

## 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...

**Tuesday July 29, 7:30pm**

*Ze'ev Jabotinskymemorial lecturefeaturing Israel Asper, Chairman, Canwest Global Communications, who will speak on "Road Map...To Where", at BAYT.*

### Commentary...

**Saving Abu Mazen** By Yisrael Harel

Tel Aviv University's School for Government and Policy this week conducted large-scale diplomatic simulations. The most important of these, which concluded Tuesday evening, dealt with the road map. This is the closing scene of the simulation:

From the U.S. point of view, the first stage of the map ends as planned in December 2003, even though the two sides, particularly the Palestinians, have not fulfilled all their obligations. The Palestinians have held new elections - in which, of course, Yasser Arafat was chosen as president - but have not dismantled the terrorist organizations, as they are obliged to do.

In addition, there were even more serious terror attacks during this period than prior to the cease-fire. On one specific day, for example, there were five almost simultaneous attacks: two in Tel Aviv - at the Kirya (government complex) and the Azrieli Towers - one in Hebron and one in Samaria; in the fifth, three soldiers waiting for a ride were kidnapped. The soldiers were rescued eventually, partly with the assistance of Palestinian Intelligence. But despite all these, U.S. President George Bush bulldozed the Israeli prime minister into attending the international conference. One of the results: a coalition crisis. The National Religious Party and National Union ministers can no longer face their voters and are forced to bow out of the coalition. Five Likud ministers, according to this scenario, also resign.

Most of the simulation participants who played the roles of Israeli government officials believed that, despite the terror, Israel must attend the international conference. And this indeed was the result of the simulation. Their mentality is similar to that of the media, which in recent days have joined forces to keep telling us about Abu Mazen's troubles - how he would really like to fight terror but simply cannot. The indirect but effective message is, therefore, that we must learn to put up with a reasonable amount of terror. It is not so terrible, they explained after the attack at Kfar Yavetz.

If Abu Mazen is indeed as weak as these supportive broadcasters say, then the logical conclusion is that he is incapable of reaching an agreement. Therefore, as strange as this may sound after our self-indoctrination about him, he is not the partner who can supply the goods. He will constantly blackmail us - as he is regarding a mass release of prisoners, including those from Hamas and Islamic Jihad - without giving us a quid pro quo, and certainly not the cessation of terror. In addition, how do his advocates believe that the following contradiction can be resolved: Israel will release Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners while demanding, together with the Americans, that Abu Mazen, as his part of the deal, fight and detain members of these organizations?

The only chance the road map has of success, if at all, is if one key condition is fulfilled: The vast majority on both sides, Jews and Arabs, have to want it. Then it does not matter whether the prime ministers are weak. The majority of the Jewish people does want the road map. The vast majority of the Arab people living in the Land of Israel, however, has not at any stage reconciled itself to Jewish sovereignty over even a small part of the land. It accepts the map as just one stage in the "plan of stages," not as a peace agreement.

The Palestinian Arabs have forced two major confrontations upon us in the past 15 years: the 1988-1992 intifada and the war of attrition and terror of the past 33 months. From the military point of view, the results have shown that Israel has the upper hand. But from the more important standpoint of Arab recognition that it is not possible to tear the Jewish people away from its land,

it did not. The vast majority of the religious and ideological texts that deal with the matter prove, to our great regret, that the conclusion reached by both the Palestinian leadership and its public is that the Jews, and not the Arabs, are on the verge of collapse as a result of the war of attrition. And with this in mind, they believe that all forms of the struggle should be continued, including terror, until the Jews pack up and leave. The

suicide bombings prove how deep the animosity is - and how deep the belief that this is the only means the Jews understand.

These conclusions did not find expression in the simulation, nor have they found expression in the public debate. The Israelis, as the simulation proved, are looking for magic formulas, pointless conferences and vain maps. They do not have the courage to reject outside pressure such as is being applied now, when we are on the threshold of defeating terror. If they were to stand up for their right - their duty! - to complete the annihilation of the Hamas and Jihad leaderships, they would be able to bring about a significant reduction in terror, perhaps even its collapse, for a prolonged period. But they were never characterized by determination - despite the fact that they have the strength - to complete the job. Those responsible for this, for not completing the job, are for the most part the peace-seekers from Israel and abroad: Whenever Israel is close to victory, they exert pressure to stop. This is the truth. And they are among those who are responsible for the fact that, for another unnecessary and extended period, there will continue to be victims among us - and we will be forced to continue to live by the sword. (Haaretz Jul 10)

**What Window of Opportunity?** By Max Abrahms

*Iraqi regime change has not significantly improved Israeli security*

During the build-up to the 2003 Iraq War, President George W. Bush delivered a watershed speech at a prominent Washington DC-based think tank. In late February at the American Enterprise Institute, Bush suggested that after dealing with Saddam Hussein, Israel "will be expected to support the creation of a viable Palestinian state and to work as quickly as possible toward a final status agreement."

The point was not that the United States would be downgrading Israel as an ally the "day after," rather that Israel's improved postwar security situation would soon allow it to safely conciliate the Palestinians.

This mindset, shared by all four members of the road map's Quartet - the multilateral body made up of the US, EU, UN and Russia - was tacitly based on the post-1991 Gulf War experience. Then, prime minister Yitzhak Rabin came to believe that the (first) US victory over Saddam had created a proverbial "window of opportunity to take risks for peace."

This catchphrase held that with Iraq sidelined, Israel had a fleeting moment to solidify peaceful relations with its neighbors before they could reconstitute their forces and once again threaten Israel's survival.

Unfortunately, this historical analogy is flawed, with important implications for the road map.

The 1991 Gulf War did create a limited window of opportunity by qualitatively improving Israeli security. But the same cannot be said about the 2003 Iraq War.

During the 1980s, the Iraqi army had become the largest in the Middle East and the most powerful in the Persian Gulf. Iraq was also on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons. The 1991 Gulf War destroyed half of Iraq's conventional military forces and led, in Rabin's words, to "the discovery of Iraq's nuclear plans, which postponed if not prevented a supremely dangerous threat."

Not only did the 1991 war neutralize Israel's toughest enemy, the Soviet Union was in the process of collapsing, thereby undercutting the Arab world's primary weapons supplier and creating a steady stream of Jewish emigrants to Israel.

By the time the Oslo framework was introduced to Rabin in early 1993, Israel's strategic position was thus at its pinnacle. This fact, more than any other, persuaded "Mr. Security" that Israel's postwar situation afforded the Jewish state a temporary opening to make concessions to the Arab world.

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NOW TIMES are different. With Saddam's capabilities having never recovered from his 1991 defeat, subsequent inspections, and years of sanctions, Iraqi regime change has not significantly improved Israeli security.

This point was easy to miss. Leading up to the war the Israeli government and military elite actively contributed to the misperception that deposing Saddam Hussein would be a panacea for Israel. Whether it was a case of wishful thinking or the desire to support the US president, Israel's official line both before and after the war was exceedingly optimistic. And the international media, on the extremes of both the Left and the Right, often went even further by suggesting that the whole point of the war was to eliminate the Iraqi threat to Israel.

But rhetoric aside, Israel's main strategic threats have outlived Saddam. Rabin never fully appreciated the danger posed by terrorism. He called it a "second level of threat" that posed only small-scale safety problems for Israel.

Rabin was right, but only in reference to Palestinian terror based largely in neighboring states, where the Palestine Liberation Organization had operated since the mid-1960s. He did not foresee the impact of terror from within a Palestinian quasi-state, operating from bases in immediate proximity to Israeli cities.

The impact of this terror from 2000 onward went well beyond the daily personal security of Israelis, constituting a direct threat to Israel's economic security and Arab-Jewish *modus vivendi*. Rabin's "window," while there, was hence never as wide as believed.

Notwithstanding rosy predictions of postwar Israeli security, Saddam had always been a tertiary contributor to Palestinian terrorism. The bulk of resources funneled to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, not to mention Hizbullah, have come from Iran and Saudi Arabia - not Iraq.

The Iranian threat has also intensified since Rabin's time. According to Muhammad el-Baradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran's nuclear technology is considerably further along than Iraq's was at the time of the 1991 Gulf War.

That Teheran could potentially develop an "Islamic bomb" by as early as next year is particularly troublesome to Israel: Teheran has made veiled threats in the past that it would not hesitate to use nukes against the Jewish state. And these threats are lent urgency by credible reports of Iran's newly completed Shahab-3 ballistic missile, which is capable of striking anywhere in Israel.

In sum, defeating Saddam in 1991 significantly improved Israeli security - though only temporarily and perhaps not enough for an "end of conflict" agreement, as envisioned in Oslo. In contrast, today Israel must contend with the mounting threat of Palestinian terrorism and a fickle Iranian regime on the break of acquiring a nuclear option.

Like Oslo, the road map initiative adopts the window of opportunity mindset that calls on Israel to make immediate concessions before the Arab world poses a major threat. Unfortunately, we are presently passed that point.

That does not mean Israel should rule out taking so-called risks for peace. But the road map to peace needs to lead through Arab and Muslim minds, not just the streets of Baghdad. (Jerusalem Post Jul 17)

*The writer, a Soref Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, specializes in Israeli security and US-Israeli relations. This article is taken from a longer essay in the current edition of the Middle East Quarterly.*

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### **Deja Vu All Over Again** By Jonathan Tobin *Will U.S. and Jewish support for the Palestinian Authority aid peace?*

One suicide bombing into the Palestinian cease-fire, optimism about the chances for the success of the road map to peace is still holding in Washington and among the media.

There are many reasons to be cynical about the decision of the Palestinian terrorist organizations to take a respite from their murder sprees. There are even more reasons for skepticism about the ability of the Palestinian Authority to stop the terrorists, even with all the good intentions of its prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas.

Incidents such as the July 7 attack on a home in Kibbutz Moshav Kfar Yavetz — which took the life of one Israeli — and a fatal shooting in Samaria days earlier are not enough to change minds about the chances for progress. The consensus among most people here and in Israel is that Abbas must be given a fair chance to justify the faith that President George W. Bush has placed in him as a man who can lead the Palestinians to a peaceful and democratic state.

But how far will we bend in order to sustain this idea? More to the point, how much effort and treasure will the United States expend to prove it?

The concept behind the road map peace plan is a logical one: Give a new Palestinian leadership the support it needs in order to get a grip on things, then let it build the infrastructure necessary to keep the peace and govern the people.

Along with American government aid for the Palestinians, we are told American Jews should pitch in to help Abbas, since that would be the best possible investment for peace with Israel.

But how much effort should those of us standing on the sidelines give to Abbas? In particular, how many U.S. taxpayer dollars and other goodies should

he get?

Predictably, the cheerleaders for the road map are urging us to dive in head first.

Former United Jewish Appeal National chair Marvin Lender believes that's exactly what we should do. Writing in *The Los Angeles Times* on June 26 under a co-bylines with the Israeli Policy Forum's Jonathan Jacoby, the New Haven bagel baron claims that "the most important thing we can do now for the Jewish state is to encourage our leaders in the United States to give Abbas' forces whatever is needed."

Following the exact same script that he and other peace-boasters read only a few years beforehand, Lender sees a coalition of "moderate American Jews supporting moderate Palestinians along with Israel" as the key to peace.

In this formulation, rather than merely defending the Jewish state against its enemies, Lender and those who agree with him believe "American Jews must take this opportunity to broaden our definition of what it means to be pro-Israel."

I don't doubt Lender's good intentions. But his words give me a gut-wrenching feeling that we are blindly walking down the same path to tragedy that was followed during the Oslo catastrophe. In the immortal words of baseball philosopher Yogi Berra, the road-map enthusiasts are giving me that feeling of "déjà vu all over again."

The scheme Lender advocates has already been tried, and it failed.

To read Lender's words and those of others who are pushing for more money for the P.A. is like watching an automobile accident unfold before your eyes. You know what is happening but feel powerless to stop it.

The years following the signing of the 1993 Oslo peace accords witnessed the same sort of earnest commitment to peace on the part of Israelis and Americans as they sought to build the new Palestinian state in the making. In particular, American Jews enthusiastically supported this process.

It seems only yesterday that New York philanthropist Kenneth Lipper was donating millions to Harvard University to set up fellowships for Palestinian bureaucrats to learn the ways of good government. And it was just a few years ago that Philadelphia's own police department was training Palestinians to join Yasser Arafat's P.A. "police."

What happened? The Palestinians may have enjoyed Cambridge, but the rule of their kleptocracy was no better for the training paid for by Lipper. Billions in aid donated to the Palestinians were stolen by Arafat and his merry crew of corrupt thieves.

The police? Not long after they completed their training, they were joining Arab mobs in attacks on Israelis, and were responsible for numerous murders. Three years of a terrorist war that came after Israel made its most generous peace offering have destroyed everything the Palestinians had built. The only tangible result of Oslo was to give Arafat and his killers the means and opportunity to murder hundreds of Jews and thousands of their own people.

Has the enactment of the road map changed any of this?

Despite American calls for his ouster or replacement, Arafat remains in charge of the P.A. and its numerous "security forces."

And even if the terrorist thugs of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Arafat's own Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade agree to stop killing Jews for a few months, Abbas has demonstrated no intention of disarming these murderers.

That said, it is always possible that Arafat might fade into insignificance as Abbas does away with the terrorists. Palestinian schools and broadcast outlets might drop their hate education and incitement against Jews.

I can't see how this would happen, but I would be quite happy to be proven wrong.

Maybe this time an infusion of American cash will be enough to bribe the Palestinians to make peace, even though we know that the same folks that used aid dollars to buy weapons to kill Jews remain in charge. Would a smart businessman like Lender pour good money after bad in this way in his own investments? Not likely, but that's what he is asking us to do with the Palestinians.

Even worse, the same dynamic of blind belief is already unfolding. As skeptics — like the Zionist Organization of America — publish lists of Palestinian violations of the map, their reports are derided by peace enthusiasts in the same way that the group's publicizing violations of Oslo were dismissed. What we need in the coming months is determination to hold the Palestinians accountable for their behavior and to keep the heat on the Bush administration to stick to its word about not undermining Israel's security. Unlike the Oslo period, we cannot afford to blindly finance terror or turn a blind eye to Palestinian incitement.

Americans should not oppose any real chance for peace, but neither should they be enlisted as accomplices in a campaign to ultimately force Israel into more concessions in exchange for terror. (*Jewish World Review* July 11)

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## **Sharon Knows How to Say No. Will He?** By Evelyn Gordon

Last time I checked, Israel's elected prime minister was Ariel Sharon, not George W. Bush. But you would never guess it to listen to Bush administration officials these days.

They have never spent more than a few days here; they comprehend neither Hebrew nor Arabic; they have never perused the masses of material collected by Israel's security services. But none of this deters them from declaring themselves, rather than Israel's elected government, the best arbiters of Israel's security needs.

This messianic belief emerged immediately after last month's Aqaba summit, and its first target was Israel's policy to attempting to kill terrorist leaders. When Israel tried to kill Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz Rantisi, White House Spokesman Ari Fleischer declared publicly that this "does not contribute to the security of Israel."

Two weeks later, after Israel killed Abdullah Qawasmeh - the man responsible for a suicide bombing that had murdered 17 Israelis earlier that month - during an attempt to arrest him, Secretary of State Colin Powell said he "regretted" the death of this mass murderer, as it "could be an impediment to progress."

Never mind that America deems killing terrorists important for its own security and has repeatedly tried to assassinate al-Qaida officials and Saddam Hussein. Never mind that Israel was then suffering almost daily terror attacks, but Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas had publicly declared that he would not act against the terrorists himself.

Never mind that, off the record, the Palestinians themselves say the targeted killings were the Israeli tactic Hamas feared most and the main reason it eventually agreed to a cease-fire - or, as one Palestinian put it: Why else do you suppose an end to the assassinations tops Hamas's list of conditions for a truce? Bush knows better.

The next target was the security fence between Israel and the West Bank. During her visit to Israel last month, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice informed Sharon that the US wants construction of the fence halted since the Palestinians view it as an attempt to determine a political border. Its continued construction will thus weaken Abbas and perhaps derail the US road map for a settlement, she said - and that is more important to Israel's security than the fence.

NEVER MIND that over the last 35 months hundreds of Israelis have been killed by suicide bombers from the West Bank, but not a single bomber has managed to enter from fenced-off Gaza. Never mind that the "political border" argument is nonsense, since Israel, just as it dismantled the settlement of Yamit under the agreement with Egypt, would also not hesitate to move parts of the fence should an eventual agreement dictate different borders.

Never mind that an agreement without a fence would almost certainly not end the terrorism, since the Islamic organizations, whose avowed goal is Israel's destruction, have sworn to continue attacks regardless of any accord, while Abbas has repeatedly pledged to take no action against them.

Bush knows better.

And now, there are the Palestinian prisoners. At a meeting with Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom last Tuesday, Bush's handpicked envoy, John Wolf, demanded that Israel release many more prisoners than the 350 the government has so far agreed to free. When Shalom pointed out that under the road map, Israel is not required to release any prisoners at all, Wolf brushed that off with the same argument Rice used about the fence: A mass prisoner release is necessary to strengthen Abbas, and Abbas is vital to Israel's security.

Never mind that the US would never agree to release terrorists involved in murdering its own citizens. Never mind that no "peace agreement" is likely to be worth the paper it is printed on as long as the Palestinians view terrorists as heroes to be brought home in triumph rather than murderers who ought to rot in jail.

Never mind that every previous release of Palestinian terrorists has resulted in a new wave of terror:

The 1,150 prisoners Israel released in the 1985 Jibril exchange became the core of the first intifada, launched 19 months later; the 415 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists Israel deported in 1992 and then allowed to return in 1993 became key players in the wave of post-Oslo terror, which culminated in early 1996 with four suicide bombings that killed 59 Israelis in a single week; the hundreds of prisoners Israel released under the Oslo Accords became the core of the current bloody war, which has left more than 800 Israelis dead.

In fact, according to Shin Bet statistics, an astonishing one out of every two prisoners released in past deals has returned to anti-Israel activity.

But Bush knows better.

The truth, of course, is that Bush is not terribly interested in Israel's security just now: He has decided that America's interests currently lie in appeasing the Palestinians. I think he is wrong, but the American people elected him to make that decision, not me.

Israelis, however, did not elect Bush; it is Ariel Sharon whom they chose to defend their interests, and who will have to answer to them for his actions. And for Sharon, who prides himself on his good relations with the US administration, this poses an agonizing dilemma: Does he insist on what he knows is right for Israel, or does he keep Bush happy?

The good news is that Sharon has occasionally stood up to American pressure in the past: When Bush ordered him to call an immediate halt to Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002, for instance, Sharon ignored him - and that proved to be the right decision for Israel.

Israelis can thus only hope that in this new series of conflicts with the Bush administration, Sharon will once again have the courage to put Israel first. (Jerusalem Post Jul 15)

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## **Can the BBC Operate Responsibly?** By Daniel Seaman

Media reaction to Israel's decision to reevaluate its relationship with the BBC has tended to ignore the reasons why it was taken.

While the decision's merits can be argued, any evaluation of Israel's grievances should be based on whether the BBC adheres to universal standards of journalistic ethics. In short: Does BBC coverage of Israel meet the tests of integrity, impartiality, honesty and accuracy?

Recycling malicious falsehoods that have been documented and independently disproved is a clear measure of lack of integrity.

Months after a UN investigation concluded there was no evidence of a massacre in Jenin, BBC anchors and the BBC web site still implied doubt as to what really happened. In a recent program allegations were again raised about Israel's use of a "mysterious" gas in Gaza, ignoring the fact that medical experts refuted this hoax over two years ago.

Adopting the narrative and terminology of one of the sides to a conflict is not impartiality. The BBC goes out of its way to state that the Temple Mount is called "Haram al-Sharif" by the Arabs, implying an Arab claim to the site. This in itself is not a problem - except that the same consideration is not extended to Israel. The West Bank is never "known by the Jews as Judea and Samaria."

The BBC goes so far as to accommodate the Hizbullah terror organization when it describes the UN-recognized Israeli border with Lebanon as "disputed." Similarly, Israeli settlements are "illegal" and the territories "occupied" rather than disputed.

Undermining the credibility of sources by implying doubt, by questioning and conditioning is disingenuous, especially when it is applied to only one side of an issue. Israeli sources reported by the BBC almost always "allege," while Palestinians "report." When hard evidence is presented by Israel, such as the photo of an infant Palestinian dressed as a homicide bomber, its authenticity is questioned. Yet Palestinians leveling the most ludicrous of accusations against Israel are quoted verbatim.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is often assigned a militant adjective such as "extreme right-wing" or "former general," something that is almost never done when describing a Palestinian leader.

Those working in television are keenly aware that how something is said or what is shown can be much more important in creating and solidifying an image than actual content. In this respect the Israeli position repeatedly suffers in the BBC's treatment of regional stories, a fact readily demonstrated by any objective analysis of its videotape archives. The use of camera angles, hidden cameras, cinematographic techniques of insinuation and innuendo, intonation - even rhetorical questions - can create a sinister, even diabolical image of an interviewee, cast doubt on his point of view and raise unofficial concern about his character and intention.

Beyond that, Israel's position has repeatedly suffered through the focus on only those points that support a particular view. Contrary information is omitted in a manner that can only be regarded as knowing and deliberate.

SUCH TREATMENT of highly complex Middle East issues does not represent "legitimate criticism." It is not an objective attempt to expose the truth, but defamation aimed at creating prejudice. This kind of reporting does not require an official Israeli response; it demands a legal defense. To discuss or debate such baseless accusations only lends them credibility.

In the past, defamation of Israel was neatly packaged in the claim of holding Israel to a "higher standard." Such pretense has now evolved into "creative journalism," in which all means are justified in order to depict Israel as a sinister society, one whose arrogance and total disregard for international law is the real menace to world peace and stability.

Thus the BBC can draw a moral equivalence between the premeditated murder of innocent men, women and children in Israel by Palestinians and their supporters and Israel's justifiable actions of self-defense.

Criticizing Israel's policies is the BBC's prerogative. However, an accumulation of grievances over a number of years leads us to believe that the BBC has crossed the line from valid criticism into vilification and demonization of the State of Israel, to such an extent as borders on delegitimization of the nation itself. A direct cause of incitement, such treatment reinforces acts of anti-Semitism and violence against Israelis and Jews worldwide.

The BBC can continue to operate freely in Israel. Israel is an open democracy embracing freedom of the press. But only at such time that the corporation acknowledges its responsibility to provide its viewers and

listeners with an honest, balanced and factual account of events in the Middle East will the government of Israel restore cordial cooperation. (Jerusalem Post July 15)

*The writer is director of the Israel Government Press Office.*

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### **Mending the Breach of the 17th of Tammuz** By Michael Freund

Tomorrow is Shivah Asar B'Tammuz, the 17th day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, one of the least known, yet most pertinent, of fast days on the Jewish calendar.

Though the date itself is associated with a number of tragic events that occurred throughout Jewish history, there is one which stands out, and whose relevance to Israel's current situation is particularly worthy of note.

According to the rabbis of the Talmud (Tractate Taanit 28b), it was on the 17th of Tammuz that the walls around Jerusalem were first breached by the invading Roman legions, who proceeded to capture the city and burn the Second Temple to the ground over 19 centuries ago.

At first glance, this would hardly seem to qualify as an event that would warrant its own special day of fasting and mourning down through the generations. After all, of what historical consequence is a breach in Jerusalem's wall which took place so long ago, and what does it have to do with Israel's daily struggle to survive in the 21st century?

The answer is quite simple, yet heartbreakingly profound: when the emperor Vespasian's forces, under the command of his son Titus, succeeded in penetrating Jerusalem's defenses and broke through the walls protecting the city, it marked nothing less than the beginning of the end for the ancient Jewish state.

The Jews of the time put up a valiant fight, as the historian Josephus describes in Book Six of "The Jewish War", adopting increasingly desperate measures in an effort to stave off the Roman onslaught.

But just three weeks later, on Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, the Temple was destroyed, Jerusalem fell and the Jewish people were sent into exile, a national calamity from which we have yet to fully emerge.

Indeed, all the tragedies and suffering which have befallen our people in the ensuing two thousand years – the Crusades and the Inquisition, the Cossacks and the pogroms, on through the Nazi Holocaust – they can all be traced back to that fateful day, the 17th of Tammuz, when the first Roman soldier succeeded in breaking through the wall surrounding Jerusalem.

Had the city not fallen, had the Jews not been defeated, the exile might never have occurred, along with all of the death and despair that has accompanied it throughout the ages.

In our own time, a similar breach has occurred in Israel's defenses, as the country's physical security and national psyche are under assault like never before.

Like the Romans of old, the Palestinians and their allies have besieged the Jewish state, diplomatically and militarily, penetrating Israel's defenses and terrorizing the public.

Israel's primary fortification – namely, its confidence in the justness of its cause – has been breached in recent years, leaving the country dangerously exposed to tragedy and possibly even defeat.

Many Israelis, including the Prime Minister himself, have fallen victim to this phenomenon, as their ideology and belief systems have collapsed under the weight of the onslaught.

And so we find ourselves, ten years after the butchery of Oslo began, with a Likud-led government ready to divide the Land of Israel and forcibly expel tens of thousands of Jews from their homes in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

The sovereign government of the State of Israel is prepared to do what no other nation on earth would countenance – agree to the establishment of a terrorist entity alongside its borders, in the process foregoing its basic obligation to preserve the safety and well-being of its citizens.

The 17th of Tammuz, then, stands as an important warning, a date which cries out across the ages to us, warning Israel to mend the breach, to repair the cracks that have emerged in our sense of purpose and mission, before it is too late.

Had the Jews nearly two millennia ago ceased to fight among themselves, had they rallied together with repentance and resolve, they might very well have emerged triumphant.

And so can we.

We must reaffirm our belief that this land is ours, and only ours, and that no power on earth has the right to take it away from us. Israel must stop paying heed to the critics and self-doubters, who question the very legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise and seek to strip it of anything remotely Jewish.

By returning to ourselves and to our land, and re-embracing the values and traditions that have preserved us as a people, we can stem the tide toward capitulation and reassert an element of control over an increasingly perilous situation.

And so, by denying ourselves food and drink tomorrow, and recalling the events of Shivah Asar B'Tammuz in ancient Jerusalem, we will be doing far more than just remembering the past.

If we take it truly to heart, we can influence the future as well.

*The writer served as Deputy Director of Communications & Policy Planning in the Prime Minister's Office. (Jerusalem Post July 16)*

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### **Why Stay in a Place of Fear? It's Home** By David Wilder

*The Jews of Hebron will not appease terrorism by pulling up their roots.*

It happened in May 2001, about eight months after the Oslo War – otherwise known as the second intifada – began. At 11 one night I was still in the office, five minutes from our home. Again, the sound of gunfire could be heard from the hills surrounding Hebron's Jewish community, hills transferred to the control of the Palestinian Authority several years earlier.

The phone on my desk rang. It was one of my daughters, then 16. Breathless, she exclaimed, "Dad, they're shooting again." I answered lackadaisically, "Yeah, I hear it." In other words, "What's new – it's the same, every day."

"But they shot into our apartment. And I was standing there," my daughter cried.

Arriving home, I discovered five holes in a wall opposite the window in the children's room. Two of my children had been standing not more than three feet from where the bullets hit. Miraculously, they weren't injured.

People frequently ask why we live in Hebron, a so-called Arab city in the heart of the "West Bank." Why are 800 Jews – men, women and children – so stubbornly willing to risk their lives to remain in Hebron?

To outsiders, it's hard to understand why I would choose to bring up my seven children, now ages eight to 23, in a tiny, barricaded community, surrounded by enemies who hate us, under constant threat of bombings and other violence? Why am I living in a place where more than 40 of my Jewish neighbors and friends have been killed or wounded since I moved here in 1981?

The answer is that Hebron is the first Jewish city in the land of Israel, home of our patriarchs and matriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. King David ruled from Hebron for more than seven years before moving the capital to Jerusalem.

Jews have lived in Hebron almost continuously for thousands of years. Our community offices are in a neighborhood founded in 1540 by Jews exiled from Spain in 1492. Jewish presence in Hebron came to an abrupt end only in August 1929, when Arab riots led to the murder of 67 Jews and the wounding of 70. All survivors were exiled from the city by the ruling British. In other words, when Israel returned to Hebron in 1967, Jews did not occupy a foreign city; rather, they came back home.

Hebron is home to Ma'arat HaMachpela, the Cave of the Patriarchs, the second holiest site in Judaism after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The building atop the original caves was constructed by Herod, king of Judea 2,000 years ago, 600 years before the advent of Islam. Despite this, the structure was off-limits to Jews and Christians for 700 years, from 1267 to 1967. The stated reason: The site houses a mosque and only Muslims can worship in a mosque.

The Arab deputy mayor of Hebron, Kamal Dweck, in a 1999 interview stated that if the entire city were returned to Arab rule, this site would again be off-limits to Jews, for the same reason. The Tomb of the Patriarchs would face a fate identical to that of Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. It would be Judenrein, or without Jewish presence. Why should a Jew in 2003 be barred from worshipping at one of the holiest places in the world?

Jews in Hebron are willing to risk present dangers because acquiescence is nothing more than a reward for terrorism. Arab terror seeks to expel us from our homes, using murder as a means to an end. However, "our homes" include not only those in Hebron but also in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. New Palestinian textbooks contain maps of "Palestine" that include the entire state of Israel.

Eviction from Hebron, the first Jewish city in Israel, would be tantamount to the removal of Americans from Boston or Philadelphia upon terrorist demands. Except, of course, that American history is less than 250 years old; Jewish history in Hebron is more than 3,700 years old. Hebron, home of Abraham, is not just the place where Judaism got its start. It is the source of monotheism in the world.

Jewish people in Israel and around the world support a strong, vibrant Jewish presence in Hebron. We do not expect an Israeli government to attempt to follow in the footsteps of the British and expel Jews from the city. In any case, we would never abandon our homes.

Besides which, why should the state of Israel be forced to chop off its roots to appease Arab terror? We know the result of eradicating the roots of a tree. God forbid that Israel should suffer such a fate. (Los Angeles Times July 11)

*The writer is a spokesman for Hebron's Jewish community.*

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