



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Events...

Sunday May 7, 9:00am

Presentation on "A Genetic Glimpse into Jewish History and Health" by Dr. **Karl Skorecki**, the discoverer of the Cohen Genetic Signature, at BAYT.

Wednesday May 24, 5:30pm

Thornhill Jewish Chamber of Commerce members' event with **Paul Godfrey** at the Rogers Centre, followed by Blue Jays game. Call 416-366-6743 for membership information.

Commentary...

The Tattered Flag By Moshe Kempinski

The senseless and heartless expulsion of Jews from their homes has impacted the Jews who love this land dearly in a very harsh way. We approach the upcoming celebrations of Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel's Independence Day) with hearts overlaid with minefields. We have not lost the awe of being witness to G-d's miracles every day in this incredible land, yet we have been sorely disappointed by many of our brothers. We have not lost the stirring of our hearts when we see piece after piece of the Divine puzzle falling into place, yet we are saddened by the hardening of the hearts of so many around us.

I cannot help but be joyful upon realizing that for some strange reason I have merited to be one of the "words" G-d is using to write the last chapters of the Bible. When I read what the prophet Zechariah said (Zechariah 8:4-5) - "Thus saith HaShem Tz'vakot: 'There shall yet be old men and old women sitting in the broad places of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the broad places thereof.'" - I cannot help but wonder if some of the boys and girls Zechariah saw in his vision were not my very own children. With all that in mind, I will be celebrating on this Yom HaAtzmaut regardless of the plans of this government. I will be reciting the Hallel (psalms of praise) prayer with a full heart of thankfulness for the cup that is not yet full, but is far from empty.

In this country, at the center of the spiritual universe, even small decisions seem to carry such important cosmic weight. Every Yom HaAtzmaut I proudly attach a large flag on my balcony and attach my Israeli flag to my car. I have always felt it important to wave that flag in the neighborhood where I live, where so many of my neighbors act as if there is no state of Israel, and in the Old City where I work, where so many of my neighbors would like to ensure that there will be no state of Israel.

That flag has represented for me one of the clear miracles G-d has brought forth in this generation.

The expulsion of the Jews of Gush Katif and Samaria and the battering of the young Jews of Amona have not dimmed my appreciation for the flag of Israel and what it stirs in my heart. I am still moved by the famous picture of those young Jews recently released from Buchenwald, some still wearing their concentration camp uniforms, looking with yearning towards an uncertain future with an Israeli flag billowing behind them. My heart still stirs with the vision of Israeli paratroopers attaching a handmade Israeli flag over the Temple Mount in 1967. I still brush away a tear when I see the movie version of the Israeli flag unfurled on the Exodus boat attempting to break the British blockade of the land of Israel.

It is painfully clear to me, though, that there is a large segment of Israel's population that does not conjure up the same images. The Israeli flag reminds

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them of the Israeli team winning the European cup in basketball. Others may reminisce of Israel winning the Eurovision song contest with some "wannabee" Israeli performers holding cute little Israeli flags. Even worse, others may connect to the little Israeli flags sewn on to the uniforms of the soldiers sent in to expel their fellow Jews.

I watch the new Israeli government being formed along lines of retreat,

hatred and disregard for this people's history and vision, and I wonder where my place will be during these festivities. I watch television reports of our Arab neighbors burning the Israeli flag in frenzied demonstrations and then watch members of my upcoming government sully the flag with small-minded and self-serving arguments about power and prestige.

I truly don't want the flag waving on my car to somehow mirror the aspirations and fantasies of so many others with the same flag; so, this year I avoided attaching my flag.

Last week, I went with members of my family to visit some of the expelled Jews from Gush Katif who had begun to carve out a future in Amatsia, in the Lachish region. During their protracted and difficult stay in the hotels of Jerusalem, we had established deep friendships with some of these families. Towards the end of the visit, we were invited to return during the Independence Day holiday for a large happening that is being planned in their new location. I asked if planning such an event was difficult for them.

I was immediately castigated by these people who never lose hope. They firmly declared that the celebrations of Yom HaAtzmaut have nothing to do with the 120 members of the Israeli parliament. These celebrations are about G-d's miracles and the anticipation of the continuation of the ongoing miraculous process of redemption.

My dilemma was solved when I found, in the back of my car, a tattered flag with an orange ribbon attached to it. This was the flag that I had used driving to Kfar Maimon. It was the one that was flying from my car when we went down to S'derot and Ofakim for the large demonstrations. It was also the flag that I flew when we were trying to avoid police blockades and get to the Gamma Junction, in an attempt to interfere with the expulsion.

This tattered flag was the one that would express my feelings this year. The flag was dirty and torn, but it would fly proudly - with a bright orange ribbon affixed securely. The perfect metaphor for the state of our people on this 58th Independence Day. (IsraelNationalNews May1)

The writer, a former Torontonian, author of The Teacher and the Preacher, is the editor of the Jerusalem Insights weekly email journal and co-owner of Shorashim, a Biblical shop and learning center in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Let's Not Move On By Frimet Roth

On a Sunday morning 43 years ago, four African American girls - Denise McNair, 11, Addie Mae Collins, 14, Carole Robertson, 14, and Cynthia Wesley, 14, - were murdered by a bomb that was exploded in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Several months after the cataclysmic attack, Rev. Martin Luther King sent the grieving families Christmas letters: "In the midst of holiday preparations," he wrote, "my thoughts have turned to you. The fact that this is a time when family bonds are strengthened makes the loss you have sustained even more painful."

Then he added, "Many of us are giving up or severely limiting our celebrations this year in memory of the great sacrifice you have made for the cause."

HIS WORDS struck me. In the nearly five years since my own child was murdered in a similar bomb blast of hate, I have never heard an Israeli leader express sentiments like those of Dr. King. On the contrary, the messages our leaders have consistently given are much like those I heard on April 17, Pessah, after a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv killed nine innocent people.

On the day of the attack, our newly elected Knesset members were gathering to be sworn in. As they headed proudly down the Knesset corridors to the ceremony, several of them were approached by journalists for their

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comments. One after another they repeated the by now familiar refrain: We must continue with our plans. We must proceed with our lives. We mustn't let the enemy sense that he has hurt us. Because that is precisely what he wants.

There is nothing new in this attitude. After every terrorist attack that Israel has suffered, similar words have been uttered by our politicians and journalists. The pride they feel in overcoming any melancholy sentiments is tangible.

When did this mantra evolve? It is so deeply entrenched in the Israeli psyche, gripped as tightly as gospel, that it is never questioned. But is the path of impregnable normality truly ideal?

FOR THOSE of us who cannot avoid grieving, who cannot don the shield of normality, that mantra is a painful one to hear. It tells us that we are very alone. It says our brethren will not allow the murders of innocent Jews to interfere with their lives.

Remember, we are speaking about vast numbers. More Jewish children have been murdered in the current intifada than at any other time since the Holocaust; hundreds upon hundreds of them. Should our goal be business as usual at a time like this? Does our approach actually weaken the enemy - or does it weaken us?

There was a time when the Jewish attitude toward death was empathetic. In Sefer HaHassidim, which dates back to the Middle Ages, we are instructed: "Upon entering a certain city, a father told his son not to kneel and kiss him in the synagogue on reading from the Torah, as was the custom, because there were many there who had no children. And he instructed his son thus in order to spare them heartbreak."

Elsewhere in that same tract we are warned not to walk with young children in sight of someone whose own child has recently died because that would remind him of his pain.

IT DOES not demand much delving to appreciate how pop-psychology has affected our attitude to grief. As concepts, "closure" and moving on have been widely marketed in self-help manuals and the mass media. Grief has become a nuisance in societies that place self-satisfaction and consumerism at the top of their priorities.

But in Israel there is an even more concerted effort to dull empathy for terror victims. In this country the memories of terror attacks have the power to stymie political agendas.

When the pain of murdered children is kept fresh, how can the public be convinced that the time is ripe for territorial concessions? So long as the shock and images of terror massacres are still vivid, how can the public be lulled into accepting the release of terrorists from prison?

To our leaders, I would like to say: One day of sirens and speeches is not enough. Remember the terror victims throughout the year. Invoke the Jewish traditions of centuries past.

Or take a page from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Empathize even when the inviting tug of normality beckons and perhaps you will be guided to more reasoned decisions. (Jerusalem Post May 2)

The writer's daughter Malka Chana was murdered at the age of 15 in a terror attack on the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem. Together with her husband, she established the Malki Foundation to provide practical assistance to families home-caring for a disabled child.

Postmortem: Israel's 2006 Elections by Yedidya Atlas

Approximately two months prior to the elections, it became clear to concerned people on the ideological right that the new party of then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon posed an existential threat to the State of Israel should they garner the number of expected Knesset seats (44-45) then being predicted by the various polls promoted by Israel's leading media vehicles. It was further obvious that the various parties on the right of the Israeli political spectrum - including, and perhaps especially, the Likud - seemed (and later proved) incapable of launching a successful campaign to alter the media-advocated results before the fact. The last important point was that Kadima, a party comprised of opportunistic and corrupt politicians with no binding ideology (in fact, no ideology at all beyond a secular left-wing agenda), was a party without infrastructure, few if any field workers, and relied solely on gifted PR manipulators and massive media promotion; i.e., without the across-the-board overt advocacy of the Israeli media, Kadima would have sunk significantly in the polls.

After intensive and professional research to determine who made up the Kadima voter base - from which parties they came - and what issues did or didn't move them, etc., a campaign finally revved up barely six weeks prior to the elections. The campaign was on two fronts: a challenge to the nearly total active support of the media for Kadima; and face-to-face meetings throughout the key target areas to convince potential voters to not vote Left and to vote for the Right.

It is not the purpose of this analysis to elaborate the operational details of

what was done. Rather, I will concentrate on the following:

1. what major difficulties activists were faced with;
2. what was accomplished;
3. what said activists failed to achieve; and
4. what is to be done now.

The major difficulties were:

- a. lack of time;
- b. insufficient resources in real time;
- c. an absence of a positive campaign; i.e., for a particular candidate that would galvanize active support and votes; and
- d. a shell-shocked or lackadaisical voting public.

In order to appreciate what was accomplished in practice, it must first be clear that this campaign more or less rose from Israel's grassroots almost in place of the various party-based campaigns, which even later on never seemed to really take off. Moreover, this campaign began without a budget, gathering basic minimum resources along the way. The campaign was, by its very nature, a negative campaign aimed at reducing support for Kadima and then hopefully shifting said support back to the right-oriented parties, primarily the Likud. This latter aspect was particularly difficult because of Binyamin Netanyahu's own lackluster and confused campaign waged by the Likud, which was hampered from day one by Netanyahu's mixed messages and his deliberate inability to declare a nationalist policy with clarity.

Following the Gush Katif and northern Samaria expulsion, executed by a Likud-led government and in utter betrayal of its voters and even its party members, many people simply "turned off" and refused to be involved in the elections on any level, including voting. They were shell-shocked by the electoral betrayal, the blatant corruption and the apparent ease and ruthlessness with which the expulsion was implemented. Only after the "Amona incident" was part of the nationalist camp's foot soldiers reawakened.

Meanwhile, arrayed against the grassroots was virtually the entire Israeli media, whose pro-Kadima campaign went into overdrive after Ariel Sharon's stroke and Ehud Olmert's ascension to party leadership. The following is an excerpt of an article published on April 14, 2006 in Haaretz and written by left-wing columnist Ari Shavit, which documents the above in stark terms: "You know full well, Mr. Prime Minister [Olmert], that your selection was to a great extent unfair. Had the Israeli media done its job faithfully, you would not have been elected. Your arrogance, your colorful lifestyle, your appointments, the affairs connected with you and your failure as mayor of Jerusalem would have prevented your election. But you are after all the most networked politician in Israel. You have at your disposal a safety net of several of the newspaper owners, and you have at your disposal a safety net of several of the newspaper editors, and you have at your disposal a safety net of many of the senior journalists. These nets did their part. They caused part of the Israeli media outlets to operate in the election campaign not as your critics, but as your security guards. If Sharon was a precious citron in cotton wool, you were a diamond in a safe. From every quarter, your well-being and comfort were looked after. You were led to the prime minister's bureau in an investigation-proof limousine."

Despite the above, a broad campaign was created and pursued. It faced with the following possibilities:

- a. a left-wing victory - a serious and dangerous possibility;
- b. a right-wing/religious victory - a possibility only if people voted; or
- c. a situation where no one wins a clear victory - a probability.

While activists tried hard to achieve the second possibility, for the reasons listed above, they were unable to do so. However, in six weeks they did succeed in denying the Left their clear-cut victory. The grassroots campaign, in addition to and in cooperation with the campaigns waged by the parties right of center, brought Kadima down from a high of 45 seats down to 29. While not a stellar success per se, the inability of Olmert and Kadima to form a government of the Left was a tactical victory of sorts. The only semi-stable government he can form is a quasi-paralyzed coalition government, with his party platform severely watered down, and his government's ability to carry out his stated goal of mass expulsion of Jews from the communities in Judea and Samaria crippled. To what degree, time will tell.

Meanwhile, valuable time has been bought during which many things can happen - from expanded war with our Palestinian Arab terrorist non-partners (inevitable), to development of global issues with Iran, et al (apparently also inevitable), to simply a freeze of the status quo despite much verbal posturing. This, together with an economic crash as the recently restored fragile national treasury gets looted between the Kadima crooks and the Labor Bolsheviks. The latter is certainly probable owing to the contrasting policies between potential and probable coalition partners, whether on economic issues or in relation to national defense and ideological direction.

For the reasons stated above, the aforementioned campaign did not succeed in denying Kadima first crack at forming the coalition government,

and obviously failed to achieve a victory by the Right/religious coalition of parties. Had the elections taken place a month later, it is probable that we would be witness to a right/religious victory, but, of course, said time did not exist.

A key failure was the inability, despite massive efforts, to convince the potential voters that represent as many as 10 potential right-wing Knesset seats not to stay home on Election Day. While there was success in shifting most of the Likud-originating voters from voting Kadima (originally estimated at 37% of Kadima's voting base), it is a matter of record that the campaign failed to convince more than a third of these voters to vote, period. The low turnout particularly hurt the Likud.

As stated previously, this was due to the Sharon betrayal, and to Netanyahu and other top Likud ministers who simply wimped out and buckled under Sharon's pressure; and then, in the post-Sharon Likud, Netanyahu made almost every mistake possible in his campaign, especially refusing to be perceived as a clear nationalist alternative candidate to Olmert's left-wing-oriented Kadima platform.

From the campaign's limited success, it is clear that it is imperative to continue to wage the war with the principal Israeli media outlets, by offering and expanding the Jewish-Zionist alternative media tailored to all the various population sectors in Israel. It means developing alternative newspapers, radio and television programming. The advent and rapid expansion of the Internet as a source of public information is part of the answer. This is especially so in the imminent (3-5 years) dominance of digital TV broadcasting. However, in the short term, weekly newspapers and alternative electronic broadcast methods are a must for the next several years. A significant grassroots campaign (i.e., "face-to-face" meetings, public stands, free bus tours to Judea and Samaria, etc.) can only be successful if backed and promoted by sympathetic media.

Activists must begin the campaign for the next elections now. Not in two years, not two to three months before the election, but immediately. Such a focused campaign will whittle away at the influence of the Left-dominated Israeli media. It will strengthen the right-wing opposition and those right-leaning and religious parties that join the next coalition government (assuming Olmert succeeds in putting it together). Moreover, as one of the major difficulties faced was a lack of credible and charismatic leadership on the Right - in all of the various parties - it will help significantly in building support for better candidates (even among the existing MKs) to achieve the necessary leadership positions in their respective parties.

If activists do not build now on what was accomplished, they can only blame themselves in the future if they fail to revitalize a weary nation and effect the sorely needed positive change. (IsraelNationalNews.com Apr 23)

Germany's Honored Guest By Caroline Glick

Last Thursday Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made a friendly gesture to Germany. Speaking on state television, Ahmadinejad said the Germans should not feel guilty because, "a certain number of Jews were killed during World War II." He bemoaned that "today an intelligent people is still a hostage of World War II," arguing that Germany "still doesn't have the right to have independent policies or proper defenses."

It is possible that Ahmadinejad's statement absolving Germany of guilt for its liquidation of European Jewry in the Holocaust is part of a general charm offensive on his part towards Germany. Two weeks ago, Germany's Deputy Minister of the Interior August Hanning returned from discussions in Teheran with the announcement that ahead of the World Cup soccer championship next month, Iran will release a German citizen it has held since he inadvertently entered Iranian territorial waters last year.

Perhaps in exchange for Iran's presidential pardon for the Holocaust and the release of his German hostage, Germany has agreed to host Ahmadinejad in Germany if he decides to attend the Iranian national team's opening game against Mexico in Nuremberg. Germany has also agreed to coordinate its actions to secure the games with the Iranian government. As Hanning told Tagesspiegel newspaper last month, "When the Iranians fear a threat, they will tell us their reasons. Then our evaluation will flow back to Teheran."

Iranian regime opponents in Germany are concerned that in negotiating this agreement, the Iranian regime is working to delegitimize its exile opponents by spreading misinformation about them. Former Iranian soccer players, who represented Iran in the 1978 World Cup had planned to protest Iran's inclusion in the games. Speaking to the Associated Press, former soccer player Hassan Nayeb-Agha said, "Don't let the Iranian regime misuse the World Cup [to gain international legitimacy] in the same way that Hitler did with the Olympic Games in 1936."

While Germany's Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaueble said last month that Ahmadinejad would be welcome to come to Germany to watch his team's matches, he has also made clear that - except from the man who is working to

make Hitler's dream of a world without Jews or America come true, his entourage and press corps - Germany will take a strong stand against anyone who endangers the order and honor of the games.

To this end, Germany has suspended the Treaty of Schengen that abolishes border obstacles for EU citizens traveling among EU member states in order to prevent fanatical soccer fans from Britain, Poland and Holland from entering Germany for the games.

In addition, while as Schaueble put it, Ahmadinejad can "naturally... come to the matches," Ahmadinejad's German supporters will be prevented from demonstrating their support for him. Indeed, in spite of Germany's problems with its large and increasingly radical Muslim minority, Iran's radical Muslim leader enjoys a considerable support base among white Germans. Germany's fascist NPD party enthusiastically supports Ahmadinejad and the Teheran regime for their Holocaust denial and their calls for Israel's destruction. Last month NPD's office in Leipzig announced its members' intention to rally in support of Iran during Iran's game against Angola scheduled to take place in Leipzig on June 21. But against these German neo-Nazis, the German government will show no tolerance. Schaueble himself angrily announced, "Germany will fight with might and main against rightist extremist ambitions before, during and after the World Cup!"

GERMANY'S refusal to isolate Ahmadinejad goes hand in hand with its appeasement of Iran's nuclear ambitions. Last Thursday Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier restated his country's position that the US should open direct negotiations with Teheran about those ambitions. His statement came two days after Iran's official news agency reported that in a meeting with Sudanese President Omar al Bashir, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that Iran "is prepared to transfer the [nuclear] experience, knowledge and technology of its scientists."

That is, Germany again tried to get Washington to commit itself to ruling out taking military action against Iran's nuclear installations two days after Iran announced its intention not only to develop nuclear weapons, but to share those weapons with others.

From a strictly legal perspective, Ahmadinejad should be arrested when he sets foot on German soil. As Israeli attorney Ervan Shahar noted in his petition to Germany's federal prosecution this past February, Ahmadinejad commits a felony under German law every time that he denies the Holocaust. Shahar requested that the prosecutors enforce German law and indict Ahmadinejad in absentia. Doing so would force Germany to issue an international arrest warrant against the Iranian leader and so make him liable for arrest any time he stepped foot on European soil. Unfortunately, as Germany has shown both by not acting on Shahar's request, and by refusing to bar Ahmadinejad entry to Germany next month, Berlin is unwilling to levy any sanction against Iran for its pursuit of nuclear weapons which, as Ahmadinejad has repeatedly made clear, it seeks in order to annihilate Israel - that is, to finish the job that Hitler started.

Germany's refusal to place any sanction on Iran is disturbing, because as German political scientist Matthias Kuntzel argued in the Transatlantic Intelligencer last December, "If there is a western nation today that has the means to confront [Iran's nuclear weapons program] with effective sanctions, it is Germany."

Kuntzel notes, "Germany is today by far the most important supplier of goods to Iran and its exports are increasing at a steady 20 percent per year. In 2004, German exports to Iran were worth some €3.6 billion. At the same time, Germany is the most important purchaser of Iranian goods apart from oil and Iran's most important creditor."

GERMANY'S behavior toward Iran is a clear sign that for all its Holocaust memorializing, for all its anti-Nazi legislation, and for all its protestations of friendship with Israel and the Jewish people, Germany has not learned the lessons of the Holocaust.

The main lesson of the Holocaust is not that war is bad and must therefore be avoided at all costs. The main lesson of the Holocaust is that evil is bad and must be fought with every effective means. By trading with Iran and protecting Iran from those who point out its obvious dangers not only to Israel but to the entire world, Germany is protecting evil and thus advancing its cause.

The Germans are acting in a morally blind and thus immoral fashion when they apply the lessons to the Holocaust only against neo-Nazis. In pretending that the only way that the Holocaust can repeat itself is for Adolf Hitler, Jr. to become Chancellor of Germany, the Germans give themselves license to ignore Hitler's actual reincarnations. In mindlessly - yet patronizingly - squawking that all violence is bad and all peace is good, the Germans allow themselves the odious privilege of impugning the honor, nobility and morality of Israelis and Americans who fight Islamofascists by pretending there is no moral distinction between our soldiers and Islamofascist fighters who incinerate innocent people. They pretend it is possible to appease a murderer like Ahmadinejad, just as 70 years ago, at the 1936 Olympics others

maintained that Hitler was someone who could be trusted to keep his word.

Today, on Remembrance Day, we bow our heads in gratitude as we commemorate the thousands of Israeli soldiers who have died protecting the people of Israel. As we reflect on their service and sacrifice for our freedom and safety, we need look no farther than Germany - to the cowardly and treacherous behavior of our former oppressors, who claim today to have learned the lessons of their evil while they shield new evil - to know how precious and sacred are the memories of our fallen warriors and how crucial the strength of our people, our state, our society, and our army are today, to ensure that our survival will never again be dependent on the goodness of others. (Jerusalem Post May 2)

The Limits of Sympathy By Jonathan Tobin

As charitable a community that we are, Palestinian appeals for Jewish donations should still be greeted with skepticism

In the wake of the collapse of the peace process and the rise of Hamas, the debate about how to engage the Palestinians continues to bedevil the Jewish community.

The Israeli government, as well as most Israelis and American Jews, clearly believes that there is no negotiating with a terrorist government.

Nor do many see much purpose in a charade of talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose own equivocal views about terror only look good in comparison with the bloodthirsty instincts of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade of his own Fatah party.

At the same time, we are sensible of the humanitarian disaster that the Palestinians have inflicted upon themselves. There is no question that the situation in the territories is bad. The corruption of the Palestinian Authority helped kill whatever business that wasn't wiped out by the conflict that they have fomented. Widespread unemployment is exacerbated by the fact that many with jobs are simply part of the P.A.'s bloated payroll and do no productive work.

All this leads to more Palestinians than ever being dependent on the United Nations Relief And Works Administration, a refugee agency devoted solely to their welfare but which has been manipulated to prolong their suffering rather than to alleviate it.

Having destroyed their economy by choosing war over peace time and time again - and having now isolated themselves from an international community eager to help by voting for Hamas - Palestinians still turn to the world with their hands out, pleading for assistance.

Such appeals sound like the lament of a child who has murdered his parents, and then asks for sympathy because he's an orphan.

So to whom do they turn? Why to American Jews, of course.

Who else would be an easier mark for Palestinian hustlers than those Jews whose idea of Jewish identity is to support any cause but that of their own people?

Ever since the beginning of the Oslo peace process, a certain portion of American Jewry has been flinging some of their charitable donations down the sinkhole that is the Palestinian economy.

Some were enticed to invest in Palestinian businesses with the laudable notion that by promoting a healthy Arab economy, they would not only build a constituency for peace but make some cash too. But almost all who did so soon saw their investments fall victim to the avarice of the Palestinian kleptocracy or the senseless violence of its terrorist apparatus.

Others invested in advanced training for Palestinians. This led to some P.A. bureaucrats getting a free ride at the Harvard Business School courtesy of American Jews where they may have honed their intellects but failed to apply the principles of sound finance to their own government's financial skulduggery.

Now in the wake of the latest Palestinian disaster comes a new set of American pilgrims who hope to feed hungry Palestinian kids in the name of peace and co-existence.

But while we should all be sympathetic to appeals to help children, some prudence about those Palestinian adults who ask for our money is called for. And when such requests come from a longtime Israel-basher and former spokeswoman for the arch-terrorist Yasser Arafat like Hanan Ashrawi, skepticism ought to be the order of the day.

As it happens, Ashrawi is here in the United States making a stop in Philadelphia this week to help raise money for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund, a group led by veteran Israel-haters, and which has had ties with a Hamas front group named the Holy Land Foundation, which was shut down by the U.S. government for aiding terrorists.

Indeed, according to the American Jewish Committee, the Holy Land Foundation - which along with three other Islamic charities was found liable for the 1996 murder of 16-year-old American David Boim at the hands of Hamas gunmen in the West Bank - it tried unsuccessfully in 2004 to divert

some of its frozen assets to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund.

According to Yehudit Barsky, director of AJCommittee's division on Middle East and international terrorism, had they succeeded in doing so, it would have limited the amount of money available to pay the judgement awarded to Boim's parents.

In addition to speaking at a formal dinner for the group, Ashrawi will also be hosted by local Jews, including some with long records of Jewish activism, for a fundraiser specifically aimed at raising Jewish money. These Jews say that past statements of their new Palestinian friends are irrelevant to the obligation to give tzedakah (charity) as well as to build bridges for peace.

But how can anyone trust Palestinian "charities" that are compromised by their terrorist connections to carry out the noble intentions of their Jewish donors?

While the impulse to help needy kids is commendable, Jews who are solicited to give to groups such as this need to think carefully about the ultimate destination of funds raised by such persons, and whether or not better ways exist to help the Palestinians in the long and short term.

One suggestion might be for Palestinians to stop educating the younger generations to hate Jews, and to cease promoting terrorism and suicide bombing as the kind of fate a child ought to embrace. If they did, there would be no need for them to ask for alms from Jews - who are, ironically enough, the intended victims of such violence. (Jewish World Review May 2)

The writer is executive editor of the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent.

The Muslim World's New Martyrs By Richard Z. Chesnoff

It's one of today's most compelling news stories, yet it's all but ignored by most of the international media. I'm talking about the growing persecution of Christian minorities in the Islamic world.

It briefly made headlines last month when machete-armed Egyptian fanatics attacked worshipers in three Coptic churches in Alexandria and murdered one aged man at prayer. Then of course, there was March - when an Afghan man escaped a death sentence for the "crime" of converting to Christianity. But how many people heard about the recent arrest and jailing in Saudi Arabia of a group of Filipino guest workers for holding Christian prayer services in the privacy of their home? Or who knows about the three Sunday School teachers charged in Indonesia last year with the crime of "Christianization" and summarily sentenced to three years in prison?

The story is similar wherever Sharia - orthodox Islamic law - reigns supreme. From Pakistan to Darfur, Christians have become regular targets for Islamic gangs who shoot at worshipers, then torch their houses of worship.

Even in Islamic countries not strictly run by Sharia law, pressures mount on local Christians to leave the homes they've known for centuries. Iraq's Christian sects, among the oldest Christian communities anywhere in the world, have been directly targeted by terrorist bombs, and Christians are now high on the list of those fleeing Iraq's sectarian strife. Thirty years ago, Lebanon was 60% Christian. Since then, an estimated 3.5 million Christians have emigrated, reducing the country's Christian population percentage to barely 25%. And in the Palestinian territories, direct and indirect pressures have also led to an increasing Christian exodus. One striking result: Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus and once a predominantly Christian Arab community now has an overwhelming Muslim majority.

Few people seem prepared to connect the dots. Some American evangelical groups like the Washington-based International Christian Concern try to raise the alarm. And America's Copts, especially those based in the New York area, actively lobby against the legal and social discrimination that face their Egyptian co-religionists. Yet most mainstream church groups seem to ignore the threat.

During certain periods, Islamic countries did allow "the peoples of the book" to live in relative peace among them. But the rise of Islamic extremism is silencing even voices of limited tolerance. More than 800,000 Jews were forced to flee the Islamic world between 1948 and 1955. Unless there is an outcry against the new wave of discrimination now facing Christians, these ancient communities are also doomed to disappear. (Jewish World Review May 3)

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