

22 Tamuz 5765
 July 29, 2005
 Issue number 539

 Jerusalem 6:58 Toronto 8:26

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...

Thursday, August 4, 7:30pm
 Betar-Tagar presents its annual memorial event for Ze'ev Jabotinsky ז"ל featuring the Canadian premiere of the documentary film *Qassam: Life in the Shadow of the Pullout* by Israeli Canadian filmmaker Igal Hecht; at Leah Posluns Theatre, 4588 Bathurst Street, Toronto; free admission.

Commentary...

The Settlers Show Their True Colors By Caroline Glick

Walking among the tens of thousands of Israeli protesters at Moshav Kfar Maimon this week was like being witness to a miracle. There in the scorching summer heat were thousands upon thousands of families with children of all ages, young men and women and elderly people, living under siege and in conditions that would make an infantryman cringe.

And yet, there was no complaining. There was no shouting. There was no pushing. There was no garbage on the ground. There was no stench of any kind. What one saw in the protesters' faces and heard in each and every statement and conversation was dignity, determination, integrity, faith and a form of earthy, plainspoken and unabashed patriotism and concern for the greater good that has become an artifact of a barely remembered past for many Israelis.

In witnessing this - when just outside were 20,000 soldiers and policemen, laying concertina wire along the fence penning these people in as if they were terrorists, and standing arms locked in row upon row, poised to pounce at them at the slightest provocation - it was, indeed, hard to shake off the sense that one was watching a miracle happen.

The tens of thousands of law-abiding citizens - estimates of their actual numbers run between 30,000 and 60,000 - were exercising their democratic right to protest the government's plan to expel 10,000 Israelis from Gaza and northern Samaria and destroy the communities they built from sand next month. The protesters oppose this plan for moral reasons. It is simply obscene, they say, to carry out these expulsions. These people are set to be thrown out of their homes and their farms just because they are Jews. Israel receives nothing in return. These people's homes will be either destroyed or turned over to the same Palestinian terrorist forces that have been attacking them continuously for the past five years. Their hothouses and livestock are set to be turned over to the Palestinians as well. The plan's proponents argue that the expulsion of 10,000 Jews from their farms and communities in the Land of Israel is necessary to maintain Israel as a democratic, Jewish society. Yet, what these opponents of the expulsion plan experienced, in their efforts to even voice their opposition, is that in insisting on carrying out this plan - which Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was reelected overwhelmingly in 2003 by promising to oppose - the government is trampling and endangering both Israel's democratic form of government and its character as a Jewish state.

On Sunday evening, the day before the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip's solidarity march from Netivot to Gush Katif was set to begin, the police denied the council a permit. In so doing, the police unabashedly denied these people their democratic right to protest the policies of their government. The police's justification was the announced plan to walk to Gush Katif - on the third day of the protest. The denial of the permit to demonstrate meant that everything about the protest plan was deemed illegal. Citizens conducting demonstrations in Netivot, Kfar Maimon and Kibbutz Re'im, the first three planned stops on the march - all of which are well within the sacrosanct 1949 armistice lines - was deemed an illegal activity.

Then Monday, when the council ignored this draconian announcement, the police breached the constitutional rights of tens of thousands of Israelis by intercepting privately owned buses throughout the country - from the Golan Heights to Tel Aviv to Eilat - and prevented their law-abiding passengers and drivers from exercising their right to travel freely in the State of Israel. In both of these actions, the police - with full backing from the Prime Minister's Office, the State Attorney's Office and the leftist local media - took actions that undermined Israeli democracy and its foundations as a state ruled by law and

not the police.

On the roads to Netivot on Monday and on the roads to Kfar Maimon on Tuesday and Wednesday, the police set up roadblocks to inspect cars. Cars with orange banners of solidarity with the residents set for expulsion, and cars whose passengers were identifiably religious, were pulled over and not allowed to pass. Rather than turn around and go home, the passengers said nothing of this obviously unlawful, discriminatory humiliation. They simply

got out of their cars and, pushing their baby carriages and strollers, walked for kilometers under the desert sun to reach Kfar Maimon on foot. In so treating these citizens, the police clearly signaled that they view religious Jews as a threat. So much for leaving Gaza and northern Samaria in order to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state.

As one walked along the crowded road and the lawns of Kfar Maimon, one was struck by the ubiquity of the television cameras. Nearly all major news organizations in the Western world were present. In the past, when the council brought up to a quarter of a million people out to protest land giveaways, the mass demonstrations in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv received barely any attention. And here were Fox and Sky News, CNN and the BBC competing with Israel's television channels for the best place to park their satellite dishes.

The reason for this is clear: The world press has bought into the demonized image of the Jewish residents of Gaza, Judea and Samaria that has been largely propagated by the Israeli Left and the Israeli media. The "settlers" are viewed as violent, extremist, money-grubbing religious fanatics who threaten the foundations of Israel and block any chance for peace between Israel and its neighbors. In other words, under normal circumstances, protests by the settlers are considered unworthy of media attention. But this time, the media swallowed the bait set by the council leaders who insisted that they would march to Gush Katif. Everyone came to film the blood that would be let when the protesters clashed with the Israeli army and the police.

But once they were there, far away from their air-conditioned offices and apartments in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, they had to send in the pictures of what they saw. And what they saw was the truth they have been insistently denying for the past 30 years. Namely, that these Israelis have nothing in common with their demonized image. Here were tens of thousands of peaceful protesters singing and dancing and studying together. Here they were, handing fruit and drinks to the soldiers and policemen sent to stand against them and, rather than fighting with them, they prayed with them. For the first time, perhaps ever, both the general public in Israel and the world were able to receive undistorted images of these people on their television screens.

If the police's trampling of democracy by attempting to block the protesters from arriving at Netivot and Kfar Maimon weren't enough, we had the hysterical reaction of the police and the IDF to ensure that the general public understood that, like the media, the commanders of the police and the IDF had fallen for the discriminatory stereotypes of the settlers and their supporters. Arrayed against these families was a division and a half of security forces. There were more security forces laying siege to Kfar Maimon than participated in the Operation Defensive Shield in Judea and Samaria in April 2002. In the entire US invasion force of Iraq in 2003, only 20,000 troops actually participated in combat operations. As the Palestinians in Gaza continued their Kassam rocket and mortar attacks, rather than fight Israel's enemies, the IDF deployed six combat brigades to Kfar Maimon, where the soldiers were told to lay siege on their own family members.

Brig.-Gen. Gershon Hacoheh, who is the division commander charged with commanding the withdrawal and expulsion from Gush Katif, laid siege to his brother, Rabbi Reem Hacoheh and his family. Reem's son, a cadet at officer training school, laid siege to his parents and siblings. Thirty percent of the soldiers in the Golani Infantry Brigade live in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. These soldiers laid siege to their parents and brothers and sisters.

At least one battalion commander refused to follow his order to lay barbed wire along Kfar Maimon's fence. Several commanders ordered their soldiers to remove their unit insignias and berets so that no one would recognize them. Soldiers from command courses in the IDF, who were sent with no warning to Kfar Maimon, cried when they received the orders and the soldiers standing arm to arm against the protesters cried as they were forced to lay siege to their innocent countrymen whose only offense was voicing their opposition to the expulsion plan.

Sensing the impact of the demonstration, and no doubt noting that the

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latest polling data from the left-leaning Herzog Institute show that less than 50 percent of Israelis support the plan, Thursday morning Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that the government may order the expulsion to begin immediately rather than on its scheduled date of August 17. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived Thursday afternoon to make sure that Sharon goes through with the plan in spite of the fact that doing so all but ensures that Hamas will take over Gaza. Hamas has already prepared 20,000 new uniforms for its operatives and supporters. They are planning a victory march through Gush Katif the day after the last Jew is expelled. So much for Washington's belief that throwing Jews out of their homes simply because they are Jews will contribute to the prospects of Middle East peace.

When a democratic government adopts an immoral policy, it is the duty of its loyal citizens, through acts of protest and civil disobedience, to hold up a mirror to their leaders and their fellow citizens to force them to contend with the implications of their policies. At Netivot and Kfar Maimon this week, the protesters did just that. What we saw on the one side was the dignified, humble and stubborn Zionism of the citizens set to be expelled and of their supporters.

On the other side, we saw the anti-democratic and discriminatory face of the government that stands against them. The time has come for the people of Israel to be allowed to freely and democratically decide which side they are on. (Jerusalem Post Jul 21)

And Then They Came After Us By Victor Davis Hanson *We're at war. How about acting like it?*

First the terrorists of the Middle East went after the Israelis. From 1967 we witnessed 40 years of bombers, child murdering, airline hijacking, suicide murdering, and gratuitous shooting. We in the West usually cried crocodile tears, and then came up with all sorts of reasons to allow such Middle Eastern killers a pass.

Yasser Arafat, replete with holster and rants at the U.N., had become a "moderate" and was thus free to steal millions of his good-behavior money. If Hamas got European cash, it would become reasonable, ostracize its "military wing," and cease its lynching and vigilantism.

When some tried to explain that Wars 1-3 (1947, 1956, 1967) had nothing to do with the West Bank, such bothersome details fell on deaf ears.

When it was pointed out that Germans were not blowing up Poles to get back lost parts of East Prussia nor were Tibetans sending suicide bombers into Chinese cities to recover their country, such analogies were caricatured.

When the call for a "Right of Return" was making the rounds, few cared to listen that over a half-million forgotten Jews had been cleansed from Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, and lost billions in property.

When the U.N. and the EU talked about "refugee camps," none asked why for a half-century the Arab world could not build decent housing for its victimized brethren, or why 1 million Arabs voted in Israel, but not one freely in any Arab country.

The security fence became "The Wall," and evoked slurs that it was analogous to barriers in Korea or Berlin that more often kept people in than out. Few wondered why Arabs who wished to destroy Israel would mind not being able to live or visit Israel.

In any case, anti-Semitism, oil, fear of terrorism - all that and more fooled us into believing that Israel's problems were confined to Israel. So we ended up with a utopian Europe favoring a pre-modern, terrorist-run, Palestinian thugocracy over the liberal democracy in Israel. The Jews, it was thought, stirred up a hornet's nest, and so let them get stung on their own.

We in the United States preened that we were the "honest broker." After the Camp David accords we tried to be an intermediary to both sides, ignoring that one party had created a liberal and democratic society, while the other remained under the thrall of a tribal gang.

Billions of dollars poured into frontline states like Jordan and Egypt. Arafat himself got tens of millions, though none of it ever seemed to show up in good housing, roads, or power plants for his people. The terror continued, enhanced rather than arrested, by Western largess and Israeli concessions. Then the Islamists declared war on the United States. A quarter century of mass murdering of Americans followed in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, East Africa, the first effort to topple the World Trade Center, and the attack on the USS Cole.

We gave billions to Jordan, the Palestinians, and the Egyptians. Afghanistan was saved from the Soviets through U.S. aid. Kuwait was restored after Saddam's annexation, and the holocaust of Bosnians and Kosovars halted by the American Air Force. Americans welcomed thousands of Arabs to our shores and allowed hundreds of madrassas and mosques to preach zealotry, anti-Semitism, and jihad without much scrutiny.

Then came September 11 and the almost instant canonization of bin Laden. Suddenly, the prior cheap shots at Israel under siege weren't so cheap. It proved easy to castigate Israelis who went into Jenin, but not so when we needed to do the same in Fallujah.

It was easy to slander the Israelis' scrutiny of Arabs in their midst, but then suddenly a few residents in our own country were found to be engaging in bomb making, taking up jihadist pilgrimages to Afghanistan, and mapping out terrorist operations.

Apparently, the hatred of radical Islam was not just predicated on the "occupation" of the West Bank. Instead it involved the pretenses of Americans protecting Saudi Arabia from another Iraqi attack, the United Nations boycott of Iraq, the removal of the Taliban and Saddam, and always as well as the

Crusades and the Reconquista.

But Europe was supposedly different. Unlike the United States, it was correct on the Middle East, and disarmed after the Cold War. Indeed, the European Union was pacifistic, socialist, and guilt-ridden about former colonialism.

Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were left alone in unassimilated European ghettos and allowed to preach or promulgate any particular hatred of the day they wished. Conspire to kill a Salmon Rushdie, talk of liquidating the "apes and pigs," distribute Mein Kampf and the Protocols, or plot in the cities of France and Germany to blow up the Pentagon and the World Trade Center - all that was about things "over there" and in a strange way was thought to ensure that Europe got a pass at home.

But the trump card was always triangulation against the United States. Most recently anti-Americanism was good street theater in Rome, Paris, London, and the capitals of the "good" West.

But then came Madrid - and the disturbing fact that after the shameful appeasement of its withdrawal from Iraq, further plots were hatched against Spanish justices and passenger trains.

Surely a Holland would be exempt - Holland of wide-open Amsterdam fame where anything goes and Muslim radicals could hate in peace. Then came the butchering of Theo Van Gogh and the death threats against parliamentarian Hirs Ali and always defiance and promises of more to come rather than apologies for their hatred.

Yet was not Britain different? After all, its capital was dubbed Londonistan for its hospitality to Muslims across the globe. Radical imams openly preached jihad against the United States to their flock as thanks for being given generous welfare subsidies from her majesty's government. But it was the United States, not liberal Britain, that evoked such understandable hatred.

But now?

After Holland, Madrid, and London, European operatives go to Israel not to harangue Jews about the West Bank, but to receive tips about preventing suicide bombings. And the cowboy Patriot Act to now-panicked European parliaments perhaps seems not so illiberal after all.

So it is becoming clear that butchery by radical Muslims in Bali, Darfur, Iraq, the Philippines Thailand, Turkey, Tunisia, and Iraq was not so tied to particular and understandable Islamic grievances.

Perhaps the jihadist killing was not over the West Bank or U.S. hegemony after all, but rather symptoms of a global pathology of young male Islamic radicals blaming all others for their own self-inflicted miseries, convinced that attacks on the infidel would win political concessions, restore pride, and prove to Israelis, Europeans, Americans < and about everybody else on the globe - that Middle Eastern warriors were full of confidence and pride after all.

Meanwhile an odd thing happened. It turns out that the jihadists were cowards and bullies, and thus selective in their targets of hatred. A billion Chinese were left alone by radical Islam - even though the Chinese were secularists and mostly godless, as well as ruthless to their own Uighur Muslim minorities. Had bin Laden issued a fatwa against Beijing and slammed an airliner into a skyscraper in Shanghai, there is no telling what a nuclear China might have done.

India too got mostly a pass, other than the occasional murdering by Pakistani zealots. Yet India makes no effort to apologize to Muslims. When extremists occasionally riot and kill, they usually cease quickly before the response of a much more unpredictable angry populace.

What can we learn from all this?

Jihadists hardly target particular countries for their "unfair" foreign policies, since nations on five continents suffer jihadist attacks and thus all apparently must embrace an unfair foreign policy of some sort.

Typical after the London bombing is the ubiquitous Muslim spokesman who when asked to condemn terrorism, starts out by deploring such killing, assuring that it has nothing to do with Islam, yet then ending by inserting the infamous "but" - as he closes with references about the West Bank, Israel, and all sorts of mitigating factors. Almost no secular Middle Easterners or religious officials write or state flatly, "Islamic terrorism is murder, pure and simple evil. End of story, no ifs or buts about it."

Second, thinking that the jihadists will target only Israel eventually leads to emboldened attacks on the United States. Assuming America is the only target assures terrorism against Europe. Civilizations will either hang separately or triumph over barbarism together. It is that simple - and past time for Europe and the United States to rediscover their common heritage and shared aims in eradicating this plague of Islamic fascism.

Third, Islamicists are selective in their attacks and hatred. So far global jihad avoids two billion Indians and Chinese, despite the fact that their countries are far tougher on Muslims than is the United States or Europe. In other words, the Islamicists target those whom they think they can intimidate and blackmail.

Unfettered immigration, billions in cash grants to Arab autocracies, alliances of convenience with dictatorships, triangulation with Middle Eastern patrons of terror, blaming the Jews < civilization has tried all that.

It is time to relearn the lessons from the Cold War, when we saw millions of noble Poles, Romanians, Hungarians, and Czechs as enslaved under autocracy and a hateful ideology, and in need of democracy before they could confront the Communist terror in their midst.

But until the Wall fell, we did not send billions in aid to their Eastern European dictatorships nor travel freely to Prague or Warsaw nor admit

millions of Communist-ruled Bulgarians and Albanians onto our shores. *The writer is a military historian and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.* (National Review Jul 22)

Rice Goes Soft Jerusalem Post Editorial

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's weekend visit to the region, intended to facilitate Israel's disengagement plan, was profoundly disappointing. The hastily planned trip was intended to calm a deteriorating situation caused by the Islamic Jihad suicide bombing outside a Netanya shopping mall on July 12, which killed five Israelis, and relentless bombardments of Gaza and western Negev communities by Hamas which killed 22-year-old Dana Galkovitch in Netiv Ha'asara and further traumatized residents of Sderot and Gush Katif.

Though PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas's foreign minister has candidly reneged on the PA's road map commitments to confiscate weapons and explosives in the hands of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and those elements within his own Fatah movement aligned with the rejectionists, Rice nevertheless complimented the Palestinian leadership for taking "important steps" against terrorism. Such praise strikes the wrong tone.

What "steps" she was referring to was left to the imagination: Perhaps Abbas's goal of incorporating terrorists under the rubric of the PA's security forces; perhaps it was the belated, uneven, largely ineffective, and now apparently suspended efforts by PA Interior Minister Nasser Youssef to end Palestinian lawlessness - not for Israel's sake, but for the Palestinians themselves.

Whatever the "steps" and with just 21 days to disengagement remaining, Abbas's aversion to taking on the rejectionists helped make Saturday night's murder of husband and wife Dov and Rachel Kol, who had gone to Gush Katif to visit family in Ganei Tal, possible. The attack also left the area's intrepid civilian security coordinator, Ami Shaked, and a young couple, also visiting for Shabbat, wounded.

It took many hours for Abbas to even bother to condemn the attack - not as immoral but as counterproductive.

Further catastrophe was averted - no thanks to the Palestinian Authority - on Friday night, when the IDF caught a would-be suicide bomber from Abbas's own Fatah movement on his way to blow up a crowded Tel Aviv nightclub. The terrorist, wearing a five-kilogram explosives belt packed with nails, infiltrated from Gaza's perimeter fence near Kibbutz Nir-Am. Another infiltrator - married to a woman from Jaffa and thus enjoying unimpeded access inside Israel - was tasked with delivering the bomber to his target.

All told, 92 infiltration attempts into Israel from Gaza have been thwarted by security forces since the beginning of 2005. Friday night's effort was the first successful penetration from inside Gaza in seven months.

In this context, Rice's admiration for the "steps" Abbas has taken to curb Palestinian terrorism rings hollow. And yet Rice went on to compound her stance with an even more incongruous avowal: "When the Israelis withdraw from Gaza, it cannot be sealed or isolated, with the Palestinian people holed in ... We are committed to the connectivity of Gaza and the West Bank."

This sort of statement is grating for two reasons. First, because it implies that Israel is, presumably out of spite or indifference, arbitrarily impeding Palestinian movements when all such movements have immediate security implications. Second, because at just the moment when Israel is simultaneously under terrorist attack and tearing itself apart over dismantling settlements, Washington still seems to feel a need to search for some Palestinian demand it can endorse while publicly berating Israel.

This is called "evenhandedness," something that Rice's predecessor early in the Bush administration vowed would not continue under President George W. Bush, and yet remains a recurring touchstone of American policy. Evenhandedness is based on the notion that the US must constantly maintain credibility as an "honest broker" by carefully calibrated statements designed to please, and disturb, both sides. But there is usually little honesty in this. Honesty means giving out praise and criticism where they are due, not in arbitrary and roughly equal proportions, even though one side is making extremely painful and risky sacrifices for peace, while the other is preparing for another round of terrorism.

This region needs more honesty and less evenhandedness. Terrorism, we thought the Bush administration believed, would be met with unabashed moral clarity.

Perhaps even an unequivocal ultimatum would be insufficient to compel Abbas to take the steps he must take. Clearly, however, anything less than an ultimatum will result in more of the same. (Jerusalem Post Jul 24)

OU Letter to the Israeli Government

Ambassador Daniel Ayalon, Israel Embassy
Dear Ambassador Ayalon:

In its public statements and in its conversations with you, the Orthodox Union has acknowledged that questions of Israeli foreign policy and domestic security are best left to the citizens of Israel and the State of Israel's democratically elected institutions. We have maintained this position despite our strong reservations regarding aspects of the disengagement plan and its effect upon the very fabric of Israeli society.

We are, however, profoundly concerned by recent media reports and other first-hand accounts describing the government's confrontation with those

protesting the disengagement plan. We are disturbed by the indifference to the civil liberties of all Israeli citizens that Israeli government officials, jurists and police and security forces appear to be displaying in the course of executing the government's policies. And as an organization representing the interests of Orthodox Jewry, we are stunned by reports of security forces singling out persons displaying outward appearances of religious observance for disparate harsh treatment. (Please see, for example, the enclosed news reports from the past few days.)

We expect that the government will implement its policies with full regard and respect for the civil liberties and religious rights of all of its law-abiding citizens, including those choosing lawful means of protest. Government threats and coercion against persons seeking to exercise their right of lawful travel and free association cannot be condoned or justified under any current circumstances. All Israeli citizens must have the right to travel to, and to move from, any location in their country that is not a closed military zone. Tactics used by government forces in recent days -- such as the baseless confiscation of bus drivers' licenses and other improper methods of disrupting the means of transportation for ordinary Israelis -- are inexcusable. Likewise, the detention in prison or under house arrest of persons merely advocating positions at odds with government policy or urging legitimate civil protest can never be tolerated.

We hope that the government will instruct the members of all its branches accordingly. Additionally, we trust that it will caution the commanders of its security forces to adhere to these guidelines and require that they, in turn, communicate this message to all of the police and security forces currently implementing the government's policies.

As you are aware, the Orthodox Union has fought for more than 100 years to protect the rights of world Jewry and has opposed religious discrimination in all of its forms, wherever it may arise. We certainly can not accept any justification for the discrimination against religious Jews that police and security forces appear to be pursuing in Israel in the implementation of the government's disengagement policies.

Recent reports and eyewitness accounts have described security forces stopping, questioning and in some instances detaining persons traveling both in public and private vehicles solely because those persons wore Kippot. Other persons in those vehicles without Kippot were not questioned nor detained. In at least one instance, we understand that the police stopped a bus leaving Maale Adumim and removed from the bus all of those passengers who wore Kippot. Those passengers were not even traveling to a demonstration, but were simply seeking to reach their place of work in Jerusalem on the same bus upon which they travel each and every other day. Yet, they were prevented from doing so solely because the police officers improperly suspected that they, as religious Jews, were on their way to protest the government's actions.

Actions such as these represent religious discrimination and bigotry that should not be tolerated in any country. It is heartrending and distressing beyond words for this to be happening in the Jewish state, for which we pray each and every day.

These are difficult times for the Jewish people and for the State of Israel. But hard times have never been an excuse for Jews or the Israeli people. In fighting Arab terror, the IDF, the Israeli National Police and the security services have collectively proved themselves to be the most humane force in the world. This has always been a source of pride for all of the Jewish people. This code of conduct should certainly be implemented when dealing with our fellow Jews.

Regardless of one's views on disengagement, as Ambassador Ayalon wrote so eloquently just yesterday in the Washington Post, "living, breathing communities, some more than 30 years old, will simply vanish," and "many Israelis deeply oppose it on moral, religious and security grounds." Those people, as citizens in any free society, must be allowed, at the very least, a right of open, public dissent.

As Ambassador Ayalon wrote, what is at stake "... is not only the success of disengagement but also the very fabric of Israeli society." Everyone recognizes that there will be "a day after" disengagement. We must all endeavor that on that day, all of the House of Israel will stand united together.

We continue to pray that the Almighty gives the leaders of the State of Israel the wisdom and fortitude to successfully guide the Jewish people at this critical time and that we soon see a genuine and lasting peace for all the people of Israel.

We await your prompt response to these very serious issues.
Respectfully, Rabbi Tzvi H. Weinreb, Stephen Savitsky, Moshe Bane, Nathan J. Diamant

Searching for Jewish Roots in Gush Katif By Eilat Mazar

Most people don't associate the Jewish presence in Gaza with history, as if Gush Katif's community were rooted solely in the ideology of its residents. A recent visit to relatives there was a reminder not just of this history, but of the mistaken impression that Jews are living cheek to jowl with a densely populated Arab area.

In Kfar Darom, for example, we visited the Torah and Land of Israel Museum. On the other side of the community's fence Arab dwellings were visible, one house per family every few hundred meters. One particular house, which in the past was a constant source of shooting and other

depredate against Kfar Darom, has now been abandoned.

The museum presents the settlement narrative that began with Abraham the Patriarch, who emigrated from Ur. Scenes from the European Shoah are also displayed, to underscore the fact that the Jewish people has no other country. Like many Gush Katif houses the museum too once absorbed a direct hit by a Kassam rocket; only by miracle were the lives of the people in it at the time spared.

Considerable content could have been added to the museum by presenting a survey of the Jewish history of the region across the generations. The museum could have begun by noting that the Gaza area was allotted to the tribe of Judah. That tribe did not settle the place, which housed the Philistines who hailed from the vicinity of the Aegean Sea.

Gaza was a strategic crossroads between the Egyptian and Assyrian empires and consequently everyone, including the Babylonians and Persians, fought to control it. Alexander the Great conquered the place and turned it into a splendid Hellenistic city. The Hasmoneans also seized control of it during their short-lived reign. During the Byzantine period (fourth to sixth centuries CE), when Jews were forbidden entry to Jerusalem, they made holiday pilgrimages to Gaza, then home to a large Jewish community.

A synagogue from this period was found with the remains of a mosaic floor showing King David plucking a harp, alongside a Hebrew inscription with the word "David."

In 634 CE the Arabs conquered Gaza. Under their rule there was a Jewish presence in the city and surrounding areas, which included Jewish agricultural settlements. Under the Crusaders, however, there was no Jewish settlement in Gaza.

The earliest evidence we have of a renewed Jewish presence is from the 14th century. In the 15th century Gaza was a large, beautiful city with a flourishing Jewish community. A Christian traveler from this period related that he found more Jews and Christians there than in Jerusalem.

In the 16th and 17th centuries as well the city and its environs included a Jewish settlement that was partly agricultural in character. Jewish settlement in the area ceased in the 18th century and was revived in the 19th century. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the second president of the State of Israel, recalled having visited the Jewish community in Gaza several times prior to World War I. During the bloody Arab riots in 1929 the Jewish settlement was wiped out.

We left the museum and moved on to Tel Katifa, where archeologists have discovered a Neolithic site dating back to the second half of the fifth millennium BCE. The tel looms up beside the shoreline, and from its heights urban dwellings are discernible on the northern horizon. I was sure that we were looking at Gaza.

The constant media refrain "Get the boys out of Gaza" reverberated in my ears, yet after having wandered the Gush Katif settlements for hours, I had yet to see Gaza or any Gaza Arab, except those employed in the hothouses and factories of Gush Katif.

The urban housing, some five kilometers from where we were standing, belonged to the town of Deir el-Balah. Gaza, my relative informed me, was not visible from here; Gaza is 15 km. to the north of Deir el-Balah!

For an afternoon break we drove to the lake. This is an artificial pool surrounded by lawns suitable for recreation and cultural events. Since it was a holiday, masses of people thronged on the grass. Separating us from the ocean were the green fields of the "Mawasi."

My relative explained that the strip of land extending along the coast contains sweet groundwater at a depth of approximately four meters, which local Arabs use to irrigate their crops. Residents of Gush Katif dwell outside the tracts watered by the Mawasi.

The Mawasi houses, visible from the highway, are actually far too wretched to be called houses. These people sit on irrigated land, so why do they look so miserable? Who can save them when they seem so unwilling to help themselves? They have been living here for decades next to Gush Katif's inhabitants. Why have they remained so destitute, given the generous international assistance that has flowed to the Palestinian Authority, while Gush Katif residents have created a flourishing community out of nothing?

We topped off this delightful day by sliding on the sand dunes of Rafiah Yam, at the southernmost tip of Gush Katif. We had thus traversed the length and breadth of the bloc, 5 km. by 15 km., and witnessed a magnificent Jewish community.

The current political proposition of uprooting Gush Katif residents in order to attain peace with the Arabs would seem, from here, to be an insult to the intelligence. A few highways and access points above and below could solve the settlement problems for everyone.

If only there were a neighboring population that genuinely wished to find a solution, and was capable of assisting itself.

The creation of linear borders, as if the problem lay in the graphics, and the shocking deracination of thousands of residents whose only crime is to have made the wasteland bloom, are surely not going to provide a political solution. *The writer is a scholar at the Institute of Archeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.* (Jerusalem Post Jul 27)

Masked Policemen By Ehud Ya'ari

Shortly after the suicide attack outside the Hasharon shopping mall in Netanya on July 12, Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen made a plea to Ramadan Abdallah Shallah, the general secretary of Islamic Jihad in Damascus: Please, he begged, please deny responsibility for the attack.

Just a few days before the bomb, Abu Mazen and Shallah had met over dinner twice, once at the table of President Asad and the second time in the Damascus home of Hamas leader Khaled Mashal. There had appeared to be the beginnings of a rapprochement between the two men, even a sort of friendship. But none of that helped. Within a few hours, Islamic Jihad took credit for the attack. Abu Mazen's hopes of blaming the bombing on a few irresponsible individuals with no proper organizational support were dashed. Later it turned out that part of the suicide operation was planned inside the police station of Tul Karm under the watchful eyes of Palestinian security officers.

Abu Mazen, under intense pressure from Western VIPs who passed through his office that day, explicitly condemned the attack in Arabic as "terrorism." And the reaction? Ramadan Abdallah Shallah gave public backing to the dispatchers of the 18-year-old student-bomber, and the entire Islamic Jihad leadership ran from studio to studio of the Arabic satellite channels justifying the action.

Meanwhile not one Palestinian Authority personality - not the prime minister nor any other minister nor the heads of the security apparatuses - not one of them mustered up the courage to repeat what Abu Mazen had said, and to call it by its simple name: terrorism. Not the official PA TV or radio nor the newspapers dared utter it again. They did vent some criticism of Jihad, but did not tar the suicide attack with the T-word. Abu Mazen was left alone in the field, and quickly dropped the dreaded word himself. When Hamas launched a series of rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli communities and clashed with the PA, Abu Mazen delivered a televised speech on July 16 in which he carefully avoided any reference to terrorism, denouncing the shelling of Israeli civilians as merely "childish" and "counterproductive."

Hamas's purported reason was revenge for cease-fire "violations" by Israel. Interior Minister Gen. Nasser Yusuf ordered his men to prevent - if necessary by force - the firing of the rockets and mortar shells. Soldiers of the PA National Security force opened fire on one such squad and Hamas reacted by attacking National Security force offices and patrols. Within hours the commanders of the two sides decided, with a nod and a wink, to prevent a slide into an all-out, head-on confrontation. Nasser Yusuf found himself completely isolated, like Abu Mazen before him. None of his peers in the government nor any of the Fatah heads dared give public support for the order he had issued. Hamas started demanding his removal. The PA refused to oblige, but since then, everyone is acting toward Nasser Yusuf as if his days on the job are numbered. They try not to be caught on camera by his side and maintain a safe distance.

So dangerous did Nasser Yusuf deem the situation that he himself issued a directive to tens of thousands of soldiers and police in the Gaza Strip to go out on the streets wearing masks. If not, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad people would try to take revenge against them or their families. It was not the armed gangs who fastidiously hid their identities when they went out into the streets of Gaza in mid-July, but the uniformed police who dressed up as highway robbers.

That is not the way to win. In the best case, the PA will hang on to its position, nothing more. Anyone who dreams that the PA will shake itself out of its lethargy when it smells the scent of disengagement is going to be sorely disappointed. Sure, they will try to push Hamas into a corner and force it to rein in its militants. And sure, they will coordinate arrangements with the IDF for the withdrawal and the handover of evacuated areas, and they will even deploy forces as a buffer to ensure that the withdrawal will not take place under fire. Essentially, however, they will not try to smash the alternative authority that has developed alongside the PA - the association of terror organizations that is demanding its share of the booty and wants to operate according to its own political agenda.

That is why Abu Mazen will denounce the Jihad's terror and at the same time, continue to sit with its leaders. He will declare the need for "one authority and one gun," while reconciling himself to the armament of the "popular army" of Hamas. He already agreed during his visit to Damascus to include Hamas in the Palestinian committees overseeing the disengagement. He reneged on his return because of the reservations of Prime Minister Abu Ala, disengagement coordinator Muhammad Dahlan and PA National Security Adviser Jibril Rajoub. Still, he will have to come up with some kind of formula for a partnership with Hamas to be sponsored once again by the Egyptians.

Such cooperation in whatever form will mean a marriage between those who see disengagement as an opportunity for reviving the diplomatic process, such as Abu Mazen and Dahlan, and those such as the heads of Hamas who see it as an Israeli ploy to paralyze the Palestinian drive for further withdrawals; between those who want to see the successful implementation of the disengagement, and those who are still striving to foil it altogether.

From the moment that clashes broke out between the PA and Hamas, it was imperative that they should end decisively even if they had not yet spread into a full head-on confrontation. And from the moment that the PA failed to impose its positions on Hamas, despite the limited use of force, the result can be considered a partial defeat. Hamas had promised its followers that the PA would not dare arrest its cadres as it did in 1996, and indeed no arrests were reported. If Abu Mazen has been frightened off using the term "terrorism" and Nasser Yusuf calls on his policemen to hide behind face masks, do not wait for miracles - not before disengagement, not during and not after. (Jerusalem Report Aug 8)