



## Quote of the Week...

"It is characteristic of people under siege or chronic attack - whether you're talking about minorities that are marginalized, defamed and attacked or a small state under attack by larger neighbors - it is characteristic of portions of those populations to embrace the indictments, however bizarre, and to believe that if they perform in a way consistent with those indictments, then the siege will.

"Abused children always blame themselves for the abuse because they want to believe that they can have control over a situation that is really beyond their control. They believe that if they can change their behavior they can make their situation better.

"The hope is that if they just accept the indictment, if they just repress the recognition that they are being attacked unfairly, and try to change accordingly that somehow they'll win relief from their attackers."

"It's a very old problem, characteristic of Jews throughout the Diaspora. There were segments of the population that consistently embraced the indictments of the Jews' enemies when Jews were being attacked, and it is characteristic of Israel during the chronic Arab siege.

"The people who led Israel's engagement in the Oslo process completely ignored what the Arabs were saying to each other and what Arafat was saying to his people in Arabic, what he had his schools teaching, and what he had his associates in the PA saying to their constituents. Instead, if Arafat said something positive in English, they would just grab onto that, or even if it was hinted at they would extrapolate. They wanted to believe, they were so desperate for an end to the siege. They wanted to believe, despite all the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

"They created a partner that didn't exist. They created this image of the other side that was prepared to give them peace in response/exchange for Israeli withdrawals. But that partner did not exist; it was a figment of the imagination. They ignored what Arafat was saying on the very night of that famous Arafat/Rabin handshake on the White House lawn. Arafat spoke on Jordanian TV telling his constituency that they should understand Oslo as the first phase in the 1974 PLO Plan of Phases, that says we'll take what we can get through negotiations, and we'll use that as a base for pursuing the destruction of Israel.

"I can only help patients who recognize that they have problems. There are too many people in Israel who don't think that they have a problem. We have to constantly confront people with the catastrophe of Oslo and how too many Israelis are prepared to perpetuate another catastrophe and follow in the same lines simply because the siege isn't ending and they want it to end by their own actions. That will never be; it will end at the declaration of the Arabs. What they can do is defend themselves. The saddest thing is that you see too many people willing to sacrifice Israel's ability to defend itself." - Dr. Levin, an instructor of clinical psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a Princeton-trained historian, in an interview with Tovia Singer.  
(IsraelNationalNews Mar 27)

## Commentary...

**The Disengagement Delusion** By Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.

Today, even more than is usually the case, Israel is the Free World's "canary in the mine shaft." Its voters are poised to vote for a policy approach their American counterparts are being tempted to embrace in the months ahead. Call it the "disengagement delusion."

## ISRAEL NEWS

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Israeli polls suggest that today's elections will ratify an idea that former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon applied last year to the Gaza Strip and - but for a career-ending stroke - one he seemed determined next to apply to the West Bank: Unilateral withdrawal of Jews from much, if not virtually all, of the disputed territories in which they had built fortifications, homes and communities in the decades since Israel wrested such lands from

enemies trying to destroy it in the 1967 Six-Day War.

A barrier would then be completed to divide the Palestinians who would assume full control over such ceded territories from their Israeli neighbors. The theory, as Robert Frost famously put it, seems to be that "Good fences make good neighbors" - or at least this arrangement will make it possible for Israel to live with security next to bad ones.

If Israel's voters do, in fact, give a mandate to Ehud Olmert, the man who now leads the Kadima Party created by Sharon in the months before his illness, they will actually be indulging in not one delusion, but two.

The first delusion is that the Israeli electorate is voting - as it has done time and time again over the past fourteen years - for someone who promises them security in the face of an increasingly virulent threat from the Palestinian community. Currently, the Palestinians are led by Hamas, a terrorist organization explicitly committed to the destruction of the Jewish State. A succession of previous prime ministers have run on such a platform, then proceeded to indulge in various diplomatic maneuvers that have put Israel at still greater risk.

The second delusion is that what amounts to cutting-and-running - in this case, it is running behind a security fence, yet remaining within easy range of artillery and rocket fire - will make matters better. In fact, Olmert's plan for turning over much of the high ground of the West Bank, its vital aquifers and strategic depth in the immediate wake of Hamas' electoral victory can only embolden those and other Islamofascist enemies of freedom. It will compound the danger they pose, not only to Israel but to all of us.

This is not idle speculation. The results of Sharon's earlier disengagement from Gaza are already evident: The ascendancy of the most unabashedly hostile of Israel's foes; the creation of new Taliban-style safe-havens for terrorists (including al Qaeda); and a metastasizing threat as Russia, the European Union and the United Nations seek to legitimate Hamas, even as Kadima proposes to reward it with further territorial concessions.

Unfortunately, polls in America suggest that the voters in this country are prone to a similar strain of the disengagement delusion. Majorities now declare their desire to withdraw from Iraq, evidence of the cumulative effect of relentless negative reports about the difficulties confronting Iraqis aspiring to freedom, and the Coalition forces seeking to help them.

Much as in Israel, American politicians, pundits and anti-war activists are blithely suggesting that disengaging from Iraq by pulling U.S. troops out will not only reduce the costs to us of conflict there. It supposedly will also mitigate international hostility against us, making us more secure. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

As is the case for Israeli withdrawals, an American disengagement from Iraq under present circumstances will be portrayed by our enemies in-country - and amongst Islamofascist movements worldwide - as further proof of our inevitable defeat. It will encourage a redoubling of their deadly activities, not their slackening. Any respite will be as fleeting as it is artificial; the War for the Free World will simply be fought on different battlefields, including here in the United States.

A recent, shameful depiction by two prominent academics - one of whom is a dean at Harvard University - of American solidarity with the Jewish State as a product of some massive conspiracy they dub "the Israel Lobby" (of which the Center for Security Policy is said to be a part) misses an inconvenient, but far more plausible, explanation for what binds the two nations together: Common values, common enemies and common needs to protect from the latter open societies that cherish the former.

Our ability to assure such protection is put at grave risk when one other common quality takes a holiday - common sense. It is understandable, but not acceptable, for voters to tire of the costs, human, financial and psychological of being under assault. Another Harvard University professor (and

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psychiatrist), Dr. Kenneth Levin, has authored an excellent book on the phenomenon, *The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege*. As he put it recently:

"It is characteristic of people under siege or chronic attack - whether you're talking about minorities that are marginalized, defamed and attacked or a small state under attack by larger neighbors - it is characteristic of portions of those populations to embrace the indictments, however bizarre, and to believe that if they perform in a way consistent with those indictments, then the siege will end."

It is simply a delusion - and a highly dangerous one at that - to kid ourselves that the enemy will be mollified by the retreat they demand of us today. Only by remaining on offense can countries like Israel and the United States hope to prevail in this War for the Free World.

(Jewish World Review Mar 28)

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### **Vision of the Empty Kitbags** By Israel Harel

A few months ago, Ehud Olmert explained, in New York of all places, the reasons that led him to the disengagement plan. And this, among other things, is what the man who will become Israel's prime minister said: "We are tired of fighting, we are tired of being courageous, we are tired of winning, we are tired of defeating our enemies." While summarizing Kadima's election campaign, Education Minister Meir Sheerit added: "We've disengaged from all ideologies. That's what's unique about Kadima." And he added a metaphor to illustrate this point: "We no longer have kitbags on our backs carrying the legacy of Ze'ev Jabotinsky or Berl Katznelson."

Even though Kadima won only 28 seats, this certainly was not a protest vote against declarations about fatigue or disengaging from ideologies. On the contrary: Olmert and Sheerit can argue, and rightly so, that Kadima's uniqueness is also unique to most of the voters who did not vote for their party. After all, even though right now the fundamental problems that faced the movements of which Katznelson and Jabotinsky were the ideological fathers, are still alive and well, only a minority of voters voted Tuesday for the parties that represent their ideologies.

It is important to note, especially now, that were it not for Jabotinsky, Katznelson and the like - and the fire they sparked in the hearts of thousands - it is almost certain that a Jewish state would not have been established and a minister of Israel would not have been able to announce the disengagement from their legacy.

Moreover, let it be said to the new ruling party: without roots and without an answer to the question of why and what we are fighting and sacrificing our lives here for - i.e., without kitbags - very many young people will not find a reason for living in this country.

Indeed, only the voter's disengagement from these ideologies - some 20 percent of the Kibbutz Movement voters also chose Kadima - can explain the apathy of those who did not vote at all and the voting patterns of the majority of those who did. And if another uprooting takes place, it will reflect not only a disengagement from parts of the homeland, but also from the ideologies of the two leading camps, both the Zionist-nationalist camp and the Zionist-socialist camp, the ones that can be credited with creating the majority of "haves" here.

Without the melting pot and refining zeal of the movements led by these two giant personalities, the organizational and political tools that enabled the Sheerit family and tens of thousands of other families just like it to immigrate to Israel and establish a foothold here would not have been created. It is only thanks to the fulfillment of the legacies packed in those kitbags that Sheerit was able to achieve the lofty positions of justice minister, finance minister and education minister.

Without their legacy, the only legacy of secular Zionism there is, a Jewish state will not exist here. Religious Zionism, certainly in its national-religious variation, cannot offer an ideological alternative to the majority of the secular-Jewish population and fill in the void created by disposing of the baggage - Olmert and Sheerit are merely continuing the process - contained in the kitbags of Katznelson and Jabotinsky.

Only a few people carried on their bent backs these kitbags, and without tiring and thanks to them, the Jews held elections in their sovereign state two days ago. Disengaging from them means living in the air. And if an Israeli prime minister openly acknowledges that he is tired and no longer wants to be courageous - except, of course, when facing the youths of Amona - then who will have the strength to overcome the fatigue? Who will be courageous in the face of an Arab and Muslim world that is gradually gaining strength and closing in on us - among other reasons, from the encouragement they get from statements like those of Olmert and Sheerit.

After all, if those two won the elections despite their statements, says any strategic analyst of the situation, if their leaders shamelessly and straightforwardly declare that they have been tired out, that we have reduced

their motivation to fight for their country and instilled timidity in their hearts - then there is no point in coming to terms with them. Their end, even if it does not happen tomorrow, is not far off.

Stable nations, whose sovereignty is not questioned and whose lands others do not claim ownership to, perhaps can allow themselves "to disengage from ideologies." But that is not the case with the Jewish people in its land.

Certainly not while the Arab people does not recognize the legitimacy of our presence in our homeland, and makes every effort - political, diplomatic, military, financial and psychological - to undermine our foothold in the one and only homeland we have.

In order to draw strength to face all these battles, which in recent years many European nations also have joined in siding with the Arabs, the trend should be the reverse of the one Olmert and Sheerit are successfully leading, as is evident from the election results: that is, filling the rapidly emptying kitbags with meaningful content.

It is incumbent on those who did not win the election but have not tired and have not failed to help the leaders and nation overcome this exhaustion and cowardice before the kitbag is emptied of its remaining content.

(Haaretz Mar 30)

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### **Hamas's 'Moderation'** Jerusalem Post Editorial

Hamas Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniyeh has called for talks with the Quartet, claims that his government "won't spare any effort to reach a just peace in the region," and asserts that "we're not warmongers and we don't call for terrorism and bloodshed." Some newspapers have reported breathlessly that Haniyeh has pledged to accept the agreements signed by the PLO with Israel.

Is Hamas turning over a new leaf? A quick glance at the fine print, not to mention what is happening on the ground, indicates not.

On previous agreements, all Haniyeh said when presenting his government to the Palestinian Legislative Council on Monday was that he would handle the matter in a "responsible" manner, which is hardly a marked change from his original position, namely that Hamas would only honor agreements it deemed consistent with its own principles. As to Hamas's idea of "peace," the same speech emphasized "the right of our people to defend itself against occupation and to struggle against the settlements and the fence and to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital" and the duty to pursue the "right of return without compromise."

Hamas, in other words, remains Hamas. It has not retreated from its objective of destroying Israel one iota, nor has it begun to comply with the international requirements to end terrorism, accept Israel and accept previous agreements.

Even Fatah remains unimpressed with any supposed change in Hamas, and all its delegates voted against Haniyeh's government when the Hamas-dominated PLC approved it, 71-36, yesterday.

Hamas does, at least, make clear the motives behind its softening not of substance but of tone: "My government will establish good and strong relations with the world," said Haniyeh. "We are interested in having solid relations with the European Union."

In other words, for all Hamas's previous bravado about not caring about Western financial assistance and its claims that the PA will do without or find support elsewhere, Haniyeh would very much like to avoid becoming an international pariah. Haniyeh's slight rhetorical shift, then, can be seen as an effort to induce someone - Israel, the US, or the EU - to break Hamas's isolation and agree to talk.

The US is to be commended for seeing through this and refusing to accept Hamas's bid for talks with the Quartet before Hamas has accepted the Quartet's conditions. Even Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, on March 20 expressed his "disappointment" that Hamas had not fulfilled the Quartet's conditions and stated that Hamas "is not reasonable. If it were, other parties would have joined them" in government.

Evidently, Hamas is testing the waters, looking for the minimum it needs to compromise to retain the PA's direct financial lifeline. We can expect, therefore, more gestures along these lines, possibly including vague acceptance of the Saudi plan, or some deal with Fatah that provides Hamas with more cover.

It is important, in this context, to differentiate between cosmetics and content. The reality on the ground is that the number of attempted terrorist attacks has been growing since disengagement and since Hamas's elections victory. In the last half year, the IDF reports it has killed over 80 active terrorists, about 40 bombs have been placed along the Gaza fence, and there have been dozens of Kassam attacks. Just last week, six Palestinians were caught smuggling weapons and two Palestinian suicide bombers were intercepted - one who had already reached the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway.

This is the sort of "struggle" Haniyeh defended in his speech. If a Hamas government wants to be recognized, it must not only distance itself from

terrorism, as Fatah did, but actually give up its own "right" to attack Israelis at will and physically prevent all other Palestinian groups from doing so.

If the international community is serious about pursuing peace, it must stick to its demands even if this means waiting for a long time either for Hamas to transform itself or be removed from office. The task - convincing Palestinians to abandon the dream of destroying Israel, either through terrorism or by flooding Israel with "refugees exercising their right of return" - may be daunting. But with sufficient patience and determination it may be accomplished. (Jerusalem Post Mar 29)

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#### **Apathy & Inconclusiveness** By Emanuele Ottolenghi

For Israel, this could have been a new dawn. Though not, admittedly, of the Age of Aquarius.

By 2006, voters had grown tired of the two visions that for decades vied for dominance in Israel, and the parties that embodied them. The Peace Now vision lay moribund, since the Intifada broke the Oslo illusion, and managed to survive only thanks to the often unwelcome and unwise interference of the international community. And the Greater Israel vision had become a pipe dream, in the face of the unbearable price of keeping millions of unwilling Palestinians under Israeli rule. Before long, Israelis understood, an international community with little patience for Jewish rights and little understanding for Jewish concerns would have forced Israel to withdraw to the 1967 lines and face civil war or keep the post-1967 lines and become a Jewish minority in an Arab state set in its stead.

Today Israel could have woken up to a new political reality. Instead, it chose the old confused and checkered landscape of twelve parties, and no clear mandate. There are winners and losers of course. Israel Beteinu, with 12 projected seats, has humbled Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud. And with a combined force of 32 seats, the nationalist camp and its vision of a Greater Israel is forever lost. Labour's Amir Peretz claims to be a winner, and demands already the finance and the education ministries. But his only strength is Ehud Olmert's weakness: After all, Labour won 19 seats last time around and 20 this time. It held its ground no doubt, unlike Likud, but with its Meretz ally down to four seats and the Arab parties beyond the pale of consensus, the Left's victory would not cause envy even to Pyrrhus. Olmert controls 28 seats, a far cry from what the polls suggested and his supporters hoped. It will not be easy to form a government that can both last and make fateful, controversial decisions without sparring a coalition meltdown or sowing the seeds of civil war.

The real losers are the Israelis and judging by their apathy, they probably deserve it: By not voting, they brought it upon themselves. Like their fallen hero, Ariel Sharon, who is in a deep coma in a hospital, they sleepwalked through an election where they had a chance to shape their destiny but instead gave their new and untested leaders an inconclusive verdict.

Still, a clear message emerged from this vote. Israelis are ready to partition the land, though they cannot trust the Palestinian give-and-take.

History offers its ironies, and it is remarkable that on the day Israelis voted to seal their willingness to endorse the partition of the land, a Hamas government won an easy majority in the Palestinian parliament and renewed its militant vision. While Israelis are prepared to endorse a two-state solution, Palestinians, through their Hamas-led Palestinian entity, are ready for a final solution only.

The new dawn therefore was not about making peace with old enemies. It was about seeking an ideal point of equilibrium on the map that could help Israel redeploy to defensible boundaries ahead of the long war of attrition with the Arab world and the Palestinians, while ensuring that this new line would be met with national consensus, not with the kind of deep division and national trauma that the Oslo accords caused.

When Ariel Sharon established Kadima in November 2005, he knew that a tectonic shift had occurred in Israeli public opinion. Israelis were prepared to make "painful concessions" and were willing to trust his judgment on their nature and extent. But they could not be led to believe, after five years of Palestinian terror, that their enemies were prepared to recognize, once and for all, Israel's legitimacy as a sovereign Jewish state. He toiled for three long years, trying to persuade his Likud party that a journey to the center was necessary if the party wished to survive. Its victory in 2003 after all had been thanks to Sharon and his newly invented image of a centrist statesman. His party thought otherwise: It felt that disengaging from the territories would only enhance terror's capabilities and relinquishing historic Jewish rights in exchange for nothing would only reward violence and embolden its advocates. That's why Sharon parted from Likud, though that is not why Likud lost the elections.

Sharon's new political gamble, at 77, signaled a new season of Israeli politics and a chance for the public to turn the tables both on Likud and Labour, once and for all. With a charismatic leader at its helm — a farmer-warrior, a visionary and a man who embodied, for better or worse, the Zionist

century of the Jewish people — Kadima could have been the new dawn, a new political chapter in Israel's history, leading the country into the uncharted waters of the Islamist decade under the guidance of a seasoned leader, who could be both ruthless and prudent, and knew when was the right time for the former and not the latter.

But history, politics and biology rarely intersect. Ten minutes to midnight, Sharon walked out on history, and left a party whose very *raison-d'être* was Sharon himself, without its greatest asset and the last gift the founding generation could offer to Israel — a vision and a hope where no vision was left and no hope had survived.

Now Kadima, a political project in its infancy, had to follow in the footsteps of Sharon without knowing what Sharon would do, with Hamas in power and the Iranian threat at Israel's doorstep. Perhaps even Sharon himself did not know what demons he had awakened, what opportunities he had created, when he left Gaza to Hamas, and what steps he should next take. What we know now is that once Sharon left Kadima, the Israeli public lost its appetite for change.

Asked last week about what he considered a success for Kadima, Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert, said in an interview to the Israeli Internet daily, *Y-net*, that less than 36 seats would be 'a disappointment'. On election night, he got barely 28.

Kadima was quick to claim victory, and Olmert was just as quick to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City. All the right messages were heard on election night: there is a left-of-center majority, Olmert has all the coalition options in the world; it is possible to form a stable and broad coalition with 70-80 Knesset members supporting it.

But Olmert would do well to pause and think. Only 63.2 percent of Israel's voters bothered to show up on a day when fateful decisions should have drawn the entire country to the ballot booth. Many who did bother to turn up, preferred the Pensioners' list — winners of an astonishing 7 seats according to preliminary results — to Olmert and his talented team. At 28 seats, his party can hardly claim a blank check for its vision. And Israel's coalitions have never been both broad and stable, unless their policy is no policy at all. In the last 20 years, only two leaders were gifted with the political power to change the map: One was Rabin, who in 1992 controlled 44 seats in the Knesset and could form a narrow leftist coalition and sign the Oslo accords. But with a narrow majority in parliament and a nation divided, he paid the ultimate price for pushing a vision that lacked Israel's consensus and left the nation traumatized and ultimately exposed to its enemies' vicious rage. The other one was Sharon, who in 2003, strong of his 40 Likud seats, could clubber the Palestinians on the headfirst and his former political allies on the right later. In between, there were two youthful prime ministers who controlled a number of seats similar to what Olmert has today, who formed broad coalitions, and whose ability to govern and deliver was quickly shipwrecked by the strict arithmetical logic of Israel's fragmented political landscape.

Olmert wants to redraw Israel's boundaries today. He will have to avoid the nightmarish scenario of a civil war that a narrow center-left coalition would no doubt usher in and will have to negotiate the consensus with the right. That, even in ideal conditions, would take longer than the time it took Rabin's far more stable coalition to sign Oslo and it would cost infinitely more than the Disengagement did: this time, it would evict tens of thousands of settlers from their homes, and it is the heartland of Biblical Israel that they would be asked to abandon for an uncertain future.

But conditions are not ideal. While Israelis were busy voting (or not voting), a Katyusha rocket landed in southern Israel, killing two Beduin shepherds. No doubt, now commentators will bend over backward to say that it was not Hamas, but some "militant" group that "rejects" the "peace process." Whoever pulled the trigger, Gaza today is closer to Tel Aviv than ever before. And the presence of much more efficient, elusive, and sophisticated weaponry in Gaza seven months only after the disengagement shows how frail and fragile the Kadima vision was, how unreliable the international community who should be monitoring the borders is, and how ineffectual (not to say worse) are the Egyptians in Sinai when it comes to weapons' smuggling into Gaza. And that withdrawal does not a peace make.

With Israel now encircled by Iran's proxies and Islamist fanatics, the last thing the country needed was an inconclusive result. It got just that. It will reap the whirlwinds of its apathy. (National Review Mar 29)

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#### **The Media's to Blame** By Daniel Doron

A few days prior to the election, two top Israeli journalists - known for their rare combination of intelligence, courage and integrity - threw a veritable bombshell into the otherwise soporific electoral debate.

To preserve the large lead that Ariel Sharon gained for his newly formed Kadima, under the leadership of the less popular Ehud Olmert, party

strategists decided to keep the election campaign on a low key. Though Israel faces some life-and-death choices that voters should understand and sort out, Kadima strategists refused to have Olmert debate his two chief rivals, the Likud's Binyamin Netanyahu and Labor's Amir Peretz. They also managed to have a very supportive media keep any serious issue out of the public's eye.

This is why the extraordinarily critical articles, one by senior Haaretz columnist Ari Shavit, and the other by Guy Rolnik, Haaretz and theMarker economic editor, people from the Left, mind you, would have created a media firestorm in any normal country.

Shavit and Rolnik asserted that Netanyahu, whom the media marked as enemy of the poor and a peon of the rich, was actually the man who saved the Israeli economy from collapse and protected the poor; that he was the one who broke the major power of the rich, the bank monopoly; and that conversely, Kadima and its leader, the darlings of the media, may actually endanger Israel's security, and corrupt its democratic system and its economy.

In "The Country Is In Our Hands," an imaginary secret memo submitted to the 18 families that control most assets in Israel by their chief strategists, Shavit wrote: "It was impossible to buy Netanyahu... when he dared threaten the banks, we suddenly understood that the man is not ours... therefore we made a determined strategic decision: Bibi has outlived his usefulness, Bibi must go...."

"To face the danger [emanating from Netanyahu's reforms]... we had to form a political body that will serve us [the oligarchy] faithfully, and we had to head it by one of our own..." "E.O. is A1... his door is always open... there is not a deal that he won't cut... we have gained access that is comparable only to what the rich have in Latin America..."

"The new ruling party will be a most useful instrument for gaining our objectives... it will enable us to have total control of the Israeli government, of the police, the state prosecutor's office, the treasury (and the various regulatory bodies)... Our 20th-century dysfunctional democracy will be replaced by a centralized oligarchy..."

ROLNIK MADE equally dramatic charges. In his piece "Kadima [onwards] - For The Benefit Of Our Rich Friends" he wrote: "Netanyahu was made to look as the elite's man... Political, social and economic commentators tell us that he made the rich richer and the poor poorer. Nice story, but little relation to reality... the rich hate Bibi, they are connected to Olmert and prefer even Peretz... [Netanyahu] was the worst minister of finance the rich families controlling the economy ever got."

"Netanyahu totally backed the removal of the banks from their chief source of power - their control of financial markets..." "[Netanyahu's] cuts [in government handouts] have saved the economy from collapse, [they have generated the brisk growth] that makes it possible for all the politicians to make promises for more handouts..."

"We know Ehud Olmert... he can be relied upon, Nochi [Dankner] relies on him, Mossie [Wertheimer] relies on him, Eitan [Raff] relies on him, they [the oligarchs] all rely on him - he will not disappoint them..."

In addition, Shavit, a fervent supporter of total withdrawal from the disputed territories, also charged that Olmert's promise to make unilateral withdrawals without securing international backing for the total demilitarization of these territories is so irresponsible and dangerous - because it will enable Hamas to establish on the doorstep of Israel a Jihadi regime supported by Iran and Syria - that he was unfit to be prime minister.

Both Shavit and Rolnik are politically close to Kadima's policy of total withdrawal from the disputed territories. However, unlike most of the media their integrity prevented them from joining the virulently anti-Netanyahu campaign which the pro-unconditional-withdrawal media exploited to advance their agenda; it has also prevented them from participating in the systematic cover-up of Kadima's and Labor's shortcomings.

But it did not matter, because they were a drop in an ocean of media manipulations and distortions.

THE MEDIA did not even report or comment on Shavit's and Rolnik's unusual criticism so most people were not aware of its existence.

Israel has three major TV channels, several radio stations plus a number of very competitive newspapers. Yet the very liberal (in its own eyes) Israeli media have a united political voice and a single agenda, the promotion of a Palestinian state no matter how jingoistic, oppressive or dictatorial it is. They make sure that no other voice is heard, and if heard, that it is discredited.

People in the media are entitled, of course, to their opinions. But it is questionable whether Israeli democracy can thrive when the media manage "to inject themselves as an actor in this campaign in a manner unprecedented in Israeli electoral history" as Yaron Dekel, senior commentator of Israel's "public" TV Channel 1 put it, and does it not only by manipulating the news but by outright fabrications.

In fact, it is likely that the media's success in squelching a vigorous public debate on the urgent issues facing Israel is also the reason for the worrisome and extremely low voter participation. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)

## The Ultimate Protest Vote By Batya Medad

The surprise of the Israeli elections - the ultimate protest vote - was the Retirees party. Many people walked out of the polling booth, after putting the little paper in the envelope, still unsure which set of politicians could be trusted to run our beleaguered country. The undecideds decided to vote anyway; so, they voted for a party that was established to protect and support the people who really built Israel, the "people's party of the retirees and pensioners", the Gimlayim. They ended up with an unbelievable eight (projected) seats.

Outside of better pensions and other related issues, they truly are the party without ideology. Kadima's Meir Shitrit claims that his party is the one without ideology, but he's wrong. It does have an ideology: it's the "me and now, and who cares about tomorrow or our forefathers" party. Kadima is selfishness to the extreme. People who voted for the Retirees care about tomorrow; at least, they want those who contributed, whatever their roles, to be compensated with dignity. There's no dignity in Kadima.

From what I understand, the Retirees party the only one that seems sincere about getting Jonathan Pollard home to Israel. His former Mossad "handler", Rafi Eitan, is one of the party leaders. But even he has stated that, outside of their specific socio-economic issues, the party's Knesset Members will have the freedom to vote however they choose. I hope that they do improve the pensions and other old-age benefits. I'm getting closer to the "official age" and many of my friends are retiring after the required thirty years as civil servants. I only began teaching English a few years ago and won't have a "pension" from my previous jobs. I wonder if people like me will benefit from their proposed laws.

Every Israeli election has its new "big" party and they've all been buried. Free Center was one, and Shinui was the most recent. They all have similar political ideas, and in every case, between internal personality conflicts and a lack of "historic" ideology, they go out of favor very quickly. I presume that the same will happen with the Retirees party.

And why did Likud lose so badly, shrunken to 11-12 seats? Very simple. It just lost its "popular touch". Binyamin Netanyahu showed his toughness in slashing subsidies to the poor and large families, and Limor Livnat showed her total lack of "reality engagement" by engineering and supporting the destructive Dovrat education restructure plan. And the rest of the politicians there were just weak and pathetic, allowing Sharon to bulldoze the once proud, pro-settlement party into the one that destroyed Gush Katif and northern Samaria. It only stands for memories. Almost thirty years after Menachem Begin finally brought it into national power for the first time, it seems to be breathing its last; though one never knows in Israeli politics. One thing for sure, it doesn't seem to have a strong "next generation". By betraying its original ideology, it has nothing to offer. After Begin gave the Sinai to Egypt in exchange for the world's praises and a promise to develop Gush Katif and preserve Judea, Samaria and Gaza in Israeli hands, its fate was sealed.

Enough has been said over Kadima, the politicians who will promise anything but a land for its people. It's not really a party, since its "let's imagine there's no..." ideology won't keep those ambitious and scheming opportunists together for long.

As for the Yisrael Beitenu Party - it has a great name. Israel is Our Home, which it should be. The party leader, Avigdor Liberman, lives in a community that is not on the "ghetto" side of the wall being built, but he has been preaching "compromise". It is not clear exactly what he really wants, besides power. In his own words, he's "open to all offers...."

Finally, the National Union-National Religious Party did very poorly in the election, only getting maybe nine seats. The National Union would have done just as well on its own, without the NRP. Many voters were repulsed by the NRP and voted for Baruch Marzel's National Jewish Front, which didn't make it in - again. Think of all the wasted votes. Many people I know voted NU-NRP with great trepidation, wary because the ailing Rabbi Benny Elon made a very poor agreement with the dying NRP. By giving the NRP life, it destroyed Moledet, the party that did the most to try to stop Disengagement.

So, to boil it down, I think that should we, G-d willing, survive, we will see more changes in the Israeli political spectrum. Likud is always stronger in the opposition and its only chance of survival is to use those instincts. It still hasn't recovered from Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, and the "cancerous cells" they left in the Likud still haven't been eradicated.

The political scene is just the thing to make our children even more cynical. But there will be great changes and demography is in our favor.

G-d willing, we will survive, v'hamoshiach yavo b'mhaira, b'yameinu, and we will be redeemed, speedily, in our days.

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