



ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

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much more.
Adding his voice to the defeatism that has necessarily taken hold of the senior echelons of the IDF in the wake of its enactment of last month's withdrawal and expulsion plan, on Tuesday Brig.-Gen. Udi Dekel, the head of Strategic Planning in the General Staff, claimed at another academic conference that the transformation of Gaza into "Hamastan"

Events...

December 4-13

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Commentary...

The Rewards of Cynicism By Caroline Glick

The announcements this week by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's top advisers, in-house generals and Vice Premier Shimon Peres (along with Sharon's dubious denials) that the government will now begin planning more land giveaways to the Palestinians after last month's destruction of our communities in Gaza and northern Samaria ought to have caused a furor in the country. And yet it is hard to escape the impression that these latest announcements are something of an anticlimax.

Politically, the announcements only served to reinforce the sense that Sharon's political and policy machinations have passed all previous bounds of cynicism. After all, before the Likud Central Committee's vote on Monday regarding the date of elections for the party leadership, Sharon and his advisers strenuously denied any plan to continue the prime minister's policy of confronting Palestinian terrorism by expelling Jews from their homes and destroying their communities.

It isn't that anyone really believed his protestations, although the local media, which to all intents and purposes act as an adjunct to Sharon's official spin team, were quick to give credence to these fundamentally unconvincing claims. More than anything, the lack of public outrage at Sharon's latest policy flip-flop, like the yawn that greeted the exposure of his flagrantly illegal election fund-raising during his recent visit to New York, stems from a widespread sense that the political system in Israel is incurably corrupt. It isn't that Israelis are apathetic about the fact that the prime minister doesn't even pretend not to lie or cheat. It is just that at this point most people feel powerless to do anything about it.

Aside from what the plan to expand the government's policy of national cannibalism tells us about the corruption of Israel's political system by Sharon and his associates, it also makes clear a larger point about the consequences of surrender. As events in Gaza, Judea and Samaria since the government enacted its withdrawal and expulsion plan last month have shown, the adoption of a surrender policy automatically rules out any option for achieving either a peace agreement or agreed and credible security arrangements with the Palestinians or neighboring Arab states.

Addressing an annual conference at the left-wing Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University on Wednesday, head of Military Intelligence Maj.-Gen. Aharon Ze'evi Farkash stated dryly that al-Qaida has exploited Gaza's breached border with Egypt to infiltrate its operatives into the area. The disturbing aspect of Farkash's statement is that it was not accompanied by a pledge that Israel will kill or arrest these operatives before they have a chance to set up operations in the area. Then again, such a statement would in the end be counterproductive because now that Israel has abandoned Gaza, it is unclear what options that IDF has for contending with this new threat. As well, Israel's deterrent posture vis-a-vis the Palestinians was so eroded by the withdrawal and expulsion that it is hard to know how uttering yet another empty threat would do anything other than weaken Israel's credibility that

has much to recommend it. In Dekel's view, "there is a potential that Hamas will be more committed than the Palestinian Authority [to stop attacking Israel] the moment it takes responsibility and control of the Strip." The fact that he made this statement just hours after Hamas released an al-Qaida-style videotape of kidnapped and bound Israeli businessman Sasson Nuriel begging for his life just before he was murdered simply makes the complete disconnect from reality that his statement exposes all the more dramatic.

It is true that Hamas, with its ideological and strategic clarity, could cut a deal with Israel much more easily than the PLO can. But then again, that clarity, which is based on a total dedication to the annihilation of Israel, is what makes the notion that it is possible to take solace in Hamas control of Palestinian society insane.

In the meantime, the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, has continued to extol its support for continued war against Israel and for the empowerment of Hamas as a "legitimate" political party. The PA indirectly supported Hamas's kidnapping and murder of Nuriel though its official media organs, which reported as fact Hamas's contention that Nuriel – who owned a candy factory – was an intelligence officer.

TODAY ONLY two things seem to bother the PA: Israel's counterterrorism operations, which Abbas and his deputies refer to as "barbaric acts of terrorism," and the fear that they may lose international support. The PA attempted to deal with the latter concern this week when it leaked a Syrian directive to Hamas and Islamic Jihad calling on the terror groups to continue their attacks against Israel. The obvious purpose of publishing the report was to get Syria blamed for the PA's own pro-terror policies.

The Egyptians, who were supposed to be the guarantors that Gaza would not turn into a base for global terrorism and that its border with the Sinai would remain sealed, have expressed no embarrassment over the fact that their military forces along the border not only have done nothing to stop the open cross border traffic between Gaza and the Sinai, they have facilitated it. Rather than voicing contrition or acting to exert effective control over the border, the Egyptians have demanded that Israel allow their forces to deploy in Judea and Samaria where, the Egyptians claim, they will reenact their operations in Gaza. For his part, Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak reacted to the mayhem that he enabled by telling the media that Sharon is thwarting peace prospects.

All of the actions and statements by the Palestinian leadership and the Egyptians show that in the wake of Israel's abandonment of Gaza and northern Samaria, it has both curtailed its military options and cast off all possibility of ever reaching either a political settlement with the Palestinians or security arrangements regarding the Palestinians with Egypt or Jordan. The Palestinians realize that they no longer have an incentive to negotiate with Israel because Israel will surrender without even a fig leaf of an agreement. From their perspective, the lesson of the withdrawal and expulsion plan – and now the latest announcements that more land transfers are in the offing – is that there is no reason for them to concede anything.

The Egyptians have learned that they can negotiate security arrangements with Israel, not abide by any of their commitments, and continue to be viewed as a positive force in the region by all parties concerned. The fact that Egypt has paid no price for its duplicity shows Cairo that there is no justification for adhering to Israeli demands that it behave like a good neighbor and stop encouraging and facilitating Palestinian terrorists.

For their part, the Jordanians – who for the past five years have successfully sealed their border with Israel to terrorist infiltration – have no interest in getting involved in the terror swamp now expanding its depth and breadth in Judea and Samaria. Not only is Jordanian society overwhelmingly

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pro-Islamist, but Jordan would end up having to confront Egypt as well as its own people if it gave Israel a hand in dealing with the Palestinians. Quite simply, after last month's withdrawal, cooperating with Israel holds costs but no benefits for the Palestinians, Jordanians and Egyptians.

SHARON AND his associates argue that the rationale for continued retreat is the absence of a diplomatic option for achieving peace. According to their reasoning, surrendering territory to terrorists is in Israel's interest because in doing so, Israel is able to determine its borders in accordance with its needs. But there is a major flaw in this logic.

In the absence of a diplomatic option, it is necessary for Israel – as for any state contending with such issues – to take unilateral steps that ensure its interests. But it is in Israel's interest to prevent al-Qaida from establishing operational bases in Gaza, Judea and Samaria. It is in Israel's interests to prevent terrorists from launching rockets, mortars and missiles at its population centers. It is in Israel's interest to prevent terrorists from controlling territory from which they can launch shoulder-fired missiles at civilian aircraft. By surrendering territory to terrorists, Israel is ensuring that it will be unable to do anything meaningful to guarantee any of these vital interests. Rather than unilaterally taking the action necessary to ensure its interests, Israel, by destroying its own communities and transferring territory to its enemies, is actively advancing the cause of its enemies while endangering its citizens and economy.

In the post-mortem review of the causes for Sharon's close victory in the Likud Central Committee on Monday, it is clear that the primary reason he won is that his opposition refused to rally around former finance minister Binyamin Netanyahu as their leader. For the past year and a half Sharon has avoided providing a defense of his policy of surrender by casting every political and policy battle as a personal dispute. With the firm backing of the local media, Sharon has beaten all his opponents by accusing them of the crime of attempting to usurp his power. It is not that his political opponents cannot do anything against this tactic, it is just that to date they have refused to adopt the one remedy – providing an alternate, agreed-upon leader to replace him – that could force Sharon to engage in a policy debate.

In light of this, there is no reason for Israelis in general or for Sharon's political opponents specifically to despair over the results of Monday's central committee vote. All that is necessary to return vibrancy to the political debate in Israel is to maintain pressure on Sharon by rallying around the one leader with the ability to actually win a national election.

Once this obstacle has been mounted, it is necessary for Sharon's opponents in the Likud and its sister parties on the Right to make the point that the absence of a diplomatic option is not a justification for the further abandonment of Israel's right to guarantee its national interests. Such a debate will constrict Sharon's maneuver room as he plots a course for further withdrawals. Pointing out that fact that the lack of a diplomatic option was exacerbated, not alleviated, by last month's withdrawals and expulsions will also serve to signal to the Palestinians and their allies that their ability to scoff at Israel's demands for action against terrorists may be smaller than they now believe it to be.

At any rate, the cynicism with which Sharon and his allies have infected Israel's political culture must end as soon as possible, and it is within the power of his political opponents to take the steps necessary to bring this about. (Jerusalem Post Sep 29)

Who Killed the Bush Doctrine? By Michael Rubin

On January 20, 2005, George W. Bush outlined the goal of his second term. "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," he said. "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."

Less than a year later, the Bush doctrine is dead, the victim not of outside circumstances, but rather lack of will and ineptness. While Bush may be sincere, across the Middle East, his administration's willingness to sacrifice those seeking freedom has become legendary.

Take Libya: On March 12, 2004, Bush declared, "We stand with courageous reformers ... Earlier today, the Libyan government released Fathi el-Jahmi. He's a local government official who was imprisoned in 2002 for advocating free speech and democracy. It's an encouraging step toward reform in Libya. You probably have heard, Libya is beginning to change her attitude about a lot of things.

Actually, Libyan strongman Muammar Qadhafi had not changed. Two weeks later, Libyan security rearrested Jahmi. Across the Middle East,

analysts saw Qadhafi's actions as a challenge to Bush. The President responded not by tying rapprochement to El-Jahmi's freedom, but with impotence. As El-Jahmi rots in prison, denied medical care for his diabetes, the U.S. Treasury Department grants waivers to allow billions of dollars of U.S. investment in Libya. According to the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will endorse Qadhafi's reign with a November visit to Tripoli.

The liberation of Iraq demonstrated that after years of effete diplomacy, the White House meant what it said. Bush reversed that victory.

It should be no surprise that Qadhafi has since gone on a rampage. In May 2005, he imprisoned dissident writer Abdul Razzaq al-Mansouri. In June 2005, regime elements tortured to death dissident journalist Daif al-Ghazal. Hundreds of political prisoners remain in Libyan jails.

The Bush administration also fumbled Lebanon. On March 8, 2005, Bush spoke at the National Defense University. "Today I have a message for the people of Lebanon," he said. "Lebanon's future will be in your hands. The American people are on your side." Perhaps many Americans were, but not the State Department.

When Condoleezza Rice visited Lebanon on July 22, she met not only with the new Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, but also with pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud, the man whose quest for an extra-constitutional third term began the cascade that led to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and sparked the Cedar Revolution. Syrian television, Hezbollah's Al-Manar channel, and the Arabic-language satellite station Al-Jazeera all broadcast her handshake with the symbol of tyranny.

The Lebanese were not alone in their betrayal. Egyptians were aghast when, on September 11, new U.S. Ambassador Frank Ricciardone appeared on Egyptian television and declared, "Let me just reiterate the congratulations of the United States of America to Egypt for this great accomplishment. As you know, President Bush has telephoned President Mubarak ... to congratulate him and Egypt on the accomplishments of this past election."

Four days earlier, Mubarak had declared victory in elections marred by harassment of opponents, fraud, and the state's refusal to allow international monitors access. The Egyptian people, in protest, boycotted the polls. Voter turnout was only 20 percent. Rather than support the Egyptian people, the President's representative fawned on a dictator. Sometimes, silence can be the best response.

Embrace of autocracy has become the rule rather than the exception in U.S. foreign policy. At the request of the Palestinian Authority, the State Department banned Issam Abu Issa, a Palestinian anti-corruption activist slated to testify in the House of Representatives.

Bush declared during his 2005 State of the Union Address, "To the Iranian people, I say tonight, as you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you." But Rice appointed an ExxonMobil advisor who advised against aiding dissidents to cover the State Department's Iran policy planning portfolio.

Against the backdrop of Bush's indifference, Turkish democracy has taken a step backward. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has both ignored rulings of the Turkish Supreme Court and retaliated against plaintiffs. After Turkish businessman Mustafa Suzer won five lawsuits against the Turkish government for its illegal seizure of Kent Bank, Erdogan not only refused to abide by the court verdict, but he also ordered a travel ban on Suzer and, without any court order, sent bulldozers to demolish a restaurant on his property.

Emboldened by Washington's silence and frustrated at the constraints of an independent judiciary, the Turkish leader has used his parliamentary majority to lower the retirement age of judges so that he can replace nearly half of Turkey's 9,000 judges before the next election.

As they do with Bush, the chattering classes of Europe, Israel, and the American elite once criticized Reagan for his talk of the "Evil Empire" and his willingness to endanger detente for the sake of a few dissidents. Reagan was right, though, and more than two hundred million Soviets had a chance at freedom because of it.

Bush might have been equally successful. Images of Iraqis, Afghans, and Lebanese voting are more powerful than any terrorist car bomb or Al-Qaida video. Armchair experts may say Iraq's liberation emboldened terrorists. But the pages of Arabic newspapers like Al-Sharq al-Awsat and Al-Hayat now carry an unprecedented debate about democracy, which experts said could not happen. Liberals may be a minority in the Arab world, but they have begun to find their voice.

Rice may echo the President, but by embracing dictators, she has undercut the spirit of his message. Dissidents should not be treated as ornaments, to be displayed when convenient but kept at arm's length. They are the foundation of freedom. While Bush might once have been remembered for bringing freedom to 30 million Afghans and 25 million Iraqis, his legacy is

fast becoming one of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.
The writer, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is editor of the Middle East Quarterly. (Haaretz Sep 30)

Open Letter from the Youth - and Rabbi's Response

The youth who struggled valiantly this summer have not yet fully recovered from the abandonment of Gush Katif/Shomron and the expulsion of the Jews therein - and some of them have surprising claims. The following open letter by one of these youths expresses the pain and shock of the disengagement and that which followed. The letter, and a response to it from a leading rabbi, were published in Hebrew in the weekly Torah sheet distributed by Jerusalem's Meir Institute over the past two weeks. The letter was written by a yeshiva student who recently graduated one of the high school yeshivot in the south, and the response was penned by Rabbi Elisha Aviner, rabbi of the Maaleh Adumim neighborhood of Mitzpeh Nevo.

"We are the youth of Summer 5765, who instead of hiking in the rivers of the Golan Heights, cut across thorn fields in the Negev in the middle of the night, who instead of working during our summer vacation, stood at intersections day and night.

We are the youth who planted and built, and added goodness, and saw how all this was crudely trampled.

We are the youth that wanted to enlist in the elite units, and saw black-uniformed IDF soldiers dragging out mothers and hitting boys and girls.

We are the youth who sat behind bars - and no, not on drug-related or criminal charges.

We are the youth whom the rabbis confused, and yet still we walked between the drops.

We are the youth who tore their cloths and recited the blessing, "Blessed is the True Judge" well before [the others].

We are the youth who, instead of laughing with our friends, cried together bitter tears.

They spit on us, they crushed us. We are broken.

We want to cry, we want to feel the pain, we want to be angry - and in truth, sometimes we want to hate.

We are "purely righteous," but allow us to complain about the evil [a play on Rabbi Kook's famous teaching, "The purely righteous do not complain about evil, but rather add goodness"].

We are the youth of Summer 5765, we gave our souls, and after we were expelled, without any delay you immediately began reminding us from every possible stage that "we have not abandoned the State" and that "let's remember and not get confused - this is our State of Israel."

You were busy with discussions about the "day after," even while the heroes among us were busy dismantling hothouses and gathering ruins and paying the so-heavy price of having the Paradise they knew engraved in their memory as a pile of ruins.

Our Rabbis!

Instead of helping us cure our still-bleeding sores, you are busy 'saving souls' so that Heaven forbid, may it not come to pass, we won't stop saying Hallel [prayer of praise and thanksgiving] for the State, or go off the path [of religious-Zionism].

From your standpoint, the main thing is that we not go to the hilltops, or become street-youth, or to a hareidi yeshiva - but you care not about our wounded souls.

But excuse us - you are mistaken. The loss is greater than the gain.

Perhaps you will succeed, and we will continue to say the Prayer for the State of the Israel

But we will know that you care only about the knitted skullcaps on our heads and not about the person underneath.

We will continue holding the flag, but we'll have a scratch in our hearts.

Our Rabbis!

Embrace us without calculations and help us cry and wipe away the tears.

Response, from Rabbi Elisha Aviner:

You are right. Now is not the time for speeches and exalted ideologies. "Everything has its time," King Solomon teaches us in Kohelet [Ecclesiastes]. Now it is "time to cry." With G-d's help, we will reach the "time to heal," but we must not skip over the crying stage. Our Torah relates to crying to teach us that this is an important and even necessary response to difficult and sad events. We cry over the harm done to individuals, and all the more so over the general destruction. Our heart weeps.

"A time to cry" - but we must be careful not to fill ourselves with the atmosphere of "time to eulogize," of eulogizing our beliefs, our spiritual philosophy and our outlook. Nor is it a "time to throw stones" on our State.

You are right, we cannot just continue as usual after all that has happened. Our soul is wounded. Our hearts are filled with anger, and sometimes we feel an inner need to scream and even to kick out. But we must not allow our feelings of fury and frustration to gather up and turn into a solid ideology of despair, estrangement, inward-turning and escapism.

Your criticism must be directed also towards those who, the day after the expulsion, and even before we had a chance to absorb what had happened, already began spitting on the flag. It must be directed at those who immediately resolved that our path ever since the establishment of the State had failed or had come to its end, and that we must turn our back on Israeli society, and that "face to face" campaigns are a waste of time. [They] wish to tear the Nation of Israel into little pieces.

We do not rule on capital cases while in the midst of a storm of emotion; study requires prayer. Matters of such great import for our nation can be judged only with calmness, clarity of mind and moderation. As is written in the Ethics of the Fathers, "Be moderate in judgment."

May this coming year be one of a "time to plant, a time to build, a time to laugh, and a time to dance." May the year and its curses end, may the new year and its blessings begin. (Israel National News Oct 2)

A Broken Vase By Moshe Kempinski

A beautiful vase has been broken and the shards threaten to be dispersed throughout the country. This fragile vase used to be filled with the faithful and proud farmers of Gush Katif, together with the determined and prayerful lovers of Israel from every corner of this land. It was filled with prayers, dreams, sacrifice and song. It was a delicate and ancient vessel, filled with vision and hope.

Yet, it has been shattered.

One can see the brokenness in the eyes and feel it in the tension prevalent among the expelled Jews residing temporarily in hotels. The government has succeeded in rattling their spirit and whittling away at their determined spirit. The seemingly purposeful lack of solutions and the constant threats of more expulsions combine to add fuel to the fire of inner tensions raging in these people.

The damage is also felt in the inner struggling and recriminations being heard within the camp of the faithful. One part of this camp clings to their feeling of connectedness to the State of Israel and its institutions. They feel that the state has abused its powers in a reckless fashion, but that it is but a vessel. They believe that though the vessel has been misused, it must be elevated to its holy purpose rather than be discarded.

The other part of the camp sees this lingering connection to the state, even after what the state has perpetrated, as a dangerous form of fantasy and wishful thinking. The vessel of the state has to be refashioned to truly mirror its divine purpose. This group sees the former group's reverence for the State and its institutions as one of the issues that weakened our struggle and eventually led to the quick capitulation of Gush Katif.

At times, it looks like Ariel Sharon is beginning to see success in his desire to break apart that powerful of community of faith that so threatens his view of the world.

Two groups of faithful Jews who love this land and its people battling each other; as a result, the cracks in the vase become deeper and wider.

The broken shards look to that which was within the vase to determine what brought about the breaking, rather than looking outside.

Were we not faithful enough? Were we too "loving"? Were we too disconnected from the rest of the population in this land? Did we not pray enough? Did we not act strongly enough?

All this introspection is natural, important and vital, but also tends to point the spotlight away from the source of the shattering.

This country has been set in the midst of a struggle for its soul and spirit for many years. It has become a battle between destiny and immediate gratification. It has become a war to determine whether Israel is about the Jewish people and their purpose in this world, or about the citizens of this country and their immediate material need and gains.

Sharon won a recent election in the Likud Central Committee elections by simply enticing people to vote for him in order to ensure their financial or political positions. Discussions relating to the possibility that Sharon may be forming a new party revolves around his need to gather people and parties around him that eschew ideology and focus on standards of living and financial gain.

Sharon is but the symptom of a greater malaise that has engulfed large portions of this country as it has engulfed many in most Western countries. This ancient enemy is called selfishness. Faith, destiny and purpose are anathema to this selfishness.

Today, I brought my car to the garage to be repaired. The owner of the garage, Shlomo, noticed my orange ribbons.

He said, "Don't you think it's time to take those down? Your fight is over."

I assumed we were going to get into a political discussion and I replied indignantly, "You don't get it, the fight is just beginning."

He responded, "You may not be understanding me. I have been through every war in this country. I was on the second tank to reach the Suez Canal. I was in one of the first tanks to get to the Old City during its liberation in the Six Day War. I love this country, but I am watching it being ripped apart by people whose only interest is money and prestige. For so many people in this country, their most favorite location in this country is not Jerusalem, it is the airport. It is from there they go on their trips abroad. We have lost the country to petty desires."

I said to him that I was just at an event in one of the Jerusalem parks with over ten thousand young people in orange, standing together with a determination to bring this country back the vision it has lost. They sang and danced and ended the evening with a resounding declaration of Sh'ma Yisrael.

He looked at me with eyes that had softened somewhat and said, "I want my son to want to put a flag in his room. I want him to want to put my father's Betar [Zionist youth movement] medallion on his desk. I want him to love this country I have sacrificed so much for."

The people of Israel that have been let loose from their moorings of faith may be reaching for materialism, but they are yearning for purpose. It is that yearning that we must begin to nurture in all segments of our people, because it is that yearning that will put the vase back together again. (Israel National News Oct 2)

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Sharon Renews the RRH Doctrine B Steven Plaut

I've long suspected that it is the Israeli grand strategy to defeat the Palestinians by forcing them to laugh themselves to death.

That seems to be the only possible way to understand the latest resuscitation of the RRH Doctrine, which has dominated Israeli policy toward the Palestinians and the Arab states since the early 1990s.

The RRH Doctrine was invented in the early days of Oslo and stands for Really, Really Hard. Israeli governments would make deals to hand over most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the PLO, while reassuring Israelis that there was no reason for worry - if the Palestinians misbehaved, Israel would hit back at them Really, Really Hard.

The Boy Who Cried Wolf was a far more credible strategist.

Even if, perchance, anyone ever took the RRH threats seriously, by the mid-1990s the RRH was little more than an overly-long-running joke. Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres had threatened it during the early days of Oslo. Later, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, after each and every act of terrorism, would loudly invoke RRH, but then did little, if anything, to retaliate. After Netanyahu came Ehud Barak, who once again threatened RRH regularly. But his only implementation of it consisted of chopper attacks on empty Palestinian buildings - and only after the PLO was given advance notification, so that all humans and terrorists could be evacuated.

RRH was also used by Barak (and other prime ministers) to threaten Hizbullah in Lebanon and their Syrian puppet masters. After each Hizbullah attack on Israeli towns and on Israeli forces inside southern Lebanon, Israel threatened the most serious RRH. But, in the end, the only manifestation of RRH implemented by Barak consisted of a panicked unilateral capitulation and withdrawal from southern Lebanon, which left Hizbullah sitting smack dab on Israel's border, with thousands of its rockets aimed at northern Israel, with Haifa in range.

When Ariel Sharon first revealed his Gaza-Samaria Disengagement Plan, after winning the last Israeli election, it too was accompanied by empty threats of RRH. Israel could not get the PLO to make any concessions in exchange for surrender of the Gaza Strip and the eviction of the Jewish population there; Sharon nevertheless decided to implement the Mitzna Plan, against which he had campaigned, and withdraw without any quid pro quo. He would just go ahead with unilateral capitulation, whether the PLO liked it or not. And if the PLO failed to contain Hamas and prevent terror attacks against Israel after the withdrawal, why, then, Sharon's government would order the Israeli Defense Forces to respond with serious RRH.

Yeah, sure.

Hours after the Gaza capitulation was completed, and all Israeli troops and settlers had been removed, the rocket and mortar attacks on the Negev began. The PLO was calling Sharon's bluff.

Almost as old as the RRH Doctrine is the Who-Could-Have-Ever-Predicted-That Syndrome. Since Oslo, every new Israeli concession resulted in escalated Palestinian violence. And the Israeli chattering classes would sigh and ask rhetorically, "Who could have possibly foreseen this?" Likewise, after each violation of the Oslo Accords by the PLO, the media and the left-wing politicians would pout, "Who could have predicted that?"

After years of daily proof that the entire Oslo concept was unworkable, its advocates were still responding to each new failure as if it was total serendipity.

The Israeli media could not foresee any failures of the Oslo capitulations and appeasements because the media are by and large the occupied territories of Israel's radical Left. The overseas media were even less capable of foreseeing the consequences of Oslo because they were far more interested in bashing Israel than understanding anything about the Middle East conflict.

The answer to the rhetorical question of "Who could have foreseen the failures of Oslo?" is, "Anyone not blinded by ideology." A few weeks after the handshake on the White House lawn in 1993, I published my first article predicting the complete failure of the Rabin-Peres Oslo initiative; in fact, it was the first such article published in North America. I predicted that the PLO would simply use any territory turned over to it by Israel to build terror infrastructure and launch attacks on Israel. I wrote of future rocket attacks and sniper fire against Israeli towns from the PLO-controlled areas years before they actually began in earnest. And I was hardly alone in 20/20 foresight.

It was not particularly difficult in 1993 to see why Oslo would fail. It is even easier now, with 12 years of disastrous "peace process" experience, to understand why Sharon's Gaza disengagement will result in an enormous escalation of violence, not in any relaxation of tensions.

Let's give the Arabs some credit. Israel has been making so many threats of RRH ever since the Oslo "peace process" began that a Palestinian leader would have to be learning-disabled to take any of them seriously. If I consider them a joke, why should Abu Mazen believe them?

The Oslo Accords produced the greatest escalation in Palestinian terrorism and atrocities in modern Israeli history. At their most severe, Israeli retaliations took the form of some targeted assassinations of Hamas and PLO terror leaders. More often than not, Israeli retaliations consisted of meaningless gestures like bombing the aforementioned empty buildings or making sonic booms over terrorist concentrations, and of course the ever louder empty threats of RRH. On Israel's northern border, virtually no retaliations against Hizbullah took place, even after Hizbullah kidnapped and murdered three Israeli army officers and fired rockets into Israel.

All of this brings us to the latest rocket attacks by the PLO on Sderot a few days ago. The main effect of the Gaza capitulation is that the PLO can now import unlimited supplies of weaponry from Egypt, with no ability of Israel to interfere. Israeli troops are no longer on the ground inside the Gaza Strip.

We already see the results and we can clearly foresee the "unexpected" consequences that will be taking place in the near future. The PLO and its affiliates now have all the freedom they need to upgrade their rockets. The new, improved Kassam rockets will be able to hit Ashkelon from Gaza. Sharon's Gaza capitulation will turn the Negev town of Sderot into Israel's Stalingrad. The PLO has already converted an abandoned synagogue building in Gush Katif into a weapons facility.

When the latest rockets hit Sderot after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon and his people responded mainly with a new round of RRH. The laughter from Ramallah was deafening. Let's note that back before 1993, when Israel held Gaza tightly with on-the-ground military rule, there were no Kassam rockets in Gaza. The Palestinian savages threw stones at Jews because real weapons were hard to procure.

The PLO knows what we all know; namely, that Sharon is afraid to take the only action that, in the end, can end the shooting of Kassam rockets into Jewish homes . R&D, or Re-Occupation and DeNazification. Let's hope his successor will be less pusillanimous. (Israel National News Oct 2)

The writer teaches at the University of Haifa and is author of The Scout.

גמר חתימה טובה