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Commentary...

A Time and Place for Prayer By Efraim Inbar

Most Israelis are not aware that the plateau of the Temple Mount is not the property of the Wakf

A section of the Temple Mount is in danger of collapse, and the Jewish state doesn't seem terribly perturbed.

The place was the location of Abraham's ultimate test of faith, the sacrifice of Isaac. It is where King Solomon built the first Temple (960 BCE) which, after its destruction by the Babylonians in the sixth century BCE, was rebuilt by the returning exiles 70 years later, only to be destroyed again by the Romans.

In the 20th century the descendants of these Jews have returned to the Land of Israel in great numbers; but the Jewish national movement - Zionism - stopped at the Temple Mount's gates.

While religious and historic motifs fueled Zionism, its secular leadership shied away from ascertaining full Jewish rights over the Temple Mount. This held even when the Mount fell under Israel's control as a result of the 1967 war; Israel allowed the Wakf to continue to administer the site.

Moreover, the secular Zionist establishment entered into a dubious alliance with haredi rabbis implementing an old injunction against prayer on the Mount - despite the fact that the beliefs of the latter were generally treated with disdain as representing medieval obscurantism.

Most Israelis are not aware that the plateau of the Temple Mount is not the property of the Wakf and that the Wakf has no legal right to make any changes beyond the area of the old Muslim religious sites situated on it.

Nevertheless, the Wakf has expanded its control of the Temple Mount compound by illegally adding places of worship for Muslims. In recent years, it has also systematically erased much archeological evidence of past Jewish presence on the Temple Mount.

With a few notable exceptions this Taliban-style behavior elicited hardly any concern from Israeli liberal quarters. Many leftists display great understanding of Muslim sensitivities, but cannot comprehend the longing of a Jew for a physical encounter with the metaphysical nature of the Temple Mount.

PRIMA FACIA, it is incredible that the Supreme Court, which champions the rule of law and human rights for all, has failed to uphold the duty of the state to apply its laws to the Temple Mount and the right of Jews to pray at their holiest place.

It has usually refrained from demanding that the state organs implement the law pertaining to buildings or archeological artifacts on the Temple Mount.

All petitions to pray on the day commemorating the destruction of the two Temples (Tisha Be'av), or on any other occasion, were turned down.

As for the Shin Bet, by telling the courts in closed camera that Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount would bring about public disturbances by incited Muslims, it has sanctioned the court's directives, allowing the state to relinquish

ISRAEL NEWS

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A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

its duty to prevent י"ט
criminal behavior and to violate the
fundamental right of freedom of
worship.

The courts rarely seek the opinion
of other security experts; these are
anyway usually disregarded.

Jerusalem is the capital of the
Jewish state, and the Jews there are in
the majority. Moreover, there is plenty
of space for Jews to pray in the
Temple Mount compound without

interfering with Muslim religious practices or Wakf-controlled areas.

It is the duty of the Israel Police to keep public order; for it to cave in
to threats of disorder is unacceptable. The police is quite capable of quelling
any domestic trouble originating from Israeli Arabs or Palestinians.

By now it is clear that the intifada was premeditated and that it had little
connection to Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in 2000. Moreover, the
Palestinians have lost much of their influence in Jerusalem and are in no
position to interfere with Israeli actions there.

The threat of an international Muslim upheaval is also slim. The Temple
Mount - of only secondary religious importance to the Muslim world - has
been under Israeli control since 1967, and we have seen no jihad war to free
it. Most Muslims, particularly Muslim leaders, are pragmatic enough to
respect the current equation of power.

Moreover, most such elites have been successful in suppressing Muslim
fanatics, well understanding that demonstrations can get out of hand and
threaten their rule. Muslim states actually prefer to see the Jews policing
the Temple Mount rather than have another Muslim power take over,
particularly when Yasser Arafat is the candidate.

Israeli determination led to the reopening of the Temple Mount for Jews
in August 2003, without any trouble. Thousands have visited it since. Jews
have every right to not only visit the Temple Mount but also to pray there.

It is high time for the Israeli authorities to put an end to the Wakf's
illegal behavior and guarantee the right of Jewish prayer on Judaism's holiest

site. This means building a
synagogue on the Temple Mount
where Jews can pray as their
forefathers did.

*The writer is professor of political
studies at Bar-Ilan University and
the director of the Begin-Sadat
(BESA) Center for Strategic
Studies. (Jerusalem Post Oct 13)*

*On Wednesday, October 20, One Israel Fund presents the
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A Proud Israeli By Ismail Khaldi

Two years ago, a few proud Bedouin Israeli citizens like asked: what is
our position and status in the State of Israel in the midst of its current
situation? After all, Bedouin are part of Israel's success story. During
current times, when Israel is being attacked and accused of being a racist
state, an 'aggressor and an oppressor', we decided that the smallest and
probably most effective thing we could do is to spread our story as part of
Israeli society.

I, Ishmael Khaldi, am Israeli. I served with the IDF, with the Israeli
police, and with the Israeli Defense Ministry. In the last year, I have lost
two Bedouin friends on army duty (God bless their memory) defending the
State of Israel. My friends and family feel that we have a common destiny
with the Jewish people in Israel: our grandparents created this land with
Jewish immigrants who arrived during the 1920s, '30s and '40s to build a
democracy.

Because of this connection to the State of Israel, I cannot stand on the
sidelines during Israel's time of need. I feel that I must speak up and be
heard.

I recently returned from a two-month campus speaking tour North
America, mostly organized by Hasbara Fellowships. This was the fourth
tour I had done over the past year. I've traveled the United States coast to
coast (of course, being a Bedouin nomad, I mainly took Greyhound!) and
flew for a ten day tour across Canada.

The tour was certainly miraculous - a Bedouin shepherd who had never
been to any major city before, all of sudden found himself in downtown

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Manhattan! It proved to be one of the most adventurous, challenging and enriching experiences of my life.

I came to the U.S. and Canada to speak on college campuses about Israel, as one who certainly holds a perspective that is rarely heard - a proud Israeli that is not Jewish. I came to share one man's tale of Israel's culture, society and politics from the perspective of a Bedouin minority in the Jewish State.

Arriving in North America, committed to defending Israel from the poisonous venom of hatred and attacks that I had heard so much about, I expected to see the same commitment on campuses among the Jewish students. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case.

I had heard much about the struggle of pro-Israel student activists, attempting to counter the unbalanced, biased and false accusations made against Israel. I had not come to North America to preach that Israel was perfect. As all Israelis know, Israel has problems like all nations of the world. Still, many students tried to stop me from speaking. There were even students who had the audacity to compare me to Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, making false claims that I was doing the same for Israel.

The United States has always been described as being the home 'of the free' and a home for free speech. How can New Hampshire's slogan read, "live free or die" if the student union is allowed to ban me from telling a cultural story? I can't believe that the hatred for Israel is so strong that student governments are able to defy their own dignity as free American citizens, in order that the truth about Israel should remain a secret.

The deep-seated hatred manifested itself clearly throughout the country with the many loaded questions asked by anti-Israel students. For example, a Muslim student at Rutgers University completely ignored the fact that Israel is a free state and asked, "how could you support a Hebrew state if you're not Jewish?" Another questioner asked, "don't you think that if Israel didn't exist, then the Palestinians wouldn't have any problems?"

In Milwaukee, I was asked "how many Palestinian old men and women have you humiliated while serving in the Israeli police?" How can such a question be asked? If only the truth were known, that Israeli soldiers have on many occasions helped Palestinians!

The situation I encountered on many of the campuses in North America and Canada was horrifying. I was not as shocked by the Arab questioners as I was with the personal threats from, and the severe apathy of the majority of Jewish students.

In my years of speaking to people, I've never received threats or personal attacks like I did speaking on campuses. There were threatening incidents at both the University of Florida and at California State University. Both were chilling. The crowd in Florida was one full of anger and hatred, yet I had to stand before them unsure of the enemy who had sent threats earlier that day. In California I spoke facing a young student who wore a T-shirt with a swastika on it, chewing on a piece of paper as some sort of protest against my talk.

Even more upsetting, I expected to see many more Jewish students who were aware of the situation in Israel, but that wasn't the case. I expected the Jewish students to realize that the situation was not only affecting Israel and Israelis, but Jews all over the world.

On the other hand, the Arab students and their supporters almost all had the last minute news clips from the Middle East. How can Israel's voice be heard if the Jewish students don't have the facts or the knowledge to speak up? I don't take the mass of Jewish students to task for not agreeing with all of Israel's policies, but I do take them to task for not caring about Israel or what happens there. It is the apathy which allows the anti-Israel propaganda to strengthen itself more and more over time.

As a personal aside, sixty years after the horrors of the Holocaust, Israel is going through one of the most critical times in its history. More than 60 years after my grandparents joined their destiny to that of the Jews coming to the Land of Israel, I feel that history is somehow moving backwards. Antisemitism and hatred towards Israel is soaring. Comparing me, a Muslim Bedouin who supports Israel, to the Nazis is just another clear piece of evidence.

And yet, 60 years after the horrors of the Holocaust, I felt that on campus, the Jewish voice is silent. Where are the Jewish students fighting back? My commitment in these crucial days, while Israel is struggling for its right to exist, is to continue the heritage of my grandparents and to stand together to fight for the State of Israel.

History will not tolerate us if we keep our voice silent. We must roll up our sleeves once again to build a better future for Israel and all of its loyal citizens. Israel's right to exist is my right and my people's right, just as Israel's destiny is our destiny.

But just as history demands for me to fight for Israel, history also will not tolerate a generation of Jews who don't care. (NaomiRagen.com Oct 4)
The writer is an Israeli Bedouin, who graduated from Aviv University with an MA in political science. He served with Israel Police, IDF, and the Defense Ministry, and worked at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

One More Palestinian Mistake By Barry Rubin

The PLO returns to its explicit demand of 'Two peoples, one state'

An event of such earthshaking dimensions occurred on October 4 that it should go down in the Middle East history books: an op-ed piece in The New York Times by Michael Tarazi, the PLO's legal adviser, comprising a policy statement of prime importance.

Such an article would never appear without approval by that group's leadership and broad support from its cadre.

Its title, "Two peoples, one state," tells the story.

The PLO's position is now publicly and officially back to where it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Its open goal: Israel's elimination. To say this is nothing new because such has been the implicit aim all along would be a grave mistake. The fact that the PLO has come out into the open with such a position signals a very important change indeed.

This decision is one more sign that any chance for progress in the peace process is an illusion. While road maps, declarations, delegations, and other efforts may contribute to peace in the long-term, in the immediate context they are useless exercises in wishful thinking.

The key to understanding the history of the last half-century's Arab-Israeli conflict is that the PLO was never a true nationalist movement. Had it been, the problem would have been solved long ago.

For the PLO destroying Israel is more important than building an independent Palestinian state or relieving the Palestinian people's suffering. That is why Yasser Arafat turned down Israel's offer at Camp David as well as the Clinton plan, both of which offered a viable independent state with its capital in Jerusalem.

Never fully appreciated about this approach was its irrationality from the standpoint of a genuine Palestinian nationalism. A nationalist wants his people to live in a country of their own in order to build their identity and well being.

Demanding a "right of return" to Israel sabotages any real Palestinian nationalism.

If the goal was to build a strong, stable Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel, everything would be done to discourage refugees from going to Israel. For why should a Palestinian state make a gift of these people, their money and talents to someone else?

But if you know that Israel will reject such a "return," then demanding it ensures postponing the end of the occupation, more violence, casualties, and billions of dollars in compensation.

The demand for return - PLO documents explicitly make this clear - is intended to subvert Israel and place it under Palestinian rule. That being the case, the returnees would not be lost to Palestine but would soon be making a real return - to the State of Palestine, bringing all of Israel with them.

BUT EVEN this slightly subtle two-stage plan proved too much for the PLO; so it has gone back to the explicit demand for a unitary state at the beginning of the process rather than as the outcome of years of subversion.

One need not be a genius to understand the consequences of such a "solution." The daily power struggle, bloodshed and civil war would make what is happening now look like a picnic.

To take the scheme Tarazi proposes seriously would be to assume that the Palestinian leadership is so humanitarian, so liberal and democratic-minded that it will sacrifice its own ambitions and totally change its historic behavior.

The movement's promotion of terrorism and vicious anti-Israel incitement belies any such intention.

Finally, and regrettably, this new campaign shows that even if Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip - or accepts a Palestinian state in all the West Bank too - it will only initiate a new phase in which the Palestinian leadership demands Israel's elimination as the next step.

Tarazi tries to make this Palestinian demand seem something forced on it by Israeli policies. In reality, Palestinian leaders have repeated it in private conversation for years, even at the height of the peace process.

The explicit demand to dismantle Israel rather than seek a Palestinian state alongside it is growing also as a result of the current Palestinian assessment. It is a "right of return" to the 1960s and 1970s arising from the combination of a lost intifada, victory in the international propaganda war, and refusal of a real compromise peace.

It is also one more in a long series of Palestinian mistakes. For every person in the West ready to go along with the Palestinian demand to destroy Israel there are five or 10 willing to accept the movement's supposed nationalist narrative.

They will buy the argument that Palestinians just want their own homeland, but not the idea that it should include Israel as well.

This is even truer of Western states and politicians. The PLO's new line is likely to be a public-relations disaster, undoing many of the movement's apparent gains in the battle for public opinion.

Even Tarazi reveals the hypocrisy of pretending that the new Palestinian policy is a reluctant choice still being debated. He concludes: "The only question is how long it will take, and how much all sides will have to suffer"

before Israeli Jews accept this outcome.

As real Palestinian moderates realize, defining the conflict in these terms ensures that no matter who leads Israel, the struggle will go on for a very long time with far more suffering - and a certainty that Palestinians will not get a state for many years. (Jerusalem Post Oct 13)

The writer is director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center; editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal; and editor of Turkish Studies.

To Tell the Truth By Sarah Honig

I'm ashamed to admit that I dozed off in front of the boob tube one evening, smack in the middle of the news, right when our PM warned about his political opponents' dastardly "campaign of incitement with intentional calls for civil war." As I drifted off, black and white visions from the golden age of the TV of my childhood floated before my eyes.

There I was, among millions of my Israeli compatriots, on a mega-version of To Tell the Truth. We were all panelists in a special extravaganza episode. It differed from the original premise, in which four panelists had to guess which of three guests, each purporting to be the same individual, was the genuine article. Only he told the truth. The other claimants fibbed.

Our expanded panel was saddled with a variation on the theme. Before us were several incarnations of Ariel Sharon. And we had to figure out who the real Arik was.

The Ariks danced rings around us. They took us for suckers. They had us coming and going.

In the background droned current Arik's demands that the prime minister have his way regardless of what others think, regardless of the fact that he lost the party referendum he'd pressed for, that he secured a cabinet majority only after firing dissident ministers and selling the wimpy remainder the notion of a gradual withdrawal, which he then brazenly reneged on, too.

But subtly, images of Arik the democratic leader who expects his underlings' unquestioning compliance were supplanted by Model 1986 Arik. He grabbed the microphone from another PM, Yitzhak Shamir, and hoarsely bellowed: "Who is against terror?" His resonating rhetorical question implied that Shamir (former chief of Lehi operations and Mossad higher-up) wasn't.

Not yet having discovered the illegitimacy of disagreeing with an elected premier, Arik cast doubt on Shamir's patriotic credentials and proceeded to constrict his options.

So who's the real Arik - yesteryear's constrictor or today's he-who-must-be-obeyed?

Again the latter's voice prevailed, asserting that "the IDF must be left out" of the raging controversy he created over settlement evacuations. He railed against the petition signed by Bibi's father and brother appealing to uniformed servicemen to refuse to uproot families from their homes.

THEN, LOUDER and more forcefully, a 1974 sound bite horned in. There was Arik in an undisguised effort to drag the IDF precisely into the settlement imbroglio, urging soldiers to dismiss an order to foil the establishment of an unauthorized Samaria outpost (as distinct from removing a veteran village over three decades old). "This is an illegal order," he thundered. "Orders of this sort must not be carried out!"

One year later, politician Arik again peddled legal advice to military personnel: "If a soldier feels that a given order cannot be squared with his conscience, he must personally stand up to his commanding officer, state his position, and face the disciplinary consequences."

To be fair, Arik was in the most unimpeachable company. On May 27, 1990, Yossi Sarid co-authored (with Meretz's Yair Tzaban) a Yediot Aharonot op-ed - "This Is the Red Line" - in which he declared: "Lest it be said that due advance warning hadn't been served - we shall not obey the transfer order, nor shall our children nor our followers whom we had educated. We will block the way of those who carry out the deportation tasks. We will lie on the road. The day the transfer order - a patently illegal order - is issued shall be the day we refuse to carry out an order."

(Author Amos Oz threatened to blow up bridges.)

In Sarid's defense, however, it must be clarified that the removal he fulminated against so passionately was of Arabs and wasn't even seriously contemplated. Sarid, after all, quite consistently prescribes for Jews what's strictly taboo for Arabs.

Sharon, though, managed to espouse opposite sides of the identical issue. It was the tough old Sharon Israelis re-elected in 2003. They had to choose between him and a candidate who ran on a platform of unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. Sharon made mincemeat of Amram Mitzna's proposal. That's how he got to stay on as the prime minister who now insists on implementing Mitzna's overwhelmingly rejected initiative.

How are we, the collective panel of our national To Tell the Truth production, to make any sense of this? We're now told that the Arik we knew doesn't count, wasn't for real, and shouldn't have been taken at his word.

How, then, do we know we can trust the new Arik?

As the emcee calls for the real Arik to stand up, we all fall down. Flat on our

faces. It hurts and I wake up in a cold sweat. This game's no entertaining diversion.

Hoodwinked, we lose for keeps. (Jerusalem Post Oct 10)

The Semantic War By Saul Singer

Last week, a Kassam rocket killed two children playing under their olive tree in Sderot. This week, the UN Security Council convened an emergency session, not regarding the ongoing slaughter in Sudan or the shelling of an Israeli town, but to consider Israel's response.

There is something wrong with this picture, and it is not just Israel's problem.

In his first debate with President George W. Bush, Senator John Kerry agreed with the international opposition to the war in Iraq, despite having voted for it. Despite the hawkish veneer, Kerry's direction is clearly one of retrenchment. Americans now have a clear choice between Bush's willingness to swim against the global current and Kerry's inclination to swim with it. But what about the current itself?

Bush and Kerry seem to assume that the current is, well, like a current - an immutable fact of life around which one must adjust. Both claim they can win the war anyway. But this current can be changed. In fact, it is impossible to imagine victory against Islamist terrorism without changing it.

The "current" is the idea that international aggression is normal. Even the word aggression, with its judgmental overtones, has gone out of fashion. If anything, the US and Israel are accused of aggression more than actual aggressors, that is the groups and nations that are attacking the West.

The morass into which the concept of aggression has fallen is a key measure of the problem. It was not always so.

When the great minds of the day gathered at Dumbarton Oaks to draft the UN Charter in 1945, not only did the word have meaning, the entire document pivoted around it. Article I, Paragraph I stated the new organization's purpose: "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the suppression of acts of aggression"

At that time, the world had just been through two wars, the second more devastating and global than the first. The new organization was to differ from its failed predecessor, the League of Nations, in that it was to have teeth, in the form of a Security Council with the power to impose mandatory global sanctions, and if necessary, authorize the use of force.

This time, the failure was one of the fox being asked to guard the henhouse. The principal post-war aggressor was the Soviet Union, which set about gutting the charter's primary goal from the inside. By 1955, 78 vetoes had been cast in the Security Council, 75 of them by the Soviet Union.

Over time, the notion of aggression was turned on its head by the exception carved out for Soviet-backed "resistance movements," which the UN was not only prevented from opposing, but found its way toward backing.

The present international tendency to excuse the Palestinian terror war and oppose even passive Israeli self-defense measures, such as the security fence, is an extreme form of this inversion. But Secretary-General Kofi Annan's claim that the war in Iraq was "illegal" is cut from the same cloth.

If terror is to be beaten, the concept of aggression must be revived. In its first conference after 9/11, the Organization of Islamic States explicitly declared a Soviet-style carve-out for terrorism against Israel: "We reject any attempt to associate Islamic states or Palestinian and Lebanese resistance with terrorism."

Bush has repeatedly spoken out against such attempts to legitimize terrorism. But, since Iraq, he has barely begun the process of deploying the UN Charter's anti-aggression tools against nations like Iran and Syria which openly support terrorism.

If terrorism against Israel, including the lobbing of missiles into kindergartens and homes, is not aggression, then the concept of aggression and the obligation of all nations to join in combating it have no meaning.

It is therefore not enough for the US to veto resolutions designed to deprive Israel of the right of self-defense. The US must set about undoing what the Soviet Union did, and what the Arab bloc is perpetuating.

The US wasted a decade after the Soviet Union's fall, when it should have quickly worked to restore the charter's basic categories of aggression, self-defense, and collective security. France, though it has stepped into the Soviet's spoiler shoes, should not be considered an insurmountable obstacle to this objective. Paris, after all, joined Washington in imposing draconian UN sanctions against Tripoli after Libyan agents exploded a French airliner in 1989.

Kerry, who last week likened the idea of toppling Saddam after 9/11 to invading Mexico after Pearl Harbor, opposes Bush's state-oriented approach to fighting terror, arguing instead for a tight focus on al-Qaida. It is therefore hard to imagine him enlisting Europe behind a policy that he

rejects. But Bush seems to have resigned himself to working around Europe and the UN, rather than persuading them to restore the charter's pre-Soviet/Arab method for safeguarding the peace. Reviving the word "evil" was a good start; rescuing the brand "aggressor" from its Orwellian limbo is the next operative task. (Jerusalem Post Oct 11)

What a Muslim Learned on Yom Kippur By Nonie Darwish

In September, Jews celebrated their New Year of 5765 with the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I know very little about the Jewish religion, but I had heard of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. My Jewish friends explained to me the importance of a ten-day period from the eve of Rosh Hashanah through the day of Yom Kippur. This marks the "ten days of repentance" in Jewish tradition.

Yom Kippur encourages Jews to examine themselves, to assume responsibility for their transgressions and for the task of self-improvement. Given my cultural background, this concept is entirely new to me.

I was born a Muslim and raised in the 1950's in Cairo, Egypt and in the Gaza strip. A moderate form of Islam was prevalent in those days. But destructive forces loomed large in other aspects of Arab society in particular, shame and pride. Arab culture, not Islam, taught me to hate.

In 1978, I moved to the United States, bringing the usual baggage and prejudice from a Middle East upbringing: fear of Jews, of government, of speaking my own mind. I had lived through the '56, '67, and '73 wars with Israel, which left me with deep skepticism of authority. A new and pleasant life in America soon opened my mind and allowed me to look objectively at myself and my culture of origin.

To admit one's flaws and mistakes, to correct and repent, challenges a person of any nationality. In Muslim culture, however, it is inconceivable. To acknowledge one's shortcomings before first blaming others would bring deep shame and dishonor not only to the individual but to his or her entire family. Those who admit fault, even unintentional guilt, are regarded as foolish. If the mistake is a cultural taboo, one's reputation may be scarred for life and the perpetrator might end up brutally punished.

In Arab society, I was discouraged from sinning out of fear of a wrathful God and fear of society's cruel punishment, which awaited sinners right here on earth. There was no reward for loving humanity as whole, striving to improve oneself, and bringing out the best in the human spirit. Many aimed only to please brutal dictators, currying favor and wealth at the expense of their fellow Arabs. Such widespread corruption in a religious society may seem paradoxical. But in Friday prayers at the mosque, no one mentioned the common sin of wronging one's neighbor, of stepping on him in a rush to self-promotion. Evil was always out there, never in here. Arabs talked eagerly of old glory and the Middle East's contributions to the world, but they refused to tolerate discussion of what their communities can do to end terrorism. Those who had the courage to be self-critical were harshly punished. Many others feared shame and having to face uncomfortable truths surrounding the negative aspects in Arab and Muslim culture. No one can deny the current sad state of Middle Eastern society. Terrorism flourishes in every Muslim country, poisoning the world. War and genocide have ravaged communities of Muslims and non-Muslims in the Sudan, Algeria, Iraq, and Kuwait, and the list goes on. Terrorists burn churches, take refuge in Muslim holy shrines, behead Jews, destroy Buddha temples, and weaken economies and the Arab media react with deafening silence.

Despite its wealth from oil, the Arab world is among the poorest societies on Earth. The once-great Nile Valley lies amid pollution and garbage. With rampant unemployment and low average incomes, poor citizens must bribe government officials to survive. And yet, Arab media correspondents ignore these difficult problems, focusing instead on the destruction of Israel. In this manner, they shift the blame for societal problems to an outside force.

At a time when most religions struggle to explain evil in the world, radical Islam has found the answer: without hesitation, they say it is the Jews. In Friday sermons in mosques around the globe, this theme repeats itself every week. In the wake of the Beslan tragedy, when Muslim terrorists attacked Russian schoolchildren, some Arabs speculated about a Jewish conspiracy. After writing in support of Israel, I personally have been accusing of participating in such a conspiracy. Israel has become the useful enemy that Arabs blame for everything.

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews do not wish one other a "Happy New Year," as others do on the first of January. The traditional Hebrew greeting is "Shanah Tovah," which means a "good year" or "a year of goodness." This simple phrase stresses one's yearning for moral uprightness and a life committed to improving the world. Hearing my Jewish friends explain the teachings of their faith during the "ten days of repentance," I am in awe.

I, too, want to repent. I personally apologize to Jews around the world on their High Holidays, and I thank them for their culture's contributions to humanity. There is a great tradition of atonement, and many of us non-Jews can benefit from it. We all need to examine ourselves, to bring out the good and see what we can accomplish as members of the human race.

On this tiny planet, we learn from each other every day. Much of early Islamic thought and practice derives from the Prophet Mohammed's observations of Mecca and Medina, two Jewish tribes who contributed to the life and culture of the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. Let us revive a gracious cultural exchange, with understanding and appreciation. May the New Year bring to fruition our highest hopes, and may it bring us closer together. (FrontPageMagazine.com Oct 5)

Watch the Clock By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

The clock is ticking. If Prime Minister Sharon has his way, it is only a matter of time until Gaza is cleared of any Jewish Israeli presence.

Sharon's plan is rash, risky and reckless on any number of counts:

* First, it rewards terrorism on a grand scale, turning over land to enemies sworn to our extermination and absolutely affirming Hamas' long-held contention that only the murder of Jews can bring about Israeli concessions.

* Second, it offers no rational plan for a long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum; it merely moves the borders of the conflict ever closer to the Israeli heartland. Some Arab pundits even refer to the initiative as the "Gaza First" plan, indicating that Judea and Samaria are next on the chopping block, with no end in sight.

* Third, the actual removal of Gaza residents, if it happens, will almost certainly create a traumatic schism in the nation, further ripping apart our already fragile social fabric.

All this at a cost of tens of billions of shekels in a country whose economy is far from buoyant.

Yet there is another by-product of Sharon's plan which has even more chilling implications for the future of Israel.

The Arabs have long maintained a stubborn belief that, in this conflict, time is on their side. They are wholeheartedly convinced that the Jewish presence in the Middle East is an anomaly and an aberration - a foreign object artificially grafted onto the Arab body - and that if they hang on long enough, that body will reject and repel us into oblivion. To that end, they are prepared to endure endless hardship and suffering, prepared to grit their teeth and wait for as long as it takes until we "disappear" - with their active assistance, of course.

That is why the Palestinians have never clearly and unequivocally accepted the State of Israel as a fait accompli, despite intense pressure from countless governments to do so. Because in their heart of hearts, the Arabs do not believe we are here to stay.

In the Arab mindset, we are modern-day Crusaders. The Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099, wresting it from the Arabs, who themselves had conquered the city in 638. The Crusaders stayed until 1187, when Saladin broke through the walls of the Old City, massacred the Christians and restored Arab sovereignty. So at the same time as the Palestinians despicably try to deny our ancient Jewish roots in Israel - methodically destroying archeological evidence of our 3000-year presence in the land - they dismiss our modern-day Israeli experience as a passing phenomenon, a fleeting footnote in history, a la the Crusaders.

Sharon is playing perfectly into their hands. If handed Gaza on a silver platter - with absolutely no reciprocal gesture or lessening of anti-Jewish incitement - the Arabs will smile a telling smile to their families: "You see, my dears, we waited 37 years, but we forced the Jews from Gaza. Soon, 'insh'alla,' we shall force them to leave ALL of Palestine, from river to sea."

Indeed, when Arab laborers constructing houses in Judea and Samaria are asked how they justify assisting Jewish settlement, they inevitably retort: "We are building these homes for our grandchildren." And they believe it.

Not long ago, IDF forces ran out of Lebanon with their tails between their tank turrets. That sent a bad enough signal. But departing Gaza is far worse: it reassures Palestinians that their 100-year wait is near an end - the Jews are on their way out.

At play here is the struggle between two kinds of Jews: Jews of the Moment, and Jews of Eternity.

Jews of the Moment have little use for the Past, and not much interest in the Future. Where their ancestors came from - the shtetl, the ghetto, North Africa - is of little consequence; and where they are going is too distant and nebulous a concept. What they care about is NOW: "How can I make the present meet all my demands and desires?" For these Jews, the quick fix, the instant answer, the short-term solution is more than adequate for whatever ails. "Patch it up 'till the next puncture" is their credo.

But the Eternal Jew never mortgages Tomorrow to solve Today's problems. He perceives the continuum of Jewish History, and knows that only the promise of an ancient, ongoing partnership between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel can ultimately protect our presence in the region. He knows that Time is a mighty weapon, one that must never be ceded to the enemy. He, too, has the patience that comes with belief in one's cause, the steely determination to see things through until the end.

Time can be the greatest ally, or the harshest mistress. It all depends on whose side she's on. (Jerusalem Post Jan 10)