

Quote for the Week...

"I feel like I'm home. I finally came home." - New American immigrant Audrey Hadad, with tears in her eyes. Audrey and her husband Nuriel and daughter Ariel were among the more than 300 US immigrants who arrived in Israel on Tuesday. (Jpost.com Jul 10)

Commentary...

Hope and Hate in Zion Jerusalem Post Editorial

For anyone who had begun to doubt the future of Zionism and aliya in the 21st century, yesterday's arrival of a planeload of new immigrants from North America should go a long way toward allaying their concerns.

It was a vivid and moving scene at Ben-Gurion Airport, as some 400 Jews hailing from throughout the United States and Canada descended onto the tarmac, fulfilling what for many had been a lifelong dream. Despite nearly two years of ongoing Palestinian terror and a slumping economy, these courageous and selfless individuals chose to make Israel their home, thereby exemplifying both the resilience and relevance of Zionism.

The arrival of so many immigrants in one fell swoop - and from America, no less - should serve as a morale booster to Israelis, who in recent years have been fed a steady diet of post-Zionist ideology. Yesterday's arrivals were neither fleeing persecution nor escaping economic hardship. They came, above all, because they were motivated by their beliefs and by their principles.

The driving force behind this project is an organization called Nefesh B'Nefesh, which was founded by a young rabbi named Joshua Fass. Believing that financial considerations were hampering efforts to encourage American Jews to immigrate to Israel, Fass launched the group last November together with philanthropist Tony Gelbart. Working with the Jewish Agency and the Absorption Ministry, Nefesh B'Nefesh identified potential olim and then offered them assistance packages ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to make the move.

The result of these efforts was yesterday's initial group of arrivals, with another 130 expected later this summer. It should be noted that some two-thirds of funding behind the project came in the form of a grant from the International Federation of Christians and Jews, whose energetic leader Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein succeeded in marshalling broad support for the undertaking, particularly among Christian supporters of Israel in the United States. The fact that Christians are assisting Jews in moving to Israel is both historic and noteworthy, and Israel should be grateful for this concrete expression of support from its non-Jewish friends overseas.

In general, immigration from North America is an issue that has long presented a monumental challenge to those engaged in promoting aliya. With the largest Jewish community outside of Israel, the US serves as an important, and largely untapped, reservoir of potential aliya. Nevertheless, the number of North American immigrants in recent years has been relatively small. Last year, 1,378 North American Jews immigrated here, marking a continued decline in arrivals since 1995, when 2,503 North Americans immigrated. All told, only 111,096 of the 2.8 million immigrants to Israel since 1948 hail from across the Atlantic. Boosting these numbers, and attracting more American immigrants, must become a greater priority for Israel, and programs such as Nefesh B'Nefesh should therefore be lauded and supported for their efforts.

Yet while it may seem obvious that Israel should be doing everything it can

ISRAEL NEWS

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to promote immigration ת"ס
from the West, not everyone would appear to agree. MK Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, head of Shinui, actually came out against the immigration of religious Jews from the US and elsewhere to Israel. Speaking with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel last week, Lapid said, "Part of the problem is the character of the immigration from the United States: it's more Orthodox. We get very little

support from the Conservative or Reform Jewish communities in the United States. So what you end up with is a mushrooming native population of ultra-religious, followed by a migration of religious North American Jews who, quite frankly, we could do without." Compounding the insult, Lapid told The Jerusalem Post yesterday that his objection to religious immigrants was not limited to the US. Rather, he said, he opposed the arrival of all "ultra-religious immigrants," not just Americans.

These comments are an affront to Zionists everywhere. Israel has always prided itself on being the homeland of all world Jewry, and for Lapid to suggest that a group of Jews is not welcome here because of the level of their religious observance is bizarre. Indeed, some two-thirds of yesterday's new arrivals were Orthodox Jews, and it is unpardonable that Lapid would throw out a verbal "Not Welcome Mat" to greet them. (Jerusalem Post Jul 10)

Curses and Blessings By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

There is an old Jewish proverb, "Word to the bee - neither your honey nor your sting for me." That is, even the blessing of the bee - i.e. its honey - may not be worth the curse of its sting. Indeed, there are many things in life - such as fame, fortune or power - which appear to be blessings but often, in reality, turn out to be curses in disguise.

Yet the converse of this corollary is also worth noting: Every curse can be a blessing. That which, at first blush, seems negative and unfortunate may very well turn out, when all is said and done, to be in our best interests. We in Israel have myriad examples of the efficacy of this phenomenon, and I will cite just two:

In 1964, the Pope decided to visit the Holy Land, and there was a concerted effort to convince the Pontiff to add West Jerusalem to his itinerary. Yet, much to the chagrin of the world Jewish community, the Holy See rebuffed our overtures and declared he would tour only Jordanian-occupied East Jerusalem.

Much fanfare accompanied the Pope's trip, and it was decided that a royal entourage would travel from Amman to the Holy City. In fact, in order to accommodate the large convoy escorting the Pope, the Jordanians built a new, wide road leading from Jordan to Jerusalem. Israeli leaders could only watch bitterly, from afar, as the Pope came - and went.

Later in the same decade, the 6-Day War broke out. Then-Prime Minister Golda Meir and Israel tried desperately to convince the Jordanians to stay out of the fight, but, alas, the Arabs fell victim to that old malady of believing your own press. Egypt and Syria - whose forces were decimated early on and soon in full retreat - continuously broadcast messages over Middle Eastern airwaves that spoke of massive Israeli casualties and heroic Arab conquests of city after Israeli city. The Jordanians, fearing the Jewish spoils would be divided without them, decided to join the fray in order to get their "piece of the pie."

The Israeli army suddenly faced a new and formidable front - the Jordanian Legion - but the end result was both euphoric and historic: The capture and re-unification of Jerusalem. It was accomplished, finally, by the movement of mechanized forces which cut off the Jordanian's supply lines from Amman. Those forces utilized the only road which could sustain the heavy treads of tank and artillery pieces - the "Pope's Road," as it was dubbed by the IDF.

Thus the twin "curses" of the Pope's snubbing of Israel and the Jordanian entrance into the war resulted in the eternal reunification of our ancient capital.

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I bring all this up to comment on the current phase of the Arab/Palestinian - Israeli conflict. While we have certainly suffered a great deal at the hands of our enemies, we must also recognize the hidden blessings which we have enjoyed until now. It was a blessing that Arafat rejected the Cinton-Barak proposals at Camp David, for now we know for certain that the Palestinians would have used that agreement to create a militant national entity armed to the teeth with the most formidable weapons to be used against us, just as they have done with all the territory that has so far been (foolishly) given over to them.

And it was a blessing that Arafat violated every single clause of the ill-fated Oslo accords, from the number of armed personnel he was allowed to have, to the arrest of terrorists, to the cessation of anti-Semitic incitement. For had he pretended to honor those provisions, he would have forced us into even more deadly concessions that would have endangered us even more.

And it is no doubt a blessing, as well, that Arafat has refused to answer the heroic American call to step down, and will run in new Palestinian "elections." The foregone conclusion that Arafat will be the only viable - or living - candidate (his "opponent" in 1996 was an elderly grandmother) and that he will win in a landslide is not a bad thing. For if he WERE to step aside, those elected in his place would not - COULD not - be an improvement over his own corrupt and murderous regime.

That can only happen when the Palestinian infrastructure itself changes: When the crazed and violent Palestinian street is purged; when Palestinians are educated towards peace and not eternal vengeance; when democracy, and not demagoguery, is embraced as a way of life; and when compromise, and not conflict, is accepted as the means to a settlement among neighbors. Until and unless THAT occurs, Palestinian intransigence and rejectionism only help to reveal the true face of the enemy to all who care to see it.

And that, far from a curse, is a distinct blessing. (Jerusalem Post Jul 7)
The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

I Love You, Israel By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

I love you, Israel, because you are my only home after the Holocaust destroyed six million of my family when no other country would provide them with even a temporary home, not even to save their lives. I did not come as a conqueror, like the Crusaders, nor as to another option, like the wealthy, who have many homes. I came as one returning home, and I shall never leave.

And so I must say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, Israel, because despite the conventional wisdom fostered by a Goebbelsian lie, you have not occupied anyone else's land. Quite the opposite: The Palestinian militants have attempted to occupy our land.

At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles provided for the establishment of many Arab states in the Middle East and one Jewish State of Israel - on both banks of the Jordan River, the heartland of the historic Jewish homeland for 4,000 years.

Despite that treaty, whose Jewish part was brought only to partial fruition by an oil-hungry, anti-Semitic community of nations which waited 30 years to fulfill even a fraction of its obligations; despite Arab wars whose avowed purpose was to push us into the sea - by 1995 we had given up 99.2 % of the lands on which Palestinians lived, for the sacred delusion of an illusory peace. Not by international law, not even by UN law, can we possibly be called occupiers.

And so we say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, Israel, because you never insisted on exclusive rights to land, but were always ready to compromise with a two-state solution: on November 29, 1947, with the UN partition plan; in the lead-up up to June 5, 1967, when we were barred from the Western Wall and could not live in most of the West Bank; and in 2000 in Camp David and Taba, where former prime minister Ehud Barak was ready to give up 96%-98% of the West Bank, including lands where Arabs didn't even live, even Arab and Christian East Jerusalem, as well as the Temple Mount.

But then, Arafat responded with the gunshots of the El-Aksa intifada and the PLO declared that a return to the 1967 Auschwitz lines was not sufficient - they wanted the 1947 lines, the obliteration of the State of Israel.

So we must only say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, Israel, because in the face of an enemy of unspeakable cruelty, who has turned our homes, schools, restaurants and roads into the front lines of battle; who is worse than the bloodthirsty idol, Moloch; who sends children to die by blowing themselves up amid innocent people, our army targets only those about to murder, risking its best and brightest.

And so we must say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I LOVE you, Israel, because in a world reminiscent of 1938, we provide a haven of refuge for defenseless Jewish immigrants, and our IDF has proved again and again that what happened between 1938 and 1945 will never happen again.

And so we say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, Israel, because in a world poised to fight World War III - against Islamic fundamentalism and for civilization against the bush, freedom against slavery, light against darkness - we, Israel, are carrying on the battle for the entire free world.

And so we say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, America, because you have upheld the beacon of freedom and democracy against the tyrannies of Nazism and Communism, because your laws uphold human rights for all, irrespective of race or ethnic origin.

And I love you, President Bush, because you have demonstrated global leadership and morality, and articulated a doctrine demanding states' compliance with the principles of freedom, democracy and honest government; because you have refused to grant a prize for terror, any terror.

And so we say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

I love you, people of Israel worldwide, standing strong and united with your brethren in Israel, because when we Jews stand as one, no force on earth can tear us asunder.

And so we say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

And I love you, God of Israel, who has returned us to our homeland after more than 2,000 years of exile and persecution, who has taught us that to be alone with God is to be with a majority of One, Who guarantees that from Zion shall come forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; peace and pluralism guaranteeing a time when nation will not lift up sword against nation, and humanity will not learn war any more.

And so, finally, we must say: No, no, no to a state of the PLO.

The writer is the chief rabbi of Efrat. (Jerusalem Post Jul 7)

See No Evil? By Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.

The FBI's depiction of the murderous 4th of July attack at Los Angeles International (LAX) must have struck most Americans as utterly bizarre. After all, it occurred on a day when the entire country was on alert for terrorist attacks; it was conducted by an Egyptian immigrant, Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, armed with two handguns and a knife; and, but for the rapid and effective action of an El Al security guard, Hadayet's premeditated assault would have succeeded in killing far more than the two innocent civilians whose lives he brutally cut short.

This would, on its face, seem to fit the profile -- pardon the politically incorrect term -- of terrorism perpetrated by Arabs against Israelis and Americans with which the world has become all too familiar in recent years.

Yet the FBI has repeatedly declined to describe this incident as an act of terrorism. Its spokesmen insisted that Hadayet could not be classified as a terrorist because, as one put it to the Los Angeles Times, the Bureau "does not use the term to describe every violent act an individual commits against a state entity or racial group." Others argued that the LAX shooter did not qualify because he appeared to have acted alone and was not on any of the U.S. government's "watch lists" for individuals associated with terror organizations. The same could have been said of Timothy McVeigh.

Interestingly, the LA Times reported on Saturday that, in so doing, "the FBI seemed to ignore its own definition of terrorism in favor of a more limited State Department definition. That meaning holds that terrorism is perpetrated by sub-national groups or clandestine agents." FBI officials repeatedly emphasized Friday that Hadayet had no known connection with Islamic terrorist organizations." This seems suspicious on two grounds:

First, there is evidence that Hadayet was connected to al Qaeda. On Sunday, the Arabic London-based Al Hayat reported that the shooter was a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and that he had met Dr. Ayman Zawahri, the Islamic Jihad leader who became Osama bin Laden's deputy, in California -- not once but twice in California, in 1995 and again in 1998.

Taken together with other aspects of Hadayet's background -- notably that he reportedly had worked at LAX for five years in the employ of a ground service company until he aroused El Al's suspicions and that he then left to run a limousine service that afforded him continued, regular access to airport terminals -- raises suspicions that the gunman might have been a "sleeper" agent for al Qaeda. We are in serious trouble if, in light of the distinct possibility that there may be many such unidentified sleepers in this country, the FBI is not fully alert to this danger.

Second, there are other grounds for concern that more than State Department politicization is compromising the Bureau's vigilance towards Islamists in this country -- fanatics who interpret Mohammed's teachings to justify violent holy war ("jihad") against non-Muslims. On June 28, FBI Director Robert Mueller dignified the American Muslim Council, a group long associated with Islamist causes and known terrorist groups, by addressing its annual convention in Washington. In the face of intense

criticism over such legitimation, Mr. Mueller felt compelled to acknowledge that "persons associated with this organization have in the past made statements that indicate support for terrorism and for terrorist organizations." This statement could only be true if, as the FBI's recent mischaracterization of Hadayet's actions suggests, the official definition of terrorism is being altered significantly. For the American Muslim Council continues to associate with individuals and groups -- some of whom actually appeared on the same stage as did Director Mueller -- who support terrorist organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad.

This is, in short, not simply a matter of semantics. It is a question of whether our top law enforcement agency -- and, for that matter, the Bush Administration more generally -- comprehend the true character of the threat posed by Islamist terrorism.

Concerns on this score can only be heightened as Administration officials meet this week with a self-described "goodwill" delegation sponsored by the Muslim World League (MWL). The MWL is an organization founded in 1962 in Saudi Arabia to spread the Wahhabist strain of Islamism throughout the world. The one-time head of its Pakistan office, Wa'il Jalaidan, was a co-founder with bin Laden of al Qaeda. The MWL's office in Northern Virginia was among those raided by federal agents on March 20, 2002 on suspicion of ties to terrorism. This delegation purportedly represents a cross-section of the "scholars, leaders and jurists from the Muslim world" and is to visit four U.S. cities, starting with Washington, D.C. Yet, it is led by Dr. Abdullah al-Turki, the head of the Muslim World League and formerly a Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs. In both capacities he has been a driving force behind Wahhabi proselytizing worldwide (including the Saudi-financed construction of some 1500 mosques since 1950, school construction, "research" entities, etc.) and assuring the uniformity and "purity" of the materials distributed throughout the Muslim and non-Muslim world. It is unlikely that moderate Muslims or their views are going to be much in evidence in any delegation he sponsors.

Worse yet, the "scholars" that Dr. al-Turki will be trotting around the United States this week presumably share the view expressed by a six-day conference of such folks held in January in Mecca. While the conferees sponsored by the MWL's Islamic Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Academy duly condemned "terrorism," they made clear that they too have their own definition -- one that excludes holy wars: "Jihad is meant for upholding right, ending injustice, ensuring peace and security and establishing mercy. Terrorism and violence committed by the aggressor who usurp the land, desecrate holy sanctuaries and loot wealth cannot be compared to the practice [of] the right of legitimate defense as used by the oppressed seeking to gain their legitimate rights to self-determination."

Clearly, such a definition of terrorism fits the Wahhabists and other Islamists' interests. But it certainly is not compatible with ours -- and must not be allowed to color our understanding of the evil we now confront in many forms and guises. (Townhall.com Jul 9)

The writer is President of the Center for Security Policy.

Why Hesham Hadayet May Be Scarier than Al Qaeda

By Dennis Prager

According to news reports, the administration, the FBI and every other relevant official agency cannot yet determine whether Hesham Mohamed Hadayet's murderous attack on El Al Airlines customers at Los Angeles International Airport last week was an act of terrorism. They are not sure whether Hadayet's murders were a hate crime, terrorism or an act of personal anger. They even claim not to be sure about Hadayet's motives.

The American government sure is easily baffled. An extremist Egyptian Muslim chooses July 4th to murder Americans and Israelis who are flying from an American airport on Israel's national airline -- and the official line is that we can't call this terror or even identify the murderer's motives?

This country's officials are in a state of denial and confusion that is almost as frightening as the terrorism they are supposed to be fighting. The FBI says that unless Hadayet is linked to a terrorist organization, he did not commit an act of terror. But if that is now America's criterion for defining terrorism, Timothy McVeigh did not commit an act of terrorism. He wasn't linked to a terrorist group.

This absurd definition is worthy of the Keystone Cops, not the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Of course, we need to know if this man was linked to a terrorist organization, but the absence of such a link in no way lessens the fact that this was terrorism.

By confining our definition of terrorism to acts committed by those with links to terrorist organizations, we may be ignoring the most frightening aspect of Islamic terror: There are many individual Muslim extremists without any links to any terror organizations who are prepared to slaughter Americans and Jews.

Only Allah knows how many Hadayets there are. But based upon what we humans can know, millions of Muslims, especially Arab Muslims, have been

raised with a hatred of Jews and Americans whose intensity is unique in the world. According to a former employee of Hadayet, Abdul Zahab, 36, a Syrian immigrant, Hadayet had told him that "the Israelis tried to destroy the Egyptian nation and the Egyptian population by sending prostitutes with AIDS to Egypt."

Hadayet learned this grotesque libel from the Egyptian government's controlled media, which, like other Arab media, routinely spread such lies about Israel and Jews. Millions of Arab and other Muslims believe that Jews kill non-Jewish children to use their blood for Jewish holidays and that 4,000 Jews avoided working at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 because they knew about the attack in advance. No wonder Hitler's "Mein Kampf" is a best seller in the Arab world and the anti-Semitic forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" is widely reprinted and read there.

And this hate is taught here, too. The Washington Post and The New York Times have reported on Islamic schools in America that teach hatred for America and Jews.

That is why this debate about whether to call Hadayet's act "terror" or merely "a hate crime" is not only foolish, it is suicidal. If al Qaeda is destroyed tomorrow, it will hardly mean the end of Islamic terrorism. There are so many Muslims filled with a diabolical hatred of Israel, America and Jews that no terror organization is needed for Americans and Jews to be murdered regularly.

Were it not for the fact that Israeli security people were armed and spectacularly capable, Hadayet would probably have murdered and maimed dozens of innocent people. How many Hadayets must there be before America calls their actions terror and awakens to the dismal reality that a frightening number of such terrorists are created daily?

This is not a call to hate Muslims. It is a call to acknowledge Muslim hate. This hatred, the most virulent in the world today, created both 9-11 and Hesham Hadayet. Denying this serves no one, and it breeds contempt for those entrusted with protecting us from Islamic terror. (Townhall.com Jul 10)

The Morning after the Palestinians Reject Bush By Shaul Goldstein

Many people recognize US President George W. Bush's recent Mideast policy address as an important call to action, yet point to "gaps" or unanswered questions. First and foremost among these is, "What will America do if the Palestinians reelect Yasser Arafat or another mainstay of his corrupt, dictatorial regime?"

I and 250,000 fellow Israelis live side by side with the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, or the West Bank. From our vantage point, it's not a question of if but rather when the Palestinian leadership once again takes a dramatic step backward by rejecting the White House's sincere call for democratization. As Abba Eban once quipped, "The Palestinians have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity for peace."

What happens the morning after - after Arafat receives 90 percent of the Palestinian vote; after the PA continues anti-Semitic incitement in its classrooms and mosques; and after Arafat dispatches more suicide bombers to slaughter unarmed civilians?

The first, immediate challenge is to rethink the idea of a Palestinian state. Once upon a time, such a notion was axiomatic. No longer. If we have learned anything from two years of Palestinian-initiated violence (after being offered statehood and 97% of the territory that they demanded), then at least this fact is crystal clear: Statehood is not the answer.

Four compelling reasons support this reassessment:

* It would be bad for the United States

US strategic interests simply cannot tolerate yet another corrupt, terrorist-driven state situated so close to American targets in the Mideast. Regionally, it would destabilize Jordan and bolster Saddam Hussein's grip in Iraq.

* It would undermine Western democracy

Arafat and the PA have consistently supported global terror infrastructures from al-Qaida to Iran. At a time when the West has belatedly awakened to the real dangers of terrorism, creating a new base for violence would be crazy.

* It would endanger Israel

A Palestinian state would shut the door on peace, not open it. Rejecting countless opportunities to halt attacks, hatred and incitement directed at Israel, the prospect of an actual state rather than a limited PA governing body is frightening indeed.

* Arafat & Co. do not deserve a state of their own

Terrorism. Corruption. Dictatorship. Duplicity. These are the legacy of Arafat's Palestinian Authority. Instead of casting out this oppressive

leadership, the Palestinians are being cynically goaded once again to endorse the old regime, repeating old mistakes. The West, and the US in particular, must be prepared to adapt a new approach. The clock cannot and should not be turned back. People who choose war over peace must not be rewarded for their wrong and deadly decisions.

SINCE A final peace agreement between the parties is unlikely to materialize in the short run, Israel must be prepared to undertake key unilateral initiatives on its own. It must implement interim measures, in partnership with the US, which would:

* Ensure Israel's security by uprooting the terrorist infrastructure embedded in Palestinian areas - including an end to incitement and education towards hatred. Israel must continue to administer to all security issues until the Palestinians are willing and able to perform this function themselves.

* Empower the Palestinians to administer their daily lives and affairs in a fair, effective manner. The day-to-day lives of the Palestinians must be administered by a democratically elected body which will fulfill Bush's rightly insisted upon standards of honesty and public accountability.

The quest for peace remains our primary goal. Until that takes root, however, we have no recourse but to directly protect our country and our citizens through all preemptive steps necessitated by the situation. There are no instant, simple solutions to this century-old conflict. Peace can only be achieved when the Palestinians prove that they have left violence and terror behind them and embarked on the one-way path of peace. (Jerusalem Post Jul 10)

The writer is the head of the Gush Etzion Local Council and vice chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip.

Labor's Reckoning Jerusalem Post Editorial

These are not easy times for the Labor Party. With its central ideological tenets of the past decade - territorial compromise and peace with the PLO - lying in ruins, and its very existence as a political alternative to the Likud increasingly in doubt, senior Labor members gathered on Monday night at the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv for the party's seventh convention. It was anything but a happy reunion.

Even before the session got started, party chairman and Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer's leadership had come under attack, as veteran Labor MK Haim Ramon launched a seemingly hopeless challenge to replace him. Though his attempt fell short, one thing Ramon did accomplish was to further burnish Labor's image as a party sinking into disarray.

Adding to this unflattering impression was the remarkable public exchange that took place between Ben-Eliezer and his rival, Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg, both of whom clashed barely six months ago in the party's leadership primary. Given the bitterness of the primary's outcome, which was wracked by charges of ballot fraud and outright cheating, and the recriminations that followed, one might have expected Labor's leaders to make an extraordinary effort to ensure that this week's convention focus on healing the party's internal rifts.

Instead, the entire affair degenerated into a petty exchange of insults and invective. An angry Ramon said that Ben-Eliezer "should not be the leader, should not be the chief, should not be the navigator," while Burg accused the party leader of being "Arik Sharon's tail." For his part, an infuriated Ben-Eliezer responded to Burg's proposal that Labor leave the Sharon government by asking, "Why do we need this? To divide us? To tear us apart, to dismantle us?" Though it made for riveting political drama, it did little to repair the party's tattered image.

But perhaps the most telling indicator of Labor's current troubles took place elsewhere. In an interview on Channel 1 on Tuesday night, former prime minister Ehud Barak broke his self-avowed silence over domestic political issues. Though he reaffirmed his decision, made after his election defeat last year, temporarily to retire from political life, Barak left open the possibility of making a comeback in the near future. "I said then that I see myself as a reservist and if I'm called, I'll go back; but, like all reservists, I expect I won't be called unless it is absolutely necessary."

Of course, it was just 16 months ago that Barak was unceremoniously booted out of power by the electorate in the largest landslide in the country's history. The very fact that Barak might now be positioning himself to step in as Labor's "savior," so shortly after he himself was drummed out of office, only exemplifies the depths of the crisis in which Labor now finds itself.

But lest you find yourself feeling sorry for the once-vaunted political party that played such a vital role in building the country, it is worth recalling that the current mess is entirely of Labor's own making. A decade ago, the Labor Party risked the country's future by signing the Oslo Accords, revitalizing the PLO, and gambling that Yasser Arafat could serve as a partner for peace. That gamble was neither shrewd nor sensible. And yet, even as the process quickly began to

unravel, Labor continued to press forward, giving Arafat a larger foothold in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, one that is now being used as a platform from which to launch terror attacks against Israel.

The price of failure is always high, and especially so in politics. By bringing Israel to the brink of disaster, Labor failed its electorate and the public, disastrously undermining the nation's security and strategic standing. Little wonder, then, that the party finds itself running up against a political wall, because the way it had preached for the past decade turned out to be little more than a dead end.

Call it justice, or perhaps fate, but either way you look at it, Labor's day of reckoning appears, finally, to have arrived. (Jerusalem Post Jul 4)

Sole Brothers By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

Intelligence allows for a change.

That is why I am re-thinking my long-held reluctance to solicit, or even accept, moral, political and financial assistance from Evangelical Christians.

For years - dating back to my tenure as Rabbi in Dallas, Texas, deep in the Bible Belt - I have been aware of the passionate feelings which "born-again" Christians have for Israel. I have watched them on TV selling tours to the Holy Land, attended their rallies, even served as keynote speaker at their annual "Salute to Israel" evening, which raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Jewish State and culminated in a rousing rendition of Hatikva. It may have been the most Zionist experience of my life.

Yet at the same time, I have stayed at arms-length from these people, deeply suspicious of their motives, aware that many of them have a "hidden agenda." Clearly, at least among some of their theologians, the support for Israel is directly linked to a belief that all Jews need to be gathered in one place - Israel - so that Jesus can eventually convert all of us en masse to Christianity. This, they reckon, will undo the great stigma that has forever stained Christianity: obstinate Jewish refusal to accept Jesus - himself a Jew - as the Messiah, son of G-d.

But several recent events have led me to a re-think. These events include massive financial support for Israel, including the funding of Aliyah from the USA & Russia, and emergency assistance to terror victims; continued Christian tourism to the Holy Land even in the face of Palestinian violence - I have been on sold-out planes to Israel recently that could not even scrape up a Minyan of Jews! - and marches on Washington to urge President Bush to maintain firm support for Israel despite intense international pressure to take up the Palestinian cause.

It is this kind of pro-Israel fervor that makes it so hard to turn away the Christian hand being extended to us at a time when so many others - including so-called "friends and allies" - have abandoned us in our moment of need, swallowing whole the lies and mistruths being maliciously spread about us. While I am still nervous about seeing crosses intertwined with Jewish stars, and still "get the willies" when I hear Gospel choirs singing "Jerusalem of Gold," I may not have the luxury of being so particular when it comes to choosing friends.

This past week, there was a massive "Prayer Summit" held in Dallas marking the 35th anniversary of Jerusalem's reunification. More than 4,000 Christians turned out to pray for Israel, to donate to terror victims, and to wildly cheer Mayor Ehud Olmert as he pledged to keep Jerusalem united, and to "win the war" against terror.

The evening was sponsored by one Michael Evans, director of the "Jerusalem Prayer Team" that claims to have 280 churches reciting regular prayers for Israel. This is the same Michael Evans who I debated back in 1978 in Texas, when he was a small-time, self-proclaimed evangelical "minister," seeking to convert our people to Christianity, where they could become "completed Jews." I have no illusions that, in his heart of hearts, he still believes that only a Jew who accepts Jesus will "merit the kingdom of Heaven."

But whatever his motives may be, he is trying to rally 1 million Christians to pray for Jerusalem and express support for Israel with both mouth and money. He, and others like him, are among the few non-Jews taking an outspoken stance in our favor, at a time when affinity to the Jewish State is hardly in vogue.

I'll watch my soul, and I suggest you watch yours. Meanwhile, I'll take all the friends I can get. (Jerusalem Post Jul 5)

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