about them in the first place."

A University of Chicago student nicely captured the nub of the problem: Arab students are attached to their roots; we are not. As a consequence, Arab and Muslim students, despite being outnumbered by Jewish students, are much more highly involved in Middle Eastern politics than Jewish students. The Arab students speak with one voice and they stay on message: Israel is the source of all that ails the Middle East.

By contrast, the invariable reaction of Jewish students to classes given by defenders of Israel is: Now let's hear the Palestinian side. Fear of being propagandized does not similarly trouble Arab students.

The apathy and studied neutrality of Jewish university students has its roots in a Jewish education devoid of any particularistic Jewish identity. Most Jewish children, in fact, receive no Jewish education. But even those who attend Sunday school or afternoon Hebrew school imbibe few messages calculated to foster identification with their fellow Jews.

Among the liberal denominations, all mention of the Jews as the Chosen

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People is verboten. Talk about the soul to Jewish Sunday school students, and they will stare at you quizzically or laugh; quote classic Jewish sources on the unique spiritual potential of the Jewish soul, and you will be called a race theorist. Even opposition to intermarriage is deemed racist by a full half of American Jews, according to a 2001 American Jewish Committee poll.

The most positive message about Judaism that the average Jewish child will ever hear in synagogue is: We were the first to champion such universal values as justice and morality.

THAT EXCLUSIVE focus on Jews as the bearers of universal values is both false and inadequate. As Cornell professor Jeremy Rabkin, who was in Jerusalem last week to deliver the Shalem Center's annual Zalman Bernstein Memorial lecture, put it to me: Jews have always been the great barrier to universalism. We rejected paganism's easy tolerance of all gods, and we have been the great naysayers to the universal monotheistic creeds that seek to unite all mankind under the banner of one religion.

In the ancient world, Jews were hated for insisting on their difference, and they are hated today for the same reason. That is what lies behind Tony Judt's disdain for modern Israel as "an anachronism," in a world in which people intermarry freely.

The focus on Jews as harbingers of the universal concepts of justice is as inadequate as it is false. It provides no reason for the continued existence of the Jewish people in a world in which these values are allegedly widely dispersed. Nor does some long-ago common ancestry (recall that over half of American "Jewish" children under 10 are being raised in homes with only one Jewish parent) provide more grounds for American Jews to identify with Israel.

As a result of their "Jewish" education, today's Jewish college students arrive on campus with roughly the same attitudes that characterized the young intellectuals in the 1961 Commentary symposium "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals." The younger intellectuals professed no interest in their religion - either as students or practitioners - and no fear of intermarriage, either for themselves or their children. Even at a time when Israel was still viewed as a doughty David, the Jewish state failed to engage their interest.

The panelists treated the name "Jew" as, at best, a metaphor for the alienated intellectual. And Jewish victimhood was, in their eyes, the most positive thing about Jews, for it imbued them with a special sensitivity to the socially downtrodden.

Such attitudes provide no bulwark for the Jewish student that will help him or her withstand the ostracism and worse that goes with identification with Israel. Lacking any particularistic Jewish identity, many Jewish students are hurt and angered to find themselves identified in the eyes of others with Israel, the most concrete expression of Jewish nationhood.

In an effort to avoid that association with Israel, some attempt to prove their progressive bona fides by leading the attacks on Israel. For others, the easiest way to shed one's identification as a Jew, at least at a subconscious level, is through intermarriage.

The irony, then, is that instead of their Jewishness predisposing Jewish students to identify with Israel, attacks on Israel are causing Jewish students to flee further from any identification as Jews. (Jerusalem Post Jan 21)

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### **The Accusers Among Us** By Amnon Lord

In a January 9 Haaretz magazine interview historian Benny Morris shattered the moral and intellectual foundations of the group of extreme leftists that has dominated public discourse in Israel. This group has been busy denying past and present Arab atrocities against Jews.

Morris showed that the majority of those who call themselves Palestinian refugees never left the boundaries of the western Land of Israel in 1948. This has frightening significance for leftist intellectuals because it means the myth of Palestinian "exile" is false, and as a result, the "right of return" means nothing.

The refugees moved a few kilometers west and south to Gaza and east to the Arab cities in Judea and Samaria.

Morris showed that the bus and restaurant bombings in today's Israel - deliberately targeting women and children - are nothing but a symbolic display of genocide. What Palestinians do to the passengers of a bombed bus they want to do to the whole country.

To put it in a moral historical context, Morris notes that Jews, unlike Arabs, do not go around blowing up buses.

In a blog disseminated over the Internet, Tel Aviv University philosophy professor Adi Ophir has attacked Morris for making this argument. He even attacks Haaretz for daring to run the Morris interview.

Ophir has written that "Zionism demands a right of return after 2,000 years, but Israelis don't want to see the anguish of Palestinians who want to return to their homes after 50 years. The question of a right to return has been suppressed by Israeli society since 1948."

Ophir has presented Israel as guilty of crimes yet to be committed, as in a September 2002 letter by Israeli intellectuals warning that Israel was about to commit crimes against humanity.

Some might call that approach hyper-morality. But it gives people like Ophir credit for being moral. Actually Ophir and his colleagues manufacture a special system of morality that is applied to Israelis only, and is thereby anti-moral. Calling it a double standard minimizes the seriousness of the incessant moral attack against Israel.

At issue is the permanent use of euphemisms which sound as if they have a high moral charge, but actually hide and justify atrocities. The Left talks about a "war of liberation," "occupation," uses the terms "peace" and "coexistence," and blames Israel for "racism," "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity."

It was the late Yehoshofat Harkabi in Arab Attitudes to Israel who showed how the Arabs made a reversal of terminology and began using terms such as "war of liberation," which allowed them to speak openly, through the use of progressive terms, about their goal of destroying Israel as a state (policide) and against Israelis in general.

The people who created the system of "anti-morality" were mainly local Israeli groups. One of the main targets of that campaign was the Israeli Air Force.

After World War II the commander of the German Condor Legion, General Sperrle, stood trial for war crimes. Sperrle is the man called "the architect of Guernica." The German squadrons at his command demolished the Spanish town of Guernica in 1937, killing more than 100 civilians. After doing his internship in Spain Sperrle went on to destroy the cities of Coventry and Rotterdam, where the number of casualties reached the tens of thousands. Put on trial, Sperrle was acquitted.

Since then the world has seen more serious aerial bombardments in Vietnam, Cambodia - and Serbia in 1999. Nor could one term recent US air force attacks in Iraq as sterile.

Contrast this with the situation in Israel. Using pinpoint intelligence the IAF intercepts specific vehicles in Palestinian Authority territory, shoots at a specific apartment or bombs a single building - gunning for a ticking-bomb terrorist. And these actions are defined by the anti-moral division as war crimes.

It is time to present the accusers among us with a real moral choice: If Israelis - by their very existence and actions - are a criminal people, thereby justifying Palestinian massacres against them, the moral action for those intellectuals, artists, refusers and fence-cutters is to pick up some Kalachnikov rifles and start shooting at civilian centers in Israel.

Why don't they join this just war against Israel with their bodies?

Instead these intellectuals and peace activists choose to participate in the terror fest by redesigning the moral system so as to create a comfortable environment for murder. Ophir and his friends bear a heavy responsibility for creating the moral, conceptual and legal vacuum that allows the Palestinians to execute their terror campaign. (Jerusalem Post Jan 20)

*The writer is the author of The Israeli Left, from Socialism to Nihilism and a columnist with Makor Rishon.*

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### **Resume Targeted Killings** By Evelyn Gordon

In the wake of last Wednesday's suicide bombing at the Erez Junction, the usual suspects were quick to demand that Israel take no counteraction against Hamas, the perpetrating organization, and, in particular, that it refrain from targeting the group's leadership.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, said that any attempt by Israel to resume targeted killings of Hamas leaders would only escalate the conflict.

Diego Ojeda, a European Union spokesman, noted that "the European Union has spoken on several occasions against the so-called extra-judicial killings of suspected terrorists" and warned that "proceeding in such a manner against a leading figure of a Palestinian terrorist organization would be counterproductive to efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East."

US State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher offered a more nuanced warning, saying that while Israel has a right to defend itself the US opposes targeted killings, and Israel must "consider the consequences of any actions that it might be contemplating."

Unfortunately for all these nay-sayers, a sober consideration of the consequences of targeted killings favors the conclusion that Israel ought to resume them - because according to both Palestinian and European testimony, Israel's last campaign of targeted killings was the main reason why Hamas has refrained from suicide bombings for the last four months.

In contrast, the subsequent let-up in this campaign enabled the organization to regroup and perpetrate last week's bombing.

From mid-August to mid-September 2003, the Israel Defense Forces conducted a spate of attacks on senior Hamas officials that left 14 of them dead. The attacks included a failed attempt on Hamas's so-called spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, on September 6. Soon after that, according to reports that appeared last month in the Palestinian media, Hamas asked Qatari mediators to approach the US and ask it to offer Israel a partial cease-fire: a halt to suicide attacks inside Israel in exchange for a halt to Israeli attacks on Hamas leaders.

Both Palestinian sources and a European diplomat confirmed these reports to Haaretz.

THE VERY fact that such an offer was made is proof enough of how pressured Hamas felt by the targeted killings and how desperate it was to stop them. But the European diplomat even explicitly confirmed the connection, attributing the group's offer to a combination of two factors.

One, he said, was the EU's designation of Hamas's political wing as a

terrorist organization – a move, incidentally, that the EU had refused to make for years until Silvio Berlusconi pushed it through during his recent six-month tenure as the EU's rotating president. The second was Israel's assassination policy, which, the diplomat said, made Hamas feel that its Gaza leadership was rapidly becoming paralyzed (Haaretz, December 23, 2003).

Obviously, Israel could not accept this offer since it would have allowed Hamas to continue targeting settlers and soldiers while depriving Israel of the right to respond. But Hamas was clever enough to realize that if it suspended attacks unilaterally Israel would suspend the assassinations de facto rather than risk the world's condemnation.

And, indeed, that is what happened. The result is that Hamas leaders, who had been driven underground in August and September, began reappearing in public over the past few months to mobilize support, recruit volunteers and otherwise rebuild their battered organization.

Needless to say, it is always easier to organize a bombing when the organizers are able to move about freely. But the grace period Israel granted Hamas was particularly important because Yassin needed to build support for a whole new direction: the use of female suicide bombers, which he himself had denounced less than two years ago as immodest and a violation of Islamic law.

Had he still been underground and unable to meet freely with his followers, it would have been much harder to persuade them that what he said two years ago no longer applied, and that because, as he put it last Wednesday, "male fighters face many obstacles on their way to operations," today "holy war is an imperative for all Muslims, men and women."

The culmination of this process, of course, was last week's bombing.

It speaks volumes about the EU's hypocrisy – and its disregard for Israeli lives – that it can denounce targeted killings publicly even as its diplomats admit, off the record, that such killings were a major reason for Hamas's four-month cessation of attacks, thereby saving the lives of untold innocent civilians. That is equally true of the PA.

But Israel's first obligation is to provide security for its citizens – even if that means defying foreign governments which value the life of "a leading figure of a Palestinian terrorist organization" above the lives of innocent Israelis.

The evidence shows that targeted killings work. Therefore, Israel must resume its military pressure on Hamas – and this time, keep it up unrelentingly. (Jerusalem Post Jan 20)

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#### **With Syria, Trade Peace for Peace** By Shmuel Katz

In implementing the separation of forces agreement with Syria after the Yom Kippur War, Israel withdrew from territory it had captured at Kuneitra and its surroundings.

Subsequently, prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, reporting to the Knesset on June 3, 1974, said, "There is no place for an interim stage. Once we achieve further progress in a settlement with Egypt the question will arise whether Syria is indeed ready to sign a peace treaty with Israel."

The agreed line of separation (which included the whole of the Golan) promised Israel security from future attacks from the Syrian aggressors. Indeed, that line has been the most untroubled border experienced by Israel to this day.

Thus it was that prime minister Begin in 1981 received the Knesset's consent to incorporate the Golan into Israel's territory. A thriving Jewish community has been growing on the Golan ever since.

The Yom Kippur War was not the only occasion for an unprovoked Syrian attack on Israel. It was the third. Syria had joined in the Arab League campaign to abort the very creation of Israel in 1948. The Arabs were thwarted in their major objective – Israel survived – but Syria converted the Golan into a tremendous system of fortifications for future attack on Israel. That, indeed, was the only constructive Syrian act in the years of its possession of the Golan.

Meantime, it contented itself with making life in the Galilean plain below as miserable as possible, mainly by the intermittent lobbing of shells into Jewish villages. During those years there were children who did all their schooling in the underground bunkers erected as protection against Syrian shelling.

Then came the attack on Israel by Egypt and Syria in June 1967. That attack was bombastically proclaimed in advance – by Egyptian president Nasser – as the war that would put an end to Israel. This time Israel decided to put an end to the towering threat of the Golan. IDF units scaled its formidable heights, bringing the Golan into Israeli hands at last.

Six years later, on Yom Kippur, the complete surprise of the Syrian attack (like the Egyptian attack in the south), momentarily threw Israel off balance. It was only after some hard fighting and heavy casualties that Israel regained control of the vital Golan bastion.

DOES THE sane nation exist which would, after that threefold experience, hand back the Golan to Syria on any terms? It is all the less likely when, throughout the years, the Syrians have been one of the most important backers and sources of terrorism against Israel – harboring some of its leading perpetrators; sowing, spreading and teaching its children murderous propaganda, demonizing not only Israel, which it threatens to destroy, but the Jewish people as a whole.

Winston Churchill, during World War II, laid down a clear-cut principle for a very similar set of circumstances: "Twice in our lifetime," he told the House of Commons on February 22, 1944, "Russia has been violently assaulted by Germany. Many millions of Russians have been slain and tracts of Russian soil

devastated as a result of repeated German aggression. Russia has the right of reassurance against future attacks from the West, and we are going all the way with her to see that she gets it."

Yitzhak Rabin phrased it succinctly in a speech in 1992: "Whoever abandons the Golan endangers the existence of Israel."

For the Jewish people, the Golan has a fascinating history, largely associated with the post-biblical period and the revolt against Rome, its memories resonating historically as Jewish as those of Judea and Samaria. What has, moreover, been forgotten is that it was so recognized in the Mandate for Palestine.

Yes, most of the Golan was included in the territory envisaged for the establishment of the Jewish National Home in the Mandate in 1922. But the British, to whom the League of Nations had entrusted the Mandate as a trustee for the Jewish National Home, violated the Mandate and, a year after its promulgation, illegitimately gave away the Golan to Syria. Article 5 of the Mandate for Palestine reads:

"The Mandatory [power] shall be responsible to seeing that no Palestinian territory shall be ceded, or leased, or in any way placed under the control of the Government of any foreign power." That was in 1923. The British signed an agreement with France whereby in return for certain benefits to itself in Europe, Britain transferred the Golan to France. France then included the Golan in its own Mandate for Syria. When France's Mandate came to an end in 1945 and Syria became an independent sovereign state, Syria became also the mistress of the Golan; and therefore the Golan was turned into a powerful base for attacking – and destroying – the Jewish National Home.

The undignified decision of Israel's president, in a knee-jerk reaction to a seemingly softer tone from Damascus, to honor President Bashar Assad with a visit to Jerusalem indicates once again the ease with which Israeli political leaders constantly ignore the painful lessons of 50 years experience with the Arabs. They seem to forget Israel's national policy and the Golan's status as a part of Israel. Three prime ministers in turn acted out of the deluded belief that Syria would make peace with Israel if the Golan was given back. They did not grasp that Syria needs the Golan primarily as a base against Israel. They forgot the reasons why the Golan was incorporated into Israel and why it must remain there for good.

Israel can offer Syria peace and, indeed, economic and cultural cooperation – but Syria must first put an end to the promotion of terror and the harboring of terrorist organizations, the anti-Semitic politicization of children, and its virulent anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda.

But these are not matters for negotiation; putting an end to them is a normal basis of civilized behavior. Otherwise it is useless, indeed counterproductive, to call for negotiations for the sake of negotiating. (Jerusalem Post Jan 20)

*The writer, a co-founder with Menachem Begin of the Herut Party and member of the first Knesset, is a biographer and essayist.*

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#### **For an Israeli Tzumud** By Aharon Levran

We have recently been inundated with all sorts of putative solutions to the Palestinian conflict with Israel.

These range from the road map and the Geneva Accords to Ami Ayalon's petition campaign and Ariel Sharon's unilateral disengagement.

All these solutions are illusory. Something totally different is required – an Israeli *tzumud*, or relentless attachment to the land.

Supporters of unilateral disengagement start out from the fundamentally correct assumption that this conflict will be insoluble for generations and that peace is a mirage. However, they go on to reach an absurd conclusion, recalling the fable of the bridge with a large hole through which travelers fell. Instead of repairing the bridge, a hospital was built underneath it.

Instead of choosing the sole reasonable solution, defeating terror – which is possible, despite the difficulties – some government leaders are proposing flight from most areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

This is reminiscent of the panic-stricken withdrawal from Lebanon, which led to the current bloody and protracted terrorist war, launched even as the Palestinians were about to receive everything they desired on a plate.

It is difficult to see the sense in disengagement. Will there really be more security and less terror when we are hiding behind a fence, having left the territories to their fate? Will we receive acclaim from a world which rejects our unilateral action out of hand? Is it at all right to give in to people who encourage their sons to be suicide bombers?

Ariel Sharon attaches greater importance to security than to peace; but doesn't he grasp that a unilateral, Lebanon-style flight from Judea, Samaria and Gaza would only result in a deterioration of our security?

The assumption that terror will be halted by the fence will be revealed as an illusion. It will intensify in areas out of our control. And won't the IDF then have to reconquer all the places from which we have disengaged?

WHAT PHYSICAL and political unilateral disengagement means above all is that the Palestinians will establish a state with every sovereign attribute, the ultimate reward for terror. This state will increase their capability and motivation to fight Israel, which enforced its solution of disengagement on them.

Hasn't it already been abundantly demonstrated that concessions and withdrawals only increase terror? What if we provide absolute freedom to perpetrate it?

Moreover, isn't it clear that the claim for the return of Arab refugees – whose significance is ominous – is predominant in Palestinian politics? The consequent overcrowding of a relatively small area will lead to human distress, which will be channeled against the fence, as in the case of the successful mass march of Moroccans against Spanish Morocco.

The Palestinians will also be free to bring in weapons and make defense pacts with Iran and Syria. What will we do when the latter supply them with thousands of rockets and missiles for holding Israel cities hostage, as Hizbullah does? Teheran might even back them up with its Shihab missiles and nuclear potential.

If Israel continues to supervise the international crossing points, what kind of disengagement is this? The Palestinians will invite an international force to their territory, something Israel will be unable to prevent. Last, but not least, they will be able to pump water from the mountain aquifer and send us their sewage.

Supporters of separation have suddenly aroused fears of a demographic threat, but these are unsupported. Experience has shown that this danger is not imminent and that the solution does not lie in dividing the country into two states, but in territory outside its borders.

Since there is no real solution to the conflict, we should adopt the concept of the stubborn Palestinian struggle – *tzumud*.

After their defeats in 1948 and 1967, when they found themselves under Israeli rule, the Palestinians did not surrender to Israel's wishes. They remained entrenched in their places, their principles, and their positions without deviating from them in the least.

They were successful; the Israelis were the first to blink. If neither an arrangement nor peace are in sight, why shouldn't Israel perpetuate the current situation until a fundamental political and cultural change takes place on the other side?

The status quo is infinitely preferable to any political activity resulting from moral feebleness aimed at finding momentary favor or intended to supplant other unrealistic solutions. Reality proves that the current situation is the lesser evil.

Sharon, that stubborn farmer, must dig in his heels and not allow himself to be blown about like a leaf in the wind – for his own good, and history's.

*The writer is a retired general and strategic analyst. (Jerusalem Post Jan 20)*

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### **Learning to Love Islam** By Yossi Klein Halevi

In recent months I've had a strange and moving e-mail correspondence with my friend Irshad Manji. Irshad, a young Toronto journalist whose Indian-born parents fled Uganda after Idi Amin's takeover, has recently published a book called *The Trouble with Islam*, which takes the form of an extended open letter to her fellow Muslims. It's passionate, courageous, and astonishingly funny – just like Irshad herself.

Irshad's provocative point is contained in her title: The "trouble" isn't only with Islamism but with mainstream Islam itself. The glorification of jihad, the subjugation of women, the relegation of Jews and Christians to permanent inferior status (*dhimmitude*) – all are expressions of normative Islam.

Irshad is particularly outraged at Arab – and, by extension, Muslim – hatred of Israel. She understands what most of the world does not: that the Arab world's antipathy toward Israel is a monstrous attempt to deflect onto the Jewish state the terrible failure of its own civilization. And she has taken the time to examine all the little lies that together form the new big lie: that the Arab world is the innocent victim of a rapacious Israel.

Irshad notes the destructive role Islamic theology has played in the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to normative Islam, no non-Muslim sovereignty can be tolerated in lands once ruled by Islam. While that Islamic principle applies, for example, to Spain as well as to Israel, in Israel's case the offense is immeasurably greater, since the Jewish state is located in the Muslim heartland.

For years, many Israelis tried to deny the profound religious aspects of this conflict. And for good reason: A conflict over borders can be rationally negotiated, while a religious war can only be fought until one side concedes defeat. Yet after three years of jihadist terrorism, it's no longer possible to deny the religious overtones of this struggle. For if the intifada were merely a national uprising against occupation rather than a religious war against Jewish sovereignty, why haven't any of the suicide bombers been Palestinian Christians?

Islam, it is true, does make room under its rule for Jews and Christians – but that's precisely the problem. The operative phrase is "under its rule." The trouble with Islam's tolerance, then, is that it is essentially medieval. For Islam to grow, at least part of the faith needs to develop a modern model of religious pluralism as large parts of Christianity and Judaism have done in recent decades.

As a friend, as an Israeli, I cherish Irshad. With the publication of her book, Irshad has joined the moral elite of those ready to risk their lives for truth.

Still, for all my deep appreciation for Irshad, she and I have an ongoing argument. And what's poignant about our e-mail debates is that I, a religious Jew, have been trying to convince her about the need to emphasize not only Islam's problems but also its beauty and power, while she insists that her fellow Muslims need to hear the unadorned truth about Islam's dark side.

In her book she quotes one of my e-mails to her: "Your narrative needs more

love. Not for the mullahs but for the billions of souls over the centuries who prostrated on little embroidered prayer rugs and offered their small unhappy lives to God's glory." And here is Irshad's response to me as it appears in her book: "Excuse me for ruining the moment, but why should so many lives be 'small' and 'unhappy,' especially under a merciful God? And please don't tell me these things happen when religions are on the defensive, because even as Islam entered its golden age, lives were small and lies were big. Remember that the caliph al-Ma'mun trumpeted free will, yet flogged people for disagreeing with his interpretation of Islam. Not much has changed in that regard, has it?" And so allow me to explain why I cherish Islam.

In late 1998, I began a year-long pilgrimage into Islam (and Christianity), in Israel and the territories. My intention was to test whether a religious Jew could find a common language of devotion and prayer with Muslims and Christians. I joined Christian monastics in silent meditation and Sufi Muslim mystics in their exuberant dances and lived, as much as possible, according to their religious calendars.

During that year, I learned something of the power of Muslim prayer, which immerses the entire body in choreographed surrender. And I learned to feel at home in a mosque – an experience that now seems to me almost surreal.

But beyond its spiritual power, I learned that Islam, like all great religions, contains powerful tools for renewal and growth – including the potential capacity to reconcile with a Jewish state.

ONE SUCH tool is a Muslim's profound awareness of mortality. The dark side of that awareness, of course, is a brooding fatalism that nurtures the culture of suicide bombings. The positive side, though, is a Muslim ability to place the events of this life in the perspective of eternity.

Almost invariably, when arguing with a Muslim, I've been told "Why should we argue? How many more years do you and I have left in this world anyway?" The Palestinian equivalent to that conversation goes like this: "Why are we fighting over who owns the land when it's the land that owns us? After all, soon you and I will both belong to the earth..."

That humility before death can lead to the wisdom of compromise. As the Catholic Church has proven, even the most entrenched theologies of contempt toward another faith can change. And there are, after all, Muslims who have accepted Israel – from Turkey's Islamist rulers to leading Muslim clerics in the non-Arab world, especially Indonesia and India.

As the crisis in the Muslim world intensifies, reformers will need to draw on the spiritual resources within Islam to justify their political and theological innovations. Fortunately for us all, those resources amply exist.

Which brings me to my argument with Irshad. Of course Irshad is right that Muslims need to be told the truth, and that the religious equivalent of political correctness only encourages Muslim self-pity and evasion of self-criticism.

Still, Muslims also need to know that their faith, and their integrity as people of faith, aren't under attack. Easing Muslims' sense of cultural and spiritual siege – even as the necessary military siege against Islamist terrorism and its vast infrastructure intensifies – may help the reformist argument to be heard.

On second thought, perhaps Irshad and I aren't really arguing. As a Muslim dissident, struggling within the faith, Irshad can allow herself to speak bluntly to her fellow Muslims. And Irshad has, after all, written her angry book as a Muslim, not an ex-Muslim.

And that is crucial because the real war for the future of religion isn't being fought between competing faiths or even between secularists and believers but within each faith – between its fundamentalists, who limit God's greatness to the triumph of their way, and its pluralists, who believe that God is great enough to accommodate multiple paths to truth.

While Irshad has responsibilities as a Muslim dissident, non-Muslims have responsibilities too. Our critique of Islam requires a nuanced tone. We should offer Islam not just our criticism but our respect and, if possible, our love.

And Irshad – this justifiably enraged young woman who still insists on calling herself a Muslim – has given me one more reason to love Islam.

*The writer is author of *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land and an associate fellow at the Shalem Center.* (Jerusalem Post Jun 19)*

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