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ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

Commentary...

Even Worse Than Oslo By Caroline Glick

In the latest orchestrated leak to the press, Thursday Ma'ariv reported the details of the unilateral withdrawal plan drafted for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon by his National Security Council. The plan involves the expulsion of Israelis not only from the Gush Katif, Kfar Darom and Netzarim in Gaza, but also from up to 25 additional towns in Judea and Samaria. According to the plan, the towns in Gaza that are set to be vacated will be transferred to an unidentified "somebody."

So now it is clear that the plan that Sharon has so far refused to present to his cabinet is not simply about a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. It is also about a unilateral withdrawal from Judea and Samaria. The fact that the prime minister has decided to shorten the security fence by some 170 kilometers to make it more or less coterminous with the 1949 armistice lines is further evidence that what Sharon has in mind is an Israeli surrender of just about all of the disputed territories to "somebody."

The NSC's plan also lists the obvious security vulnerabilities inherent in the unilateral withdrawal. These dangers include "an increase in terror; a disintegration of the Palestinian regime; a Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip; a humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories that Israel will be sucked into; an adjustment of terror organizations to the new circumstances with renewal of operations at a raised tempo; and damage to Israeli intelligence capabilities in the aftermath of the withdrawal."

Sharon's political machinations over the past few weeks indicate he is committed to moving forward with this plan regardless of consequences. Again, through orchestrated media leaks, we learned this week that he has already concluded negotiations with Labor Party leader Shimon Peres for Labor, a party resoundingly rejected by the voters in last year's elections, to join his government after he forces the National Union and the NRP to bolt his coalition.

Sharon has also leaked that he is considering bringing Shas into his government, perhaps as a result of a projected breakup of the Likud itself. Sources in the Likud have noted that the anti-withdrawal block already includes the legally required 15 MKs who together can leave the party and form a new parliamentary faction.

While our elected officials have so far received no opportunity to debate or vote on Sharon's plan in the cabinet (and have disgracefully demanded none), Sharon is aggressively promoting it to foreigners, with whose help he plans to push it through his government as a fait accompli. With the enthusiastic backing of our media, Sharon is engaging the Egyptian and US governments in in-depth discussions about the role they will play in implementing his plan.

After his meeting Thursday with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak agreed to amend the limitations placed on Egyptian military deployments in the Sinai by the Camp David Peace Accord and deploy units to man the border between Gaza and Egypt. As for Hamas, Mubarak told Israeli reporters that the movement is not his problem. "I don't want to talk about Hamas or any other organization. It's not my business. The Palestinians must bring security. As for Hamas, you created it," Mubarak said.

As for the Bush administration, Sharon hopes that the removal of Jews from up to 25 towns in Judea and Samaria will convince the president and his advisers to accept what former President Bill Clinton proposed in 2000, namely an American acceptance of Israeli civilian presence in Gush Etzion, Ariel and the Adumim bloc communities. Since negotiations are still ongoing, it is unclear whether President Bush will go as far as Clinton would have.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Sharon plan is how closely it follows the model of the Oslo Accords. Like the current initiative, the Oslo Accord was sold to the Israeli public as a way to withdraw from the hornet's nest of Gaza. The fact that Judea and Samaria were also being given away was aggressively downplayed by both the Rabin-Peres government and the media. Like the current plan, Oslo was negotiated without government or military oversight. Like the current plan, the dangers inherent in Oslo were known before the agreement was signed.

On the other hand, in many respects Oslo was better than what Sharon is

currently advocating. In 1993, the government had the luxury of innocence. It can be argued that both Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres believed that the PLO was a reasonable partner that would abide by its commitments to live at peace with Israel, combat terrorism and educate Palestinian society to live in peace with the Jewish state. This is not the case today. We already know that we have no credible Palestinian partner.

Oslo also provided us with diplomatic openings to many countries and enhanced Israel's diplomatic standing generally for a time. In the case of the Sharon plan, no such dividend is in the offing. The position of the international community remains that the plan cannot cancel the future need for additional concessions in Judea and Samaria and leaves the issues of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees on the table.

In addition, Oslo entailed the continued deployment of IDF troops in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. It also allowed the retention of an Israeli civilian presence in the territories and placed no restrictions on the right of that Israeli civilian presence to grow and develop freely.

Sharon's program allows for none of these things. The IDF will be redeployed out of Gaza and, it can be assumed, much of Judea and Samaria. We also know that when the Palestinians continue to attack us, the Europeans and the Americans will pressure our government "to exercise restraint" in responding. We know that the Egyptians will take no effective action to curb these assaults and we know that at the UN and other international fora, Israel will be condemned for taking any actions whatsoever to defend our citizenry from terrorist assault emanating from the areas under the control of "somebody."

Aside from the policy parallels to Oslo, Sharon's plan shares an additional similarity to Rabin's gamble. As was the case with Rabin, Sharon has offered his plan at a time when he was under no international pressure whatsoever to do anything of the sort. Rabin moved on Oslo because he wished to shore up his credibility domestically. In the 1992 elections he had promised to achieve an agreement "within a year."

The clock was ticking, so he moved. In Sharon's case, he has his legal woes and his sinking numbers in the polls to consider, so he too moves. The most stunning aspect of this plan is the fact that it is being advanced at the same time as another Middle East peace plan that actually could bring about a long term change for the better in our region. This plan, the Bush administration's Greater Middle East Initiative, involves pressuring Arab dictatorships like Egypt's to democratize. The very existence of the US initiative has already caused shockwaves throughout the Arab world. It is empowering voices of freedom from Damascus to Mecca to Cairo. For the first time, these voices are getting picked up by Western news organizations which for years stood by as they were repressed and silenced. Iraq this week took the incredible step of ratifying a constitution that will make the country the first Arab democracy ever. The potential repercussions of a stable pro-Western Iraqi democracy on the region are enormous.

And yet, again according to leaks to the press, we learn that Egypt will be paid off by the US for its declared willingness to deploy its military forces along the border. One can only assume that the price that Mubarak will exact is an American pledge not to apply even the slightest pressure on him to free his people from the yoke of his dictatorship.

For decades Likud leaders, from Begin to Shamir to Netanyahu, argued that the only way for Israel to ever live at peace with its neighbors is for these neighbors to become democracies. Since Israel has no power to force such a change, over the years, these leaders were subject to ridicule and calumny. Their belief in democracy was criticized as a tactic to forestall negotiations with the PLO and with the presidents-for-life in Egypt and Syria.

Yet, while Israel has no power to cause our neighbors to choose freedom and democracy, the US has such power. And today, rather than allowing the Bush administration to use this power, Sharon's wooing of Mubarak pulls the rug out from under an initiative that presents the only real chance of bringing peace and security to Israel in a way that can meet both the Arab and the Israeli needs.

Not surprisingly, the US plan was long debated both openly in the US press and behind closed doors. It was publicly launched by the president. The plan's credibility rests on the credibility the US gained in the Arab world as a result of its military victory in Iraq. If successful, it will advance US national security interests in the region by drying up the swamps of

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extremism that flourish in the darkness of totalitarian regimes. If it fails, the US is no worse off than it is today. That is, the plan is low risk and entails a potentially enormous payoff.

In sharp contrast, Sharon's plan is being advanced despite its high risks and unclear payoffs. It strengthens our enemies among the Palestinians. It enhances Mubarak's regional strength and reputation at the expense of the American sponsored nascent Iraqi democracy. It emboldens the Europeans and it pushes the US into a position where in the interests of "progress" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict it will be forced to undermine a plan that can actually bring peace.

And all of this it does while manipulating the Israeli people, through orchestrated leaks and behind the scenes discussions, to accept a government we rejected a year ago and a plan far worse than the one we were bamboozled into accepting 11 years ago. (Jerusalem Post Mar 14)

A Palestinian State Will Not Bring Peace By Shmuel Katz

At my age, I can't help but insist that people learn their history before they tell us how to "solve" the Arab-Israeli conflict. President George W. Bush's vision of "two states living side by side in peace" sounds nice – until it is subjected to a scrutiny of its factual components. The prophet Isaiah also had a vision of peace, about 3,000 years ago. It was a vision of the wolf dwelling with the lamb. He did not, however, suggest it as a practical policy.

Two salient facts relating to the perennial Arab hostility toward the Jewish people have been consistently ignored by "quick-fixers," including Jewish leaders and international policy makers. One is to grasp the extent of the deep antipathy Arabs have toward Jews.

By the middle of the 20th century, the Arabs states had succeeded in emptying their territories of Jews. After periods of pressure and persecution, some 800,000 of our people were forced out of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Aden.

In 1978, when Egyptian president Anwar Sadat received the Sinai from prime minister Menachem Begin as part of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, Sadat insisted that the relative handful of Jews living peacefully in Sinai had to be expelled. Without that expulsion there would be no treaty. Even the strategic advantage of Egypt's once more ruling Sinai were overridden in Sadat's heart by the almost primal desire to be rid of these Jews.

Thrice had Sinai, a territory almost empty of settled inhabitants, been used as a launching pad for war on Israel. The first war was launched as soon as the Jewish state was declared on May 14, 1948, after the Arab League warned the UN that it would not tolerate Israel's creation.

Nineteen years later, the Arab states, having failed to abort Israel's birth in 1948, decided to try for its destruction. Under the leadership of Egypt's Gamal Nasser they launched what became the Six Day War. In this contest they lost completely. Israel regained Judea and Samaria, which Transjordan had brazenly "annexed" after 1948. Israel also regained the Gaza Strip, which Egypt had captured in 1948.

The Arabs had been so sure of victory that the war was advertised weeks in advance (and had Israel's Jews building shelters, digging trenches and making room in hospitals). Then, when Israel won conclusively, our government offered to cede the reconquered territory in return for peace. The offer was rejected: "No peace, no negotiations, no recognition of Israel" came the reply from the Arab League.

A second salient fact also too often forgotten by the "experts" who have fast-fix formulae for peace is that those rejections of peaceful gestures – like the wars Israel was forced to fight – were not the work of "Palestinians" but of the combined Arab states, led by Egypt, Syria and Jordan. No political entity called "Palestine" or "Palestinians" existed. It was only after 1967 that the Arabs of Palestine expanded worldwide the pan-Arab campaign for the elimination of Israel, using "Palestinianism" as a tool.

It may not be fashionable to say so, but the evidence is overwhelming: If the Arabs were given a state in a part of Palestine, they would surely accept it as the next of the "phases" for attaining the rest of the country – which they have been forecasting for years. It would inevitably make a serious contribution to the grievous weakening of Israel, strategically and politically. It is illusory in the extreme – and shockingly misleading – to suggest that it will bring peace.

All the evidence that crowds into our minds at the thought of a Palestinian Arab state squeezed into the heart of the Land of Israel cries out against it. The facts such a state would create on the ground (including an immediate and unprelatable membership of the Arab League) would only enhance the weapons of terror and inflame the pan-Arab threat of annihilatory war against Israel.

As for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan: By his manipulations within our parliamentary democracy, his intention to expel Jews from their homes in their homeland, and his evident intention to give us "more of the same" in Judea and Samaria, he is leading our people on a march of folly. As historian Barbara Tuchman wrote in the book of that name, there have been many leaders throughout the ages, in places from Troy to Vietnam who, heedless of logic and experience, determinedly led their people to disaster. (Jerusalem Post Mar 16)

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

Justice Trampled Jerusalem Post Editorial

The lack of minimal equity in what is demanded of Israel and what is requested of the Palestinian Authority in the way of confidence-building measures isn't incidental. It goes to the heart of the difficulties to reach accommodation and end hostilities. Nowhere is this more evident than in issues involving prisoners.

Deputy Internal Security Minister Ya'acov Edri is leading a parliamentary initiative to restore a modicum of common sense and fairness to the equation. He demands that the double standard be erased, that Israel not yield to international pressure to permit a wholesale release of captured and duly convicted terrorists, especially if the PA doesn't reprieve those of its people sentenced to death for having allegedly assisted to thwart terrorists.

He rightly notes that even if the hapless Palestinians on death row had nothing to do with Israel, but were the victims of internal power struggles and shakedown maneuvers, the very perception that they were tied to Israel obliges this country to do its utmost to prevent their cruel public execution. Otherwise Israel will signal all Palestinians that it cannot be counted upon by anyone who casts his lot with it.

That indeed is so on the most primary practical level. But there is more. The fate of those sentenced to die for association with Israelis is nothing less than a litmus test for PA intentions on all issues.

The PA undertook to eradicate terrorism. It will be doing the opposite if it executes those accused of having attempted to foil terrorists – at precisely the moment when the international community is demanding that the PA do the same.

Moreover, executions for alleged collusion with Israelis augur ill for the prospects for coexistence. If cooperation, another ceremonious PA commitment, constitutes grounds for the most horrific of penalties, then the PA again forfeits our trust.

The same applies to its demand that Israel release many more prisoners, above and beyond the 500 recently freed. The bottom line implication is that the blood of Israelis, which stains the hands of prisoners the PA strives to liberate, is of no consequence. The continued incarceration of these terrorists is somehow deemed as illegitimate, regardless of the fact that those convicted in court were all tried with full respect for due process and to their civil rights, respect that remains woefully non-existent in the PA land of legal horrors.

The inescapable inference is that Israel isn't entitled to apprehend, prosecute and lock up those who indiscriminately target its populace, and that convicted mass murderers are akin in PA eyes to prisoners of conscience jailed unjustly by a repressive regime.

Edri does well to link the death sentences against supposed terror-impeders and the incessant clamoring for the release of apprehended terrorists. Had the PA's intentions been truly honorable, its immediate desire should be to remove even more terrorists from circulation and to do exactly what it accuses its death row inmates of having attempted. Instead it is trying to terminate those it says collaborated against terror, while increasing the numbers of terrorists at large.

Foremost among the latter are those it reluctantly imprisoned for the slaying of tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi. A peace-bound PA should want them behind bars. The aspiration to spring them threatens to blur all distinctions between Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Arafat.

Something is dreadfully wrong with this picture. We can only hope that Edri manages to convince all involved that the cause of peace wouldn't be served if skewed standards remain unchallenged. It is inconceivable that convictions by an independent judicial system be set aside as if invalid, while capital punishment meted out by kangaroo courts is condoned.

This isn't only of local interest but is something for the international community to ponder deeply. If it sincerely seeks to democratize this region, it cannot remain apathetic to despotism and gross miscarriages of justice by the Palestinians, while agitating against and dismissing the judgments of one of the most upright judiciaries in the entire free world.

The recent London conference hosted by Prime Minister Tony Blair set PA judicial reform high on its agenda. If Blair and others are silent now as justice is so blatantly trampled, why should the PA take the West's reform agenda seriously? (Jerusalem Post Mar 16)

For the Love of Galut By Moshe Kohn z"l

One of the tragic aspects of the "territory for words" arrangements we have allowed others to impose on us is the glee with which certain Jews have hailed what they call "the death of the Greater Israel dream."

Of course, there never was, and there is not now, a Greater Israel dream. There was, and there still is, a dream of restored Jewish national sovereignty in all of historic Eretz Yisrael. And I'm sure this dream will continue to live in the hearts of sufficient numbers of Jews even after we have surrendered chunks of Eretz Yisrael to the PA.

It will continue to live just as it lived in the hearts of nearly all Jews throughout the centuries of Exile. It lived even after our leaders had been forced to accept the Churchill White Paper of 1922 severing the east bank of the Jordan River from the internationally recognized Palestine Mandate. It

lived even after the 1947-1948 Arab aggression and the occupation and annexation of large parts of Judea and Samaria, the cradle of Jewish history in this land, by Jordan.

Our dream of restored Jewish sovereignty in historic Jerusalem lived even during the 19 years after Jordan occupied and annexed that part of the city and, in violation of the Jordan-Israel Armistice Agreement, forbade the entry of Jews to the ancient Jewish holy places and modern Jewish institutions there, most notably the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives cemetery, the Hebrew University, and Hadassah Hospital.

The dream lived throughout those separations, and numerous Jews here – both Orthodox and other – continued to educate their children concerning historic Eretz Yisrael.

For nearly all, however, this education included the pragmatic reservation that total restoration was a dream to be fulfilled only when Messiah came. Only a tiny handful, inspired by the educator Dr. Yisrael Eldad and the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, thought of initiating a war to try to regain those areas of Judea and Samaria and eastern Jerusalem. Yet, after 1948 nearly everyone – Orthodox and other, right wing to moderate left wing – "knew" that if the Arabs should initiate a war, we would, with the help of God and the IDF, make as clean a sweep of it as possible.

And that is nearly what we did in the 1967 Six Day War.

Today, although the dream still lives in the hearts of a sufficient number of Jews, the number seems to have diminished considerably, and, barring a salutary spiritual upheaval, will in the near future shrink even further.

No less serious is the fact that for the overwhelming majority of Jews throughout the generations of Exile the dream was not impelling enough to bring them home to Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, they did not even consider it operational, but something to be reserved for devout lip service in the prayers.

In words that apply perfectly to contemporary Diaspora Jewry, even to the Zionists and their leaders, Orthodox and other, the 18th-century Rabbi Ya'acov Emden summed it up as follows in "Sullam Beit-El," his foreword to Beit Ya'acov, the prayerbook he edited and published: "...What sustained us in our bitter Exile ... was the thought of the Land [Eretz Yisrael]. But when we forgot about settling in the Land, we were ourselves forgotten, like the dead.... Hearts stopped longing for the Land and even stopped longing to behold it, imagining, whenever they found a little respite somewhere outside the Land, that they had found a new Eretz Yisrael and a new Jerusalem.... And they completely forgot that they were in Exile, and they mingled with the people among whom they lived, and learned their ways, finally assimilating into them...."

Now Rabbi Emden delivers a blow to the solar plexus: "It is strange how Jews spare no effort and expense in meticulously observing all the other mitzvot, but are so negligent and lazy about the precious mitzva of living in the Land, on whose observance all the rest of the Torah depends...."

How different our national history, especially in Eretz Yisrael, would have been if we had possessed a stronger urge to assume the burden and privilege of sovereign responsibility for our national destiny.

The historic aliyot of the past two centuries brought barely a few hundred Jews in each instance, while many hundreds of thousands of Jews streamed from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, the Americas, and the other English-speaking countries.

In the early years of the British occupation after World War I, a precious few Jews took advantage of the country's wide-open gates to come home. In Eastern Europe, some of the leading rabbis were cautioning their flocks against going to "Zionist-contaminated" Eretz Yisrael, or even to America.

How different Israel's Jewish demographic situation and our geopolitical situation would be today if 65% of the Jewish people had come home in time and only 35% were in the Diaspora, rather than the reverse. For one thing, far many more of those pre-1948 Jewless areas in Judea and Samaria and far many more of those post-1967 barren areas would have been inhabited, productively worked, and protected by Jews.... (Jerusalem Post Mar 13)

The above is excerpted from the writer's 'A View from Nov' column, which ran in The Jerusalem Post Magazine. He passed away this past week.

Who We Are: A Shul Profile By Arthur Rosenzweig

The following is the introduction given by the President of the BAYT Brotherhood of our guest last Shabbat, Rabbi Binyamin Elon, MK.

On behalf of the BAYT Brotherhood, it is my pleasure to welcome you here tonight, to share a Shabbat Dinner and Oneg Shabbat with our distinguished guest, a member of the Knesset, former Minister of Tourism, former Rosh Yeshiva, Chairman of the National Union Faction and of the Moledet Party, Rav Benny Elon. We welcome the President of the Jerusalem Capital Development Fund, Chaim Silberstein. And we also welcome Rabbi David Hill from New York, past National President of Young Israel Synagogues of America, a lifelong activist for the plight of Soviet Jewry, and together with his wife, Lenore, they are Mechaitunim to Marcee and me.

Before I proceed, on behalf of everyone here tonight, I would like to thank Florence Dimant and Julia Weintraub for planning tonight's menu, selecting the decorum of the room, and being the liason with Jacobs Catering. After the Brotherhood's Shabbat Shira Dinner, Juli gave us some very good suggestions. We were receptive and thank her and Freydel for all their work. If you have a simcha coming up, I recommend you get a pro. Go with the Flo. Thank you,

ladies.

Rav Elon will present his main address at the Oneg Shabbat that will follow this dinner. At that time, I will make a brief introduction of Rav Elon. But, at this time, I would like to take some time to review our Shul's connection to Eretz Yisrael and, our yichas to Rav Elon.

Twelve years ago, under the Chairmanship of Larry Zeifman, the BAYT twinned with the City of Bet El, in Yesha. The twinning was our Shul's expression of support to Eretz Yisrael and specifically to those on the front lines. The twinning gave rise to the publication of the weekly Israel News which has been distributed throughout the City and several other cities for the last ten years, the formation of the Shul's Israel Action Committee, the visits of Israeli dignitaries to our Shul, most notably, Katzele, and the three Brotherhood Missions to Eretz Yisrael, each led by our Mora Datra, Rav Taub, that predominately visit Yesha.

We have been honoured to have Rav Benny Elon address us on each mission. On the first mission, Rav Elon presented the Elon Plan to us, in a small Bet Midrash, that had no air conditioning, in the Shimon Hatzaddik neighbourhood of East Yerushalayim, a project of the Jerusalem Capital Development Fund. On the second and third missions, Rav Elon drove in to our hotel in Yerushalayim from his home in Bet El, right after Shabbat, to address us at our reception for our children and neighbours who were studying in Eretz Yisrael or who had made aliyah. Rav Elon, we thank you for the effort and for finding time for us in your very hectic schedule.

What was the purpose of the BAYT Brotherhood Mission to Eretz Yisrael?

Our Mission was to bring *Chizuk* to our fellow Jews in Yesha: Yehuda, Shomron and Azza. It did not take long to figure out that it was us deriving more *Chizuk* than we were providing. On each mission, we met outstanding people and visited remarkable places. But above all, I found that on each Mission, we developed a better understanding of the situation in Eretz Yisrael and about our own connection to the people of Yisrael and to the land of Israel.

It all started in Parshat Lech Lecha, when Hashem promised Avraham that he will become a people and inherit a land. The Brit with Avraham was based on three distinct elements. Hashem, our God, represented by the Torah. Our people, Am Yisrael. And our land, Eretz Yisrael. The Torah was given to us. It will always be ours. We have free will to follow the Torah, or not to follow its ways. Regardless, the Torah remains ours. But when Hashem gave us Eretz Yisrael as a Yerusha, Hashem gave it to us as "*l'achuzat Olam*". An Eternal possession. A possession is ours when we hold onto it. *L'echoz*...to grasp. When we don't grasp, when we don't take a hold of Eretz Yisrael, it remains our *Yerusha*, but we don't possess it. Unlike the Torah, we, the Jewish people, have to make the effort, take the action, to possess Eretz Yisrael.

For two thousand years, the Jewish people lived in the Galut. We lived with only two of the three elements in the Brit between Hashem and Avraham. We were a People and we had our Torah, but we did not have our Land. Eretz Yisrael is our Yerusha. We had title but no possession. Undoubtedly, we survived as a people during those two thousand years because we had our Torah. We survived but we did not thrive. Two thousand years of misery, persecution, isolation, and poverty for the majority of Jews.

Several of us in this room tonight, gather each Shabbat for the "Sixty Second" Dvar Torah presented by Rav Daniel Weicman. Two weeks ago, on Parshat Ki Tisa, Rav Weicman made a reference to the following. Yehoshua waited for Moshe at the foot of Har Sinai. When Moshe came down after forty days with the Luchot, they heard the noise from the Camp which was actually the worship of the *Egel Hazahav*, the Golden Calf. Yehoshua said to Moshe, sounds like *Kol Milchama*, the sound of battle. But, he continued, *Ein Kol Anot Kevurah*, it is not a sound shouting strength. Indeed, it was not a sound of victory. How could it be? The Jews were not familiar with the sound of victory. They had never had a taste of victory. They had been slaves for 210 years.

My friends, for 2000 years of Galut, we the Jewish people, did not know the sound of victory. We survived but we did not thrive. We were a People with a Torah, but without a Land. We survived but we did not thrive.

When the Mission visits Yesha, we hear the *Kol Anot Gevura*. The sound of strength. The sound of thriving, not just surviving. When we have all three elements, the People, the Torah and the Land, we, as individuals and as a people, can grasp intellectually that we must live our lives with purpose and take control of our destiny. We only thrive as: One People. With One Torah. With One Land.

On the first mission, we visited the girls' high school in Bet El, where Rav Elon lives with his family. The people of Bet El dedicated a room used for counseling students in memory of our beloved Rebbitzin Judy, A"H. The people of Bet El dedicated the room. They did not ask us, their twin community, the wealthy Canadians, to pay for the dedication. They should have, but they did not. They made the dedication because over the years Katzele got to know our Shul, our Rav, and our Rebbitzin. Katzele knew the Woman of Valor that our Rebbitzen was. Katzele knew the honour that was becoming of such a person.

One People. One Torah. One Land. As we sat in the school during the

dedication, I could not get over how much those beautiful girls look, dress and act just like our girls right here in Thornhill. We could have been sitting right here in our own Shul. And now they had Judy as a role model. One People.

On the second mission, we were back in Bet El at the army base for the dedication of Sifrei Torah and mobile Batei Knesset in memory of our Brother, David, A”H. The Chief Rabbi of Tzahal, Rav Yisrael Weiss, had addressed us at the dedication. We had lunch on the base where the Chief Rabbi of Central Command, Rav Lt. Colonel Yehuda Vizner spoke to us. He told us that over the years he had attended many dedications of Sifrei Torah, but he had never felt such strong emotions as he did at this one. He then literarily broke down into tears. He explained that he understands in principle, in theory, that the Jewish people are one. But sitting with our mission, at an army base on the West Bank in Bet El, he was overwhelmed by the reality that Jews from across the ocean really do stand with the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. One People. One Torah. One Land.

On the third mission, we visited, for the third year in a row, the Mechina in Atzmona, which is located in Gush Katif, in Azza. The Mechina is a prep school for students who have completed high school and are preparing for their army duty. On March 7, 2002, a terrorist infiltrated the Mechina and murdered five talmidim, including Asher Marcus whose family had made aliyah from Toronto.

The Mechina is led by a very powerful figure, the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Rafi Peretz, a tall, fit man who walks around with an Uzi strapped over his shoulder, and who is an active Reserve Pilot in the Israeli Air Force. I wish that each person in this room tonight, could see first hand the special bond that Rav Taub has developed with Rav Peretz. Rav Taub, don’t even think about the Uzi.

Think about the concept of the Mechina. Preparing boys for the army in a Torah-Yeshiva environment while living on the front line in Azza. That feeling of love combined with that feeling of purpose is what makes us such a special people.

As you all know, the 21 settlements in Azza are slated for disengagement. The planned disengagement did not stop us from coming to Azza last December to make a dedication on behalf of our Shul in memory of our Rebbitzin Judy. The Mechina has a one room building that is a memorial to the five Talmidim who were murdered along with nine graduates who lost their lives in the army or were killed by terrorists. There are pictures of each individual and a computer that provides a history for each. Among them is Daniel Mandel, A”H, whose family made aliyah from right here from Toronto. Daniel’s mother runs the Judaica Centre at Gush Etzion. Our Shul dedicated this room in memory of our Rebbitzin Judy, A”H. We brought those boys a Mother to watch over them while their birth mothers cry for them here on Earth. One People. One Torah. One Land.

Rav Benny Elon is dedicated to the preservation of an undivided Yerushalayim as the Eternal Capital of Eretz Yisrael and Yesha as an Eternal part of Eretz Yisrael. I find it fascinating that Rav Elon has tremendous support from the Christian Evangelist faction. You know I often wonder about those Evangelists. They are always quoting from the Testament. But their book only has the text. No Rashi. No Unkelos. No Ramban. No volumes of texts of interpretation. Look at what they are missing. And then I think, maybe it is us who are missing something. Maybe we pay too much attention to the interpretations and not enough to the actual text.

Avraham was told that there were ten nations occupying the Land of Canaan. Seven of those ten nations did not abide by the Seven Laws of Noah, the seven laws of basic human decency, including Thou Shalt Not Murder. In Parshat VaEtchanan, Perek Zayen, Pasuk Aleph and Bet, the Torah addresses how the Bnai Yisrael should deal with those seven nations occupying their land, Eretz Yisrael: *Ki Yeviacha Hashem Elochecha el Haaretz Asher Ata Ba Shama L’Rishita* When Hashem brings you to the Land that you will inherit... *Unetanam Hashem Elochecha Lephanecha V’Hekeetam* Hashem will deliver before you the nations occupying the land and you shall smite them *Hacharem Dacharem Otum* You must wipe them out *Lo tichrot lahem brit* Do not sign a peace treaty with them *V’Lo Tenachem* And above all, do not give them any recognition. No Oslo Accords. No Camp David handshake. No Road Map. *Hacharem Dacharem Otum* as long as they are not prepared to abide by the very basic code of decency, Thou Shalt Not Murder. Right there in the text. Right there, in our Torah.

Rav Elon, they refer to you as a Right Wing politician. Maybe you are simply a Jew following the Torah. We are sure that you are not a Christian Evangelist.. We do however know that you have dedicated your life to the survival, to the netzach of Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. And for this, we thank you.

Rav Elon, you have come here to convey to us your message. However, at this moment, I am going to present you with a message of hope from our Kehilla, Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto.

Rav Elon, our Shul is one of the most unique Shuls in the whole world. We have members from every religious background. Those who wear black hats, those who wear kipot srugot and those who wear silk kipas. But we are united as one because our Rav and our Rebbitzin, A”H, made it their goal when they undertook to lead our Kehilla almost twenty-five years ago, that this would be a Kehilla of achdut, with love for each other, love of our Torah and love of Eretz Yisrael.

The hope for a strong Eretz Yisrael is manifested in our most cherished

possessions. Eretz Yisrael has our children.

Our children do not have the burden of 2000 years of Galut on their minds. Our children do know the *Kol Anot Gevura*. The strong voice of victory. They know the victory of the Six Day War and the victory of the Yom Kippur War. They have witnessed the world wide recognition of distinguished and accomplished Israelis in the fields of science, technology, arts, sports and even outer space.

Over all the years, many of our young men and women have spent a year or more learning in Yeshivot and Seminaries in Eretz Yisrael. Our children came back to Israel after Sabarros. A suicide bomber blew up Chesi Goldberg, the brother of our member Aaron Goldberg, and our children came back in bigger numbers and stayed longer. Today we have some 50 children from our Shul learning in Eretz Yisrael. And you know what, Rav Elon. Our children are going and many are staying. Many are in Tzahal.

Rav Elon, I am going to tell you a little about the children of people sitting in this room tonight.

Ten years ago, Simon Weintraub joined the Hesder program and served in Tzahal. Simon went to law school at Bar Ilan. Simon was married in Israel. Today, Simon and his wife, Danielle, live in Modiin with their children, Gefen and Daveed.

Dr. and Mrs. Stern have two daughters living in Israel. One has been living there for ten years, the second for seven years.

Seven years ago, Aviva Dimant and her husband, Simi Zeleniec moved to Israel. They live in Yerushalayim with their three children.

Six years ago, Yoni Stanleigh moved to Israel. Today he is in Medical School and lives with his wife, Naomi, in Yerushalayim.

In 2000, Dr. Jonah Kruger, along with Doctors Jay Wohlgernter, whose family are members of our Shul, and Yoel Greenwald, whose parents have joined two of our missions, made aliyah after graduating from medical school. Jonah interned at Shaare Tzedek and served in a combat unit for 18 months infiltrating some of the most dangerous Palestinian towns there are. We visited him at his base in Otniel on our first mission. Jonah married in Israel and lives with his wife, Naomi, in Modiin. Last December, Jonah’s older brother and sister-in-law, Doctors Josh and Tammy Kruger made aliyah with their children, Ariel and Adin.

Five years ago, Chana Zeifman went to Israel to study. Chana is still there living in Katamon with her husband, Eli, and children Hadar and Shlomit. Her brother, Ian Zeifman is in Israel studying at Yeshivat Hakotel.

Toba Zigelman and her husband Ilan moved to Modiin where they live with their children, Tzvi and Aliana Miriam.

Miriam Samuel has been living in Tsfat since 2003 and her aliyah is imminent. Her brother, Yoni, is also studying in Tsfat.

Joelle Tollinsky has been living in Yerushalayim since December, 2003.

Ilana Syrtash is studying at a Seminary in Yerushalayim affiliated with Stern College.

Michael Rand is learning in Yeshivat Shalavim for a second year.

Eight years ago, Dana Kaplan and her husband, Joe made aliyah. They live there with their children, Shalom, Zahava and Binyamin. Dana’s younger sister, Tamara, moved to Yerushalayim three years ago.

Dina Goldschmiedt would only marry a man who was prepared to make aliyah immediately. Dina lives in Beit Shemesh with her husband, Jeremy, and daughters Ilanit and Leat.

Aaron Rosenzweig has been in Israel for the last three years and is completing the Hesder program. God willing, Aaron will be making aliyah this August.

Shira Tepperman lives with her husband, Avi and daughter, Emunah, in Neve Dekalim, in Azza. On the second mission, the mission visited their home. Shira’s brother, Ari, is currently in Tzahal.

Rav Elon, as you can now see, the *Kol Anot Gevura*, sounds strong and clear in this Kehillah.

On the merit of our children, who learned and experienced the concept of One People, One Torah, One Land right here in this Shul, may Hashem grant real peace in Eretz Yisrael.

On the merit of our children, may Hashem ensure that every Chayal returns home each night safe and sound and that there are no more victims of terror. No more Kobi Mandells. No more Dr. David and Nava Applebaums. No more Chezi Goldbergs.

On the merit of our children, may Am Yisrael have an Achuzah, a possession of Eretz Yisrael for Eternity.

And on the merit of our children, may the Government of Israel make the right decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honour to call upon Rav Elon to speak to us.

The dinner in Rav Elon’s honour coincided with the Shalom Zachor for Arthur’s grandson. A hearty mazel tov to Arthur, Marcee, Zevi, Aura and the entire family.