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ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Commentary...

So We Don't Give up Jerusalem

By Nadav Shragai

When the Yemenites arrived in Jerusalem 122 years ago and sought to settle inside its walls, the veteran residents doubted they were really Jews. The Yemenites, who had walked all the way through the deserts, were bedraggled, dirty, hungry and sick - and were offended by the doubts. But they did not give up their dream of Jerusalem. They settled in caves on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, near Silwan. Rabbi Shalom Elsheikh described them then as "lost and abandoned in the field, wrapped in hunger large and small, the elderly and babies, without a slice of bread among them."

One paper, Hahavetzelet wrote about them - and for them. Its editor, Yisrael Dov Fromkin, founded the Society to Help, which built what became known as the Yemenite Village for them. Rabbi Boaz Habavli donated the first land for the project, some 8,000 square cubits. And in 1885, the first three houses were dedicated. Six years later there were 65 houses. Over the years, more land was bought and the neighborhood grew. The Jews of the Yemenite Village built their homes themselves. "Building stones on camels' backs, water on the backs of camels," wrote Moshe Yehud, born in the village of Shiloah, and author Yisrael Zarhi wrote about "the builders at work under the moon and the stars, stone by stone, floor by floor."

Simha Hazi, 75, whose parents were born in the Yemenite Village in Silwan, remembers the neighborhood and its alleyways, and the house built by her grandfather, one of the founders of the neighborhood. A few years ago, people from Ateret Cohanim (an Old City yeshiva and settlement group operating in East Jerusalem) approached Hazi, who lives in Rosh Ha'ayin, and took her to the rubble remains of the Yemenite neighborhood. They asked her to help them map the area. Hazi happily helped out. Most of her friends did the same. She remembers good relations between Jews and Arabs in the neighborhood. She hopes it will be possible to resurrect those days in the future, "maybe after the Arab neighbors get used to the sight of the renewed Jewish presence in the Yemenite Village area," which began last week.

The reality that Hazi remembers lasted in the Yemenite Village until 1929. By 1938, the 40 families that survived the riots were forced out. The British authorities gave the Yemenites documents saying they would be allowed to return when the situation improved. But the situation did not improve, the Jews did not return and the British left, too. Yitzhak Ben Zvi tried to move Jews back into Shiloah and after 1967, Minister Yisrael Yeshayahu tried to resurrect the Jewish community there, but then premier Levi Eshkol was sympathetic and nothing more.

In a normal situation, the Israeli government should have undertaken the mission as it did other missions in Jerusalem. But it left the job of settling the difficult and most significant areas of Jerusalem - the Old City outside the Jewish Quarter, the City of David, Shiloah (Silwan), and the Mount of Olives - to a handful of people obsessed with the issue. They remind us over and over what we have managed to forget: Jerusalem will not be united only by habit and slogans. Those who want the city will have to struggle for it. The Palestinians understood this a long time ago. In the last decade they have campaigned for Jerusalem as a people conducting a war for their identity. On our side, on this point, we are feeble and weak. Too many in Israeli society nowadays are not ready to pay any price for any thing. Too many are ready to pay almost any price, as long as they can avoid difficulty or complications that require meeting a challenge.

In such a society, those ready to sacrifice, suffer and make an effort - something that was the province of many - appear to be strange. Thus, an act of Zionist settlement, which in the past we would have welcomed and blessed, has been turned into a provocation. Those who oppose dividing Jerusalem should now support the settlement enterprise in the Silwan and City of David areas, and support Jewish territorial contiguity around the Old City. None of the dire and dark predictions that were made when the Temple Mount was reopened to Jews or when the new Jewish settlements went up at Har Homa and Ras el-Amud, have come true.

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In Silwan's south, where Jews now live, the opposite has happened. Over the years it has turned out that the reality Hazi remembers from her childhood is possible nowadays and that the face of Jewish settlement in the Silwan area is much softer than in Hebron. Relations and bonds have formed between Jew and Arab in Silwan and in the nearby Muslim Quarter. Not much is heard about it, mostly because too detailed a public report of it could harm the Arab

side. The fact that the new settlement areas were bought at full price, and not expropriated (as the government does) also contributed to the calm. Only the terror gang from Tunis and the delusional supporters of Oslo have tried undermining that reality, which is being resurrected under much more difficult conditions. (Haaretz Apr 7)

Israel Is Not Allowed to Defend Itself By Ze'ev Schiff

A few days after the publication of the report in which the Europeans admit anti-Semitism has worsened there, Europe took another step from which the same stench rises. The European parliament effectively redefined Israel's self-defense against terror as an "act of terror," because Palestinian civilians are hurt in the war.

The background to the decision was the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin - the person who effectively invented and encouraged the suicide terror, and who recently allowed women to conduct suicide terror missions. Nothing was said, for example, about the latest suicide terror attack in Ashdod port, in which 10 Israelis were killed, and which preceded the Yassin assassination. That is the same self-righteous Europe with air forces that bombed Yugoslavia for 73 days, even though no European state was threatened by any existential danger.

The problem did not begin with Yassin's assassination, about which there is a debate in Israel. From the minute the current round of conflict broke out, there have been waves of criticism of Israeli actions, whether offensively or defensively.

First there was criticism of the use of pinpoint snipers by the Israel Defense Forces. In the critics' eyes, it apparently would have been preferable if the army used machine guns, which later came under criticism. The initial use of combat helicopters prompted a wave of complaints. Then there was the ruckus over Israel using F-16s to drop bombs. The criticism also came from the American side, which a few years later used planes to attack targets in Baghdad, even after the American army was in control of all of Iraq.

When the IDF began bombing, as a punitive action, the homes of Palestinians involved in murder and sending suicide attackers, once again the accusations were directed at Israel. Israel did not know how to deter suicide terrorists whose families received financial grants (including from Saddam Hussein) for the dead Israelis killed by their relative. The idea that the bomber's family be expelled was raised, but even when the proposal was to move the family to Gaza from the West Bank, the hue and cry against Israel rose once again.

"Pinpoint prevention" provoked a tsunami of complaints, as if this wasn't a war in which one side, the Palestinian side, deliberately strikes at civilians - on buses, in restaurants and malls - filling the explosives belts with large amounts of nails to make sure as much human damage as possible takes place. That is targeted killing of Israelis. But in the eyes of the critics, the pursuit of terrorists appeared to be a criminal act, not hostilities during warfare. The criticism was even leveled at the size of the bombs used by the air force. And there were complaints against the IDF's rules of engagement. What army in the world has better rules of engagement? The Americans? The Egyptians? The Indians? The French? Or the Russians and Turks? All of them could learn from the IDF about how to comply with the orders. But when it comes to Israel, they even complain about the rubber-coated bullets the IDF fires. Nearly every Israeli statement is greeted with mockery. The Israeli legal system has also been mocked.

Lift the blockades and checkpoints, shouted the critics. True, the checkpoints harass the innocent, but the critics did not take into account that the breaches through which the murderers come must be blocked. At first the intent was to prevent car bombs from making their way - including ambulances carrying weapons. And the idea of the separation fence was

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hated from the start. It was beyond the pale even before it began to go up and its route was determined.

The criticism is also fed from inside Israel. The threats to put IDF officers on trial at the international court of law did not only come from Belgium. Now there are complaints that Israeli representatives are going to newspaper editors to complain about distorted reports.

Presumably if we were to defend ourselves in this war of terror by throwing rocks, the world would still complain. Most critics don't believe Israel has a right to self-defense. Israel, therefore, should in most cases ignore the critics. We should be the ones to criticize what is happening on our side and around us.

(Haaretz Apr 7)

A Call To American Friends of Israel - Defuse The Doomsday Bomb

By Aaron Lerner

Only days after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that he would present his "disengagement plan" to the Likud Party membership, Sharon's point man in the campaign, Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert shifted from praising the plan to threatening his fellow Likudniks of the disastrous crises in Israel-American relations if they fail to approve the plan.

Regardless of the wisdom of Mr. Sharon's "disengagement plan", America's historic commitments to Israel cannot and must not be made contingent on the democratic decision of the almost 200,000 strong Likud rank and file who are slated to vote on the plan shortly after Sharon returns from Washington.

To do so would set several dangerous precedents that will haunt our relationship for generations to come:

Hard earned promises of past presidents (Johnson, Ford, etc.) on such vital issues as the proper interpretation of UN Resolution 242 ("secure and recognized borders" rather than the 1967 border), consultation on diplomatic initiatives and Israel's right to act in self defense, that until now were held as permanent promises are in danger of being transformed into conditional commitments.

Just as dangerous: once it is legitimate to take America's commitments hostage to essentially blackmail Likud voters, the temptation will be great to employ similar threats against Israel in the future.

There is every indication that if Olmert has already pulled out the campaign's "doomsday weapon" with almost a month left before the expected vote, that the Sharon team will be tempted to find ways, with help from Washington, to make that threat just that more ominous and threatening in the days and weeks to come before the early May Likud referendum.

Now is the time for American friends of Israel, regardless of their position on disengagement, to use their influence in this election year to defuse this dangerous precedent setting "doomsday bomb".

It is absolutely critical that President Bush make clear that America's commitments Israel are solid commitments - regardless of the democratic decision of the Likud, the Cabinet or the Knesset on the disengagement plan - or any plan for that matter.

Democracy isn't an inconvenience - it's a sacred shared value. (IMRA Apr 4)

Avoiding Media 'Hametz' By Yisrael Medad & Eli Pollak

Israel's State Prosecutor Edna Arbel traveled to the United States last week for a lecture tour. On her way out of the country she left a draft indictment on the desk of Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz asserting that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should be charged with bribery.

A legal affairs expert on Israel Radio intimated that the media had learned of the charge sheet even before the attorney-general. That left Mazuz in a media trap.

Immediately following the announcement, commentators opined that Arbel's act had been prompted by the urge to generate a media storm that would, as Hebrew slang has it, boot Sharon, locking him into a media-judicial battle in an agenda set by her indictment.

Likud ministers condemned Arbel for leaking her decision to TV's Channel 2. Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom called the leak wicked. Uzi Landau claimed: "The repeated leaks from the State's Attorney's Office show that the system is deficient and that someone needs to clean house there."

Mazuz's decision won't be made before the end of May, and Sharon's only recourse is to the court of public opinion. The only problem is that there are serious doubts about whether Israel's media can deal adequately with the serious and weighty issues involved.

Back in 1914, H.L. Mencken, the quixotic essayist, wrote: "I know of no subject, save perhaps baseball, on which the average American newspaper discourses with unflinching sense and understanding."

There is no reason to presume that Israel's media have been endowed with a greater wisdom.

IN THE spirit of Pessah, we suggest a guide for media consumers so they can avoid media "hametz" - the prohibited products that should not be consumed during the holiday - or, indeed, at any time.

Media people are not truly smarter than the average person; it is their access to information that sets them apart. If, though, you rely on only one favorite media person, be it a reporter, commentator or program host/interviewer, you

become dependent on that source.

Expose yourself to a plurality of views. Don't limit yourself to one media outlet or person. Watch out for imbalance. When you are presented with a panel, try to judge whether most sides of the political spectrum are being represented. Is there a Right, Left and center? Are minority groups (haredim and Arabs) permitted a say? Does someone get constantly cut off, shearing his or her participation of any influence?

Be alert for tendentious terminology. For example, whereas Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir are always referred to as "murderer," consider the last time you heard Ahmed Yassin called a "murderer."

Rarely is the adjective "extremist" ever applied to left-wingers. Haaretz has now adopted the foreign press's approach; it avoids using the term "terrorist," mostly employing "militant" instead.

Plainly, semantics matter. The Prime Minister's Office also engages in media manipulation, describing Sharon's Gaza plan as "disengagement." But Webster's dictionary defines disengagement as "freedom from obligation." Those who oppose the plan refer to it as retreat, defined as "withdrawal in the face of opposition."

Overwhelmingly, the media has adopted the prime minister's terminology.

Turning to the Sharon bribery case, it strikes us that the media is not being impartial. One need only recall that there is no law obligating a prime minister to resign or suspend himself from office. Nevertheless, our media moralists repeatedly hammer home the argument that it's Sharon's duty to resign.

Beware of polls. All too frequently the questions posed are leading or badly formulated.

It took only a day after a Likud gathering agreed that Sharon's plan would be put to a vote by the party's membership for the two largest Hebrew tabloids to publish polls indicating how the 180,000 Likudniks would vote.

As no one knows what the contents of Sharon's Gaza plan are, such polls are not too meaningful. Polls like these tend to be mostly aimed at influencing outcomes rather than reflecting opinions.

Interested media parties are strategically engaged in fashioning an "echo" - multiple artificial voices aimed at influencing the media consumer as well as others, including justices of the Supreme Court.

The media is not a sideline player but an active participant in the political system. Mencken also noted that "The chief appeal of a newspaper is not at all to the educated and reflective minority of citizens, but to the ignorant and unreflective majority."

It is the citizen's duty to filter out the biases of the media and pay attention to what the news really is. Doing so is in some sense similar to our leaving Egypt on the way to the Promised Land.

An informed citizen rather than a brainwashed one is essential for a thriving democracy. (Jerusalem Post Apr 4)

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Obstructing Democracy By Caroline Glick

Speaking to the Likud's Central Committee Tuesday night, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon maintained that while as prime minister he has "supreme responsibility" over public policy, he still believes that "major decisions" like his plan to retreat unilaterally from the Gaza Strip "should be brought to a democratic vote."

This is a rather ironic bit of demagoguery from Sharon who, since he announced his plan to retreat from Gaza amid reports that he is to be indicted on bribery charges, has prevented any constructive debate or vote on his plan in any of the legally constituted forums of government. Neither his cabinet nor the Knesset has been presented with the prime minister's radical plan of withdrawal under fire.

Sharon's plan to cut and run from all of Gaza and still to be determined portions of Judea and Samaria is being advanced against the backdrop of increasing collaboration among global terror organizations. Just this week Hamas chieftain Khaled Mashaal met with Hizballah overlord Hassan Nasrallah and the two agreed to tighten the collaboration between their terror groups. Hamas's reaction to Ahmed Yassin's death made it clear that Hamas is not an autonomous organization but rather a local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which itself is a major segment of Al Qaida. Hamas communiques say nothing about the Palestinians. Rather they address themselves to the Arab and Islamic nation, much in the style of Al Qaida and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. But we can be certain that we will not have any debate or discussion of what awaits us the day after an Israeli withdrawal. A democratic vote on the issue, as Sharon indicated he supports, might have had a chance of bringing various aspects of the plan to the public's attention. But what Sharon forced down the throats of his Central Committee members Tuesday evening is not a vote at all. It is, at best, an opinion poll. And, like most opinion polls, it will be run like a popularity contest.

The Likud members who will be called on to vote on the withdrawal

from Gaza will not be participating in a legal exercise in participatory democracy. They will not be voting in a referendum. A referendum must be legislated by the Knesset. And the short public discussion last December of a referendum made clear to Sharon that he would lose control of his agenda if he allowed democratically elected representatives to have a hand in structuring it. And so the idea was shelved.

In their upcoming vote, Likud members will not be participating in an exercise that is subordinate to any rules of electioneering. Since there is no legal basis for their vote, there will presumably be no legal restrictions on donations to one side or the other of the debate. There will be no limitations or prohibitions placed on foreign financing of commercials or billboards.

There will be no obligation for anyone to disclose the sources of their funding. Quite simply, in the uncharted territory of this non-legal vote, there is a possibility that the votes can simply be bought. What's to stand in anyone's way? To ensure that the vote will follow a vacuous and short debate on the plan, where none of its obvious dangers will receive too much attention, the resolution passed on Tuesday calls for a vote to take place no more than three weeks after Sharon decides he wants it to take place.

Sharon's associates explained to the media on Wednesday that their plan is to have the vote carried out before Attorney General Menachem Mazuz has a chance to decide whether or not to indict the prime minister for accepting bribes.

Under the gun of a possible indictment, it is the prime minister's popularity that will be put to a vote. And the "opponent" that Sharon will be running against will not be his Likud rivals, who enjoy support among party members. Sharon will be running against the much despised State's Attorney Edna Arbel, who with her usual temerity and penchant for abuse of power, let it be known that she wants Sharon indicted.

Sharon's opponents within the Likud are deeply worried. Given that Sharon is making this a contest between himself and Arbel, they cannot get a critical mass of ministers willing to campaign against him.

Aside from that, if the party members vote against the plan, Sharon will not be the only loser. The Likud as a party will also be weakened. A party that paralyzes its leaders is a party that cannot be trusted by the voters.

And so ignored is fact that the plan leaves Israel vulnerable not only to a more lethal threat of terrorism emanating from a Judenrein Gaza but also from the type of international pressure Sharon groundlessly claims a withdrawal will prevent. As is its wont, the media, always game for an Israeli retreat, is complicit in this conscious dumbing-down of the national discourse.

On Thursday Haaretz reported that US President George W. Bush will tell Sharon that, in exchange for leaving Gaza, the US supports the view that Israel will not have to retreat from all of Judea and Samaria. This does not mean, as Sharon would wish for us to believe, that the US supports Israeli annexation of blocs of settlement. To the contrary: The US still insists that Israel not build the security fence in areas beyond the 1949 armistice lines. If Sharon announces that he is adding ten neighborhoods to Ma'aleh Adumim and five to Efrat after he throws thousands of Israeli citizens from their homes in Gush Katif, the Americans will not accept this. The fact of the matter is that it is Israel that is scaling back its positions, while the US remains adamant about defending the Palestinians' full territorial demands.

The press tells us that the US has agreed to Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's conditions for his support of the plan. This is not true. Netanyahu stated that in return for an Israeli surrender in Gaza, the US must announce that it rejects the Palestinian demand for a so-called right of return that would allow millions of foreign-born Arabs opposed to Israel's existence to immigrate to Israel and demographically undo the state, or, at least create the conditions for a Lebanese-style civil war.

It would seem obvious that the US opposes a demand that would cause the destruction of Israel. And yet the US refuses to accept this condition. Rather, it is reportedly willing to say only that it supports Israel's right to be a Jewish state, which can mean a lot or nothing depending on the circumstances. In addition, the US is planning to announce that the so-called Palestinian refugees will have a right of free immigration to the Palestinian state. That is all very fair, but where exactly are these foreign Arabs to work? Who will be pressured to ensure their economic viability? These would all be interesting issues to hear debated among our political leadership.

Yet to go against the unilateral withdrawal plan means to go against Sharon in his time of victimization by the State's Attorney's office – and who could bear to do such a thing? The sad truth is that both Sharon and Arbel are abusing their offices. By making the adoption of his plan before Mazuz decides on an indictment the central unifying principle of his political and diplomatic efforts, Sharon is lending credence to the view that his radical diplomatic platform is based largely on personal considerations. In so doing, Sharon is cheapening his office, damaging the credibility of our political institutions, undermining his party and delegitimizing his own leadership.

In publicly stating her view that a criminal indictment of an elected official is grounds for his forced resignation from office, Arbel is using her position as State's Attorney to advance a view that is not within the purview of her office and gravely undermines the democratic process. This is a patent abuse of power. It harms her office by damaging the public trust in the fairness and equity of our justice system.

Sharon today is advancing a policy that is antithetical to the policies he

advanced when he was elected chairman of Likud and prime minister just a bit over a year ago. Sharon ran for office on a commitment to fight relentlessly against terrorism and a refusal not merely to retreat under fire, but a refusal to conduct negotiations for as long as the Palestinians enabled the terrorist cells to operate at any level.

The policy of retreat that Sharon now embraces was the platform of his election rival, Labor candidate Amram Mitzna. This policy was roundly rejected not only by Likud members, but by the rank and file of Israeli voters who served up Labor's greatest defeat in its history.

If Sharon respected democracy, as he claimed on Tuesday night, he would return his leadership mandate to the voters and ask to be reelected on the basis of his adoption of the 2003 Labor Party platform.

Of course he will not do this. But the fact that the prime minister is behaving improperly does not give our other elected officials the right to do so. It is the duty of our governing ministers and members of Knesset to require Sharon to present his plan to them for their oversight and approval before he concludes a deal with a foreign head of state. The Knesset attempted to force Sharon to do so a couple of weeks ago, but Sharon called the members' bluff by turning his presentation into a vote of confidence and proceeded to say absolutely nothing. Sharon has sidelined his government ministers by bypassing their calls for debate with ego-massaging meetings with headline-hungry ministers. This can no longer be countenanced.

Our elected officials have a sworn duty to participate in policymaking and to oversee and debate the policies of the government. The prime minister is not, in our parliamentary democracy, a supreme authority. He is the head of a government of empowered ministers and the leader of the largest parliamentary bloc in the Knesset. The Likud Central committee is not a politburo and the Prime Minister's office is not the Kremlin. It is time for our political leaders to call Sharon's bluff. This is, after all, a democracy. (Jerusalem Post Apr 4)

Passover Hate: A lie continues to spread. By Steven Stalinsky

The Syrian-produced Hezbollah TV series Al-Shatat, which ran earlier this year during Ramadan, represents a long line of Syrian blood libels. In the 20th episode of Al-Shatat, a "rabbi" states, "we want the blood of a Christian child before Passover, for the matzos." A neighborhood boy named Nathan, who looks to be about eight years old, is brought into the room, his throat is slit as he cries "Mama, Mama" and his blood is poured into a metal basin. The next scene has the rabbi wishing a "Jewish man" a good Passover and offering him matzo — "tastier and holier because it was kneaded with pure blood."

Twenty-one years earlier, Syrian Minister of Defense Field Marshall Mustafa Tlass, who is considered one of the pillars of the Syrian Baathist regime, released the first edition of his book *The Matzah of Zion*. The 1983 book retold the notorious Damascus Blood Libel of 1840 in which the Jewish community in Damascus was accused of murdering a Christian priest named Toma, and his servant, to use their blood in making matzahs.

The second edition of Tlass's book was published in 1986 with added footnotes and pictures, including one of the tombstone of Father Toma's grave with an inscription indicating that he was killed by Jews. Tlass's book has become influential in international antisemitic circles as a reliable source of information about Jewish ritual murder and has been published in multiple languages, including French and Italian.

By 2002, Tlass's book had been reprinted eight times, and was one of the most popular books at the Syrian Book Fair that year. According to its publisher, the reason for its popularity is "the will of the next generation to know about the Jews, how they harm Arabs and others." Tlass explained that in each reprint he will add new documents "which will shed light [on] the distortion of the Torah [by the Jews] and on criminal Jewish religious rituals." Similarly, in the 1986 edition's introduction, citing the Koran, Tlass wrote, "I intend to illuminate some of the secrets of the Jewish religion by describing the actions of the Jews...and the implementation of the Talmudic precepts compiled in the Diaspora by their rabbis who distorted the principles of the Jewish belief."

In 2001 it was reported in the Egyptian media that Tlass's book will be made into a movie in which he will receive five percent of its profits. The movie's producer will be Egyptian Munir Radhi and the Egyptian cast will reportedly be led by Omar Sharif. According to Radhi, the primary goal of the movie is "to respond to all the Zionist films distracted by the American film industry" notably Schindler's List. During a 2003 interview, Tlass explained that his book is not antisemitic and compared such charges to those against French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy, because "world Zionism opposes anyone who speaks the truth."

Following the airing of Al-Shatat this year there has been a growing movement in Europe to block Hezbollah TV. In late 2003, Australia was the first Western nation to announce the suspension of Al-Manar from its airwaves following a government viewing of Al-Shatat and with a subsequent investigation of the channel alleging criminal activities of broadcasting programs that "perpetuate hatred against or gratuitously vilify any person or group."

France announced in February 2004 that it is also considering banning Al-Manar. Le Monde reported that following the French prime minister's viewing of Al-Shatat, he stated that the government would take action to stop its broadcasting. Earlier, in November 2000 a French court subpoenaed the editor of the Egyptian government paper Al-Ahram for printing a blood libel strikingly similar to the one told by Tlass.

During a session of parliament in Sweden on March 18, 2004, in reference to Al-Shatat, Parliamentarian Mikael Oscarsson of the Christian Democratic party asked Prime Minister Göran Persson to put an end to Al-Manar broadcasts in Sweden which are "appalling propaganda of incitement" that "can only be compared with that of the Nazis."

While the U.S. condemned the series during its airing as spokeswoman for the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Rhonda Shore, stated, "Such venomous antisemitism has absolutely no place in the civilized world," there is no government effort to block Al-Manar in the U.S. Surprisingly, during an Al-Manar broadcast on December 14, 2003, it was reported that Hezbollah TV actually has a correspondent stationed in Washington, D.C. Al-Manar's website is also hosted in the U.S. by a company in Hoboken, New Jersey.

The writer is executive director of MEMRI. (National Review Apr 6)

Why No Christian Suicide Bombers? And Other Thoughts on Islamic Terror By Dennis Prager

Golly gee, Muslim terrorists tried to attack Madrid again. How can that be? Wasn't Muslim terror in Spain supposed to end once Spain appeased the terrorists by voting in the socialists?

Only those who do not understand Muslim terror could fool themselves into believing that.

So, to better understand the subject, I offer three conclusions I drew about terror during my week of broadcasting from Israel last month.

First, Islamic terror is caused by Muslims, not, as Islamic and leftist apologists would have it, by the non-Muslims against whom it is directed. In our morally confused world, Spain, Israel and America are blamed for having their men, women and children blown up: What did these countries do to arouse such enmity among otherwise tolerant Arabs and Muslims?

Palestinian terror provides the answer. About 25 percent of Palestinians are Christian, yet if there are any Palestinian Christian suicide bombers, I am unaware of them. Now why is that? Don't Muslim and leftist apologists incessantly tell us that the reason for Palestinian terror is "Israeli occupation and oppression"? Why, then, are there no Palestinian Christian terrorists? Are Christian Palestinians less occupied?

The answer is obvious. There is Palestinian terror for the same reasons there is Muslim terror elsewhere. A significant part of the Muslim world wishes to destroy those non-Muslims -- Americans, Israelis, Filipinos, Nigerians, Sudanese blacks -- who prevent Islam from violently attaining power.

Palestinian Muslim terror emanates from a desire to destroy Israel, not to end Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Other Muslim terror is aimed at weakening the West, America in particular, so that militant theocratic Islam can dominate Muslim-majority societies and then take over other societies, as it is slowly doing in Western Europe.

Second, despite the Spanish cave-in to terror, in the long run, terror doesn't work. By any rational calculation, to take the Palestinian example, it has become the most self-destructive policy Palestinians could pursue. Palestinian terror has convinced almost all Israelis outside of academia that the moral gulf between them and the Palestinians is so wide that there is presently no hope for peace.

Nor has Palestinian terror terrorized Israelis. In what will surely be recorded as among the most impressive behaviors of a national group, Israelis have decided to live as normally as possible among people who aim to murder and maim as many of them as possible. In fact, I learned, many Israelis are now concerned that they have done this too well, that there is not enough mourning and rage after each atrocity.

Palestinian terror is self-destructive because it has morally, economically, religiously and politically destroyed Palestinian society and led to its present state of chaos. The mayor of Nablus resigned two months ago, declaring that gangs of thugs now govern Palestinian society. Any society that encourages terror ends up consumed by it. Ask the Saudis.

Third, there is a terrible long-term price that Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians in particular are paying for the minority that engages in terror and for the majority that says nothing about it or supports it.

They may wish to reflect on the fact that with every act of terror they engage in, their people and religion are increasingly identified with cruelty. Can anyone anywhere name any Palestinian contribution to humanity other than innovative forms of terror and cruelty? On my radio show, the spokesman of Zaka, the Israeli rescue squad that attends to terror victims, told me that at various times Palestinian terrorists have laced the screws attached to their bombs with rat poison, and that at least one of the Palestinian terrorists was injected with the AIDS virus in the hope that his blood would transmit AIDS to wounded Israelis.

Just as the German nation, fairly or not, has had to grapple with the moral legacy of Nazism, and the name of Christianity still suffers (unfairly) because of medieval persecutions of non-Christians, so, too, Islam, Arabs and Palestinians will have to struggle for generations to shed their identification with murdering

innocents.

While it is Americans, Israelis and other targets of terror who most suffer individually from Palestinian and other Muslim terror, those with the most to lose are Palestinians, Arabs and Islam. (TownHall.com Apr 6)

Bird-Jews of a Feather By Sarah Honig

In his autobiography, author Shalom Aleichem recalls a harrowing story his grandfather told him about "the bird-Jew." That was how the grandfather referred to Noah, a pious Jewish innkeeper who lived in constant dread of the village squire. Trembling, Noah headed for the manor to renew his lease. His timing was off, as the courtyard was full of festive guests ready to go hunting.

The squire, in a jovial mood, agreed to renew the lease if Noah would climb the stable roof and pretend to be a bird - so he could shoot him. Fearful of angering the nobleman - the worst consequence he could imagine - Noah obsequiously did his bidding, went up, and, as ordered, bent forward, flung his arms sideways, and assumed a birdlike pose. At that point the squire fired and Noah fell, as any slain bird would.

Although realizing he was about to be put to death anyway, the bird-Jew played along with his executioner, still absurdly terrified of what might happen if he didn't. This is the cringing mentality, the fear of giving offense to one's mortal enemies, that Zionism was established to eradicate.

Not fully successfully, it seems. You can take the Jew out of the Diaspora but not all the Diaspora out of all Jews.

Thus the pinpointed targeting of Hamas godfather Ahmed Yassin engendered in Shimon Peres and like-minded cronies apprehension and acute anxiety lest the demise of the preacher of the Jewish state's destruction rile his faithful followers. The inference is that their hate isn't unconditional and irredeemable, that they don't hate us fanatically and irrationally, that they don't yet hate us all they can and that our indiscretion can possibly goad them to worse.

That's not all. While conceding that Yassin deserved death, they argue that the timing was off, omitting to specify when the timing might be suitable.

DO THEY suggest that Yassin should've gotten his comeuppance only after he murdered more Jews? And if so, exactly how many?

To hear them, one would think that had we not bumped Yassin off, moderation and goodwill would have prevailed. It takes minimal prescience to predict the accusative carping and sanctimonious finger-pointing that would follow the next terrorist outrages, as if these wouldn't be perpetrated had not a hair on Yassin's evil head been touched, as if terrorists lack pretexts.

The notion that fighting terror produces more terror is as perverse as the assumption that if you don't fight terrorists, they'll go easy on you. This might work with the Mafia, but not with Hamas or Fatah. Their agenda excludes any provisions for coexistence.

Contemporary bird-Jews prefer to presume that the enemy is reasonable, that his goal is plausible, and that accommodation is achievable. But none of this applies to the Palestinians - be they Yassin's disciples or Arafat's, not that there's any discernible difference between them.

They are all racists, who despise Jews with the unbridled Nazi venom of Hitler's ally and avid collaborator Haj Amin el-Husseini, Arafat's predecessor as the intimidating warlord and local Arab icon. Like him and like Yassin, Arafat has spoken of Jews as pigs, monkeys, dogs and killers-of-prophets. The clerics he appointed, in the mosques he supervises, call weekly - in the sermons he scrutinizes - to put the subhuman Jew-infidels to the sword.

We're hated for who we are, not for what we do. Any remaining doubts should be thoroughly nullified by two recent revealing yet overlooked incidents.

On Arafat's direct orders 1,200,000 students in his fiefdom observed a minute's silence in memory of the Spanish train-blasts victims, as if Palestinian terror hadn't inspired such wanton mass homicide. The sponsor and prime practitioner of terror staged sympathy-pageants with its casualties. The arch-terrorist lay wreaths at the proverbial graves of terror's victims - so long as said victims weren't Jewish. Arafat rallied no one to mourn the 1,000 Israelis slaughtered in 42 months of the ongoing bloodbath he instigated.

A few days after that surrealistic spectacle, Arafat had occasion to extend condolences to the family of Jerusalem attorney Elias Khouri, whose son George was shot, while he jogged, by Arafat's own snipers who mistook him for a Jew. Arafat rued the tragic error and the fact that George paid with his life for being misidentified as a Jew. He was furious at the hit men he dispatched for not gunning down a Jew.

Can such hate be mitigated? Is there any point to avoid antagonizing such implacable enemies? About as much as for the two Jews in a later variation on the bird-Jew theme. These Jews faced a firing squad. One of them cursed the executioner who offered him a blindfold. The other was horrified and exclaimed in trepidation, "Why are you making him angry? You're going to get us killed!" (Jerusalem Post Apr 5)