

 Jerusalem 5:42; Toronto 6:38

Commentary...

We Are All Jews By James Woolsey
I sometimes get asked these days if

I'm Jewish — it's my neoconish views on defense and foreign affairs, I suppose. For a while I would just say, "No, Presbyterian," but I've started saying instead, "Well, I anchor the Presbyterian wing of JINSA (the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs)."

What with anti-Semitism growing in Europe and a hideous variety thereof metastasizing in the Middle East — not to speak of the American Left's (and a small part of the Right's) hostility to Israel, which sometimes veers off into anti-Semitism — it seems to me our Jewish friends could use a bit of solidarity these days. Today, the first day of Rosh Hashana, celebration of the Jewish New Year, is as good a time as any to explain why.

It's not only the other two great Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Islam, that owe a substantial debt to Judaism, it's the world as a whole. The reason is that between three and four millennia ago something happened in the Sinai among a tribe of refugees from Egyptian oppression that introduced the world to the concept of the rule of law — the idea that the law is not the whim of, but rather has its source above, those who rule.

This concept is at the heart of what makes decently-governed societies possible, whether you sign on to Jefferson's formulation that we are "endowed by our Creator" with basic rights or prefer the more secular notion of natural law. In the absence of one or the other of these bases for the notion that the rule of law somehow derives from a source above the rulers, electoral democracy can degenerate into mob rule and capitalism into theft. This supremacy of the law is what most Americans mean when they say that we have a "government of laws, not men."

Some aspects of this have gotten a bit muddled recently in the largely academic debate about whether the United States is or is not an "empire." If the US is an empire it's a very odd one: Countries where it has troops such as Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Germany suggest they are unhappy about that and the response is, "OK," and an offer to leave.

Nero and Napoleon would have been appalled. They would also have had a hard time understanding the travails of Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. One was driven from office by the people's elected representatives for permitting a cover-up of a clumsy political burglary. The other was impeached by the House, then acquitted in a Senate trial, for lying under oath in a deposition taken in what was essentially a sexual harassment case brought by a private citizen.

What, you may well ask, are the most powerful individuals in the world doing, if they are emperors, getting held to account by members of Congress for burglary cover-ups and by private citizens, no less, for sexual behavior?

The answer is, of course, that neither Nixon nor Clinton, indeed no American president, is even close to being an emperor. People (and smaller nations wherein an empire maintains troops) obey emperors, if they know what's good for them, without much discussion. These two recent presidents were, instead, held to account in a distinctly non-imperial way — in pretty much the same way Elijah humbled Ahab for allowing his queen, Jezebel, to frame and execute Naboth and steal his vineyard, and in the way the prophet Nathan confronted David over his taking Bathsheba and ordering her husband, Uriah, to the front lines and certain death.

The US does not look back to Rome or France at the height of their power in determining the way to deal with those who today govern the most powerful nation in history. Thankfully, in regard to the powerful being subjected to the rule of law we are, instead, all Jews.

I'VE MAINLY been in synagogues for the bar mitzvas and bat mitzvas of friends' children. The next time you are, notice what the object of veneration is — it is the Torah, the law itself. At a point in the service it is carried, lovingly, around the congregation, greeted as an old friend. I am convinced that it is this veneration of the law — with its status above the ruler — that is at the heart of

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*

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anti-Semitism.

Jews have almost always been the first target of tyrants, because their beliefs and religious practices, honed by nearly two millennia in Diaspora, clearly declare that in their view the law is above the ruler: dietary laws, the dress of the Orthodox, a propensity to contend about what is a fair interpretation of rules, all stamp Jews with this belief's being the heart of their history and religion. As a consequence they are often the first group that

dictators, secular or theocratic, feel they must suppress.

We should all reflect upon the historic reality that when anti-Semitism raises its head, the rest of us, unless we are willing to live with a foot on our neck, will be the next targets.

Jewish humor, a distinctive barrier against any propensity to self-righteousness, permeates American culture. A number of times during the Cold War, I was involved in arms control negotiations with the Soviets. No matter how bad the tension across the negotiating table during the day, Russian and American negotiators would often end up going out for dinner together. Somehow, even in the most difficult periods, the conversation frequently turned to trading jokes.

I always thought it remarkable how much Russian humor was suffused with a wry, self-deprecating, ironic tone both quite funny and somehow quite familiar to Americans. Later, finding versions of a number of these jokes and stories in Leo Rosten's wonderful *The Joys of Yiddish*, I realized the source of the familiarity.

Six years ago the Immigration and Naturalization Service imprisoned eight Muslims, Iraqi freedom fighters who were refugees from Saddam, for allegedly being security threats to the US. The government's case was worse than flimsy but it was protected by rules regarding secret evidence. After a long struggle all eight were freed, and several are now working to establish democracy in Iraq. I was one of their lawyers. The majority of my co-counsel, all acting pro bono, were Jewish. The law is, after all, above the ruler.

To all of us, happy Rosh Hashana. (Jerusalem Post Sep 26)

The writer was director of the US Central Intelligence Agency 1993—95.

גמר חתימה טובה

The Historic Significance of American Aliya By Yossi Klein Halevi

I didn't know David Applebaum, the remarkable doctor who saved hundreds of

Jerusalemites wounded in terrorist attacks and who was murdered in the Cafe Hillel atrocity with his daughter, Nava, on the eve of her wedding. But many years ago, I did know members of the family of his wife, Debbie - the Speros of Cleveland - one of those essential Jewish families that energizes an entire community.

And so I was among the thousands of people who crowded the Applebaum house during the week of mourning, held instead of the week of post-wedding celebrations.

The crowds moved slow and steady. People spoke quietly, restraining their grief; teenage girls gathered around family photo albums. No words of comfort were possible for such an epic tragedy. If a new book of the Bible were ever written about the modern return to Zion, it would have to include the story of the Applebaums.

Yet words of comfort were somehow unnecessary. Debbie received her broken well-wishers with clarity and strength, a symbol of Jewish endurance. Hers was the strength of those who see their own lives as part of a larger story.

The restrained dignity of the Applebaum shiva could only come from people who know they are home and whom no force can dislodge. In a contest between one society where murderers are celebrated as martyrs, and another where real martyrs are mourned without hatred or rage, I have no doubt which side will prevail.

Still, this wasn't supposed to happen to our post-Holocaust generation of American Jews. We were meant to be exempt from the curse of Jewish history. Our parents' generation was the most traumatized; we were the most privileged. After all, we were the generation of the Six Day War and Soviet Jewry liberation and American Jewish rebirth. Like the myth of the end of history invoked after the collapse of communism, we were implicitly raised

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on the notion that Jewish history was moving on a one-way trajectory, from destruction to rebirth - and, some even dared to say, redemption.

But for those of us who opted to leave America for Israel, the past three years have confronted us with the enormity of our decision to enter the heart of the Jewish story. Recently, I was interviewed by an American talk-show host who practically accused me of being an abusive parent for keeping my children in a war zone. What national dream or religious fantasy could justify that? he demanded.

And so, like other American immigrants, I've been trying to remind myself why I'm here.

For as long as I can remember, I knew that I would live in Israel. My father, a Holocaust survivor, had come to America, instead of Israel, only by an accident of fate. In our kitchen in Brooklyn hung a bronze relief of Theodor Herzl; our Hanukka menorah played "Hatikva"; and the only news that really mattered to us was news about Israel. I had no doubt that every Jew should live in the Jewish state.

But when I finally did come, at age 29, it wasn't because I believed that every Jew should live here, but simply because I believed that I should. I didn't want to be one of those Diaspora Jews obsessed with Israel without really knowing the actual Israel. I wanted to be intimate with the back pages of the Israeli experience, not just the headlines.

And I wanted to normalize my relationship with Israel. I wanted Israel to stop being a cause and simply become daily life. And it has. When I drive every morning past the walls of the Old City, my mind isn't on history or metahistory but on catching the next light.

When American Jews ask me whether I "like" living in Israel, I am perplexed by the question. Israeli life, with its combined informality and intensity, suits me. But I don't think about whether I like living here, any more than Americans think about whether they like living in America. There are aspects of Israel that I cherish, others that I detest, and still others that I find inexplicable and probably always will. In other words, life.

Most of all I came here because I couldn't bear not to be here. The encounter with a frenetic Hebrew culture that sanctifies the mundane and mocks the sacred has admitted me into the greatest Jewish adventure since biblical times. The dilemmas of Jewish statehood in the Middle East have forced me to abandon idealistic formulations and test my moral mettle against unbearable reality. And the encounter with Jewish sovereignty and power has helped free me from a post-Holocaust identity of victim and allowed me to become a "normal" human being, just as Zionism intended.

And being here is, above all, a privilege. To experience the ordinary courage of Israelis in this time is to glimpse something of the qualities that have made the Jews an eternal people.

Every American immigrant is here for a different reason. But in some sense we're all here for the same reason: the belief that Israel isn't only meant for refugees with nowhere else to go. We've come because history has finally made it possible for us to come. Our decision to leave the safest and most prosperous Diaspora in history is confirmation of the irreversibility of the Jewish return home. Despite our small numbers, that is the historic significance of the American aliyah.

Leaving the Applebaum shiva, I felt proud to be part of the community of American olim, with our funny flat accents that our sabra children love to mock, and our sense of decent behavior that Israeli society seems intent on negating.

Not that we have the right to complain. We Americans moved here because we wanted to stop being spectators of Jewish history, cheering Israel from the sidelines, and instead assume our place on center stage.

We've gotten what we came for. (Jerusalem Post Sep 26)

The writer is a contributing editor of the New Republic and an associate fellow at the Shalem Center. He is author of, At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land.

The Arafat Barrier By William Safire

By unleashing and sustaining suicide bombers against Israeli civilians, Yasir Arafat outfoxed himself: the Palestinian boss has given substance to the Israeli dream and U.N. promise of "defensible borders."

Two-fifths of the barrier against terrorist infiltration is already built. Its purpose is to remove the extremist Palestinians' threat of suicide attacks from what was once called the peace process.

Having driven the Israelis to build a protective fence, Arafat now wants it built along the Green Line that made Israel's cities so vulnerable in the past. That won't happen; the barrier < 6 percent of which is a wall to stop sniper fire at passing school buses < can be seen outside the suburbs of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, where many of the 200,000 West Bank Jews live. A "double fence" will also protect the high ground around Ben-Gurion Airport.

But what about the Jewish families in the thriving Ariel salient, with its 7,000-student college, which juts into hotly disputed territory? Arafat wants those residents left exposed to his "martyr's brigades."

The Bush White House, in deference to European and U.N. diplomacy, has asked Israel's government to think twice about the fencing needed there. Bush aides even hint darkly of limiting that small part of our \$9 billion loan guarantee that goes toward building controversial portions of the fence. Sounds menacing,

but the U.S. guarantee, which costs us nothing, saves Israel about 1 percent on its borrowing costs; on 30 miles or so of fence, I figure that holdback would penalize Israel a few million dollars.

Ariel Sharon's cabinet meets today to consider "the battle of Ariel." (The Hebrew name of both the town of 20,000 and the current prime minister can be interpreted as "a lion of God" or as the poet Milton's rebel angel.) Hard-liners will argue for building the fence "east of Ariel," incorporating it into the protected zone.

Sharon is no more likely to give up Ariel, now or post-Arafat, than he is to change his first name. He once proudly showed the hilltop town to then-Governor Bush from the air, and has an affinity for its courageous townspeople. Long before that, when Sharon seemed washed up in politics, he choppered me into Ariel, where voters received him with cheers. They trust him.

He also remembers how Arafat, when presented with almost all the West Bank by Ehud Barak and Bill Clinton, interpreted that huge concession as weakness and launched the second intifada. Dennis Ross, who was at Clinton's side, says that not even the deal offered the Palestinians in 2000 of 97 percent of the West Bank included the give-up of Ariel.

Now here is where the current fencemanship gets interesting. A pretty good source in Jerusalem tells me that in today's cabinet meeting, Sharon is going to count on the continued trust of his friends in Ariel. Rather than play to the Israeli grandstand by rejecting the U.S. concern, Sharon is likely to urge his cabinet to respect the Bush advice.

That does not mean to abandon Ariel; far from it. It means to postpone the inclusion of the five-village salient inside the main Arafat barrier until the last stage of the fence's construction. Meanwhile, fencing can encircle each of the villages, defending them as islands, or perhaps a horseshoe-shaped barrier not attached to the main line with Israeli troops stationed in the gap.

That would show the world that Israel respects America's intercession, and would demonstrate that only Bush < not the Europeans or U.N. < can influence Sharon. Meanwhile, the fence-building elsewhere goes on, and the decision to build "east of Ariel" need not be made for months.

Israelis are bracing for another attack by Arafat's commanding faction. In its aftermath, Israel's decision to extend the fence to defensible positions will be made.

All along, Sharon will insist that the fence is a security device, not a political border. That gives future Israeli governments opportunity to improve territorial defenses if a Palestinian partner does not soon emerge.

When that peacemaker does emerge, he or she will find the defensible-border issue already settled < thanks to Yasir Arafat. (New York Times Oct 1)

The Left's Real Agenda: Destroying the Jewish State By Naomi Ragen

In the beginning, I didn't understand. I thought that there were people with different political viewpoints in this country of ours, a vital democracy. Of course, I thought that the policies of the Labor Party and Meretz, exemplified by Yossi Sarid and Shimon Peres, were totally wrong. I thought that they and their supporters were mistaken in their honest, but misguided search for a peaceful solution to the problems with our Arab neighbors.

But now, three plus years into the Intifada, when, as a direct result of their policies, over 20,000 terrorist attacks have killed our children in the streets, and caused thousands of injuries, destroyed our once thriving economy and putting people in line for soup kitchens, not to mention an unprecedented outpouring of hatred all over the world not only for Israelis, but all Jews, I must admit the truth to myself. These people really will not be satisfied until they destroy the Jewish State. That is their real agenda.

I give you the fabricated "pilots' revolt," done in conjunction with Israel's Channel Two and the Yediot Acharonot newspaper, both of whom apparently coordinated the release of this trumped up traitors' list, which includes reserve pilots who haven't been in a cockpit in years, as well as those who aren't at all involved in targeted terrorist killings anyway. They will "refuse orders" they tell us; the orders they don't get anyway. Hundreds of pilots signed counter petitions, but you will not hear about that. Just as you will not hear about the thousand people who stood across the street from Shimon Peres' birthday extravaganza paid for by the impoverished Israeli people (and don't tell me it was privately funded. I know who did the catering at the President's House, and that alone cost 80,000 shekel, and the people of Israel are paying for it...)

And now we have the "writers and intellectuals" who have taken the army to the Supreme Court, charging them with a criminal act in targeting Hamas Chief Sheik Salah Shehade, killed by Israel in July 2002. Shehade was responsible for hundreds of terrorists attacks and hundreds of Israeli deaths. In killing Shehade, civilian bystanders, including children, were also killed, the regrettable outcome of fighting an enemy who hides behind children and old ladies. This is the "crime" the army is accused of by two Arab writers and their Jewish colleague. I myself once personally witnessed Shulamit Aloni fawning all over Muhammad Bakri, who put together that web of filthy lies he called a "documentary" about Jenin, a film that Goebbels would have given the Third Reich's highest award. Self-hating doesn't begin to explain

these Israelis. They don't hate. They actively support and encourage the enemy to destroy their fellow citizens.

So let us see how their campaign is going so far. Bring in Arafat from Tunis and let him rearm and then give him a private enclave where his terrorists can set up camp, joined by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Make it a safe haven for bomb-building and a launching pad for attacks against Israelis by taking to the streets any time the IDF tries to stop their activities. Then let them bomb away. Let them kill your fellow Jews at their Passover seders, at their bus stops, in café's, in playgrounds. In short, make Israel an unlivable place. Certainly, a place no tourist in his right mind would want to visit. And then, when you are voted out of office by the hoodwinked masses, rally your leftist leagues once again. You've already got all of your people into key positions in Israel's newspapers, and most of its radio and television news programs so that they report what you want, and ignore what you don't want. Use them to fight the elected government (not hard. They are mostly corrupt, spineless jellyfish anyway). And, having accomplished that, go all out after the last bastion of resistance to your plans, the Israeli Defense Forces, those ordinary patriotic citizens willing to die for their country, those people who man the thin red line between Israelis and the murderous hordes of barbarians chaffing at the gate.

And because we are not allowed to call anyone a traitor in this country; and because no one wants to be labeled a right-wing fanatic (although no one worries about being called a left-wing suicidal lunatic), you will get away with it. And the last stage in the destruction and the demoralization and impoverishment of this country can take place.

There is only one thing wrong with this plan. Israelis love life. And they understand when they've been taken for a ride. And they have no faith in the press, and have stopped buying Yediot Acharonot (before the holiday, my supermarket was giving it away for free...) and watching the news ...

But the time has finally come when we have no choice. All those of us who want to stop this plan have got to begin to fight our fifth column, our own Israeli media and our own media darlings, the way we once fought CNN and The New York Times. The enemy within our gates has had enough tolerance. We need to use our democratic rights to defeat them, by exposing them and boycotting their propaganda organs. We need to rout them before they complete their agenda.

May God help us. (NaomiRagen.com Sep 30)

Reasonable Doubt By Amnon Lord

If more than 10 of the terrorists who attacked the Twin Towers in Manhattan and the Pentagon had turned out to be Israelis, I doubt whether President George W. Bush would have invited the Israeli ambassador the very next day to sit with him and quietly smoke cigars on the White House balcony.

I also doubt whether, in such an eventuality, the Israeli prime minister would have been invited to an extended, intimate meeting at the family ranch at Crawford, Texas.

But, thank God, they were not Israeli but mostly Saudi terrorists. And therefore it was Ambassador Bandar and Crown Prince Abdullah who received such intimate and friendly invitations after the strategic attack on the US.

Today we also know that two weeks before the September 11, 2001 attack, the Saudis gave the American administration an ultimatum on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Immediately afterwards (August 29) President Bush issued a written promise to the Saudi crown prince, stating: "I firmly believe that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and to live peacefully and securely in their own state in their own homeland."

No such political commitment was given to any Arab party even by former president Bill Clinton. A short while after the September 11 attack and after the declaration of a global war on terrorism, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon apparently found out about the presidential promise to the Saudis. That was a moment of truth, and for those who remember, Sharon called a press conference at which he made the dramatic declaration that Israel would not be the "Czechoslovakia" of the war against terror. He may have retracted it after a presidential reprimand, but there has been a feeling since then that Israel is convenient currency in a policy of appeasement towards Saudi Arabia.

It appears that the primary goal of US policy in the Middle East has remained as it was: how to protect Saudi interests — identified as American national interests — without betraying Israel too openly. This is also what gave birth to the war in Iraq.

The immediate goal was to take the American bases out of Saudi Arabia and place them somewhere else in the region. At the same time, other important goals were achieved as well: removing the threat of Saddam Hussein from Saudi Arabia, encircling Iran and placing Syria under threat.

All told, two years after the September 11 attack and three years after the beginning of the Palestinian terror campaign against Israel, it appears that the moral clarity of Bush's policy against terror had no basis when it came to Israel's war.

A strange formula has emerged in the way Israel and the US handle the Palestinian issue. First, both countries place a political obstacle in their own paths with their own hands. Then they move in zigzags and in roundabout ways with the goal of removing the political obstacle that obstructs the war on terrorism. So it was with the Camp David understandings in 2000, to which the

current administration is committed, through Secretary of State Colin Powell, and so it is following the introduction of the road map. Minefields have been left on the ground in the form of the Mitchell paper and the Tenet and Zinni plans.

Since Sharon came to power in March 2001, Israel has gradually had to nibble away at artificial red lines in order to effectively confront Palestinian terrorism. Initially, the 'A' areas of the Palestinian Authority were considered sacred, and when IDF forces first entered them, they had to withdraw within a few hours — due to 'American pressure.' Only after a blitz of massacres, that lasted from June 2001 (the Dolphinarium) to the end of March 2002 (the Pessah massacre) were IDF forces permitted to operate for a period of some two weeks inside 'A' areas.

About a month before Operation Defensive Shield, the forces operated — with success that surprised all the pessimists — in the heart of the terror bases in Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus and Ramallah. But the arrival of US emissary Gen. Anthony Zinni compelled the IDF to withdraw its forces well before completing its mission. The IDF paid heavily for this premature cessation in its next operation in Jenin. The futile negotiating process gave the terrorists in Jenin and in other places precious time to organize to fight in the midst of a civilian population.

But what has been proven is that when Israel initiates bold moves, ultimately the Americans stand behind it, though first we have to pay the full price in civilian lives.

On the eve of last summer's false cease-fire (hudna), there was a similar occurrence: Israel sharply increased the pressure of its targeted killings, which reached their peak in the attempted assassination of Abdul Aziz Rantisi. Bush's initial reaction was condemnation: This was, supposedly, the crossing of a red line. Within 24 hours, however, the US changed its tune and sided with Israel by declaring war on Hamas. By the time Israel attempted to kill the Hamas leadership a few weeks ago it was accepted as natural. Likewise, the policy of isolation and neutralization of Yasser Arafat was carried out gradually at Sharon's initiative, and today there is only one red line in that regard: Just don't kill him. The fate of this red line may well be the same as that of the other red lines.

It seems that the main problems in the US-Israel relationship in the last years are the result of domestic entanglements inside Israel, a lack of clarity as to its goals, and a decline in the quality of its diplomacy. As a global superpower, the US, naturally, has a broad range of interests, many of which create internal contradictions. But when little Israel is entangled in its own internal contradictions, with different leaders and political forces, it creates many misunderstandings and convoluted trajectories that unnecessarily complicate situations.

Years of experience have taught the Israeli leadership that for domestic political survival it needs the appearance of a warm and intimate relationship with the American administration and especially the US president.

Prime ministers who led Israel on an independent path and achieved good results received cool treatment from the White House, in conjunction with political and economic pressures. Such was the case during Yitzhak Shamir's term and also at the end of Binyamin Netanyahu's term. Netanyahu got the cold shoulder from Clinton, while Arafat became a welcome guest at the White House.

It has been proven that such an attitude towards an Israeli prime minister shakes the confidence of the Israeli public, and in both these instances this led to those prime ministers' downfall. There is no doubt that this is the lesson Sharon keeps in mind, and as a result he is sometimes prepared to sacrifice Israeli interests, to avoid confrontation with the American administration, the latest example of which is the fence. The administration's behavior on this issue contradicts Bush's promise that he is committed to Israel's security.

The writer is the author of The Israeli Left, from Socialism to Nihilism and a columnist with Makor Rishon. (Jerusalem Post Sep 26)

Person of the Year By David Wilder

The Jewish New Year, Rosh HaShana, is marked quite differently from January first. Whereas the latter is celebrated in Times Square, at gala parties, and the like, most of Rosh HaShana is spent in the synagogue. According to the Jewish calendar, a new 'day' begins at sunset, and so it is that we commenced our year on Friday night with evening prayers. Following the short service, each family returned to its home and began the first festive meal of 5764 (counting from the creation of the world), with the traditional 'signs' or symbols of the New Year, beginning with an apple and honey, while reciting the prayer 'May it be G-d's will that we should have a good and sweet year.' The next morning, (and the following day too) many Jews spend between five to six hours at the synagogue, reciting numerous prayers, while looking back at the past year in retrospect and looking ahead to the new year with expectation.

I participated in early morning prayers at Ma'arat HaMachpela, the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. It's difficult to characterize one's own prayer, but I found my worship to be troubled. Reflecting on the past year was very painful. For many years, while living in Kiryat Arba before

moving to Hebron, I prayed at the same synagogue with my friend Rabbi Eli Horowitz, sitting one row behind him. Year after year I would not only see his prayer, but in many cases actually sense it, especially during the High Holy days of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. I was only a few months ago that Rabbi Eli Horowitz and his dear wife Dina were cut down in their apartment, murdered while eating their Sabbath meal on a Friday night. This Rosh HaShana his image seemed to be constantly before my eyes.

One Saturday morning, during prayers, a friend of mine said something to me about the year starting off with a 'bang.' When I asked him what he was talking about he looked at me with surprise and asked, "what, you don't know?" When I shrugged he added, "Negahot – a terrorist infiltrated last night, started shooting, and killed two people."

Just as we were sitting down to eat on Friday night, so too, Eyal and Sarah Iberbaum, together with neighbors Shai and Shira Abraham, with some other guests, were dipping an apple in honey. The Iberbaums and Abrahams live in Negahot, about ten miles south-west of Hebron. A community of over thirty families, Negahot faced tremendous hurdles in the past few years as a result of the Oslo Accords because the main approach road to the community was transferred to Arafat and the PA. When the Oslo War began three years ago that road was cut off to Negahot's families, who could then enter and leave their community only from the west. Hebron's archivist, Shlomit Gadot, who lives in Negahot, could get to her office here in Hebron only after a two hour drive, as opposed to the twenty minutes it would take before the main road was closed.

Yet, despite the difficulties and terrorist activity in the area, the community continued to thrive. Not only didn't people leave, rather, new families moved in. Negahot families began building permanent houses, allowing them to move out of temporary 'caravan' homes.

Eyal Iberbaum, 27 years old, had served in Negahot while still in the army, and after marrying a year ago, brought his bride to live in this beautifully scenic community. The Iberbaums, together with his neighbors, the Abrahams and some other guests, welcomed the New Year with hope and expectation for a happy, sweet, and good year.

It was just after nine o'clock when their dinner was interrupted by sharp knocking at the door. Eyal asked twice, 'who's there' but received only a garbled, unclear answer. When he slowly opened the door, weapon in hand, a twenty-one year old terrorist from a nearby Arab village opened fire with an automatic rifle, killing Iberbaum. A guest in the house quickly shot at the terrorist, preventing him from entering the home. The terrorist, standing outside, started blasting his rifle at the 'caravan' home, whose walls are constructed of plasterboard. As a result of this shooting, seven month old Shaked Abraham, infant daughter of Shai and Shira, was hit in the chest. Her father, an ambulance driver, together with his wife attempted to resuscitate their daughter, to no avail. She died in their arms. Two other guests were slightly wounded.

Soldiers serving in Negahot quickly arrived at the site and within two minutes killed the Arab attacker. It was later learned that the murderer, Mahmoud Hamdan, was recently released from an Israeli prison after serving thirteen months because he planned to blow himself up in a suicide attack against Israelis. An Arab gets a year in jail for attempted murder, is released, and then fulfills his wish by killing a baby and a 27 year old man on the eve of the New Year.

At the end of every year, it is customary in certain circles to crown a 'person of the year.' I spent some time thinking about who is my 'person of the year.' In the end, I decided that my choice is not one particular person - rather it is a collective – Am Yisrael, living in Eretz Yisrael – the people of Israel, living in the Land of Israel – they are my 'person of the year.' Sure, people like Rabbi Eli and Dina Horowitz, Shaked Abraham and Eyal Iberbaum. Not only them though – but also Eli and Dina's children, Shaked's parents, and so many others, who have been afflicted by Arab terror which has left hundreds and thousands of dead and wounded. These are the people who are continuing to live – who are not giving up, are not leaving their homes, and have not despaired of their dream. These are the people of the year – and they are not just in Yesha, - Judea, Samaria and Gaza. They are from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and Hadera and Haifa, Eilat and Shlomi – continuing to live – to dip an apple in honey, wishing each other a happy, sweet and good New Year, despite the difficulties, despite the pain. This is the real Am Yisrael which has returned home – to our eternal home, our only home, Eretz Yisrael. (Jewish Community of Hebron Sep 29)

The Price of the Left By Michael Freund

There was something truly sinister about this past Friday's edition of Haaretz, the paper of record of Israel's Left. Although it was the eve of Rosh Hashana, which is traditionally a time for spiritual introspection and national unity, the editors of Haaretz had other, far less holy thoughts on their minds.

After three months and countless hours of investigation by over a dozen of its top journalists, the paper decided to devote an entire special section of its holiday edition to "The price of the settlements."

The 40-page (!) pullout, complete with charts, maps and colorful graphs, was clearly designed with one goal in mind: to persuade the Israeli public that the Jewish settlement enterprise in Judea, Samaria and Gaza has been one big, costly mistake.

Haaretz, of course, has every right to adopt such a position, even if it appears

to have more in common with Palestinian nationalism than with Zionism.

And, in fact, this has long been the paper's stance, as Editor-in-Chief Hanoch Marmari himself pointed out in last week's special section.

"Since the Six Day War in 1967," Marmori wrote, "Haaretz has published more than 10,000 editorials. Many of them hundreds over the years addressed the need to evacuate the settlements in order to make possible the establishment of a viable Palestinian state."

Aside from the questionable methodology employed by the newspaper, which compared the cost of providing services in distant, outlying settlements with those offered in the center of the country, there is something far more disturbing at work here.

After all, what does it say about the Left's world view when it begins to place a price tag on minority groups within society? Does it mean to suggest that some groups are "worth" the price involved, while others are not? To appreciate just how chilling this entire approach can be, try replacing the word "settlements" in the Haaretz report with "the elderly," or "Ethiopian immigrants," or "development towns."

You would, rightly, be denounced as heartless or racist, or both. It should go without saying that Israeli citizens over the so-called Green Line are entitled to the same array of government services as their fellow citizens living within pre-1967 Israel. But the entire thrust of the Haaretz report seems aimed at singling out the settlers and effectively presenting them as pricey parasites sucking the country dry.

The result is the demonization of an entire population group, one that loyally serves in the army, pays its taxes and defends the state.

INDEED, THE authors of the Haaretz report seem to think that the cost of providing protection to Jewish settlers is the fault of the settlers themselves, rather than of those attacking them.

But that's like blaming the victim of a robbery for the high cost of catching criminals. If Palestinian terrorism did not exist, there would be no need to spend billions defending against it.

Moreover, if we start applying Haaretz's cost-benefit analyses to other parts of the country, what might one conclude about front-line communities such as Kiryat Shmona in the north or Sderot in the south? Are they "worth" the extra defense budgets they require because they sit near a boundary line adjacent to hostile forces?

But to really grasp the absurdity of all this, consider an alternative report one could draw up regarding, say, "The Price of the Left."

To begin with, one would have to take into account the billions in shekels that have gone to keep the kibbutzim afloat over the years. In March 1996, the government agreed to a NIS 5.9 billion plan to save some 76 kibbutzim from bankruptcy. Under the arrangement the kibbutzim were allowed to write off most of their debt and reschedule the rest over a generous 20-year period, all at taxpayer expense, no less.

This deal came barely seven years after a December 1989 government rescue plan in which the kibbutzim saw another NIS 1.67 billion written off as well. At the time the kibbutzim promised not to seek government assistance again.

On top of the "price of the kibbutzim" one should also throw in the cost of Israel's failed socialist system, which was established, cultivated and developed by the Left throughout the decades in which it held power. Punitive tax rates of 50% on individual income, endless bureaucratic red tape and archaic labor laws have all served to stifle Israel's entrepreneurial spirit and energies.

The Left's economic legacy has been on display this week, with the Histadrut labor union shutting down government offices while customs agents caused a near-riot at Ben-Gurion International Airport due to the work stoppage.

Who knows how many billions have been lost over the years as a result of the Left's mishandling of the economy? And, while we are on the subject, what about the high cost in blood that the Left's failed peace policies have bequeathed the country?

It is thanks to the Oslo Accords that Israel has seen over 1,100 of its citizens murdered in the past decade in Palestinian terror attacks, with thousands of others injured. The human toll and economic cost of the Left's diplomatic disaster has been, quite simply, incalculable. By bringing the PLO army to our borders and giving them guns, the Left has imperiled the future of the state, weakening Israel strategically and subjecting it to carnage and conflict.

Add it all together the kibbutzim, the socialism and Oslo and the result you get for "The Price of the Left" is a pretty hefty figure, one that almost certainly exceeds the so-called cost of the settlements.

So the next time Haaretz decides to reach for their calculators, they might want to stop and consider the wisdom of such an approach. Because the numbers, as they say, just don't add up. (Jerusalem Post Oct 1)

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