



Jerusalem 6:47 Toronto 8:15

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

Events...

Sunday May 15, 10:00 am - 6:00pm
Israeli Real Estate and Property Show featuring major builders and developers from Israel, at BAYT

Monday May 16, 7:30 p.m.
"Purchasing a Home in Israel Before, During, Or After Your Aliyah - An overview of the process for Olim and Investors alike" with Paysi Golomb, Director Kehillot Tehilla, and- "New Opportunities for Purchase in Israel - Ramat Bet Shemesh, Bet Shemesh, Efrat, Yad Binyamin, Modiin, Chasmonaim..." with Ben Tzion Schlachter & Dan Sivan of Pearl Skolnik Associates, at the home of the Budner Family, 62 Toledo Crescent, Thornhill (behind the Sephardic Kehilla Center).

Wednesday May 18, 8:30pm
"Fighting Terror With Kindness" featuring terror victim Shmuel Greenbaum at Westmount Collegiate (corner Bathurst and Atkinson).

Wednesday June 1, 8:30
Assistant Mayor of Kedumim Raphaella Segal speaks at Routes Jewish Centre 1118 Centre St.

Quote of the Week...

"The Land of Israel does not only belong to the people of Israel, but to the Jewish people. I would be negligent if I let it be abandoned without a response." - NY politician Dov Hikind's response when asked whether he had reservations, as a Jew living outside Israel, opposing the Israeli government's will.

Commentary...

Plenty to Celebrate Jerusalem Post Editorial
Fifty-seven years after David Ben-Gurion declared its establishment, the State of Israel's daily affairs seem, on the face of it, as tiresomely familiar as those of most others.

The Jewish state is deeply embroiled in diplomatic intrigue, in regional conflict and in far-flung arms deals, and its politicians are shoulder deep in struggles with judges, generals, and fellow politicians. Despite its genuine desire to realize Isaiah's visions of social justice, Israel also has its unfair share of poor, jobless and otherwise disenfranchised people. And despite the Jewish people's historic appreciation for education, our elementary and high-school students too often fail to meet international standards of scholastic achievement, and too many of our university-age citizens can't afford a higher education.

Still, when put in perspective all these problems are dwarfed by what has been achieved here since 1948.

Ben-Gurion, whose original state contained a mere 600,000 Jews, would have hardly believed that in his own children's lives, this number would grow almost tenfold. He certainly would have been stunned to learn that Zion is only a few years from becoming home to the world's largest Jewish community, a status it has not had not since the Second Temple's destruction, but since the first destruction, nearly two-and-a-half millennia ago.

Ben-Gurion's successor, Moshe Sharett, who founded Israel's Foreign Service, would have been delighted to learn that Israel – in his day ostracized

technological industries.

Eshkol's successor, Golda Meir, who was Israel's first envoy to Moscow and as prime minister worked hard to lift the USSR's emigration ban, would have been thrilled to learn that not only the famous Prisoners of Zion on whose behalf she fought, but all of Soviet Jewry has been freed and largely arrived here.

Meir's successor, Menachem Begin, who struggled for the immigration of the Jews of Ethiopia and Syria, would have been overjoyed to learn of their full liberation, and arrival in the Jewish state.

Indeed, even Theodor Herzl, who in 1897 said the establishment of the Jewish state would be accomplished within 50 years at most, would have been dumbfounded to learn that, for now at least, and for the first time since antiquity, that with the exception of Iran, there no is longer a Jewish community anywhere in the world that is formally oppressed by its government.

In the same vein, Chaim Weizmann, who spent decades seeking Arab-Zionist harmony, would have been elated to learn that the Jewish state has signed peace agreements with the two largest Arab states that share its two longest borders.

In fact, Israel's accomplishments are today impressive not only when viewed through such historic prisms, but also when compared with current global trends.

Strategically, Israel is ahead of most countries in tackling the post-Cold War era's biggest menace – terror.

Socially, in a world that is rapidly beset by developed countries failing to either block or absorb immigrations from poor countries, Israel has in just over a decade absorbed a population about a fifth its original size. Unlike initial pessimistic assessments, these immigrants have on the whole found housing, employment and education, and in fact have frequently joined the economic middle class and the cultural mainstream. Demographically, while most other Western populations are shrinking, Israel's continues to grow, thanks to fertility rates that are higher, and marriage ages and divorce rates that are lower, than most other countries in the West.

Economically, in a developed world in which even veteran economies like Germany's and France's are struggling to achieve viable growth rates, Israel has managed to restore its economic growth even after being momentarily debilitated by a vicious terror war.

Lastly, and most importantly, in a world where organic culture is often being overpowered by international commercializing forces, in Israel Hebrew language and culture – which only a century ago hardly existed – are flourishing.

As we celebrate our independence tonight, we should take stock of all this and remember that with all the flaws, setbacks and hardships that involve our existence here – it's worth the effort. (Jerusalem Post May 11)

Everybody Loses in Sharon's Gaza Plan By Jeff Jacoby

Plots of flowers grow outside most of the homes we pass as we drive through this small agricultural cooperative in southern Gaza. I point out a particularly lavish one, and the driver, a gruff 55-year-old, stops the car.

"What are those white ones?" I ask, motioning through the window. "And those yellow ones with the orange tips?"

From the back seat, Rafi Horowitz, a veteran of four Arab-Israeli wars, calls out a Hebrew name for one of them. Debbie Rosen, a resident of nearby Neveh Dekalim and a spokeswoman for Gaza's Jewish communities, isn't sure he's got it right. I get out of the car to take a closer look, and a moment

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later all three Israelis are in the garden with me, admiring the flowers and arguing about their names. A consensus is reached on the begonias, hibiscus, and pimpernel, but the white ones remain an enigma.

Rosen knocks on the front door and tells the man who opens it about the botanical debate underway in his front yard. He steps back inside, then reappears with a well-worn guide to the flora of the Holy Land. In it we find a picture of our mystery flower: white bougainvillea.

A visitor would have to be strangely obtuse not to sense the deep attachment of Gaza's Jews to the land they live on. Gadid is the kind of place where even tough army veterans take an interest in flowers -- a place whose streets and kindergartens are named for the seven biblical species of fruits and grains. "Gadid" itself is an old Hebrew word for the date harvest, and the names of other settlements, like Pe'at Sadeh ("edge of the field") or Netzarim ("sprouts"), similarly evoke the agricultural yearnings of their founders.

When those founders arrived, Jewish Gaza was all yearning and no agriculture: These settlements were mostly built on barren sand dunes where no one lived and nothing grew. Today it is a horticultural powerhouse, supplying two-thirds of the organic vegetables and cherry tomatoes Israel exports, and renowned for its bug-free lettuce and other greens. Gaza's legal status may be complicated (it is technically an unallocated portion of the League of Nations' 1922 Palestine Mandate), but the moral status of this land is as clear as day: As a matter of justice and sweat equity, the Jewish homesteaders whose faith and hard work have made the sand dunes bloom surely have as much right to their homes in Gadid and Neveh Dekalim as the Arabs have to theirs in nearby Khan Yunis and Dir El Balah.

Yet in just 10 weeks, if Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "disengagement" program goes forward, the 8,000 Jews who live in Gaza -- men, women, and a great many children -- will be expelled. Their homes and property will be taken over by the Palestinian Authority. And the green revolution that has transformed Gaza's sandy wastes into an oasis of hothouses, nurseries, and flower gardens will almost certainly come to an end.

It will be a tragic upheaval. But Jews won't be the only victims of Sharon's plan.

At Tnuvot Katif, a large produce packaging plant here, I watch for a while as about two dozen workers, most of them local Arabs, get heads of tall leaf lettuce for export. More than half of Tnuvot's 127 year-round employees are Arab; they in turn account for about 2 percent of the 3,500 Arabs employed by Gaza's Jewish firms.

During a break in the shift, I ask some of workers if they like their jobs. They shrug -- rinsing and bagging lettuce is no one's idea of exciting work. But when I ask what they think of the coming Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, they grow animated. If the Israelis go, some of them tell me through an interpreter, they'll lose their jobs. If this plant shuts down, they'll be out of work, and if the Palestinian Authority takes it over, they'll still be out of work -- the jobs will go to workers with better connections to the PA's ruling thugs.

"If that's how you feel," I ask, "why don't you oppose the disengagement publicly? Why don't you tell the PA that you want your Jewish neighbors to stay?"

When my question is translated, the men look at me as if I'm crazy.

"It's forbidden!" replies Randoor, the only one of the workers who would give even his first name. "We're not allowed to say that!"

I press him: Why not? What would be so bad about saying that Jews and Arabs should be able to live together? But Randoor shakes his head and crosses his wrists, as if being handcuffed. "They might put us in jail," he says. "They might call us 'collaborators.'" In the jungle that is Palestinian society, being called a "collaborator" can be a death sentence. Indeed, the PA's newly elevated security chief -- a cold-blooded killer named Rashid Abu Shabak -- is known in Gaza as the "collaborator hunter." In recent years, reports Khaled Abu Toameh of the Jerusalem Post, Abu Shabak has "hunted down" scores of Palestinians accused of helping Israel prevent terror attacks. Who knows what he might do any Palestinian who would dare to call for the Israelis to stay?

All the world over, politicians and pundits are applauding Sharon's coming retreat. Yet a simple lettuce-packer like Randoor seems to grasp what so many of them cannot: The lives of Gaza's Arabs will not be improved by expelling Gaza's Jews. (Boston Globe May 8)

The writer is a columnist for The Boston Globe.

Unsettling By Yossi Klein Halevi

On February 16, 2005, Israel's parliament voted, 59-40, to authorize the government to remove all Jewish communities within the Gaza Strip, as well as four small communities in the northern Samaria region. Four days later, the Israeli cabinet, in a 17-5 vote, decided to put the Knesset's authorization into practice. Barring a major turn of events, this coming summer will see the evacuation of some 8,000 Jews from their homes--some of them by force--and their relocation elsewhere in Israel.

The withdrawal of Israel's civilian presence from the Gaza Strip, known as the "disengagement" plan, presents one of the most severe domestic crises in Israeli history. For the first time, the Jewish state, backed by a solid majority of its elected representatives, will voluntarily renounce its claim to a part of the historic land of Israel in the most unequivocal way, by physically uprooting Jews from their homes. The image of the destruction of Jewish communities resonates powerfully in Jewish history, and especially in its reversal of the classic Zionist principle of *hityashvut*--settlement of the land. But the wounds may go far deeper than the symbolism, and even beyond the suffering of the individual evacuees. When one part of the Jewish people accuses another of complicity in *hurban*--the most dreaded word in the Judaic lexicon, invoking the destruction of the Temple--the result could be a schism so profound that the Jews of Israel will no longer feel bound by a common destiny. Regardless of whether one supports disengagement as the correction of a historical error or opposes it as the betrayal of founding principles, disengagement should be recognized as a critical moment for the Zionist enterprise as a whole.

But disengagement represents a special challenge to religious Zionism. Although not all religious Zionists support the settlement movement, the two have been deeply intertwined. The most prominent and popular version of religious Zionism is one that identifies the idea of an ancestral land as one of the central pillars of Jewish faith, and has led the charge in settling the biblical land of Israel in the last generation. That stream has not only built the communal and educational institutions of the community as a whole, but has also provided its spiritual leadership, infusing a generation of young people with a determination to persevere regardless of any trial.

For this reason, disengagement has been so difficult for many religious Zionists to fathom. For the tens of thousands who have been taught from childhood that Jewish settlement of the land of Israel is not only inviolable but central to a divine plan, the Knesset and government decisions on withdrawal are an inconceivable reversal of the nation's destiny. They are perceived not only as a threat to the communities which they have dedicated their whole lives to building, but as a wholesale rejection of the values upon which their worldview rests.

Much has been written about the possibility of violence that might accompany the withdrawal; no less troubling, however, is the possibility that the disengagement will alienate significant elements of religious Zionism from the Israeli mainstream and from Zionist ideology. One increasingly common critique voiced among religious Zionists is that secular Zionism has ended its mission; some even question religious Zionism's historic decision to enter into a partnership with secular Zionism, and wonder whether the Haredim were not right after all when they opposed entrusting the leadership of the Jewish people to secularists. Those voices strengthen isolationist trends evident in recent decades within a part of the religious Zionist camp.

So far, public debate has focused on ways of reducing the intensity of the conflict over withdrawal, such as the demand that the Sharon government enhance its legitimacy by holding new elections or a national referendum on the pullout, and the demand that settlers and their supporters repudiate any form of military insubordination. Beyond those calls for moderation, however, little thought has been directed toward the question of how religious Zionism will find a place in Israeli society if and when the greenhouses of Gush Katif are abandoned. Both sides of the debate should consider steps that will help the Jewish people emerge from this ordeal with its basic sense of commonality intact.

To begin with, supporters of withdrawal need to recognize that the destruction of Jewish communities is not only a sectarian, but a national, tragedy. The Gaza settlements, after all, were not foisted by settlers on an unwilling country, but established with the active support of successive Israeli governments, beginning with the Labor Party government of Golda Meir in the early 1970s. The Gaza settlers were celebrated by both Labor and Likud as exemplars of the Zionist ideal. To turn them now into emissaries of a specific political camp is to distort the historical record and to shirk responsibility for our collective endeavor.

Yet the main responsibility for maintaining the cohesion of Israeli society through the trauma of the Gaza withdrawal belongs to religious Zionists themselves. It begins with the recognition that supporters of withdrawal are no less committed than they are to the well-being of the state. Reducing the demographic threat to a Jewish majority, preempting the threat of an international campaign to isolate and demonize Israel, and establishing consensus borders of defense are goals that require serious debate, not dismissal. One may question the judgment of those who support withdrawal, but not denounce them as post-Zionists who have lost the will to fight for Israel's survival. In the last four years of war, Israeli society has demonstrated a resilience few other societies in its place could have managed. Civilian Israel reclaimed its public spaces, while military Israel

shifted the war from the coffee shops and city streets to the Palestinian home front. Those are not the achievements of an exhausted nation.

Religious Zionists must therefore reject the temptation of a purist separatism from the "corrupted" Jewish mainstream. The model of separation from the rest of the Jewish people practiced by a significant part of the Haredi community is hardly worthy of emulation: In the last century, this community has largely exempted itself from every major political struggle adopted by the Jewish people, from reestablishing Jewish sovereignty to freeing Soviet Jewry. Indeed, the historic insight of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the central thinker of religious Zionism in the first half of the twentieth century, was that peoplehood is a foundation of Judaism, and the well-being of the Jewish people is a central religious value. That realization led to Rabbi Kook's second great insight: That secular Zionism, with its passion for peoplehood, was not so much a rebellion against Judaism as a partial fulfillment of it.

The twentieth century's assault on the existence of the Jewish people reinforced the urgency of those insights. In our time, totalitarian movements that have aspired to world domination—Nazism, communism, and now Islamic fundamentalism—all identified the Jewish people as its primary enemy. Natan Sharansky has suggested that in each era of history, anti-Semites targeted the very facet of Jewish identity that marked the Jews as unique. In ancient times, the pagan enemies of the Jews attacked monotheism; during the medieval era, when much of humanity had become monotheistic, anti-Semitic animus focused on the refusal of the Jews to abandon their way of life and convert to Christianity or Islam. In modern times, when the unifying force among Jews became simple Jewish loyalty, Jewish existence rather than belief has been targeted for eradication. Zionism, which begins with a celebration of Jewish peoplehood, is an intuitive Jewish response to the anti-Semitic assault on the legitimacy of the Jewish nation.

Religious Zionism has the resources to reconstitute itself and reclaim a position of leadership for the State of Israel, and for the Jewish people as a whole. Although the movement has thus far failed to convince the nation as a whole to embrace the biblical homeland as a core value, it did succeed in creating a broad and dedicated community from which Israeli society may yet learn a great deal, and which represents classic Zionist values—including the importance of Jewish reconnection with the land of Israel, regardless of its final borders; the value of defending the Jewish state through military service; a belief in Zionist idealism and the rejection of fashionable cynicism; the importance of building family-based communities; and the centrality of Jerusalem to Jewish history and identity. Indeed, it is religious Zionism alone that has consistently advocated a strong role for Jewish tradition in the formulation of Zionist theory and policy.

Though often accused by its detractors of reducing its ideology, since the 1967 Six Day War, to the single focus of settlement, in truth religious Zionism has maintained multiple Zionist commitments. Bnei Akiva is one of the largest and most passionate Zionist youth movements; religious Zionist youth serve, far disproportionately to their numbers, in the IDF's elite units and in its combat officer corps; hesder military yeshivot have been established not only in settlements but in development towns throughout Israel; and religious Zionists in the Diaspora have been at the forefront of every major Jewish political initiative of the last generation. The vitality of the Jewish state and the Jewish people depends in no small measure on the continued vitality of religious Zionism, and on its continued commitment to the general Zionist enterprise.

So long as the government of Israel remains committed to the goal of ingathering the Jewish people to its sovereign state, it must be respected as the embodiment of Zionist aspirations. Willingness to compromise on the borders of the Jewish state is not a fair measure of that commitment: The Zionist movement, after all, has been arguing with itself about territorial compromise since the early 1920s. The same government that is preparing to evacuate Jews from Gaza recently decided to airlift to Israel thousands of Falashmura, descendants of Ethiopian Jews who converted to Christianity and now are returning to Judaism. Only a government dedicated to Jewish peoplehood would act to protect the interests of European Jews confronting a renewal of anti-Semitic violence, to encourage Jewish education in Eastern Europe, or to maintain a level of Jewish knowledge among secular Israeli students. The burden of religious Zionism after disengagement, then, is to recognize the decisive role that the State of Israel continues to play in promoting the interests of the Jewish people.

Zionism's goal of transforming the Jews from disparate communities back into a people has scarcely been achieved. The mass immigrations of the last two decades, from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union, have not yet been successfully integrated into Israeli society and the Jewish people. Along with that internal challenge to the cohesiveness of the Jewish nation is the growing challenge around the world to the legitimacy of Jewish nationhood. This generation's struggle is to fulfill Zionism's promise of renewing the Jewish people and confirming its place among the nations. Meeting those challenges

requires the best efforts of our most committed people; religious Zionism has a crucial role to play. (Azure Spring 2005)

Soothing Rhetoric - Scary Reality By Michael Rubin

The death of Yasser Arafat and the fall of Saddam Hussein have changed the political landscape of the Middle East. Iraqis defied insurgent threats to vote in their first free election in a half century. Palestinians likewise queued to elect a new leader. The democratic wave spread fast. Lebanese outrage at the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri in February culminated in the end of Syria's long occupation and the demand for truly free elections.

The democratic wave has emboldened dissidents to voice unprecedented criticism against dictators. In Damascus, for example, Aktham Naisse openly called for the repeal of the emergency laws upon which the Syrian regime derives dictatorial power. In Libya, Fathi al-Jahmi, a former provincial official, challenged Muammar Gadhafi to hold contested elections. In Egypt, Ayman al-Nour likewise challenged President Hosni Mubarak.

Dictators have taken notice and adopted the rhetoric, if not the substance of democracy. While Saudi officials trumpet the kingdom's first-ever municipal elections, few Saudis have accepted as sufficient the resulting councils, which have neither legislative nor budgetary authority.

Iranian leaders have likewise co-opted the rhetoric of democracy. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini repeatedly promised an Islamic democracy, even as he ushered in dictatorship. "By the time we learned what he meant, it was too late," a former revolutionary told me when I visited Isfahan in 1996. Iranian President Muhammad Khatami, labeled a reformer in the West, also twisted the meaning of democracy, when he wrote that he supported the concept, so long as only those with "several years of [Islamic] studies" could fully participate.

While American, European and Israeli officials remain cynical about democratic rhetoric emanating from dictatorships, many remain curiously blind to terrorist groups claiming a new commitment to the political process. On April 13, 2005, for example, White House spokesman Scott McClellan labeled Hamas candidates who won elections "business professionals," a curious moniker for members of a group responsible for the deaths of more than 400 Israelis in the past five years. European officials and American intellectuals have repeatedly engaged Hamas. At the height of the 2002 suicide bombing campaign against Israel, Alistair Crooke, a European Union security advisor, held talks with Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Speaking before the Council on Foreign Relations last year, Crooke argued that Hamas could be a political partner.

Despite its harsh rhetoric about the war on terrorism, the Bush administration has also gone wobbly on Hezbollah, an organization responsible for the terrorist murder of more Americans than any other group prior to September 11, 2001. According to two former Central Intelligence Agency officials, President Bush authorized outreach to the group in the wake of the World Trade Center attack. The dialogue continued despite Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's October 2002 comment that "if they [the Jews] all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide."

In a March 15, 2005 press conference, Bush offered political redemption for Hezbollah if they laid down their arms. The failure of engagement became clear one month later when, in an interview with Beirut's Daily Star, a Hezbollah official both promised Palestinian fighters whatever "material support" they needed to fight Israel and also announced that Hezbollah would send deputies to Europe to engage politicians and promote the group's activities "as a resistance group and political party."

In Egypt, too, American officials have reached out to Islamists whose commitment to the democratic process is dubious. Asharq al-Awsat reported last month that American diplomats had held talks with the Muslim Brotherhood, a group whose armed wing is responsible for thousands of Egyptian deaths. Not long after the diplomats' visit, terrorists detonated a bomb in a popular market and sprayed a tourist bus with bullets.

Without fail, engaging terrorists backfires. On April 29, 2005, an Islamist Web site broadcast a speech by terrorist mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi citing American outreach as evidence of weakness. "The severe blows you dealt this enemy, by the grace of Allah, forced America to beg for negotiations," he said.

While true democracy is the Achilles heel of Middle Eastern dictatorships, insincere commitment to democracy can undercut peace and security. The sincerity of terrorists should no more be trusted than that of dictators. They may adopt democratic rhetoric - but words are cheap.

Any organization that targets civilians for political gain should be irredeemable regardless of whether, like Hamas and Hezbollah, the group provides social services: If Oxfam or Save the Children blew up buses, they

would be terrorist groups, not humanitarian organizations.

On May 2, Natan Sharansky resigned from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government, warning that failure to link Israeli concessions to Palestinian democratic reforms would "strengthen the forces of terror." American and European officials may praise advances in Palestinian democracy, but Sharansky is correct to call into question the sincerity of such rhetoric. After all, even as Middle Easterners genuinely strive for democracy, American and European officials have developed a track record of naively valuing rhetoric more than reality.

Ultimately, it will be Israeli lives on the line. (Haaretz May 6)
The writer, editor of the Middle East Quarterly, is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

War of the Words By Michael Freund

It is a war that Israel has never really fought, despite the inestimable damage which it continues to inflict. And while our foes have been on the offensive for decades, claiming one victory after another, most of us have yet to even acknowledge its significance.

It is the "War of the Words," or of terminology. It is a battle to define and describe Israel's conflict with its neighbors, and it is time that we started thinking ahead and fighting back.

Glance at any major Western newspaper and it quickly becomes clear who is winning the linguistic tussle in the Middle East. The territories are "occupied," Jews living there are "settlers," their supporters are "extremists," while those trying to kill them are mere "activists" or "militants."

On the whole, the language is clearly loaded, helping to shape public opinion against the Jewish state. And thanks to repeated use over the years, these terms have come to be accepted in nearly all public discourse regarding the Middle East.

Needless to say, this is far more than just a struggle over semantics. It is about influencing international opinion and shaping policy. Words, after all, are an instrument of persuasion. As George Orwell noted in his 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language": "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought."

And corrupt it most certainly has. An entire generation has grown up imbibing a slanted version of reality, one that is peddled on a daily basis by the Arabs and their supporters.

Our foes long ago understood that by fixing the definition, you also effectively fix the debate. In the process, they have succeeded in laying the conceptual groundwork that has come to dominate the world's (mis)understanding of the issues at stake in the region.

Now, you might be thinking: so what? What difference does it make?

The answer is a whole lot. Indeed, anyone who doubts the political role and significance of words need only take a look at the energy and effort expended by others to deploy them effectively.

Take, for example, the Bush administration. Say what you will about the conduct of the war in Iraq, but there can be no doubt that the US has managed the war of words in a compelling manner.

Saddam Hussein's government was always referred to by the ominous-sounding term "regime," and the war itself was dubbed "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to underline its main objective.

From the start of hostilities, administration officials were careful to refer to troops stationed in Iraq as "Coalition forces," rather than GIs, in an effort to stress international backing for the war.

Of course, finding the right phrase is not necessarily going to change people's minds or transform their positions, but it can and does have an impact on the way an issue is viewed and understood. And over time, this can have a cumulative and often decisive effect.

Is it any wonder that after being told for so long that the territories are "occupied," many Jews and Israelis have now come to view that as being the case?

By conceding the point, Israel unwittingly set the stage for conceding the territory, too.

And that is why it is so essential that we prepare ourselves for the next phase of the propaganda war, and start thinking more clearly and effectively about how to get our points across.

Consider the term "settlement blocs," which Prime Minister Ariel Sharon himself has used on occasion, including in his April 22 interview with this newspaper. Is that really the best phrase to be using when describing Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria that Israel intends to retain in any final-status agreement?

Over the years, our foes have succeeded in demonizing the word "settlement." By adopting this label, Israel is playing directly into their hands, giving them an unnecessary advantage.

Various other expressions, such as "Israeli population centers" or "suburban Jewish communities" should be used instead. They sound less menacing, and are more in line with our national interests.

At this point, it is perhaps too late to turn back the clock, or to press the rewind button and start fighting the linguistic battles that were lost decades ago. But it is certainly not too late to begin applying a little foresight, and to anticipate the clashes that inevitably lie ahead.

As John F. Kennedy once said regarding Winston Churchill, he "mobilized the English language and sent it into battle." After decades of forsaking this important arena, it is time for Israel at last to do the same.
The writer served as an aide to former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. (Jerusalem Post, May 5)

The "Cemetery Test" of Peace By Michael Freund

Israel is turning 57 this week, and in conjunction with its birthday the country will be getting a new military unit: the IDF "disinterment division."

According to a recent Maariv report, the army has secretly established a special reserve unit tasked with exhuming the 47 Jewish graves located in the Gush Katif cemetery as part of preparations for the planned withdrawal from Gaza this summer. The unit, which will reportedly operate under the direct authority of the Defense Ministry, is slated to begin functioning shortly after Independence Day, when it will start to train for its grisly and macabre task.

Among those buried in the cemetery that is slated for destruction are soldiers who died while serving the country and civilians who were murdered by Palestinian terrorists.

This was perhaps one of the most chilling news items that I can recall reading in a long, long time.

The very idea that a Jewish army - our army! - would be ordered to establish such a unit, with the express purpose of demolishing a Jewish cemetery and digging up Jewish graves for purposes of relocating them, should send a chill down our collective spines.

Is this what Israel has come to?

The government's argument, of course, is that it has no choice in the matter in light of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's insistence on leaving Gaza. Yonatan Bassi, head of the Disengagement Authority, said last month that "no graves can be left in enemy territory."

Bassi hardly needed to spell out why - after all, if a Jewish cemetery were to remain in Gaza after an Israeli retreat, one can only imagine how the Palestinians would behave toward the site.

Anyone remember what they did to Joseph's Tomb in Nablus (Shechem) in the autumn of 2000, when a frenzied Palestinian mob set the site on fire and tore down the building which housed it brick by brick? Jewish prayer books and other religious articles left behind by the retreating Israeli army were set alight by the crowd, which danced and celebrated their desecration of a sacred Jewish site.

It seems safe to assume that after an Israeli departure from Gaza, the Palestinians would demonstrate a similar level of "respect" for the Jews who are buried there as well.

Clearly, the government is aware of this problem, which is why it is so anxious to remove the Jewish graves from Gush Katif. While Sharon has said that "No graves will be moved without full cooperation from the families," he also insisted that "We must try to convince those who object, and explain the importance of this move."

But what seems to escape the prime minister is what this situation says about our ostensible Palestinian partners. They won't let us live in peace, and they won't let our dead rest in peace either.

If Israel finds itself confronting a foe that is incapable of showing even a modicum of respect for the dead, is it really wise to strengthen that foe still further by handing over more territory to his control?

Call it "the cemetery test" - namely, if your opponent cannot muster the basic amount of decency necessary to refrain from desecrating a burial ground, for God's sake, then chances are you won't be able to make peace with him any time soon.

Since the Palestinians don't come close to passing this test, it should be obvious that it is not in Israel's interest to embolden them further by uprooting the residents of Gush Katif - living and dead - and fleeing the scene.

In Hebrew, the term used for cemetery is *beit almin*, which is taken from the Aramaic and translates literally as "everlasting home." This is no coincidence. Once a person has been buried, it is only in the most extreme of circumstances that his or her eternal rest should ever be disturbed. Judaism has long placed enormous importance on the need to respect the dead. It is time that our government - a Jewish government - did the same. (Jerusalem Post May 10)

The writer served as an aide to former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.