

 Jerusalem 4:25; Toronto 4:59

Events...

Tuesday January 28, 8:00pm

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

Tuesday January 28, 8:00pm

Chug Aliya meeting on spending a year or more in Israel, at BAYT.

Sunday February 2, 8:00pm

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

Commentary...

Lighting Up the Skies Over Ramallah By Michael Freund

Slowly but surely, the PA is trying to bleed Israel to death.

Brace yourselves, because it looks like Israel is about to squander yet another opportunity to rid itself of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority.

The impending American invasion of Iraq, and the diplomatic maneuvering that is sure to accompany it, will grip the world's attention, directing the international spotlight elsewhere and taking some of the heat off of the Jewish state, at least temporarily.

With Allied forces battling Saddam Hussein's terrorist regime in Baghdad, Israel will have greater freedom of movement than it has had in a good, long while to finally do away with Yasser Arafat's terrorist regime in Ramallah.

But don't count on it.

For, rather than setting the stage to take advantage of this opening, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appears to be doing precisely the opposite, reportedly telling the US that Israel will do its utmost to avoid a flare-up with the Palestinians while the battle for Baghdad rages on.

On the surface, Sharon's stance may seem pragmatic, even reasonable. After all, it is in Israel's interest to see Hussein's regime toppled, and his demise will certainly alter the political landscape of the region for the better.

But by making it clear that he will adopt a hands-off policy toward Arafat and the PA during the next Gulf War, Sharon is effectively giving the Palestinians a free hand to do as they please, since they need not fear an overwhelming Israeli response. Or, to put it more bluntly, Arafat now knows that he can go on killing Jews with virtual impunity.

Allowing this opportunity to pass by would be a tragic mistake. There have been several such occasions in the past when, with a bit of determination and resolve, Israel could have freed itself from the nightmare of Palestinian terror, but failed to do so. After the February-March 1996 wave of suicide bombings in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, for example, or last year's Passover massacre in Netanya.

These atrocities demonstrated exactly what type of regime Israel was dealing with. In both instances, the moment was ripe to send Arafat and his regime packing, but weakness, and lack of foresight, prevented that from occurring.

Just imagine how many innocent lives would have been saved, had the PA been removed from the scene. And consider how many future deaths can still be averted by taking steps now to get rid of Arafat and his cronies.

Come now, you might be thinking, the world would never let Israel get away with it, even if they are busy with Baghdad. After all, the front page of the New York Times is six columns wide, leaving plenty of room to rant and rave against the Jewish state should it decide to target the PA. Anger, though, is something we can live with. Terrorism, on the other hand, is not.

This past year was the worst since the state was founded in terms of terror. In 2002, a total of 453 Israelis were killed and 2,344 injured by Palestinian terrorists. That averages out to more than 1 Israeli killed and 6 injured per day, every day, over a 12-month period.

All told, in the 28 months since the Palestinian terror campaign began, some 720 Israelis have been murdered and another 5,052 others wounded. Slowly but surely, the PA is trying to bleed Israel to death, aiming to sap its resilience so it

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*

can move in for the kill.

In light of this ongoing and merciless assault, Israel has every right to march back into Gaza, Ramallah and elsewhere and take apart the Palestinian entity. Leaving the PA in place because of pressure from abroad is tantamount to placing a higher value on international opinion than on Jewish lives. And that is simply unacceptable.

Moreover, the US is already making clear that once the job is done in Baghdad, they will turn their attention back to forming a Palestinian state. In a January 17 interview with Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said that in the post-war environment, "our stake in pushing for a Palestinian state will grow."

The very idea of upgrading the current Palestinian entity into a full-fledged state is of course sheer madness, if only because such a step would merely enhance its ability to wreak havoc and mayhem on its neighbors.

To forestall such a possibility, then, Israel must seize the moment whenever it may arise over the next few weeks, and remove the PA from the equation. It must set the stage for a new post-war reality, one in which Yasser Arafat's terrorist regime, like Saddam Hussein's, will be little more than a dim, if somewhat painful, memory.

Twelve years ago, the first Gulf War began when the skies over Baghdad lit up with American airpower. In the coming weeks, that scenario is likely to repeat itself yet again.

Israel, too, must now be prepared to demonstrate a similar level of resolve. For only once "the skies over Ramallah have been illuminated", will the people of Israel at last be set free from the ongoing scourge of Palestinian terror.

And so, when America finally does take aim at its Iraqi foe, here's hoping that Israel will do the same, and remove the terrorist threat posed by the PA once and for all. (Jerusalem Post Jan 22)

The writer served as Deputy Director of Communications & Policy Planning in the Prime Minister's Office from 1996 to 1999.

Same as it Ever Was Jerusalem Post Editorial

Sometimes it seems that September 11 changed how everyone, but particularly the US administration, sees the world. An increasingly out-of-the-box Saddam Hussein is not to be ignored, but confronted. Yasser Arafat should not be wooed, but replaced. And democracy in the Arab world is not a threat to stability, but a key American objective.

Everything has changed, and yet one idea fixe seems to remain as enshrined as it ever was: settlements are an obstacle to peace.

As a sign of how pervasive this idea is, even the hawkish US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was quoted as saying that "dealing with settlements" was one of the "concrete steps" that must be taken after the expected war in Iraq.

Wolfowitz's comment was made to Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, who did not provide much context for the remark. There is little reason to predict based on this and other snippets coming out of Washington that settlements will be at the center of US post-Iraq policy.

But the fact that high-level Bush administration officials are even paying lip service to the centrality of settlements is worrisome, and betrays a case of old-think that calls into question America's understanding, not just of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but of the war against militant Islam in general.

The problem starts with terminology. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat claimed in a recent New York Times op-ed that there are 400,000 "settlers." The only way to even approach such an inflated figure is to include the Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem built since 1967, which even the most dovish Israelis would not consider evacuating.

But it gets worse. It is not just Palestinian "rejectionists," but the Palestinian Authority itself, that routinely refers to Israeli cities and towns as "settlements" and "colonies." According to a study by Palestinian Media Watch, Netanya, Hadera, Zichron Ya'akov, Kfar Saba, Acre, Petah Tikva, Ra'anana, and the kibbutzim have all been labeled "settlements" in the PA-controlled press. Jaffa, Haifa, Tiberias, Lod, Ramle, Safed, Caesarea, Beit She'an, and Acre have been tagged as "captured Palestinian cities." US officials who speak of the "settlement problem" may mean one thing, but when Palestinians speak of "settlements" they mean something quite

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different. The Palestinian narrative, Oslo Accords notwithstanding, has developed no basis to distinguish between settlements and Israel itself.

As Ehud Barak belatedly pointed out, Yasser Arafat does not even accept the existence of a Jewish people, let alone that this people has a right to self-determination in the area that was called Palestine.

To the Palestinian ears, then, the settlement problem is the Israel problem.

American preoccupation with the minutiae of caravans on barren hilltops, or how to define "natural growth," misses the point. Worse, it plays into the Palestinian attempt to distract from the real obstacle to peace, which is the refusal to accept a Jewish state, regardless of its borders.

It is possible that the Bush administration knows this, and that talk of settlements, like the road map, is simply a way of throwing a bone to the Europeans and Arab states that are upset over US plans in Iraq. Why complain about bones, when the meat - ousting Saddam - is so overwhelmingly going in the right direction?

The reason for concern is that the Bush administration has shown almost no signs that the penny has dropped: the Arab-Israeli conflict is not separate from, but a subset of militant Islam's war against the United States.

In this context, playing into the settlement distraction is a serious mistake. Settlements are not the obstacle to Israel's recognition; the refusal to recognize Israel is the obstacle to Bush's vision of two democratic states living together in peace. The more the Bush administration talks about settlements, the longer the Arab world can pretend that Israel, not their rejectionism, is holding up peace.

Imagine for a moment that the United States were to focus on Arab rejectionism, the real obstacle to peace. It would insist that Egypt and Jordan return their ambassadors to Israel, that Arab leaders enter face-to-face talks with Israeli leaders, that the "right of return" to Israel be renounced, and that a "warm peace" be sketched out for the day after permanent borders are drawn.

US policy should be restructured along these lines not just for Israel's sake, but for America's. Appeasing Arab rejectionism of Israel is the same as appeasing countries that harbor terrorism. Bush clearly understands that the latter just invites more terrorism, but he has not yet shown understanding that the former mistake is cut from the same cloth. Until Bush more fully integrates his thinking on the Arab-Israeli conflict into the wider war, he is facing the same enemy with contradictory strategies: moral clarity on the one hand and appeasement on the other. (Jerusalem Post Jan 20)

Aliya: Are You Coming or Going? By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

One of the most important - and emotional - subjects in the Jewish World today is the complex relationship between the Jews of Israel & the Jews of the Diaspora.

For centuries, this may have been a non-issue. But now it is one of the thorniest questions in the Jewish debate: What, exactly, is the responsibility of the Jews here to the Jews there, and vice-versa.

Like every other important subject, this, too, can be found in the Torah. And so we turn to this week's Sedra. There Moshe, on his way to Eretz Yisrael, confronts his father-in-law Chovav (Yitro) and implores him: "Come with us, & it will be good for you, for Hashem has spoken well of Bnei Yisrael." (10:28)

Yitro shakes his head. "I will not go; but to my land and my family I will go - Ki im el artzi v'el molad'ti eylech." In 7 choice words, Yitro employs the classic arguments against making Aliyah:

My LAND: "All my real estate, all my business interests, all my accumulated wealth is there. How can I leave it all behind for the uncertainty of an unsown land?"

MY Land: "The place I come from is 'mine.' I'm comfortable with the language there, the culture, the idioms, the weather, the ins & outs of that place. I feel at home there; I'll never, ever, acclimate to a new life in Israel."

My Family: "You know, family is everything. How am I going to leave my elderly parents, my brothers and sisters, my aunts and uncles? I need them, they need me, we need each other. IF they were all coming, OK. But THEY are staying put, so I have to do what the majority wants."

Moshe tries one more plea with Yitro: "I beg you, do not forsake us," & then he returns to his first point: "If you go with us, then the good which Hashem does for us, he will do for you, too."

Moshe the Wise knows that he cannot counter the emotional arguments of kin and comfort. So he reiterates the same promise Hashem told Avraham when he said "Lech-LECHA," go FOR YOU, namely: "ISRAEL IS GOOD FOR THE JEW!" While Diasporas appear comfy and cushy, they all eventually turn tragically hostile. Centuries of Jewish settlement in the Galut can disappear in short order, taking all the shuls, schools and people with it. History, alas, does not lie.

Does Yitro reconsider and come to Israel? No one knows for sure; the text doesn't say and the evidence is inconclusive. So, too, the ongoing tug-of-war over Aliyah remains - then and now - an open question. It is the answer to that question - in the hands of each and every Jew - which may very well determine the fate of Klal Yisrael. (Bet El Yeshiva Centre Jan 19)

My True Hero By Solly Ganor

I don't think there was a person in Israel who didn't watch the Shuttle Columbia blasting off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, yesterday.

We watched with trepidation and anxiety, but above all pride as the graceful white shuttle lifted off into the blue Florida sky, trailing a white plume behind it. For us Israelis, it was a special flight, because our own astronaut, colonel Ilan Ramon was among the crew, the first Israeli to enter space.

For a short while we allowed ourselves to forget our problems, our differences, even the coming elections, and were united in hailing colonel Ilan Ramon as our hero.

But for me, there was another hero: someone that was hardly mentioned in the Israeli media. If it weren't for an American TV station, which briefly stated that colonel Ilan Ramon's mother was an Auschwitz survivor, I too would have been ignorant of the fact.

To most us the fact that his mother was a Holocaust survivor from Auschwitz, would be baffling why I would call her a hero.

I will tell you why.

After the collapse of Hitler's Reich and our liberation in the beginning of May, 1945, I served in the US army as an interpreter. I was fortunate enough to have learned English during the war, a language that very few survivors spoke.

I served in a unit that was attached to the CIC, (Army Intelligence). We were eleven men, all of them, beside myself, American service men, who knew a second language besides their native English. Our Job was to find Nazis hiding among the displaced persons in the DP camps.

However, we also visited camps where only Jews lived, such as Feldafing, Fherenwald and more. For a while I was the interpreter for a colonel Woodhouse, who for some reason was attached to our unit. Colonel Woodhouse was an English psychiatrist who was sent to evaluate the mental state of the Jewish concentration camp survivors.

I will never forget his official evaluation. He didn't keep it a secret and I was able to read it. I came to the conclusion that the trauma caused to Jewish inmates of concentration camps was unprecedented in its severity and that they would never be able to live normal lives, get married and have children. I have known patients who were subjected to trauma that weren't even a fraction of the trauma the Jews were subjected to and they were psychologically disabled for life. Therefore, I see no hope for them.

Well, Colonel Woodhouse, allow me to introduce you to Mrs. Ramon, a Auschwitz survivor, who not only got married and brought children to this world, but brought up a son that anyone in the world would be proud of to call as his own, despite your prognosis.

Perhaps, from the medical point of view he was right, but he didn't count on the spirit of the survivors. When we were liberated we were almost naked, bereft of all possessions, clad in a prisoner's striped uniform and wooden clogs. We owned nothing, not even underwear, socks or a handkerchief. We were like walking skeletons, all skin and bones. My schooling was interrupted when I was twelve, and I was subjected to brutalities that mankind has never known. I was liberated from the Nazis, but what next? So I stood before a world, I considered hostile, age seventeen, and I had to make my way through it. And yet I did it and I did it well.

I don't know Mrs. Ramon, but today when I watched her son taking off into space, I am sure that she did more than well. Therefore, Mrs. Ramon, I salute you. You too are my hero. (NaomiRagen.com)

"Sherlock Holmes" Probes the BBC By Yehuda Avner

The BBC is a redoubtable establishment with a formidable reputation. Its World Service, which is currently celebrating its 70th anniversary, attracts an audience of 150 million listeners a week.

One man who was quite partial to the British Broadcasting Corporation was Menachem Begin. The first thing he did upon rising at five each morning was to switch on the BBC and wash and dress to the intoning of the news announcer speaking with the imperturbability of a cricket commentator during a somewhat dull moment in the match.

Begin loved the BBC's economy of style, its unexcitable precision and clarity of speech. His partiality stemmed from his days in the Irgun, when good English phrases were weapons, and he would sit glued to his wireless set in an inconspicuously cunning hideaway absorbing the bulletins and mastering the tongue.

In later years he would talk whimsically of those BBC language exercises in the underground. And like an aficionado of history who adores lampooning the foibles of the long-gone famous, he would take pleasure in charming overseas guests with stories of knotty BBC vocabulary tests he had set himself, like Disraeli roundly trouncing Gladstone across the parliamentary aisle, saying, "The honorable gentleman is a sophisticated rhetorician with the exuberance of his own verbosity." When the premier recited this nugget of hyperbole the words rolled trippingly off his tongue and his guests would lap it up delightedly.

Begin considered the BBC's coverage of world news professional, factual

and, by and large, trustworthy. On October 6, 1981, when word reached him that an attempt had been made on the life of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, he typically instructed his secretary to tune into the BBC. He himself used a special line to speak to the Israeli embassy in Cairo, but they could tell him nothing amidst the general mayhem. President Jimmy Carter broke in with a call from the White House to share the good news that Sadat had been only slightly wounded. The American ambassador in Cairo, Alfred Atherton, had told him so.

As more initial reports came through, the prime minister's secretary fiddled systematically with the radio, monitoring other stations as he searched for the BBC. The Voice of America repeated what Carter had told the prime minister. Radio Monte Carlo, on the other hand, said Sadat was mortally wounded and might already be dead.

Radio Free Europe alleged that the Egyptian president had walked away from the assassination attempt unscathed. And then the secretary finally alighted on the BBC, where its unflappable newsreader told his listeners that Anwar Sadat was dead, shot at the Cairo military parade that marked the eighth anniversary of the Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal at the start of the Yom Kippur War.

"Hinei, ha-BBC," muttered Begin, grimacing at the bad news "Zo ha'emet. Sadat nirtzah!" ("That's the BBC. It's the truth. Sadat's been murdered!") He gave instant instructions to set in motion an emergency stratagem for fear a military coup was under way in Cairo. One could see the arteries throbbing in his neck as he gave the order.

Such were the days when statesmen would sometimes make decisions based upon the reputation of the BBC. And whereas its commentators might spare no rod in criticizing this or that aspect of Israeli policy, its current-affairs producers were for the most part impartial, accurate and balanced, bound by the ethic of fair play.

A Royal Charter created the BBC in 1926. Over the years, in agreement with the British government, various procedures have been put into place to ensure accurate reporting, among them an official code of conduct called "the Producer's Guidelines." The Royal Charter requires the governors of the BBC to monitor and supervise compliance with this code.

Chapter 2 of the Guidelines states that "Due impartiality lies at the heart of the BBC. All BBC programs and services should be openminded, fair and show a respect for the truth. No significant strand of thought should go unselected or underrepresented on the BBC. The BBC is explicitly forbidden from broadcasting its own opinions on current affairs."

Thus, impartiality, truth, dispassion, fairness, accuracy, context, faithful representation - these are the ethics of the BBC. Fidelity to that code is what gave the corporation its monumental reputation as the gold standard of current affairs broadcasting.

Until the intifada, that is.

Just at a time when the Israeli journey turned suddenly perilous, the BBC's coverage of it turned suddenly rough. While professing to blow trusty horns of impartiality, its interviewers have become hostile, strident and clipped, without sympathy or empathy. BBC announcers uttering the word "Zionism," "settler" or "Sharon" seem to do so through a curled lip.

Opinionated, slanted and emotional advocacy have replaced accurate, honest, and straightforward journalism. Obfuscation has taken over from plain speech.

Ian Duncan Smith, leader of the British Conservative Party, speaking in Cardiff on December 9, told the BBC, "stop using platitudes and describing Hamas and Islamic Jihad by such euphemisms as 'radical' and 'militant.' Broadcasters should call these groups what they are: terrorist organizations. Such fudging of what Hamas or Islamic Jihad are confers a dangerous legitimacy on people who could easily extend their war of terror to this country."

Internet "bloggers," fair-minded folk with no axe to grind, have been posting their outrage and compiling rap sheets of blatant bias against Israel from those who claim objectivity and then broadcast their political views as facts. The psychological tentacles of innuendo, insinuation, and outright bias have seemingly so penetrated the BBC's corporate culture that some analysts conclude a pernicious virus has infected the system, malevolent to the Jewish state.

Thus, The Financial Times in its weekend edition of November 16/17, wrote: "In a study earlier this year of the BBC's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the British lawyer Trevor Asserson and [his research assistant] the Israeli lawyer Elisheva Mironi, the authors found that the BBC breaches its license agreement to be impartial by 'incorporating use of language, unbalanced reporting, inappropriate selection of material and distortion or omission of facts - a clear and significant trend of bias' against Israel and against Jews."

The study in question was an analysis by a prominent highly respected London solicitor. He has now published a second report, working with an impressive committee of academics and lawyers.

Oxford-trained and a senior partner in one of the world's largest law firms, Asserson first addressed the matter of alleged BBC bias in 1986, not with respect to Israel, but in the context of a British general election. He was at the time a member of the legal team instigated by former British foreign secretary David (now Lord) Owen to bring a high-profile action against the BBC for bias in its lack of coverage of the Social Democrats and Liberal parties in that election. The BBC settled the action and amended its policy rather than face its critics in the courtroom.

Applying a similar forensic technique, Asserson has now authored two reports (www.bbcwatch.com), exhuming a pattern of BBC bias against Israel. As meticulously documented as a coroner's inquest, Asserson shows how Britain's only tax-funded broad casting body, is, in fact, purveying biased views as news.

"We have found," says his Executive Summary, "that the BBC preserves a superficial impartiality by allotting broadly similar time to supporters of each side to the conflict. However, against most other criteria we have found the BBC to fall consistently short in its aim of impartial and accurate reporting. At times, by a mere selection or omission of facts, the BBC provides a report which portrays the very opposite of the truth."

"Frequently, the BBC is misleading. At times it appears to invent material to suit its own bias." Over two randomly selected periods of time, Asserson and his team analyzed the BBC's major coverage of the Middle East in its main news programs. Then, collating their findings into the two reports, they documented in devastating detail breach after breach of the BBC Guidelines, among them: emotive use of language; unbalanced reporting; selective use of material; distortion and omission of facts; unfair choice of interviewees; an almost consistent sympathetic portrayal of Yasser Arafat with no corresponding profile of a major Israeli leader; refusal to use the legal and dictionary definitions of the word "terrorist"; calculated omission of Israeli viewpoints; suppression of stories that do not suit the BBC world view; the abusive use of pictures; biased reporters expressing personal views, and an almost automatic attempt to find an anti-Israel angle to numerous news stories.

Asserson acknowledges that between the publication of his first report (March 2002) and his last (December 2002), a number of defects have become less blatant. For example, references to "occupied Palestinian land" are now rare. Instead, the less emotive "occupied land" is used. Arafat is now seldom referred as "president," but rather, correctly, as "chairman" of the Palestinian Authority.

This is fine. But when measured against the rich tapestry of partiality which the BBC weaves, it adds up to very little indeed. The overwhelming bias Asserson so conscientiously demonstrates, and which myriads of listeners and viewers sense daily for themselves, persists.

Which is why the Asserson Report concludes: "The BBC has significant power, heavy responsibilities and clear legal obligations. By failing to break out of its own cycle of inaccuracy and partiality in its reporting of the Middle East the BBC is abusing its power, behaving irresponsibly and is in breach of its legal obligations. If it is to maintain its reputation for impartial and accurate reporting we consider it should now put its house in order."

The question is, how? One answer may lie in the fact that, unusually for a news organization, the BBC's Guidelines are not mere aphorisms. They are mandatory. The BBC is a publicly funded body subject to legal redress enforceable in British courts.

And Asserson, with his meticulous magnifying glass and assiduous nose for evidence, might well turn out to be the Sherlock Holmes of the case, who, with the help of some keen and generous Dr. Watson, could unearth enough material to go to court. (Jerusalem Post Jan 17)

The writer served as Israeli ambassador to Britain.

The Problem with Mitzna by Yossi Klein Halevi:

The difference between peacemaking and appeasement is timing. At Camp David, where he tested the possibility of an end to the conflict, Ehud Barak was a peacemaker. At Taba, where he offered Yasser Arafat additional concessions after four months of terrorist war, he turned into an appeaser.

So too, during the first intifada, the Left's anguish over occupation was an essential sign of moral health. During the second intifada, though, self-recrimination over a reoccupation that's been forced on us by a genocidal jihad isn't a sign of moral vigor but of ideological rigidity and self-delusion.

Amram Mitzna's problem is timing.

He insists on repeating Labor's two fundamental disasters of the last decade: Yitzhak Rabin's empowerment of Arafat and Ehud Barak's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. Like Rabin, he would save Arafat from isolation; like Barak, he would signal the Palestinians that terror pays.

Colette Avital, one of Labor's more dovish Knesset members, recalls that after Barak's withdrawal from Lebanon, Palestinians she knew told her that now they too would have to begin "speaking Lebanese."

Not surprisingly, Mitzna's plan for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza has been cited by Hamas as vindication of terrorism. The morning of the bus bombing in Jerusalem's Kiryat Menachem neighborhood last November, Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi declared that such attacks are precisely what led Mitzna to seek withdrawal from Gaza. So much for the Left's assertion that Hamas prefers a Likud victory.

Though Mitzna hasn't presented a systematic program, a careful discernment of his pronouncements reveals a four-stage plan. Stage 1 is immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Gaza. Stage 2 is negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, with Mitzna offering approximate return to the 1967 borders in exchange for Palestinian withdrawal from the demand of

refugee return to Israel.

Mitzna would impose a one-year deadline on negotiations. If no deal emerges, Israel would then proceed to stage 3: unilateral withdrawal to borders we ourselves determine. But if Palestinian leaders eventually reconsider and waive the demand of refugee return, Israel would proceed to stage 4 and complete its withdrawal.

The plan is more complex than Mitzna's detractors admit, but is also hopelessly inconsistent. Its innovation lies in stages 2 and 3. Mitzna believes he may succeed in stage 2 because of the threat of stage 3: unilateral withdrawal to borders that would give Israel about 35 percent of the West Bank, including greater Jerusalem, settlement blocs and the Jordan Valley.

Mitzna's gamble is that the mere threat of those borders, which would leave the Palestinians with a shredded map, would force them to concede the demand for refugee return and make a deal.

The Palestinians would indeed dread the imposition of those untenable borders. But for the threat of that map to work, Palestinians would have to believe they risked missing their last chance for viable statehood - that is, no stage 4. By holding out the prospect of further negotiations over the remaining 35% of the territories, Mitzna fatally undermines the credibility of his threat.

The Palestinians would almost certainly pocket the 65% Mitzna would be ceding, and then resume the terrorist war from their new, enhanced borders, to force Israeli withdrawal from the rest. And by unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza at the very start of negotiations, Mitzna would be signaling the Palestinians that such a terror strategy would have every chance of succeeding.

Isn't Mitzna, the former general, aware of the strategic inconsistencies of his plan? Doesn't Mitzna, the decorated war hero, realize the consequences of withdrawal under fire?

To understand how Mitzna became an appeaser, one has to return to the first intifada, in which he served as West Bank commander. Like many of us who served there too in those years, Mitzna came to realize that the decades-long warnings of the Left against occupation had been prophetic. When one society is forced to mobilize its resources to suppress the national longings of another society, in the end it's the occupier who becomes the occupied.

Along with Mitzna, a majority of Israelis emerged from the first intifada desperate to end the occupation and ready for far-reaching compromise. The result was the empowerment of Arafat and the re-creation of the PLO's terrorist mini-state in southern Lebanon in the 1970s, except this time located minutes away from the center of Israel.

And so the second intifada has taught us that sometimes the cure is worse than the illness.

In the last two years, a new post-ideological majority has emerged that is ready to consider almost any measure to ensure security and also ready, in principle, to make almost any territorial concession for genuine peace. That majority of hard-line pragmatists lives between the insights of the first and second intifadas - that we cannot occupy the Palestinians and we cannot make peace with them.

Most Israelis today would agree that both greater Israel and Oslo were utopian delusions, wishful ideology imposed on reluctant reality. And they sense that the decades-long debate between Left and Right was in fact an argument between two partial truths: The Left understood the danger of occupation, while the Right understood the danger of appeasement.

Mitzna, though, has learned only the truth of the Left. He remains stuck in the first intifada, and hasn't absorbed the lessons of the second. Like all ideologues, he is capable of holding only one insight at a time.

Ironically, Sharon has revealed greater conceptual expansiveness. By conceding the inevitability of a Palestinian state, he has forfeited the dream of restoring the biblical heartland that animated his political career. The centrist majority won't forgive Labor for Oslo until party leaders offer a similarly clear admission: that the gamble of empowering one group of terrorists to control another group of terrorists was a disastrous miscalculation.

However improbably, Sharon managed to refashion himself from the symbol of our divisiveness into the embodiment of the centrist consensus. Sharon exchanged the wholeness of the land for the wholeness of the nation, becoming our most passionate advocate of national unity.

For that reason alone - despite everything he chose not to know about the scandals within his party and his family - Sharon remains the obvious choice for prime minister at a time of war, while Mitzna is an anachronism from another more ideological Israel. (Jerusalem Post Jan 17)

The writer is the Israel correspondent for the New Republic.

The Pieces of Peace By Yisrael Medad

On May 4, 1948, the President of Jerusalem's Hebrew University, Judah Magnes, despite his advanced sickness (he was to die later in September), was received by the Secretary of the United States. He had left Palestine some two weeks earlier. Magnes was one of Zionism's foremost peace promoters, a pacifist, a Reform rabbi and a behind-the-scenes go-between with the Grand Mufti since 1929. He had come with an idea how to stop the fighting that had broken out when Arabs attacked Jews on the morrow of the Partition Resolution of one half year earlier.

The minutes (published in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Vol. V, Part 2, 1976, 901-904) show to what extremes peace activists can and will go, and what dangers they trigger in their quest. Magnes' solution for ending the hostilities was incredibly simple: he proposed that America cut off the donations made by the Jewish community to the Zionist movement in Palestine. The record shows him saying: "the Jewish community in Palestine is an artificial development... if contributions from the United States were cut off, the Jewish war machine in Palestine would come to a halt for lack of financial fuel." Not content with that plan, Magnes sought to make sure that this "artificial development" would remain so, when he insisted that a trusteeship be instituted.

Still unsure how the US would act, the minutes read, "as Dr. Magnes was leaving, he asked permission to direct a very blunt question: 'do you think there is any chance to impose a solution on Palestine?'" The Secretary, George C. Marshall, replied, "Imposition of a regime implied the use of force... I did not think it was wise for the US alone to take the responsibility for military commitments in Palestine." Marshall, though, facilitated a meeting between Magnes and President Harry S. Truman the very next day.

Over a half century has elapsed and not much has changed. The Arabs are still engaged in terror and violence. Their religious leaders are now promoting suicidal bombings. Supplied by Israel, the European Union and the United States with money, advice, training and other wherewithals, the Palestinian Authority prepared for, and is now waging, a campaign of death against Jews, foreign workers, tourists and others. This campaign includes the brainwashing of schoolchildren through a mobilized curriculum of hate, and the propagandizing of the population through a harnessed media system and press.

To this end, Yasser Arafat and colleagues have subjugated the Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, denied them democracy, embezzled the foreign contributions intended to improve their lives, abused their human rights, disallowed their civil liberties and refused all attempts to reform the corruption and lack of administrative transparency that beset the Palestinian Authority. No new "Palestine" was established, but an old "Tunisia" was transferred to the shores of Gaza.

The essential venality of the entire enterprise has reached into Israel. Soldiers and others addicted to drugs have been selling weapons to Arabs, Israeli Arabs are participating in the terror, Arab MKs are serving foreign interests and subversively promoting the dismemberment of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and former security agents, such as Yossi Ginossar, have been skimming profits in the many millions of dollars.

Again, the picture is repeating itself. Faced one hundred years ago with the possibility of economic, health and social advancement, Arab nationalists rejected Zionism. Up until 1922, they did so in the name of Southern Syria aspirations and then, chancing on a better idea, they opposed the Jewish National Homeland with Palestine. Political violence began in 1920. In the following years, in addition to the hundreds of Jewish dead, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of Arab dead were sacrificed. And all through the Mandate years, Jewish peace activists and even peace militants, sought to serve the Arab cause in a messianic self-deluded vision, which sought to weaken Zionism. Their goals included renouncing the very idea of a state, halting Jewish immigration, removing Jewish 'colonies' (as the kibbutzim and moshavot were termed, prior to the current 'settlements'), rewarding Arab violence and, as the Magnes example indicates, the disarming of the Jews. Nothing, it seems, would serve as an obstacle in the path of their peace.

At present, Amram Mitzna is leading the opposition as chairman of the Labor Party in Israel. Not yet elected to the Knesset, and American Ambassador Dan Kurtzer has already paid a call on him, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has invited him for a courtesy visit, and his agent, MK Yossi Katz, was in Cairo. Former Peace Now leaders Tzali Reshef and Yuli Tamir are backing him. The pro-Palestinian B'tselem group is increasingly publishing its reports. A Philadelphia-based group, Shefa, is funding Israeli soldiers to refuse to serve. Mitzna himself has adopted a Magnes-like approach to solving the situation. He will not reject Arafat as a partner and will seek to negotiate a withdrawal, a la Lebanon, from the Gaza district in the first instance. And, if need be, he will retreat unilaterally in any case.

Why Arafat should even consider talking with Mitzna, given the already-promised end result, is beyond logic, it seems. However, all this activity can be understood if one realizes that the supreme value that has mutated into the status of the most-revered goal is peace. Not a Jewish state, not a secure state, not an economical viable state, but peace. If that is the measuring stick, then all becomes clear.

This clarity, however, is an apparition of the blind. It is immoral. The enthusiasm, the passion, the excitement of struggling for peace, for human rights, all lead to a very real possibility of existential danger for Israel, and further death and injury to its citizens, its guests and, in the end, to the Jewish dispersion. There is a peace of broken pieces.

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