

 Jerusalem 3:57; Toronto 4:29

Events...

Sunday, November 23, 7:30 PM

Dr. Noah Efron, of Bar-Ilan University, author of *Real Jews: Secular, Ultra Orthodox and the Struggle for Jewish Identity* will speak on "Israel's Other War: The Struggle Over Jewish Identity in Israel" at Shaarei Shomayim.

November 28-29

Renowned author and lecturer, R. Noah Orlowek will spend Shabbat in Thornhill. Oneg Shabbat "The Key To Shalom Bayis" at the Grafstein's, 55 Bevshire. Motzei Shabbat, "Raising Roses Among The Thorns" at Thornhill Talmud Torah (Ohr Somaych area of the BAYT) 8:00 PM.

Commentary...

The Circle Widens Jerusalem Post Editorial

Once again, the circle widens. We do not know whether the deadly attacks against two synagogues in Istanbul were committed by an internal or external terrorist group.

In the coming days, it will be debated whether this attack fits in the continuum of the increasingly vocal hatred for Jews and Israel, or the continuum of terrorism that has struck in the United States, Israel, Indonesia, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

This is, ultimately, a sterile debate. It strains credulity, as some commentators have already done, to portray this only as an attack against Turkey. Two synagogues were bombed during Shabbat prayers. This was an old-fashioned pogrom employing the latest method, the car bomb.

At the same time, however, this was an attack against Turkey. The terrorists who did this were not just out to kill Jews, but to attack Turkey in a way that some might excuse and claim it was "only" the Jews.

Of course this was not "just" an attack against the Jews, for the basic reason that at least three times as many Turkish Muslims were killed as Jewish worshippers. While the attack obviously begins with anti-Semitism, it does not end there. As Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan put it, "I consider this as a bomb hurled at Turkey's peace and tranquility."

This attack illustrates the indivisibility of terrorism. The issue is not whether it was against Jews, Turkey, or the West: it was all of the above. The attempt to dissect such attacks is often, consciously or not, an attempt by those not yet affected to pretend that the circle of victims will not spread to them.

Jews were attacked because of hatred of Israel, we are told. Or Turkey was attacked because it is close to America and Israel. Maybe, so goes the logic, if we do not cooperate with America or Israel, we will be spared.

Don't count on it. How many countries have to be hit before Europe concludes, in an operational way, that we are in this together?

The heart of the strategy of terrorism is to bank precisely on Europe's ability to deceive itself. If the West were as united and single-minded as its attackers, the terrorists would not stand a chance. If the key democracies of the world united to isolate and impose comprehensive sanctions against the handful of states that harbor terrorism, as they did against the former apartheid regime in South Africa, those nations would be forced to abandon terrorism as a tool of national policy. The terrorist network sees that this is not happening and concludes, with some logic, that continued terrorism is necessary to reinforce and deepen the divisions between Europe and the United States.

For all its high moral and strategic pretensions, the European strategy amounts to this: lie low. Maybe the bullets will fly overhead. Maybe the outlaws will not train their guns on us.

This would be a fine strategy for nations without power, influence, or dignity. In fact, it would be understandable and even acceptable if it did not detract from the sheriff's ability to hunt down the outlaws. The problem is that Europe is not just a cowering, innocent bystander, but more like someone who is not only hiding behind the sheriff, but holding one of the sheriff's hands behind his back.

Europe claims to believe in multinational action and working through

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

international institutions, such as the United Nations. If so, the tools are all there, waiting to be used. A united Security Council could stop the ruse whereby countries like Syria blatantly claim the right to define terrorism against Israel as "resisting occupation."

It could impose sanctions of the sort that forced Libya to admit guilt and pay billions in reparations. It could, in short, transform terrorism for countries like Iran and Syria from a policy that

pays off to a policy that endangers their regimes.

The longer Europe waits to join the fight in earnest, the more it risks not only its own security, but what it seems to value more – its standing as the world's self-appointed moral arbiter. Lying low, at the end of the day, is not a terribly effective way to maintain one's stake on the high moral ground. (Jerusalem Post Nov 16)

Jihad Comes to Turkey, but Why? By Walid Phares, Ph.D

There is no doubt about it, the final target in the terror attacks against the Jewish synagogues of Neve Shalom and Beth Israel this past weekend was no one else than Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, modern Turkey's founding father. This would be the conclusion of any reader of the Jihadist mind, or in analyst realms, any attentive viewer of al-Jazeera's panels on the Turkish secular experience. Many Jews were killed, but in historic terms it was Ataturk that was being assassinated.

Both Turkish and Israeli officials pointed their fingers at the outside accusing, principally al-Qaida for the attacks. Although I concur with both assessments, and do believe that al-Qaida ordered the strike, and that local elements are involved, I feel that most officials and fellow experts are still using the lenses of the pre-9/11 era. Let me be clear about it. Nowadays, there is no more major cleavage between external and internal Jihadism; they are all connected. And more troublesome to many to absorb, Jihadism is not solely a strategy restricted to Islamists. As an international community in general, and Americans, in particular, we're dealing with a mutant. Here's the real picture.

In the Istanbul strike, we can clearly see the fingerprints of al-Qaida. Bin Laden declared his Harb (war) against Jews and Americans since 1998. He wants it global, with no boundaries nor time limits. Wherever, whenever and with whomever he can, the Sultan of Jihad will kill Jews, any Jew anywhere. His Harb is not against Israel, or a Zionist entity, as the PLO use to wage. Nor only inside Palestine as Hamas and Islamic Jihad claims. His Jihad is as global as the Jewish community is. In the October tape, he made it even clearer, as he insisted on emptying the region from the "infidels." From Kfar Habu in Northern Lebanon, to the Muhayya in Riyadh, Christians are targeted at will. And from Jerba in Tunisia to Casablanca in Morocco, Jews are terminated by slices. It is ethnic-religious cleansing in slow motion.

When President Bush warned about the terrorist threat against Christians and Jews in the Middle East and Africa, some intellectuals called the speech "builder of fear." But last weekend's Istanbul Massacre, as much as the Riyadh slaughter was, is evidence written in blood.

In the general context of Jihad, as constructed by the survivors of Tora Bora, this war is about re-making world order. Al-Qaida's Harb is a war of elimination of Jews, Christians, Hindus, on the one hand, and Muslims who refuse this war on the other hand. This is the first and foremost explanation of the killings.

But there is another dimension to the Istanbul attacks. The Jews targeted in the former capital of the Ottomans were not aliens, nor settlers. They are the descendants of communities who fled the Reconquista and the Inquisition of Spain. They left the Iberian Peninsula, along with Arabs and Muslims with whom they lived for centuries. They were persecuted by the Christians, when its institutions were managed by ruthless theocracies. It was a Muslim Caliph who opened his lands to them. The Ottoman Sultan granted them political asylum and the right to live in security. If the highest Islamic institution - the Caliphate - for which reestablishment Bin Laden would kill millions around the world, was the authority to accept the Jews on Muslim lands, by which authority are the Jihadists attacking the people of the Book (Holy Bible).

It is simple, Bin Laden clarified it, and al-Jazeera's numerous panels analyzed it: As long as no Caliphate is around, the Harb will go on. To the

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neo-Wahabi groups around the world, all other forms of Islam are not legal, and therefore their protection of infidels is illegal. Neither Sufis nor Shiia, neither secular nor conservative moderates are accepted. Only Salafism is the norm.

Attacking the Jews in Istanbul is also a warning to the political establishment in Turkey. From moderate Muslims to arch-seculars, from left wingers to the military, the Jihadists are not sparing anyone. Today the Jews, tomorrow the seculars, and after tomorrow, those who do not concur with their form of Islam. This is their ideological message.

But read the tactical move as well: Turkey has a conservative Muslim Government, seeking to revive the country's Islamic identity. But Anatolia has a solid and dynamic secular establishment, both liberal and nationalist. If you are al-Qaida, and its Turkish affiliates, you would want to create chaos from within. You would attack the Turkish Jews and leave the country to deal with it. You would expect the military to move on the religious and the latter mobilize against the secular. You would hope relations with Israel deteriorate the US presence in Turkey reconsidered, and a Jihad crisis to begin. Whatever are the consequences, al-Qaida, its allies and partners would be winning.

In addition to al-Qaida's profit, who gains from the Istanbul massacre? The answers are speculative, but converge into one analytical highway. One, the Jihadists forces inside Turkey, which have been underestimated by many, including by the Turks themselves. As a result of 9/11 and the rise of Jihadism in the region and worldwide, Turkish radical Islamists are the first group to take advantage of the attacks. For it opens the path to future strikes, if the Government doesn't react strategically.

Secondly, al-Qaida's international networks and political credibility inside the Islamic Fundamentalist world benefit, as well. If Ankara goes silent on the Jihadist nature of terrorism, Bin Laden will recruit more elements in Asia Minor.

Third, although on the lower levels of suspicion, regional regimes may well be implicated in the destabilizing of this Muslim member of NATO. At least two capitals are very nervous about the long-term commitment of Ankara in a regional axis, including potentially Turkey, the new Iraq, Jordan and Israel. They are Damascus and Tehran. Striking first, striking unexpected, striking secretly would be the best tool to pre-empt that axis from being formed.

When attacked by Israel, Syria's regime warned that it would respond on the battlefield of its choice, on the timing of its choice, and with the means of its choice. While al-Qaida is certainly not a Syrian Baathist outlet, in Iraq it has been made clear that Baathists and Islamists can come together for the sake of their survival in a changing region. (Townhall.com Nov 19)
The writer is a Professor of Middle East Studies and a Terrorism Analyst for MSNBC.

Terror & Blasphemy By Doug Bandow

The evil behind the weekend synagogue bombings.

Istanbul is a beautiful city sitting astride the Bosphorus. A sophisticated, tolerant city, it seamlessly mixes Occident and Orient. But now it has been stricken by the new cancer of our age: terrorism.

The attack on two Turkish synagogues is not just an instance of terrorism. It is the deliberate targeting of civilians nowhere near a war zone. And it reflects the virulent antisemitism that has despoiled our world for centuries.

It is hard for most people steeped in the humane, liberal values of Western Civilization to understand the massacre of innocents. To slaughter to make a political point. But terrorism is not likely to disappear.

Indeed, it is a surprisingly common practice. Although Americans were taken unaware on September 11, many other peoples have long suffered from the murderous attention of domestic and foreign terrorists.

The attacks on Israelis have been frequent, in Israel and around the world. And killings continue, deterred neither by war measures or peace processes.

Kurdish rebels used terrorism against the Turkish government. Urban leftist terrorists once bedeviled Germany and Italy. Ethnic and religious separatists have killed in Northern Ireland and Spain.

Terrorism was a tool of leftists fighting military regimes in South America. Communist guerrillas routinely bomb urban targets, such as bars and nightclubs, in Colombia.

Chechens kill in Moscow. In Algeria, terrorism was used against the French colonial overlords and continues today against the military-backed regime. Tamils and Sikhs kill in India. Tamils also have routinely deployed terror against the majority Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, making the former the most prolific suicide bombers on earth. Russian revolutionaries once killed czars and czarist officials. A Serbian terrorist shot down the Austro-Hungarian royal heir and his wife, triggering World War I. No other murder in human history — except perhaps that of Julius Caesar — had such profound consequences.

Terrorism is common, and will persist, because it is a tool of the weak versus the strong, a cheap military weapon to achieve expensive political goals. As long as there are people willing to kill to advance their ends, there will be terrorists.

Awful but unsurprising are attacks on military targets, such as the Marine Corps barracks in Lebanon, the USS Cole on its visit to Yemen, and the Italian military-police headquarters in Iraq. Lacking the conventional weapons of war necessary to resist, opponents turn to the truck bomb. Horrific, careless of noncombatants, and brutally effective.

The Istanbul strikes — like those in Riyadh, Jakarta, Bali, and on the World Trade Center — take terrorism a step further. They are intended to kill

noncombatants. The goal is not to resist foreign military power per se, but to murder and terrorize civilians. The willingness to kill, and kill indiscriminately, is expected to cow peoples and governments.

Yet the bombings of the two Turkish synagogues cap the murder of innocents with that age-old disease, antisemitism. It's been around for centuries, mixing discrimination with persecution.

The early variants were practiced in the name of Christianity, a bizarre justification of what was in fact a murderous assault on the roots of Christianity itself. Without the Jew Jesus, there is no Christianity. There is certainly nothing in his message to justify the Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms, or the polite social ostracism often practiced in Western Christian societies.

Today Christians, especially American evangelicals, have become among the strongest defenders of Judaism, even occasionally confusing support for Israelis against Palestinians with support for Jews against persecutors. Nevertheless, a Christian commitment to the life and dignity of all those created in God's image is the strongest barrier possible to antisemitism: The most monstrous anti-Jewish attack ever, the Nazi Holocaust, grew out of a movement that assaulted authentic Christianity with the same fervor that it destroyed tolerant humanism.

That terrorists claim to kill people in the name of God may be the greatest sacrilege. The Abu-Hafs al-Masri Brigades, a group linked to al Qaeda, took credit for the Istanbul attacks: "The remaining operations are coming, God willing, and by God, Jews around the world will regret that their ancestors even thought about occupying the land of Muslims."

What kind of God urges his people to kill other people gathered to worship him? What kind of God urges people to kill other people today because of what their ancestors did years, decades, and centuries before? What kind of God urges people to kill other people, made in his image and of transcendent worth, to advance ephemeral political ends?

What kind of God is this?

If this is not the God of Islam, Muslims must speak out. Not just Islamic politicians themselves under attack — in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, for instance. But clerics, imams, teachers, and ayatollahs. And common celebrants, those who regularly fill mosques for worship and daily drop to their prayer rugs.

Moreover, it is not enough to denounce attacks on Americans or Australians or Indonesians. It is necessary to denounce attacks on Jews. To say clearly that the God of Islam does not urge the children of Ishmael to murder the children of Isaac.

No one but the enemy gains from turning the war on terrorism into a war between civilizations. But it certainly is a war between the civilized and uncivilized. And after atrocities like that in Istanbul, it is essential that Muslims as well as Christians declare against antisemitism, the blasphemy that refuses to die. (National Review Nov 19)

The writer is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and the author of Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Speech At the General Assembly

Dear Friends from the USA, Canada, Israel and all over the Jewish world, Good evening. I am happy to welcome you in Jerusalem, our eternal capital. Welcome home.

Several days ago, I read a moving letter sent by a young Jewish boy who lived in Israel last year, during a period in which the terror attacks were extremely severe. The letter was addressed to his friends who were debating whether or not to come to Israel the following year. I quote:

"There is a word in Hebrew without a solid translation in English - "davka". In essence, "davka" means doing or thinking something both in spite of and because of a given situation. I realized after the end of my Jerusalem period, that "davka", this year I am having the single most important and valuable experience of my life. [...] I can [honestly] say that being in Israel this year, "davka" - with all the misfortune [...] that has been visited upon Israel - has been without doubt such an utterly life changing experience that given the choice being on Year Course this year or 3 years ago [...], I would easily choose this year."

"I do not wish for a second that you would think I am in any way thankful that the conditions of my Year Course are the way they are. I have felt the pain of terrorism deep in my heart, and know what it feels like to hear the word "pigoo-ah." That having been said, the things that have made my experience this year so rich are exactly the things you are afraid of and concerned about. So, do it."

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to thank you for coming here, to show solidarity with the people of Israel. "Davka" - "davka" now, "davka" to Israel, "davka" to Jerusalem. The solidarity you demonstrate here touches the heart of every Israeli. Our joint work in shaping our common future is of critical importance to the Jewish people.

One thousand, nine hundred and thirty three years ago, on a hill not far from here, Roman soldiers burned the remains of our Temple, believing that by doing so they had put an end to the Jewish history and legacy. The historian Yosef Ben Mattityahu at the time wrote that the destruction of Jerusalem was so widespread: "so that one who passes over the place of the

destruction, would not believe that there was in this place an inhabited city." However, their plan did not succeed.

This is how we are. Despite repeated attempts to eradicate the Jewish people from the face of the earth, we "davka" grew and "davka" developed a rich culture. We have "davka" always maintained a connection with our homeland. Even during very hard times, there were always Jews in Israel, and with G-d's help, we have succeeded in realizing the dream of re-establishing an independent and democratic Jewish state.

During the last few years, our enemies have risen against us again. Here in Israel by murderous terror attacks, and all over the world, in hate-filled anti-Semitic assaults against the Jewish people and the Jewish State. Yesterday, we received a hard reminder. On Shabbat, synagogues were attacked in Istanbul and Jews were killed and injured during their prayers. Our enemies have yet to understand that the Jewish people cannot be broken - cannot and will not be broken. Faced with these attacks, we will not be deterred and will continue the journey which began thousands of years ago. "Davka", we will carry on with the tremendous efforts we are investing in our young generation - our future, and teach them the history, culture and legacy of our people. "Davka", we will continue to bring thousands of Olim from the Diaspora, including the United States and Canada, to the only country where Jews can lead full Jewish lives, to Israel. Aliyah will strengthen Israel and ensure its future. A strong Israel is a guarantee for preserving the existence of the Jewish people. Much as, during the past three years, despite all the difficulties, we brought over a hundred thousand Jews to Israel. "Davka", we will develop our country, the State of Israel, in our land, the Land of Israel, and in its center, our city - united and undivided - Jerusalem.

Dear Friends, In a few days, you will return to your homes. When you get there, our work will only just begin. What can you do?

First and foremost, be Jewish. I am a Jew, and for me, to be a Jew is the most important thing. Educate your children to be Jewish and invest in Jewish-Zionist education.

Make Aliyah to Israel, help those who want to make aliyah and encourage your friends and relatives to visit Israel. I have a dream, that every Jew will visit Jerusalem at least once. I believe we must set a goal that every young Jew will live here at least one year during their lifetime.

Invest in Israel. Help us develop and strengthen the State of Israel, especially Jerusalem, the Negev and the Galilee. Be ambassadors for the Jewish people and the Jewish State. Each and every one of you can make a difference. I believe that if we join forces, we will be able to ensure our future, bring peace and security to our country and - with G-d's help - realize all our hopes and dreams.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me add something personal. I remember when I was wounded and left alone during the battle to lift the siege over Jerusalem. Being wounded was painful, but being left alone was even more painful. 55 years later, we are still fighting for Jerusalem, but when I see you all here tonight, I know that there is one big difference: today we are not alone. Thank you. (Prime Minister's Office Nov 16)

What Can We Do? By Rabbi Zalman Melamed

We are, at present, in the midst of a period of suffering. The past few weeks have been especially painful. Yet even before this, things were difficult. Anxiety grows and people ask, "How much longer?" Many turn to the Rabbis hoping to receive direction. Two weeks ago, I went to the funeral of a young man from the settlement of Ofra. He had been killed by terrorists on the road between Eli and Ofra. A man approached me and began to complain, "The Rabbi's aren't doing anything! You have to get out there and uplift the masses. Lead the people! Enough standing quietly on the sidelines!" He spoke to me in a straightforward and forceful manner. It was neither the time nor place to respond. And even if it were, there was really not much that could have been said. Perhaps he was right. The situation is a difficult one, and something needs to be done. Yet, I am faced with the question, "Can we really change things?"

Our community believes that the government is not acting as it ought to. An all-out war must be declared upon the PA, to the point of its total collapse, to the point where the entire terrorist groundwork is uprooted. Yet, the government does not do this. If we were capable of influencing the government, we would tell them that there is no need to transfer Arafat to foreign soil. Rather, he and all of his comrades have to be transferred to the World to Come - he, the entire Palestinian leadership, and all of the other leaders of terrorist organizations. Their money and property, their bank accounts in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or wherever else - must all be confiscated. We must liquidate this treacherous Palestinian leadership, for it possesses a threat to Israel and the whole world. If we do not extinguish this terrorism, it will continue to spread. We have to explain to the rest of the nations that this terrorism poses worldwide threat. Afterwards, if the Arabs decide that they want to live with us in peace and stop all of their terrorist activities, we would be willing to allow them to live as they like, so long as they possess no ruling authority. The entire Land of Israel belongs to the Nation of Israel. The Palestinians have absolutely no right to rule in the Land of Israel, and they have to accustom themselves to this fact. When we finally speak as one, with assurance and force, the world too will agree with us. If the Israeli left stops approaching the Americans with proposals for the establishment a Palestinian state, such a state will never be born. The nations of the world, too, will stop making such demands.

However, the situation today is such that we are not the ones running the state. Moreover, even the government is not alone in running the state. At the heads of the many crucial positions in the state of Israel stand people who do not believe that we can overcome the Arabs in war: the heads of Israel's secret service (I have heard this from them for myself), defense, media, courts, and police forces. All of these people hold central and influential positions, and do not believe that we can defeat the Arabs in war, destroy terrorism by force, and return a sense of security to the people. They believe that we have to sit down and establish dialogue with the Arabs. I do not think that they represent the majority of the Israeli public. I think that the majority of Israelis do not feel this way. At any rate, if we had a different media, the public would definitely not feel this way. The majority of the Israeli public is stronger than the present leadership. Most Israelis are confident that we are justified in our claim to the Land of Israel - and are willing to fight for it. Yet, these leaders have taken hold of all of the key positions, and are at present calling the shots. It does not appear to me that we are in a position where we can stand up and shout, apply pressure, and try to change their way of seeing things. What we really need is a fundamental change of approach. The fanatical secular outlook, stuck in the rut of some unattainable goal, some false-messianism, is not capable of changing just like that. It will take time. If the situation gets particularly bad, heaven forbid, it is possible that the public will apply pressure, rising up and effecting a fundamental change on all fronts. A new leadership could rise up that would truly represent the opinion of the majority, a leadership that would destroy terrorism, restore a sense of security, and raise the morale of the public. At present, though, this is not the case.

We therefore are faced with the question: What are we supposed to think and do? Of course we must put constant pressure on the government to be more aggressive, to change its ways and to decide to declare an all-out war against terrorism. In the meantime, though, we must understand that everything that transpires is according to God's desire, and that everything is for the best. Everything that happens to a person is for the best. The Almighty is good and benevolent, He gives and He takes away, everything belongs to Him, and everything comes from Him. We have no claim on anything in this world; everything that He takes was His to begin with. We have to thank him for everything that He has given us up until now. We must approach everything that is happening to the Jewish people today with a deep sense of faith. We must be certain that everything is for the best, and at the same time strive to make things better. And just how are we supposed to do this?

Every affliction that God brings upon us is meant to uplift us, to elevate us to a higher level. True, it is difficult to sense this - but it nonetheless exists. Such has always been the case in the history of the Jewish people. Moreover, this rule has been especially true in the past one hundred years, with the rebirth of the Jewish people: From each affliction we emerged victoriously, advancing, and ascending to a level even higher than that which we were on previously. Take, for example, the First World War. At that time, the very existence of the tiny Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael was endangered. Yet, after the war, the Jewish population here doubled in size. In a like manner, after the terrible destruction of Second World War the State of Israel was established. So it was, and so will it continue to be, God willing. If we remain aware of this and understand that this is God's will, and that this is His way of advancing things, we ourselves can take part in the process. Every difficulty becomes an opportunity for advancement. Difficult? We will double our strength and intensify our activity. Whether in the sphere of settling the Land, or personal behavior; each one of us in his own way. If our enemies strike at a settlement, the settlement will grow. It won't take cover and retreat. To the contrary, every blow will be met with growth and development - another neighborhood, another hilltop, more houses, more determination. And on an inner personal level, we must turn each difficulty into a source of strength. We will become all the more strong in spirit, more sure of ourselves, more faithful, more adamant in Torah study; we will perform more Mitzvoth, show more kindness, and become even more worthy than we had been previously.

This is what God desires - that our suffering should serve to uplift us. Therefore, we must join forces with the Almighty Himself. While we do not desire affliction, we are not weakened by it. One way or the other we are strengthened. This is the road to redemption which God leads us down. He leads us, but we have to do our share. We have to be more joyful, more confident, more believing, more active, to pray with even more fervor. It is not enough to add to the quantity of our prayers. We must also perfect the quality of our prayers. In this manner, we can be partners in the divine scheme that the Almighty is conducting.

Let us pray to the Almighty that He hasten our redemption, and that we speedily merit a complete redemption; let us overcome our enemies and oust them from the Land; let us dwell alone in our land, "From the Egyptian River as far as the great river, the Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18) - in all of those places that God promised to our forefather Abraham. May it be His will that the Holy Temple be speedily rebuilt, that He cause His Presence to dwell among us, and that we be an example to all of the nations of the world. In the end, all of the nations will stream to the Temple Mount, to the House of the God of Jacob, and will request that we teach them God's ways

that they might know them and follow them, "For from Zion Torah will go forth, and the word of God from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

The writer is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Bet El Yeshiva Centre and the Chairman of Arutz Sheva Israel National Radio. (yeshiva.org Nov 4)

Post-Zionist Rampage By Isi Leibler

Israel has just cause to take pride in its democratic system. What other country at war with ruthless terrorists would take for granted the right of independent media to highlight interviews with former security leaders who lambaste the government and warn of impending catastrophe if its policies are not reversed?

While I disagree with these approaches, whose singular themes are reminiscent of the flawed premises of the Oslo disaster, the unfettered right of citizens to express dissent at such times is the hallmark of a mature democracy. Not least, it guarantees that our leaders are kept on their toes and obliged to continuously consider alternative options. Public opinion and the ballot box are their masters.

However, a distinction must be drawn between debate and malevolence. Avraham Burg's interview in English supplement of Haaretz last Friday, addressed to Americans visiting Israel for the GA, was sheer malice.

The remarks of the former Knesset Speaker and chairman of the World Zionist Organization expand on an article of his which appeared a few months ago in Yediot Aharonot demonizing Israel and Zionism. It was then translated throughout the world and now occupies a prominent position in the pantheon of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic Web sites. In that article, Burg accused this country of resting "on a scaffolding of corruption and on a foundation of oppression and justice." He predicted the emergence of a "strange and ugly" Jewish state run by "an amoral clique of corrupt bureaucrats who are deaf to both their citizens and their enemies." He even rationalized the behavior of Palestinian suicide bombers who, he alleged, emerge "from the infrastructures of injustice and moral corruption they spill their blood in our restaurants because they have children and parents at home who are angry and humiliated."

Editorially and in op-eds, Haaretz has of late been bewailing the tendency of American Jews to uncritically support the democratically elected government of Israel, urging them to put their weight behind dissenting policies promoted by a small discredited clique of failed politicians - policies rejected by the vast majority of Israelis.

In his most recent interview, Burg embellishes his previous libels referring to the "cancerous process which is devouring us." He makes the utterly false allegation that most Israelis would leave the country if they could, and that only "the economically weak and the fundamentalists are staying."

He is equally outrageous when he alleges that Jerusalem schoolchildren recently told him that when they become soldiers they would "kill old people, women, and children without giving it a thought" and compares them to Nazis. He makes other outlandish observations, suggesting, for example, that graffiti from a few crazed individuals calling for "Death to the Arabs" represent the norm in Israeli society.

If this is not self-hatred, how else to describe a person whose outbursts of venom against his own people have become a rallying cry for all who wish the Jewish state ill? This is not just washing one's dirty laundry in public. This is malicious propaganda. This is defamation of Israel. This is calculated, at the very time the GA is in town, to undermine solidarity with Israel under the Sharon government. This is grist for the mills of anti-Semites, demonizing and delegitimizing the Jewish state. This paves the way with words for acts of violence against Jews, wherever they are.

That a former Speaker of the Knesset and head of the Zionist movement can survive politically after indulging publicly in such post-Zionist rampages is a reflection of the decadence of Israeli politics. For if Burg represents the Left, the Left is doomed.

It is sad that a man like Burg can continue repeating his lies with hardly a word of criticism from his own party, whose leaders constantly protest the "incitement" of the Right. The Labor Party will never enter the Prime Minister's Office so long as it tolerates the defamation of the vast majority of Israeli voters by one of its principal leaders. Where is Shimon Peres, the leader of the party? Where are the other moderate Laborites and members of Knesset? Where are the fellow traveling intellectuals, such as Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua?

Surely it is time they speak up and make it clear to us that Avraham Burg does not speak for them. (Jerusalem Post Nov 18)
The writer is senior vice president of the World Jewish Congress.

The Court Overreaches By Evelyn Gordon

There are solid grounds for arguing that a film censorship board has no place in a modern democratic state. But as long as the law empowering this board remains on the books, there are no grounds for the High Court of Justice to disregard it - which is essentially what it did last week in overturning the board's decision to ban the film Jenin, Jenin.

The film, which bills itself as a documentary, accuses the Israel Defense Forces of committing war crimes in Jenin during Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002.

It does this through a mixture of outright lies, such as that the IDF

perpetrated a massacre (a claim refuted by three different organizations - the UN, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch - not known for friendliness toward Israel), and cheap propaganda tricks, such as juxtaposing footage of moving tanks with footage of bound Palestinians to create the impression that the tanks ran over the prisoners (the version distributed abroad even has a Palestinian declaiming "the tank is rolling over them," but director Mohammed Bakri cut that sentence from the Israeli version).

The film board thus decided to exercise its legal right to ban local theaters from showing it, and Bakri petitioned the court against this decision.

To reach its verdict in Bakri's favor, the court resorted to tricks worthy of Bakri himself. Justice Dalia Dorner, who authored the court's opinion, for instance, noted that the film board gave five reasons for its decision - but then proceeded to ignore four of them. Having rejected the first, that the film was full of lies, on the grounds that government agencies are not entitled to be arbiters of truth, she announced that she had no obligation to consider whether any of the other four reasons sufficed to justify banning the film.

Her other arguments were equally lame. At one point, for instance, she declared that since the ban would apply only to commercial movie theaters, but would not prevent the film from being screened on television, video or the Internet, it was an ineffective means of achieving the board's purpose - and therefore, the harm it did to freedom of speech could not be justified.

She and her colleagues, Ayala Procaccia and Asher Grunis (who both concurred with this argument), apparently failed to notice that if the ban were ineffective, it could not constitute a grave infringement on freedom of speech.

PROCACCIA, WHO wrote a concurring opinion, was slightly more honest. Given that numerous court rulings deem injury to public sensibilities a justification for limiting freedom of speech, she felt that Dorner could not simply ignore the film board's claim that Jenin, Jenin should be banned for this reason.

Citing various High Court precedents, Procaccia thus posited four tests for determining when injury to public sensibilities justifies limiting freedom of speech. First, there must be "near certainty" that the speech in question will cause such harm. Second, the expected harm must be very severe, to the point of threatening "society's internal strength, the ability to carry out national missions, or the ability to cope with existential defensive needs."

Third, the bar for what constitutes harm of this magnitude is often lower during "times of emergency, war or national crisis."

Finally, the court cannot simply substitute its own judgment on these issues for that of the authorized government agency; it can only overturn decisions so unreasonable that no reasonable person could support them. With regard to Jenin, Jenin, Procaccia found not merely "near certainty," but "absolute certainty" that public sensibilities would be harmed. She also assessed this harm as "broad and deep tangible, real and grave."

Nevertheless, she said, no reasonable person could possibly deem it severe enough to justify restricting freedom of speech - especially since Israel is not in a situation of "total war, crisis or emergency," but merely "an ongoing process of great security tension and localized military-security activity."

Even for a staunch defender of the court like Haaretz legal commentator Ze'ev Segal, Procaccia's findings of "tangible, real and grave" harm were "impossible to reconcile" with her conclusion that banning the film was "extremely unreasonable."

But Procaccia's conclusion is especially difficult to accept in light of the testimony given the court by soldiers who fought in Jenin. One reservist, for instance, related that at a panel discussion following the film's premiere (before it was banned), members of the audience screamed "Murderer! War criminal! How many kids did you kill today?" at him. Another reservist related that he watched the film with his wife, and "when it was over, she said: 'I can't believe it - how could you guys have done things like that?'"

When reservists who regularly risk death in their country's defense come home to find themselves branded as war criminals, attacked by total strangers and doubted even by their nearest relatives, the damage to society is massive.

Indeed, few things could more quickly undermine reservists' willingness to serve. And, Procaccia's opinion to the contrary, this danger is even greater during an "ongoing process" of warfare than during a temporary crisis, since an "ongoing process" requires morale to be maintained over the long term, whereas a brief crisis usually ends before the damage has time to take hold.

Thus, while one could still disagree with the film board's decision, it was hardly so unreasonable that no reasonable person could support it. Indeed, as Segal wrote, it hard to imagine any case in which the court would permit a film to be banned if not this one. What the court effectively did in this ruling was to interpret the censorship law out of existence, even though the Knesset has not yet voted to repeal it. And in so doing, it went far beyond its proper role, to the point of usurping the legislature's prerogatives. (Jerusalem Post Nov 18)
