

## Commentary...

### Joining Hands By Naomi Ragen

The subject of Israel destroying the thriving Jewish communities in Gush Katif in exchange for --well, no one has quite figured that out yet-- has been on my mind ever since the "plan" was proposed by Mr. Sharon. I read the "plan" carefully, and all I could see was a series of destructive acts against peaceful Jewish communities, without any up side. It didn't promise peace. It didn't even promise better security. In short, there was no logical reason at all to do it. I was even present at an interview with Mr. Ehud Olmert, who staunchly backed the plan, and tired his best to defend it. "If it saves even one life.." he said vaguely.

Did he mean it was dangerous for Jews to live surrounded by Arabs? Dangerous for the soldiers who protect them? If that was the argument, then it held true for me as well, living in Jerusalem, surrounded by Arab villages. And it was certainly true of the entire State of Israel, being as it is in the Middle East, surrounded by Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq...etc.

There was no one to negotiate with, and therefore, we needed to unilaterally set our own boundaries and break off from the dangerous Gaza Strip, the next argument went. When they said "break off" did that mean no more Gazan workers coming into Israel every day? And what, exactly, was going to stop Palestinians from turning the area into a terrorist training camp, even closer to Israel's population centers, once peaceful Jewish homes and businesses were bulldozed? What was going to stop the Kassam rocket launchers from being moved even closer, sending bombs into the bedrooms and nursery schools of Ashdod and Ashkelon?

I didn't get answers to those queries either.

So, when it was announced that a protest was being organized that would create a human chain from Gush Katif to the heart of Jerusalem, I decided to join hands.

It was an amazing sight. Hundreds of people snaking down highways, lining the streets of Jerusalem. Children, and teenagers in bright orange, waving flags. Mothers, fathers, grandparents. I saw Benny Elon, the Knesset Member. I saw the legendary Geulah Cohen. I saw my lawyer, and women from my synagogue. Streets had been designated for different neighborhoods, and I found my friends and neighbors standing together. Ushers took great care not to allow roads to be blocked, so as not to create traffic jams. There were no hate signs. No violence. Later I heard that David Hatuel, whose wife and four daughters were slaughtered by terrorists, was also there. He told reporters: "Sadly, I came alone, but the connection I felt from everyone here on erev Tisha B'Av is quite amazing. This will broadcast to everyone that we have the will to continue to pursue our lives in all parts of the land of Israel," he said.

As I walked through the streets of downtown Jerusalem, I remembered how only a short time ago, they were deserted, a ghost town, people fleeing the silent reminders of shattered glass and human flesh and blood-soaked pavement. How much we had all lived through! Yet now there didn't seem to be standing room. There didn't seem to be a iota of fear. These streets had been claimed once again, I thought, the silence banished. It was an act of tremendous courage. These people, these brave, wonderful people, deserve better leaders, I thought. Leaders who are worthy of their hope and faith and courage and fortitude.

And as we joined hands at ten to seven, and began singing Israel's national anthem, HaTikvah (The Hope) I really did begin to feel hopeful. Perhaps this horrible mistake, pushed forward by a government that has betrayed the democratic process in pursuing useless and harmful policies that were voted out resoundingly by the people who put them into office, could be stopped. (NaomiRagen.com Jul 26)

### The Rooster, Redemption and the Sea

By Toby Klein Greenwald

My husband and I recently spent a Shabbat with our married daughter, Naama, in Atzmona, a fervently religious community in Gush Katif that boasts a magnificent plant nursery -- one of the largest in Israel. It is also home to a much in demand pre-army yeshiva program, most of whose students become officers in combat units. Several years ago the yeshiva was struck by heartbreak when terrorists infiltrated the community and five yeshiva students were

## ISRAEL NEWS

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murdered while learning Torah in the Beit Midrash, study hall.

Along the pathway leading to our daughter's house are exquisite, yellow desert flowers, bursting boldly out of the sand. I am always amazed by the brightness and strength of these flowers. The paucity of water does not keep them from spreading their petals wide and reaching toward the sun.

Naama's home is small and the Atzmona hospitality is legendary, so our sleeping quarters were at the home

of a young couple who had gone away for Shabbat. The first thing I noticed when I walked in the house were snapshots propped up on the telephone shelf, across from the entrance door. They were of Mrs. Dena Horowitz of Kiryat Arba, who, together with her husband Rabbi Eli, was killed by terrorists who burst into their home on a Friday night. The Horowitz's were shot while sitting at their Shabbat table, singing zmirot, Shabbat songs. I gathered that Dena had been the high school teacher of our hostess.

The spotless little house, like that of many young couples in Atzmona, was filled with scholarly books, including many by Rav Kook. The pictures on the wall were of Jewish sages and scenic views of Israel. Silky tablecloths and flowers welcomed the Sabbath. We live on such a roller coaster, I thought. Joy and mourning. Faith and determination.

I was awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of a rooster crowing. I was a little surprised that a rooster, who, I thought, wakes in tandem with the morning star, was crowing at 3:00 AM. Well, I thought, what do I, a city girl, know? But when he was still crowing at seven o'clock, I realized he was just a very enthusiastic (or very neurotic) rooster.

When I laughed about it later with my daughter, she said, "Oh, it belongs to a family that lives next to your hosts. They created a petting zoo for the local children. I guess we're so used to it, we don't hear it anymore."

I expected to catch up on my sleep Shabbat afternoon, when I tried to fall asleep reading < i>Israel: Life in the Shadow of Terror published by Aish.com. My husband was reading a biography about Hillel Unsderfer, the soldier whose photograph became famous in 1973, when he crossed the Suez Canal carrying a Sefer Torah during the Yom Kippur War. Tragically, he had survived his ordeal as a prisoner of war in Egypt only to die some years later in a traffic accident.

It occurred to me that maybe, for relaxation, we could find lighter reading material for a Shabbat afternoon, like murder mysteries.

At 2 PM the crowing began again.

While I covered my head with the pillow and tried to fall asleep, my husband commented that the rooster obviously had time issues. After a while, he asked me, "Do you hear that?"

"What is it, the rooster again?" I mumbled.

"No, listen."

It was shooting. It sounded close. "Don't worry," he said, "It's ours. And it sounds closer than it is because we're in the desert; there is nothing to block the sound."

I just trusted that after fighting in two wars and doing 25 years of active reserve duty, he must know what he was talking about, but after listening for a few seconds, all I could say was, "I'd rather hear the rooster."

When I mentioned the shooting to Naama, she said, "I guess we're so used to it, we hardly hear it anymore."

A few weeks later, I was visiting my friend, Shira, in Efrat and saw a beautiful painting of three roosters on her wall. "That's so unusual," I commented, "a painting of roosters!"

"Well," she said, "you know, of course, that roosters are a symbol of geula -- redemption."

I was stunned by the discovery. "Okay, now I get it," I said. "Now I understand why roosters are crowing in Atzmona."

Shira's mother, Gabby Finkelstein, who made aliya from New York about 24 years ago, joined our conversation and added, "When we were little, our parents used to sing a song about a rooster to us, in Hungarian. It's called 'Solo kukush mar' and the words are, 'The loan rooster is singing, when will the time come already? When his feet turn yellow and his lips turn green, that's when it will be. The Beit Hamikdash [the Holy Temple] will be built and Zion will be filled, that's when it [redemption] will be.'"

The story of the rooster and redemption moved in and out of my consciousness for a while, and then, last week, I was in Gush Katif again, preparing for the weekly Creative Writing class I give to a group of women there. A little boy asked me for a short private session before the women's class. He was nine years old and he wanted me to read his story.

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It was about how he loves to go to the sea in Gush Katif, dig a hole on the shore and cover himself in sand. "And then," he wrote, "I brush off the sand and run into the ocean. I struggle with the waves, until they rush back to where they have come from."

"Then," he told me, "I swim out into the sea."

"This is beautiful," I said to him.

"What should I write about for next time?" he asked.

"How about your name?" I said. "What does your name mean?"

His bright, dark eyes sparkled. "My name is Nerya," he said. "Light of God. It means that I should give light."

Maybe the rooster crows at 3AM because he knows something we don't, that the light is there, but we don't yet see it.

I love those evenings in Gush Katif. I love the wide expanses of grass and trees blooming along side the dunes. I love the sunsets unmarred by high-rise buildings. I love the gentleness of the people. Nerya and I have set up a weekly date, and now that I sleep at Naama's, after the women's writing class, I have grown used to hearing strange noises at night. I share a room with my toddler granddaughters. I am still awakened by the sounds of occasional gunfire from distant Rafiah, but they sleep through it peacefully, just as I grew up sleeping peacefully through the sounds of robins singing, and maple branches brushing against my window.

I think about the crowing that disturbed my Shabbat afternoon, and I think about the first of the morning blessings, "Blessed be You, or Lord, who has given the rooster the ability to differentiate between day and night."

Maybe the rooster crows at 3AM because he knows something we don't, that the light is there, but we don't yet see it. That is what we pray for in the morning blessing -- for our own ability to distinguish between light and darkness, between good and evil, between dawn and midnight.

I don't know when redemption will come, but I think I know where some of the signs are hiding.

They are in the crowing of a rooster, in the wonder of a golden desert flower, in the soft breathing of little girls in the night, and in the black-eyed smile of a child of light, who loves the sand and the sea. (Aish.com)

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## The Ten Commandments Of Transfer By Professor Ron Breiman

So sayeth Rehoboam Ben Shlomo: "My father punished you with sticks; I will do it with scorpions."

Unlike his predecessors Peres and Beilin, whose failed plans gambled on tranquilizing the public with promises of "peace", and "a new Middle East," their successor, Arik Sharon, doesn't even bother to use an anaesthetic before laying his patients on the operating table.

For some time now, no one has even brought up the concept of peace in exchange for land, or security. On all that Israel --docile and frightened of Arafat and his henchmen-- has given up. From Beilin to Sharon, the common denominator has now become "transfer." We aren't talking about the neutral term "disengagement," or "evacuation" or "dismantlement." Not even about "banishment" or "uprooting." We are talking about "transfer." The transfer of Jews from their homes in their country because they are Jews. We are talking about the prohibition against Jews living in Judea-- the very source of the name of the Jewish people-- and the transformation of Judea, Samaria and Gaza into the only place in the world where it is forbidden for Jews to live.

If that's not racism, then what is? And the judicial system, and the media - aligned as one with "peace," Geneva, and Oslo - are silent.

What can we do to stop this transfer scheme? Here are the ten commandments:

1. Call transfer by its rightful name. Don't launder it with bland synonyms that sweeten the horrible decree.

2. Make it clear that this transfer is illegal, and impossible to accomplish according to the rules of any democracy. That any order to transfer human beings from their homes because of their religion or nationality has a black flag waving over it. It's an order impossible to give, and impossible to fulfill.

And if a democratic majority in the Knesset supports it? Then the rule of thumb decided in the past by the Sainly Leaders of the Left -- who threatened to lay beneath the wheels of any truck designated to transfer Arabs, even if the Knesset decided unanimously on the uprooting of Arabs from their homes--is this: Such a move would be anti-democratic and forbidden, and impossible to carry out. The same must hold true for the transfer of Jews from their homes.

All the knights in shining armor doing battle for human rights and democracy need to be reminded that these principles hold true for Jews as well. And all those who support transfer--for one reason or another--should first practice on transferring Arab settlements sitting in the center of Jewish cities, to see if it's do-able, before they have the nerve to try transferring Jewish settlements.

3. Use the language of the human rights organizations, and to apply it to Jews. In contrast to the impression given by the media in Israel, Jews are also human, have citizens rights, and are equally permitted to gain legal backing from the Supreme Court when their fundamental rights and freedoms are eroded simply because they are Jews.

4. Make it clear that the transfer isn't feasible economically. The idea of taking Jews out of their homes as if they were objects without any rights or desires of their own is against every Zionist, Jewish, human or democratic value.

Even those evacuated willingly are entitled to decide where they want to live, and to receive compensation accordingly, and not to be "shifted" to some Godforsaken, cheap backwater that will be chosen for them. It is, therefore,

recommended that the intended "evacuees" make it clear immediately that they're willing to be "evacuated" only to Herzliya, for example, and to ask for and receive compensation at that level. There is no country, even among the terror havens of the Islamic world, who would be willing to finance such a transfer.

5. Make it clear that a transfer isn't possible militarily. Even Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Interior Minister Tzachi Hanegbi know this, which is why they are trying to pass jurisdiction over accomplishing this contemptible task like a hot potato one to the other. Israel doesn't have the manpower to accomplish such a cruel ethnic cleansing, which is infeasible morally, and numerically. The minimum number would be five to one between the enforcers and the victims, that is to say a special force of 40,000 men, larger than the entire Israeli police force, or a huge chunk of the defense forces.

6. Place a human shield around neighborhoods designated to be transferred, in numbers that will make it a mission impossible. Such a shield will be very human, in contrast to those protecting Arafat with their bodies. Against the bureaucracy of transfer, we need to create a counter organization that will arise, and rally others to arise, against this attempt at ethnic cleansing.

7. Prevent provocations and injury of soldiers and policemen, which will play into the hands of the transfer architects and be used as instigation against the Israeli majority. The use of a single individual's evil act to instigate against an entire population is a well-known tactic that has been used often since the murder of Yitzchak Rabin. The use of a portrait of Yitzchak Rabin in a Nazi uniform by a Secret Service provocateur during anti-Oslo rallies had that exact purpose in mind.

One of the slogans that routinely accompany "peace plans" is to ensure Israel's survival as a sovereign Jewish, democratic State. The opposite is true: The current plan will ensure Israel is neither sovereign, nor Jewish, nor a democracy.

8. Clarify that transfer will destroy Israel as a sovereign State. A State that retreats in the face of terror, that accepts terrorist ultimatums, and burrows itself into the ground or (in the words of Hezbollah head Nasrallah) "behind spider web barriers" will find itself swept out of the Middle East by the fire of terrorism which will be lit in the wake of its revelation of weakness.

9. Clarify that transfer will destroy Israel as a Jewish State: He who relinquishes claims to the Temple Mount (which Sharon turned over recently to Jordan...N.R.) relinquishes all claim to the land of Israel. Jerusalem, and first and foremost the Old City and the Temple Mount, are the heart of the Jewish people, and Judea and Samaria are its arteries, not Tel Aviv or Herzliya. On the 100th anniversary of Herzl's death we would do well to remember that Zionism arose in order to gather the people of Israel into the land of Israel, before there was a "green line," or "territories" or "the occupation" etc. The State of Israel that relinquishes the Temple Mount and recognizes her as being "abroad", is not a State and is not Jewish.

10. Clarify that transfer will destroy Israel as a democracy. Those who are willing to carry out a transfer of Jews from their homes in the heart of their country because they are Jews, destroy Israel as a democracy. How would we react, for example, if the government of France decided that it was forbidden for Jews to live in half of Paris, or the suburbs surrounding her? Israelis who ignore every Jewish value, and who are ready to hand over the Temple Mount to the enemy without even feeling a twinge of having made an enormous, painful sacrifice, would be on their hind legs barking at French anti-Semitism.

But what is not permissible in France, is permissible in Israel? Won't the transfer of Jews in Israel give the stamp of approval to anti-Semitism the world over? Won't the transfer of Jews in their country discourage Jews from moving to Israel? (Please note, Mr. Sharon, who called for the Jews of France to make aliyah immediately because of French anti-Semitism).

(NaomiRagen.com Jul 22)

*The writer is Chairman of Professors for a Strong Israel.*

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## Media Tales of Victims Leave out the Real Culprit By Jonathan Tobin

Who are the real victims in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians? There has been no shortage of casualties and tragic stories on either side of this terrible war. And no friend of Israel ought to be insensitive to the human cost that it has exacted on the Palestinians.

But while Arab victims of the violence have every right to our sympathy, we have the right to ask what those who are seeking to highlight their suffering at Israel's expense are trying to do. Coming, as it does, on the heels of the International Court of Justice's preposterous ruling that Israel's security fence is illegal and a possible follow-up vote in the U.N. General Assembly, the emphasis on Palestinian victimhood has created more misperceptions than truth. Case in point was a lengthy series run by The New York Times last week, which focused on the plight of the Palestinians in the territories such as the residents of Jenin and Gaza. Similarly, The Washington Post chose the same week to devote part of its front page to the story of the members of a youth theater group that was organized during the heyday of the peace process.

While both the tale of what happened to the seven would-be actors and the Jenin home owners were interesting, there was one key element to the

story that wasn't mentioned, despite the inordinate amount of space devoted to both these stories: the reason why the peace agreements of 1993 dissolved into warfare that destroyed up the lives and the property of so many Palestinians.

Both the Times and the Post treated the impact of the conflict with Israel on the lives of Palestinians as if it were a natural disaster that swooped down out of the sky like a Kansas twister. The only context, if any, given in these stories is the constant malevolent presence of Israel and its Defense Force, whose only role in the lives of the Palestinians is that of implacable foe and destroyer.

But what these stories didn't say is that the current war was not an act of G-d. Just like the international court did not consider the role of Palestinian terror in erecting the fence, these journalists did not consider the role of Palestinian hatred of Israel in creating these Arab victims. They left out the fact that the war was chosen by the Palestinian leadership - and overwhelmingly supported by the Palestinian population - when they could have chosen peace with Israel with an independent state that would have rendered Jenin and Gaza off-limits to any Israeli presence.

While the loss of any life is tragic, where is the accountability for the people who fomented this war? Arafat's corrupt clique and their Islamic rivals have ruthlessly exploited the Palestinians and bought their continued stay in power with the lives of teenage terrorists and other Palestinians who serve - wittingly or unwittingly - as the human shields for these cowards.

Weep if you will for the houses knocked down in Jenin (which are being lavishly rebuilt with the help of foreign aid from the United Nations and the European Union, two entities that are doing nothing to aid the Israeli victims of Arab terror), but remember that those houses were damaged only when Israel was forced to send its troops into that town to stop the Palestinian terror forces that used it as a safe haven from the murderous attacks that had taken dozens of innocent Israeli lives.

Mourn if you like for the student actors who grew up to be murdering terrorists, but remember that their choice to kill Jews is the source of Palestinian suffering. (Jewish World Review July 26)

*The writer is executive editor of the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent.*

### **Arafat's Poisonous Reign Finally Being Challenged** By Joel Mowbray

News headlines at the start of the week diligently covered the unfolding drama in the Middle East, with Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia resigning, then apparently un-resigning, followed by the Palestinian "parliament" urging strongman Yasser Arafat to accept the original resignation.

While the stories certainly made for interesting copy, they all missed the real point: No matter how well-intentioned a new leader might be, peace cannot come as long as Arafat is around.

Even upon the ouster or death of Arafat - the former finally seeming like a realistic possibility - peace might not occur for some time afterward, given how thoroughly Arafat has poisoned the Palestinian culture.

What is now unfolding could mark the start of Arafat's eventual demise. Then again, he has a knack for hanging on when everyone has counted him out.

When the U.S. and the European Union last year wanted to "sideline" Arafat, the lifelong terrorist - and ultimate political survivor - appointed his longtime number-two, Mahmoud Abbas, as prime minister. Hoodwinked Western diplomats nodded in approval.

Within four months, Abbas was gone. Less than a year later, Qureia either has resigned or is at least trying to. What both men quickly realized is that Arafat has his hand on all the levers of Palestinian power.

How anyone who knows Arafat could believe he could be "sidelined" is simply baffling. It's not in his character to allow any sort of power-sharing. This is not analysis requiring the professional input of a shrink, either. The record couldn't be any clearer.

From the time of supposed self-governance (in the form of the Palestinian Authority) granted following the Oslo accords of 1993, Arafat has controlled practically every aspect of Palestinian life, from the security forces to radio and television to the economy.

Look at the 1996 "election." Arafat made sure he had but one opponent, a 72-year-old social worker, a woman named Samiha Khalil. She stunned observers by garnering a much higher vote total than anyone anticipated: 9.3%.

There's more. After his political party, Fatah, held a primary, Arafat knocked off the slate those he did not like. Some of those purged from Fatah did end up getting elected to parliament, but Arafat soon rendered the legislative body toothless.

In the run-up to the balloting, Arafat used Palestinian radio and television to spread his propaganda, while candidates not affiliated with his party were virtually blacked out. Even outlets beyond Arafat's direct control were bullied into submission.

Palestinian newspaper Al Quds was ordered by Arafat's minions to run an article on the thug's meeting with a Greek Orthodox leader on the front page. When it ran on page 8 instead, armed guards arrested Al Quds editor Maher al-Alami, "detaining" him for six days.

Violence and intimidation continue to play significant roles in Arafat's playbook. On Tuesday, former Cabinet minister and longtime Arafat critic, Nabil Amr, was shot on his way home by unidentified "gunmen." Early reports indicate he might lose his leg.

Maybe it's no surprise that Abbas refused to cross Arafat, and Qureia chose

resignation over a "mysterious" death.

At least Arafat treats political enemies better than he does Israelis. He openly desires nothing short of the complete destruction of the Jewish state. He is, after all, a partner for peace.

While charming diplomatic dupes in the West with beautiful English-language statements, he has for years been rallying Palestinians to Jihad - in Arabic

It's all part of Arafat's cult of death. It starts by brainwashing youths not long after they are out of diapers, and the incitement continues with the bombardment of constant anti-Semitism and calls to arms over radio and television. With so much venom injected into Palestinian hearts and minds, it's a fair question if peace can come even after Arafat exits stage left.

Offering a glimmer of hope, though, that Palestinians might be able to overcome Arafat's cancerous reign is decades of exposure to Israeli media. Though Palestinians may not love their neighbor, they do envy it. According to a recent poll, Palestinians preferred an Israeli-style democracy over that found in any other nation, such as the U.S., France, or Germany.

It would be messy, and likely bloody, but after the demise of Arafat, the Palestinian people might eventually get just that.

*The writer is the author of "Dangerous Diplomacy: How the State Department Endangers America's Security". (Jewish World Review July 26)*

### **Is it over Yet?** By Caroline Glick

Has Israel won the Oslo War? Is the Aksa intifada over? Over the past several weeks a number of prominent voices have weighed in on this topic claiming triumphantly that indeed, the war is over. Israel has won.

There are several objective factors that lend to this conclusion.

Israel's economy, which was teetering on the verge of collapse in the first two years of the war is now making a strong comeback. Whereas in 2001 and 2002 the economy shrunk, by 2003, our economy grew by a modest 1.3 percent and conservative projections forecast a healthy 3.8 percent increase in GDP by the end of 2004.

The number of successful terrorist attacks has decreased by some 70% over the past year. The fact of the matter is that IDF forward deployment in Judea, Samaria and Gaza together with more sophisticated defenses, better technology and more specialized training and professionalization of the armed forces have together enabled Israel to prevent terror attacks that would have been undetectable four and even two years ago. The precipitous drop in the number of Israeli casualties has had a psychological impact on Israelis. Today we cringe, rather than fall into a sweaty-palmed panic every time we hear ambulance sirens. Tourists, the kind that come here for fun rather than "solidarity missions," have returned to us. Foreign exchange students are returning to our university campuses.

In short, it would seem, we are back to normal.

On the other hand, the Palestinian towns and cities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza are wracked with anarchy and gangland violence between the various terror groups and PA militias in a seemingly endless turf war. When polled late last month about Gaza's prospects after Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's planned evacuation, 59 percent of Palestinians said that they are worried that internal Palestinian infighting WILL ensue. More starkly, 69 percent of Palestinians believe that their lives and those of their family members are not assured.

Add to this popular sentiment about the Palestinian Authority. Eighty-seven percent of Palestinians believe it is corrupt; 92 percent support fundamental reforms of the PA while 53 percent do not believe that the PA is reforming. Fifty three percent of Palestinians also believe the status of human rights and democracy in the PA is poor.

And then there are the PLO apologists. Over the past couple of weeks some of the PLO's strongest and most knee-jerk supporters are voicing criticism of Yasser Arafat. Terje Roed-Larsen, who as the UN Coordinator in the territories has been one of Arafat's most trusted shields from criticism and one of his main shields for libelous attacks against Israel, has suddenly said that things are bad in Gaza and the Arafat isn't interested in governing. Even more shocking, The New York Times, which holds the greatest responsibility for mainstreaming the PLO in the US, politely suggested on Thursday that Arafat consider retirement. Such statements from Arafat's best friends seem to indicate that the wall of international support for Arafat's terrorist dictatorship may be starting to crumble.

But there is another side to this story. And it tells a far different tale. Yes it is true, so this story begins, that Israelis are persevering and proving once again that the presence or absence of peace has no bearing on our ability to function normally and indeed to prosper. And yes, the Palestinians are miserable and poor.

Yet we have changed and they have not.

When Ehud Barak went to Camp David in July 2000, he did so after having lost a vote of confidence in the Knesset. He went as the head of a minority government increasingly despised by the overwhelming majority of Israelis. His offers at Camp David were rejected by a majority of Israelis. After the collapse of that summit, as Barak desperately begged Arafat for a peace deal in Taba, there was a complete disconnect between the sentiments of Israeli citizens and the machinations of the government. The landslide with which Ariel Sharon was voted into office in 2001 attests to the fact that Barak's platform - THE surrender of all or most of Judea,

Samaria and Gaza and the partition of Jerusalem with the ceding of the Temple Mount to Arafat – was completely rejected by the Israeli people.

Back in 2000, the idea of erecting a fence more or less along the 1949 armistice lines was seen as the default view of the far-Left. Politicians like Haim Ramon, who wanted to put distance between the Labor Party and the messianic visions of Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin, embraced the idea of the fence as a way to force Israel out of the territories with a delusion that we weren't creating a terror kingdom on the other side. The Likud under Sharon opposed the fence, rejecting the idea as a stupid version of the stupid Bar Lev Line which led to the fiasco of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Tempered by two years of war, in 2003, the Labor Party discarded its grandiose visions of PLO flags unfurled on the Temple Mount and based its election campaign on a call for the mere withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza and the destruction of the Israeli towns and farms that have been built there. Again, Israelis laughed, Sharon called it folly and won an overwhelming victory as the Labor party was all but decimated.

Yet what do we have today? Largely as a result of the Palestinian terror war, the Likud has adopted some of the most radical Labor views from four years ago. Not only is Sharon calling for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the deportation of some 8,000 Israelis from their homes. He and the Likud have made Ramon's fence their own. Even Sharon's original route for the fence left plenty of Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria on the Palestinian side and thus spelled out their eventual destruction. Under US pressure, Sharon basically agreed to have the fence follow the route of the 1949 armistice lines. And now, the Supreme Court has determined that even that was not enough. The Supreme Court's decision on the fence laid down the legal precedent that, as Ehud Barak conceded at Camp David, the territories are not disputed, they belong to Arafat.

Although Sharon still argues that he will not divide Jerusalem, his deputy and GADFLY Ehud Olmert has already stated that at least five Jerusalem neighborhoods would end up in PLO hands. The route of the fence already takes two neighborhoods out of the city.

Shimon Peres, who has never been elected by Israeli voters, is poised to become reunited with his seat in the Foreign Minister's office. Four years after the transformation of his Oslo Peace into the Oslo War, Peres is still a true believer. He insists on resuming negotiations with Arafat and believes that it would be "immoral" for Israel to retain any territory it gained in 1967. According to Palestinian sources, Arafat is banking on both Peres's return and Bush's defeat in November.

When he assumed office in 2001, US President George W. Bush proclaimed that the proposals offered by Israel at Camp David, like the December 2000 Clinton Plan, were no longer valid. Yet over the past three and a half years, Bush has made Palestinian statehood one of the central planks of his foreign policy. His advisors have made clear that from their perspective Israel will at the end of the day transfer nearly all of the territories to the PLO. And Bush is still more supportive of Israel THAN his Democratic rival Senator John Kerry.

When Arafat rejected peace and turned to war four years ago, Barak and his foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami both argued that Europe would have to react to Arafat's action by finally ending its automatic support for the PLO. Alas, time has proved them wrong – again. As we learned last year, far from supporting Israel, the EU now considers us the greatest threat to world peace. Levels of anti-Semitic sentiment and violence in Europe are higher than they have been since the Holocaust. Not only does the EU support every Palestinian position against Israel in every international forum, its leaders and elites have a new comfort level with the notion of Israel's destruction.

For their part, the Palestinians are proud of what they have accomplished. While 16% of Palestinians believe that Israel has won the war, 40 percent believe that they are on the winning side. There has been no dampening of support for terrorist attacks since the beginning of the war. Support for suicide attacks in Israel remains more or less steady at 62 percent. Sixty-nine percent of Palestinians believe that the "armed confrontations have helped achieve Palestinian rights in a way that negotiations could not." As for Arafat, he is still the unquestioned leader. While it is true that various Palestinian factions are fighting one another, they are all paid by Arafat and they are all loyal to him. And while his supporters in the West half-heartedly criticize him, they will never abandon him.

And look at what he has accomplished: He went to war to gain through terror what he was given at the negotiating table. And he has achieved this aim. In so doing he showed that he will receive Israel's final offer from July 2000 as Israel's opening offer tomorrow and will do so without having made any concession in return. He is still a terrorist overtly committed to Israel's destruction and he has been handsomely rewarded for this.

Perhaps then, the best that can be said is that Israel won the Aksa intifada but Israel has lost the Oslo War. (Jerusalem Post Jul 23)

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### **Settler as a Human Being** By Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu

A hitchhiker from Tekoa in Gush Etzion was riding with me a few years ago when we spotted an Arab youngster standing by the side of the road with rocks in his hand. This was back in the days when Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak were helping Bill Clinton create a New Mideast. I glanced at him long enough for him to know we had spotted him, and he dropped his "toys" and ran away.

The hitchhiker, some screwball American, informed me that she had been working with local Arabs on an experimental farm until "circumstances" forced her to quit.

After we passed the retreating Arab youngster, she turned to me and protested, "I wish you would have stopped and let me get out to talk with him. They have to understand we are human beings, not settlers."

Okay, what do you expect from a screwball American?

But nutty or not, she was right. I also am a human being, not just a settler, no less than one is only a Sephardi, Ashkenazi, secular, tall, short, French, or Italian.

By media definition, I am a settler because I live in a community – okay, settlement – over the Green Line. The only area separating my home in Beit Yatir from the Green Line are some hills occupied by trees and an Arab neighbor, who prefers to call himself a Beduin.

Once upon a time, residents of French Hill, Gush Katif, Ma'aleh Adumim, Kfar Tapuah, and Beit Yatir all had one thing in common. All of us were settlers who in Peres's/Clinton's future would live in pre-1967 Israel.

Anyone with an iota of knowledge of Hebrew knows that the media, which have become part and parcel of the political Left, have bastardized the origin of the words "settler" and "settlements." Critics may want to pooh-pooh the Bible as an irrelevant and anti-democratic volume exposing "settlements" that the first settlers established on occupied territory. But they should first remember that the same word refers to the secular kibbutzim of the 1930s and 1940s as well as post-1948 outposts, such as Ashkelon.

The media has cruelly exploited the "settler" to manipulate public opinion. After the first Oslo talks, every settler killed by terrorists was a "price of peace," a barbaric concept of the Left that is contrary to its own doctrine of humanism.

After the collapse of the Tower of Oslo, in which everyone spoke the same word "peace" and no one understood its meaning, the media redefined "settler."

Starting with Israeli newspapers and the alleged "Kol Yisrael" (Israel Radio) and continuing with CNN, BBC, and The New York Times, journalists had to admit that "settlers" didn't mean every Jew over the Green Line. The term really meant those Jews whom the media thought could be transferred. A "settlement" was not a community but rather buildings and land to be handed over to the Arabs. Even Yossi Beilin gave up on Ramot and Ma'aleh Adumim, but almost everything else still was not on their map of Israel.

The media's "settlers" are Jews illegally occupying Arab land – another lie for the next century's historians to correct. Kfar Darom, Kfar Etzion, and Neveh Daniel, among others, include land that Jews bought from Arabs. Almost all of the communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza are on no man's land that no Arab ever thought of occupying, not in the time of the British Mandate nor during the Jordanian occupation.

Through unprofessional reporting, the press has characterized the settler as armed, bearded, and sporting a kippa in a socially unacceptable fashion.

A good (read "bad") example comes from a Haaretz column by Daniel Ben-Simon the day after Arabs murdered Tali Hatuel and her four children. He described a Kfar Darom resident as "a stern-faced man with the typical look of a drooping skullcap, negligent haberdashery, and sandals that have known better days."

Now a Hebrew media campaign for the evacuation of Gush Katif – after which settlements and settlers are supposed to fall like dominoes – is trying to incite the public into thinking that all settlers are plotting violence. Yediot Aharonot, July 5, quotes Peace Now: "The settlers have made their objective to turn the evacuation of Gush Katif into a national trauma and stir up in people fear of civil war."

But the media cannot fool all the people all the time. Most Israelis, at least for now, probably want to transfer Jews out of Gush Katif. But that same mainstream majority is also fed up with agreements and promises just as much as they (and I) are fed up with spending more money on outposts in Judea and Samaria.

They have learned that Judea, Samaria, and Gaza 2004 is not Yesha 1974 and that most of the new "settlers" of the past 20 years are not wild-eyed extremists.

Most Israelis know we are like ourselves – professional and law-abiding middle-class people who made a home in a community-oriented society.

They know that most settlements serve their personal and national interests, in terms of security as well as social and financial stability.

Tom Friedman and Israel Radio are stuck with a dwindling number of "settlers," regardless of whether Gush Katif residents – excuse me, "settlers" – are evacuated or not.

By the way, I do not have a beard or a gun, and my skullcap is more or less socially acceptable – unless a drooping reporter looks at me.

*The writer is a former US and Canadian daily journalist and lives in Israel.* (Jerusalem Post Jul 23)

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