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ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

 Jerusalem 6:33; Toronto 7:52

Events...

Monday April 26, 7:00pm
 Mizrahi's Community Yom
 Hazikaron commemoration and Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration at BAYT.

Wednesday May 5, 7:30 - 9:30pm
 Town Hall meeting "Global Terrorism: Is Canada at Risk" with **Stewart Bell**, at North York Central Library, Auditorium - Second Floor, 5120 Yonge Street., enter off Beecroft.

Commentary...

So What Did We Get? By Caroline Glick

So, what did we get? After months of expectation and postponement, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon Wednesday finally got his audience with US President George W. Bush.

Since the beginning of the year, we have been told day after day, "Just wait and see." So now that the visit is behind us, what did we get? What did Sharon bring back from Washington? On the positive side, we received American acknowledgement of Israel's basic right as a sovereign state to defend itself against aggression. This is no small feat today. In acknowledging that Israel can defend itself, Bush said something that no other leader in the world would say today. Certainly not any leader in Europe where every action Israel takes to defend itself is condemned.

Aside from that, Bush recognized the right of the Jewish people to self-determination by acknowledging Israel's right to remain a Jewish state. Here too, with the resurgence of the anti-Semitism throughout Europe, this statement should not be taken for granted. It is hard to imagine many European leaders saying as much. Bush also embraced Israel as America's friend. This too is impressive. Today, the US needs the assistance of states like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to help it fight Al Qaida and the US is seeking to rebuild an Iraqi society that was poisoned by decades of Saddam's anti-Semitism. In this state of affairs it would not be surprising for an American president to eschew any public statements of support for Israel. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any other president standing with Israel's leader while his military forces fight Arab and Muslim armies and insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In these days of diplomatic isolation and ostracism, it is comforting to know that we have a friend in the White House.

If Sharon had simply wanted to go to Washington to remind Israelis that we have a powerful friend, we could stop the analysis here and call it a success. Unfortunately, Sharon did not go to Washington just to hear that America has not abandoned us to our fate. Rather he went there to receive American goodies in exchange for his plan to surrender Gaza and parts of Samaria to the Palestinians while they remain in a state of war against Israel. And here he returned empty-handed.

Sharon and his people claim that Bush's letter to Sharon contains such goodies and so it is important to read the letter closely.

A good attorney wrote Bush's letter. While the prime minister and his media flaks declare that the president agreed that the so-called Palestinian refugees not be allowed to immigrate to Israel, the president said no such thing. What Bush wrote was, "It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair, and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel." There is no commitment here. There is no positive statement that the US will never back the immigration of foreign-born Arabs to Israel in the framework of a deal with the PLO or any subsequent Palestinian leadership. There is not even a simple declarative sentence stating that this will not stand. The president wrote, "It

seems clear." What does that mean? It means nothing.

Then there is the issue of the Israeli communities that are not yet slated for destruction. Sharon and his spinmeisters claim that Bush agreed that many of these communities will remain inviolate as part of Israel even in the event that a Palestinian leadership arises that will cut a deal with Israel. But a look at the text shows something else entirely. The president wrote, "In light of new realities on the ground

[since 1949], including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." Again, there is no positive statement of support for the continued growth and development of these communities. It is simply unrealistic to assume that hundreds of thousands of Israelis who live in them will be forcibly transferred from their homes and communities. And this statement can actually backfire on Israel.

Take for instance the case of Jerusalem. Over the past decade the Palestinians, in an effort to create "facts on the ground" have built scores of largely illegal housing developments in the city. Many of these apartment blocks stand empty, awaiting the "return" of the so-called refugees. It will no doubt be argued that it would be unrealistic to deny the Palestinians sovereignty over these areas of the capital, given the "new realities on the ground." Then too, there is the issue of Sharon's letter to Bush. In that letter, Sharon committed Israel to a continued ban on building in the remaining communities in Judea and Samaria when he wrote, "we are fully aware of the responsibilities facing the State of Israel. These include limitations on the growth of settlements." So if Israel, under American pressure, agreed to continue to curtail the growth of the remaining communities in Judea and Samaria, how can we view the president's statement as support for the continued existence of these communities? If we aren't supposed to build in them, why should we trust that the US won't pressure us to give them up? Indeed, Bush himself said that Sharon's plan

has "started the process of removing settlements from the West Bank." Aside from all of this, Bush's letter, and indeed, Sharon's, continue to force Israel into an untenable position of having to fight terrorism while promising victory to the terrorists in the form of a state. Why should the Palestinians lose hope that terrorism pays when they have yet to pay a price for it? As well, Bush and Sharon both wrote and said that they remain committed to strengthening the Palestinian security services. This is a regurgitation of a

commitment that has been stated repeatedly since those same security services enabled the first suicide bombers to enter our cities in 1994.

And it makes no sense. Israel has exposed and the US has reviewed mountains of evidence proving that these security services are terrorist cells and that the Palestinian Authority itself is a terrorist entity. Yet in spite of this, the US continues to insist, and Israel continues to agree, that these security services should be reformed and strengthened and PA institutions supported and reinforced rather than destroyed and replaced.

Finally, as has been the case since the "land for peace" equation was coined, the demands on Israel from the exchange of letters are all concrete while the demands from the Palestinians are not. They have to reform and fight terror but there is no "or else." Nothing will happen to them if they don't. And as for the reform of their political institutions, there is no blueprint for how they are supposed to go about it, especially in light of the fact that the Bush administration has ruled out the option of getting rid of Yasser Arafat.

The truth is that it is hard to blame Bush for the fact that aside from comforting Israel with his declarations of support and friendship he gave Israel nothing on Wednesday. He didn't ask for this meeting. Sharon did. Sharon begged for it. The US didn't put Sharon up to his plan to surrender Gaza and uproot Jewish communities. He came up with the idea all by himself.

Given all of this, the question arises, why did we have to go through this edifying exercise in statecraft? Here one is reminded of the way that then prime minister Yitzhak Rabin decided in 1993 to take the European mediated Oslo Accord and have the Americans present it as their own plan. It was Rabin's view that American adoption of his radical decision to cut a

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deal with the PLO would make the agreement more palatable to a skeptical Israeli populace that viewed Arafat as an unreconstructed mass murderer committed to the destruction of Israel.

Then as today, Israel's leaders went to Washington and offered the Americans a gift. Whereas the US expected Israel to stand strong and not give an inch in the face of terror in spite of America's interest in getting a peace process going, both Rabin and Sharon presented their US counterparts with an easy win. No administration will be opposed to the notion of a peace process or an Israeli surrender of land. It serves the US interest to have a peace process or a withdrawal process going, especially before an election. It mollifies the Arabs. It paints the president as a moderate champion of peace. And it costs the US nothing.

Sharon, like Rabin, preaches defeatism and retreat because he sees time working against us and for our enemy. According to this view, in the event of a stalemate, Israel must surrender because our enemies have more staying power.

But there is an alternative approach to the situation. This approach says that we should fight the war waged against us with the aim of winning. On the ground this means that we fight terror everywhere it exists, we take away the bases of operation and support from the terrorists and we push hard for societal change among our enemies by enacting policies that will lead toward democratization. By so acting, it is actually Israel, not our enemies, that has the real staying power.

This is what the US is doing in Iraq. It is also the opposite of what Israel, under Sharon's leadership, is now doing and indeed, the opposite of what we have been doing since 1993. It is a policy built on the strength and resilience of our people and our democracy and the weakness of our enemies' dictatorial terrorist breeding grounds. Too bad Sharon has so little faith in us. I'll bet that Bush would have supported such a strategy. (Jerusalem Post Apr 18)

Anti-Israel Terror Backfires by Daniel Pipes

A day after Israeli troops killed its second leader within a single month, the Islamist terrorist organization Hamas put on a brave face. The Israelis "are dreaming" if they think this would weaken Hamas, announced Ismail Haniyeh to a crowd of over 70,000 mourners at the funeral for Abdel Aziz Rantisi. "Every time a martyr falls," Haniyeh insisted, "Hamas is strengthened."

This sort of boosterism and puffery has a long history among Palestinians. The last time Israeli forces did real damage to the Palestinian war machine, in May 2002, for example, Khaled Meshal of Hamas announced that the Israeli devastation was actually "a Palestinian victory that lifted the morale of our people." Not to be outdone, Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) claimed that same month, "The more destruction I see, the stronger I get."

These leaders may be fooling themselves by pretending that defeat is victory, but growing numbers of Palestinians are wising up to the bitter realities of losing a war. Their mood has darkened since February 2001, when the prime minister, Ariel Sharon, came to office intent to establish that violence against Israel does not work.

The results have deeply affected Palestinian life. In one town of 5,000 on the West Bank, a resident told the Times of London how his town has been "isolated from the whole world, even from other villages. Everybody has to be in their homes by 6 p.m., and the Israeli patrols come around every day to check."

Protracted isolation has led to steep economic decline. Recent P.A. figures show that 84% of the Palestinian population lives in poverty, as defined by the World Bank, four times the number that did so before the Palestinians stepped up the violence in late 2000. P.A. residents number 3.5 million and their economy produces \$2.5 billion a year, meaning the average per capita income is \$700 a year.

A World Bank study in 2003 found that investment in the P.A. declined to \$140 million in 2002 from about \$1.5 billion in 1999. The United Nations found in 2003 that Palestinians have turned to subsistence agriculture — growing their own food — in place of the more sophisticated work they had previously been doing.

Commenting on the situation, the U.N. special envoy to the region, Terje Roed-Larsen, describes the Palestinian economy as "devastated."

(That said, conditions should not be exaggerated. Foreign aid adds \$800 million a year, bringing annual per capita income to about \$1,000 — or about the same as Syria and higher than India and all but a few sub-Saharan countries. Palestinians are thus by no means the poorest people in the world.)

In a word, Mr. Sharon's tough policies have established that terrorism damages Palestinian interests even more than it does Israeli ones. This has led some analysts deeply hostile to Israel to recognize that the "second intifada" was a grievous error. Violence "just went haywire," says Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University. An "unmitigated disaster," journalist Graham Usher calls it a "crime against the Palestinian people," adds an Arab diplomat.

After the execution of Hamas's other leader, Ahmed Yassin, last month, 60 prominent Palestinians urged restraint in a newspaper ad, arguing that violence would provoke strong Israeli responses that would obstruct aspirations to build an independent "Palestine." Instead, the signatories called for "a peaceful, wise intifada."

Ordinary Palestinians, too, are drawing the salutary conclusion that murdering Israelis brings them no benefits. "We wasted three years for nothing, this uprising didn't accomplish anything," says Mahar Tarhir, 25, an aluminum-store owner. "Anger and disillusionment have replaced the fighting spirit that once propelled the Palestinian movement," finds Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, a reporter for Knight Ridder.

As for Israelis, as early as July 2003 the military brass reached the conclusion that Israel was achieving victory. More sharply, Israeli analyst Asher Susser concluded in the Middle East Quarterly back then that the Palestinian effort to break the Israeli spirit through terror "has failed" and resorting to force "was a catastrophic mistake, the worst the Palestinians have made since 1948."

In this context, rapidly eliminating two Hamas chieftains in a row deepens Palestinian perceptions that Israel's will to defend itself is strong, its military arm long, and that terrorism is tactically wrong. Perhaps more Palestinians will realize the time has come to accept the existence of the Jewish state. (New York Sun April 20)

The Hard Lessons of Terror By Melanie Phillips

The killing by Israel of the Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi has been widely condemned in Britain and Europe. The Palestinians are screaming for revenge. Only America has stopped short of condemnation, confining itself to vague concern about consequences.

The Rantisi killing happened days after President Bush publicly endorsed Israel's policy of retaining some West Bank territory and refusing automatic right of settlement in Israel to the Palestinians. As a result, many in Britain may be inclined to the following conclusions: that Israel killed Rantisi because America has now given it carte blanche to do whatever it likes; that the killing will once again ratchet up the violence; and that instead of building upon America's support by keeping its head down, Israel has displayed its usual arrogance and aggression which has now killed off the chances of a political settlement.

This widespread reaction rests upon some profoundly dangerous misunderstandings, not just about Israel and the Middle East but about the wider phenomenon of global terror and what encourages it.

The first major error is the idea that Israel is torpedoing a political settlement. There is in fact no political settlement on the horizon. For all Tony Blair's insistence otherwise, the road map is dead in the water because the Palestinian Authority refuses even to attempt the map's first and most basic requirement, that it dismantle the infrastructure of terror.

Not only has it refused on the grounds that to confront Hamas would mean civil war, but Yasser Arafat's own militias — and even the PA's own policemen — are repeatedly involved in the human bomb attacks which are being regularly attempted (and mainly thwarted). You can't negotiate a settlement if there is no-one committed to peace with whom to negotiate.

Next, the idea of a connection between President Bush's statement and the Rantisi killing is demonstrably absurd. Israel decided some time ago that the only way to prevent yet more of its citizens being murdered by Hamas was to kill its entire leadership. Indeed, it tried unsuccessfully to kill Rantisi, the operational commander of Hamas's terrorism, last June, and killed its founder, Sheikh Yassin, a month ago.

Since its rules of military engagement forbid it from attacking if there is a risk of large scale civilian casualties, it could only strike when opportunities arose — and these have been rare.

In Britain, many see this as aggression. Undoubtedly, targeted killings are troubling. But since the alternative is to wait for more innocents to be blown apart by Hamas, how can that possibly be right? No legal authority in the world requires a state to sit on its hands while its citizens are systematically murdered.

When US forces killed Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay last year, there were plaudits from Tony Blair. Britain and the US are now hunting Osama bin Laden and his principal lieutenants in order to kill them. Earlier this month, at least 600 Iraqis were killed by the Americans in Fallujah with no outcry. Why, then, is Israel judged by a double standard?

The problem is that many in Britain simply don't grasp the reality of what is happening in Israel — from where, incidentally. I have just returned after a ten-day stay. Endless TV images of Israelis in tanks demolishing Palestinian houses, with an often hostile commentary, have created an impression of unbridled aggression.

In reality, Israel is fighting a war for its own survival that has now gone on for more than fifty years. The Palestinians have repeatedly stated that their aim remains the eradication of Israel altogether. Why is Israel alone deemed not entitled to defend itself?

But, people say, killing terrorists surely makes violence more likely. Well, history tells us that the opposite is true. It is the west's weakness and appeasement of terrorism over several decades which have encouraged the terror-masters to turn the screw ever tighter.

After all, Palestinian terror escalated during the years of the Oslo 'peace process', when a political settlement seemed more likely than at any time. And here lies perhaps the biggest — and most bitterly ironic — error by Israel's critics. For to its Arab enemies, far from representing strength Israel actually embodies a terrible weakness.

Sure, Israel is armed to the teeth. And since Israel well understands that, for the Arabs, weakness rather than strength is the trigger for violence, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision to withdraw from Gaza has given targeted killings another strategic purpose — to show that Israel is not departing with its tail between its legs.

But the Arabs know that Israel is weak in their own terms. This is obvious in the way Israel and the Arabs respectively respond to attack. In 1982, Syria put down a revolt in Hama by wiping out at least 20,000

inhabitants. The Palestinians have been massacred in, or kicked out of, virtually every Arab state in which they have settled.

Israel, by contrast, goes in for pin-point targeted killings, or house-to-house terrorist hunts with a relatively severe attrition rate among its own forces. The weakness is embodied in the Palestinian taunt to the Israelis that 'we will win because you love life and we love death'.

And here, the warning for Britain and Europe too could not be starker. For like Israel, we are facing the same 'asymmetric warfare', in which conventional military might becomes worthless if countries are not prepared to use it against those who are willing to turn even children into human bombs.

The danger lies in not recognising that terrorism is encouraged by weakness, not strength. Al Qaeda attacked America because it perceived the west was decadent and so assumed it was not prepared to fight. It made a big mistake over America, but it got Europe (with the exception of Tony Blair over Afghanistan and Iraq) dead right.

The history of modern terrorism is a history of appeasement. From the first Palestinian plane hijacking in 1968, the response of the west was to assume there were legitimate grievances that had to be addressed. From that point, terrorists had every incentive to continue.

The Israelis themselves, in deep denial after half a century of annihilatory attacks, have also attempted appeasement — negotiating with the terrorists who have killed them, slapping them down for continuing to kill them and then making overtures again while still being killed by them. Now for the first time, they have said the charade has to stop.

But both they and we still face the same hideous dilemma. Terrorism can only be defeated by superior strength. This was shown in Falluja where (whatever other horrors Iraq still harbours) the huge American show of force produced a truce.

But in general, are we really prepared to use massive firepower? Are we in the west prepared to compromise our values by creating the carnage that may be necessary to defeat this new kind of terror warfare, which routinely uses human beings as both bombs and shields?

If it's a choice between our values and our lives, which course will we take? For in a war between those for whom life is everything and those for whom life is nothing, there's no contest.

Our values require us to distinguish between terrorism and self-defence. Moral courage means facing reality and making hard choices. Our survival depends on it. (Daily Mail Apr 19)

Libels, Medieval and Modern By Michael Freund

Situated outside the Swiss village of Montreux, along the shore at the eastern end of Lake Geneva, sits one of the most impressive architectural relics of the Middle Ages. With its turreted towers and Gothic architecture, the Chateau de Chillon, or Chillon Castle, built on an islet nearly 1,000 years ago, projects an image of beauty and serenity that strikes all who come to see it.

But the dazzling exterior is deceiving, for beneath it lies a dark and sinister secret, one that says a great deal about Europe's relationship with the Jews in the distant past as well as in the present.

The year was 1348, and the Black Death was ravaging the Continent, wiping out entire communities in its wake. The Jews of Europe suffered no less from the plague than did their non-Jewish neighbors, but that did not save them from being blamed for it anyway. Slander against the Jews, such as rumors of well-poisoning, spread quickly throughout France and Switzerland, laying the groundwork for massacre and persecution.

In September 1348, the Jews of the Swiss town of Villeneuve were taken to the Chateau de Chillon and imprisoned in its dungeons. Horrible tortures were inflicted on them until a Jewish surgeon named Balavignus finally "admitted," under duress, that local Jews had concocted a poison made of Christian hearts and flesh, spiders, frogs, and lizards, topped off with the "sacred host" used in Catholic ritual, with the aim of poisoning Christian wells and rivers.

As a result, Villeneuve's Jews, its men, women and children, were burned alive in the depths of the castle. As historian Joshua Trachtenberg writes in *The Devil and the Jews*, "This tale, in one form or other, spread on the heels of the plague and was eagerly seized upon by the terror-stricken populace as an adequate explanation of its origin."

A few months later, in January 1349, 600 Jews in Basel were burned to death.

This horrific pattern repeated itself in all its horror in other communities throughout France, Switzerland and Germany. Back then, Europe's treatment of the Jews was shaped and molded by a ridiculous lie. In that sense, at least, very little seems to have changed. For while Europeans once charged us with the "blood libel," saying we illicitly used other people's blood, they now falsely tar us instead with "land libel," alleging we have taken other people's territory.

Just this past Monday, we were witness to this, when Swiss ambassador to Israel Ernst Iten refused to attend a street-naming ceremony in Jerusalem in honor of a Swiss Righteous Gentile. The reason for the ambassador's rudeness was that the street in question is located in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood, which Israel took in the 1967 Six Day War and Europe considers to be "Arab land."

"Unfortunately," the ambassador wrote in a letter to Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski, "the embassy cannot attend a ceremony for a street that is not located within the internationally recognized territory of Israel."

In other words, what His Excellency was really saying was: You Jews are a bunch of thieves because you stole Palestinian land. This, of course, represents not only the individual view of Switzerland but that of Europe as a whole, which has long pressed Israel to yield control over Judea, Samaria and Gaza to the

Palestinians.

Just last week, the EU reiterated its stance on this issue after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met with US President George W. Bush in the White House. At an April 15 news conference in Brussels, European Commission spokesman Reijo Kemppinen said that Israel and the Palestinians would have to negotiate an agreement resulting in two "viable and independent states based on Israel's 1967 borders."

"The European Union," he added, "will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties."

Now the Europeans are free to ignore thousands of years of history and archeology, which prove that the Jewish presence in places such as Hebron and Bethlehem predates that of their own civilization. And if they wish to pay no heed to the Bible and its mandate, which promises the land of Israel to the Jewish people and no one else, that is between them and God.

But they have no right to slander us and cast aspersions on us, falsely accusing the Jewish state of occupying someone else's land. This is not just a question of historical truth, but a matter of life and death.

For just as belief in the medieval "blood libel" legitimized the murder of Jews in the minds of its adherents, so too does the modern European "land libel" lend legitimacy to those who now target us, be they Islamic fundamentalists, Palestinian nationalists, or European anti-Semites.

After all, no one likes a land-grabber, and if, as Europe insists, the Jews are pilferers of Arab territory that would appear to set the stage for transforming them into a justifiable object of hatred and disgust.

Over six centuries ago, it was precisely this kind of attitude that led to innocent Jews being burned in the dungeons of Chillon. In its modern-day incarnation, the result is suicide bombings, synagogue desecrations and shooting attacks. And so, despite the passage of hundreds of years, one thing remains unchanged. Then, as now, Europe is no less culpable for what it has wrought. (Jerusalem Post Apr 21)

A Different Kind of Muslim By Melissa Radler

Sheikh Abdul Hadi Palazzi is emerging as an unlikely voice of moderation in Islam

A few years back, Sheikh Abdul Hadi Palazzi, the secretary-general of the Italian Muslim Association, imam at the Shafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence, and the co-chair of Islam-Israel Fellowship at the Root and Branch Association, addressed a group of conservative-leaning Jews in Manhattan. After hearing him cite a Koranic passage endorsing Zionism (*The Night Journey*, 17:104), deriding terror groups for misinterpreting religious texts to advance their "pseudo-Islamic radicalist" agenda, and endorsing a "Jordan is Palestine" solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the invited guests were taken aback. Was the bearded sheikh really a hawkish rabbi? One participant asked Palazzi if he received death threats, to which he shook his head. On the way out, the participant sighed, and said: "If the terrorists don't want to kill him, he's probably not that important."

Today, Palazzi, 43, is emerging as an unlikely voice of moderation in a religion whose leaders are viewed by many as apathetic, if not sympathetic, to terror abroad and oppression at home. A student of Sheikh Muhammad Shaarawi (an Egyptian cleric who promoted Jewish-Muslim relations and backed Anwar Sadat's decision to make peace with Israel), Palazzi is a harsh critic of the anti-Semitism that has come to pervade Islam.

A proponent of Israeli Tourism Minister Benny Elon's voluntary transfer plan, Palazzi opposes the US-backed road map on the grounds that it rewards Palestinian terror. His most vocal criticism, however, is reserved for the Saudis, whom he sees as the main force behind the rise of extremism in Islam. Whether one agrees with his views or not, Palazzi's voice is a sign that pluralism may finally be returning to Islam.

How did anti-Semitism enter mainstream Islam?

It's a consequence of Britain's foreign policy immediately after World War I. The original Weizmann-Feisal agreement was one of friendship and cooperation between the Zionist movement and the leaders of the Hashemite family, and the acceptance of the creation of two states - a Jewish state and an Arab kingdom, with the Jordan River as the natural border. Had that agreement been respected by the British, the Jewish state would have been born 30 years earlier, and the Arab and Zionist movements would have cooperated.

Unfortunately, the Foreign Office empowered the house of Saud, which promotes cultural Wahhabism, a belief that has anti-Semitism as one of its defining features. Until today, Saudis are using their oil money to promote anti-Semitism in the Arab world and beyond.

Can you really reduce Muslim anti-Semitism to Saudi influence?

When Emir Feisal declared in 1919 that he was welcoming the Jews home, no one used a religious argument against him. Maybe some said that from a political point of view we are not inclined to accept your idea of cooperating with the Zionist movement, but no one said that Islam forbids cooperating with the Zionists, or that Islam prevents us from accepting the existence of a Jewish state. That ideology, which is so widespread in the Arab world today, simply did not exist.

Even today, if you look at how anti-Semitism is spread in the Arab world, it is done by translating anti-Semitic European literature like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Roger Garaudy into Arabic. If you look for sources in classical Arabic literature, you can't find them.

Of course, many leaders understand that promoting hostility against Israel prevents the spread of democracy to their own countries. As long as those countries go on being dictatorial regimes, they need scapegoats, and it's easy to hold Israel responsible for everything that is wrong at home. I think that fighting democracy and spreading anti-Semitism are two sides of the same agenda.

Is the West sufficiently aware of the threat of Islamic extremism?

No. After 9/11, President Bush invited Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah to his ranch in Texas, and told him: "You are our ally in the war against terrorism."

The reality is that Prince Abdullah contributed funds to both the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaida.

Prince al-Turki, former head of the Saudi secret service, is practically the founder of al-Qaida. The relatives of the victims of 9/11 sued him for damages [the suit was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction], but now that same sponsor of terrorism is the Saudi ambassador to Britain, where he publishes poems praising suicide terrorists in British newspapers.

The power of the oil companies in the Western world is such that the role of the House of Saud as the main supporter of extremism and international terrorism goes on being covered up.

Is there a counter-appeal to Islamic fundamentalism in the West?

We should try to create a moderate Muslim education network which can balance the influence of the extremist network, but it is a hard task because the extremists have huge funds at their disposal.

If you look at the rest of the Muslim world, anti-Semitism is not common in Turkey or former Soviet Muslim republics like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; it was not part of any political agenda. But I think that the situation in the West is different because Muslims who live there in most cases can only attend Saudi-controlled mosques, Islamic schools and Islamic centers. In general, the countries in the Muslim world that are closer to democracy are the most friendly with the West, and those in which extremism is limited. So the logical consequence should be that Muslims in the West are the most open-minded. But the role of the extremist network in taking control of the mosques means that the opposite has happened.

One of the effects of 9/11 in North America is that those who were afraid to be heard are starting to speak about the danger of fundamentalist and extremist networks. If the number of those speaking out increases, the public will start understanding that the extremists have no right to speak for Islam.

You've stated that the Palestinians have no religious or historical right to Judea and Samaria, and that the Koran endorses a Jewish return to the Holy Land. How should Muslims respond to the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria?

I think that those Palestinians who abide by Israeli law have a right to go on living in Judea and Samaria, exactly like Israeli Arabs in Galilee or Beduin Arabs in the Negev. However, I do not think that being a minority in a certain country gives that minority the right to claim a state of its own. Consequently, I think that every Muslim should protest the idea of a PLO-controlled state in Judea and Samaria. The area of Palestine is already divided into a Jewish Palestinian state, Israel, and an Arab Palestinian state, Jordan; creating a third Palestinian state for the PLO is neither in the interests of Israel nor in the interest of Jordan, and even less in the interests of those Palestinian Arabs who would be compelled to live under a barbaric regime.

Moreover, accepting the creation of such a state would mean that terror works. Many Muslims rejoiced when the US administration liberated the Muslims of Iraq from Saddam Hussein. I think those same Muslims must protest when the White House pressures Israel to accept the creation of another dictatorial regime in the Arab world.

Muslims need democracy, and democracy for the Muslims of Judea and Samaria can only be granted by Israel.

Yet millions of Palestinians, and the majority of Israelis, support an eventual Palestinian state. What's the solution?

I think the biggest step toward real peace in the Middle East was the war in Lebanon: By expelling Arafat and the PLO, the level of terrorism was reduced. If they had let Arafat die in Tunis and never permitted his close associates to come back, terrorism would have been defeated within 10 or 20 years, and it would have been possible for a new leadership to emerge in favor of some kind of political agreement to grant the residents of the West Bank their rights as a foreign minority living in Israel.

Oslo simply destroyed that opportunity by bringing Arafat back and giving him control of the population. After [prime minister Ehud] Barak, Israelis voted for [Ariel] Sharon, the man who expelled Arafat and expanded settlements in Judea and Samaria, but now even Sharon is abiding by the principle of withdrawal.

Israel needs a leader who is able to say that negotiations with the PLO are not a solution, who says that we oppose the creation of a Palestinian state now and in the future, and that we will establish administrative autonomy [with Jordanian citizenship] for Arab inhabitants of the West Bank.

If President Bush claims that the war against terrorism is a global war, and that the solution is to spread democracy, Israelis have the same right to fight against Yasser Arafat and Sheikh Yassin [killed by Israel a week after this interview] as the United States has to fight against the Taliban, Saddam Hussein or al-Qaida.

Did you ever run into Jews who disagree with your activism?

It happens frequently. Until recently, most of my opponents in Rome were leftist Jews, criticizing me as an enemy of the peace process. I remember when some of my friends wanted me to speak at the Jewish center in Rome, [the center] opposed the idea, claiming that I'm an extremist. Some weeks later, they

invited Yasser Abed Rabbo and Sari Nusseibeh to be their guests; they called them moderate leaders of the Palestinian Authority.

I told them if someone thinks Sari Nusseibeh is a moderate, then I'm glad he considers me an extremist. (Jerusalem Post Apr 19)

People Are Beautiful, the World Stinks By Dennis Prager

If you love goodness and hate evil, this is a tough time to stay sane.

Israel has killed Abdel Aziz Rantisi, the Hamas terror leader, and almost every nation in the world and the nations' theoretical embodiment, the United Nations, have condemned Israel for doing so.

World leaders and the world organization have said almost nothing about Communist China's ongoing destruction of one of the world's oldest civilizations, Tibet. World leaders have said almost nothing about the Arab enslavement and genocide of non-Arab blacks in Sudan. But they convene world conferences to label Israel, one of the most humane and decent democracies on earth, a pariah.

In order to retain my sanity, I ask the reader's indulgence as I use this column to express personal thoughts.

I have contempt for "the world." I cherish and admire countless individuals, but I have contempt for "the world" and "world opinion." "The world" has never cared about evils inflicted on human beings. The Communist genocides meant nothing to humanity. The Holocaust meant nothing. With almost no exception, the mass atrocities since World War II have likewise absorbed humanity less than the Olympics or the Miss World Contest.

I have contempt for the United Nations. It is one of the great obstacles to goodness and decency on this planet. Its moral record -- outside of a few specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization -- is almost entirely supportive of evil and condemnatory of good. It is dominated by the most morally backward governments in the world -- those from the Arab and Muslim worlds, the Communists during their heyday and African despots. It appointed Libya, a despotic, primitive state, to head its Human Rights Commission, whose members include China, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. Neither the United States nor Israel sits on the Commission.

I regard the European Union with similar revulsion. With little opposition, Europe murdered nearly every Jewish man, woman and child in its midst, and a half-century later provides cover for those in the Middle East who seek to do to the Middle East's Jews exactly what the Nazis did to the European Jews. For the European Union to condemn Israel's killing of a Hamas leader, when Hamas's avowed aim is another Jewish genocide, is so loathsome as to board the incredible. For Germany and France (who, unlike America, have almost never shed blood for the liberty of others) to do everything they can to undermine America's attempt to liberate Iraq is similarly repugnant.

As for the international news media and journalists, I regard most of them as aides to evil.

This is not new. The 1932 Pulitzer Prize, American journalism's highest award, was given to Walter Duranty of the New York Times for reporting from the Soviet Union. In his reports, Duranty repeatedly denied Stalin's forced starvation of Ukrainians that led to the murder of more than 6 million of them. The same "newspaper of record" deliberately toned down reporting on the Nazi annihilation of Jews 10 years later so as not to appear "too Jewish."

The Soviet decimation of Afghanistan was so little reported in the international media -- especially radio and television -- that when I talked about its scope and horror on my radio show in the 1980s, listeners kept wondering if I was telling the truth -- they had never heard anything about it.

In the last years of the Saddam Hussein regime, according to John Burns of the New York Times, major news reporters refused to write stories about Iraqi mass murder and atrocities lest the Saddam regime remove their press credentials. For most journalists, and their newspapers and television stations, it was better to lie for Saddam and have a bureau in Baghdad than to tell the truth but have no Baghdad bureau.

And not one international news organization calls Hamas or any of the other Palestinian terror organizations "terrorists."

I love learning and revere the title of "professor," but with few exceptions, universities, too, merit contempt. The vast majority of professors who take positions on social issues are moral fools. They teach millions of students that America and Israel are villains and that the enemies of those decent societies are merely misunderstood victims who are often justified in their hatred. And they loathe the American Judeo-Christian value system that has made the United States the world's land of opportunity and beacon of liberty.

In sum, I feel that I am living in a world that is morally sick. Good is called bad, and bad is called "militant," "victimized," "misunderstood" and "the product of hopelessness," but rarely bad. Only those who fight the bad are called bad.

I am kept sane by the knowledge that there are hundreds of millions of individuals who can still tell the difference between good and evil; by the knowledge that there was never a time that humanity was particularly decent; and by a strong belief that a good God governs the universe even though He allows evil many triumphs. And I believe this God will judge Osama bin Laden and Jacques Chirac appropriately. (Townhall.com Apr 20)