

President Bush Addresses Members of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament)

By George W. Bush The White House May 15, 2008

President Peres and Mr. Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, thank very much for hosting this special session. President Beinisch, Leader of the Opposition Netanyahu, Ministers, members of the Knesset, distinguished guests: Shalom. Laura and I are thrilled to be back in Israel. We have been deeply moved by the celebrations of the past two days. And this afternoon, I am honored to stand before one of the world's great democratic assemblies and convey the wishes of the American people with these words: Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach. (Applause.)

It is a rare privilege for the American President to speak to the Knesset. (Laughter.) Although the Prime Minister told me there is something even rarer -- to have just one person in this chamber speaking at a time. (Laughter.) My only regret is that one of Israel's greatest leaders is not here to share this moment. He is a warrior for the ages, a man of peace, a friend. The prayers of the American people are with Ariel Sharon. (Applause.)

We gather to mark a momentous occasion. Sixty years ago in Tel Aviv, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence, founded on the "natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate." What followed was more than the establishment of a new country. It was the redemption of an ancient promise given to Abraham and Moses and David -- a homeland for the chosen people Eretz Yisrael.

Eleven minutes later, on the orders of President Harry Truman, the United States was proud to be the first nation to recognize Israel's independence. And on this landmark anniversary, America is proud to be Israel's closest ally and best friend in the world.

The alliance between our governments is unbreakable, yet the source of our friendship runs deeper than any treaty. It is grounded in the shared spirit of our people, the bonds of the Book, the ties of the soul. When William Bradford stepped off the Mayflower in 1620, he quoted the words of Jeremiah: "Come let us declare in Zion the word of God." The founders of my country saw a new promised land and bestowed upon their towns names like Bethlehem and New Canaan. And in time, many Americans became passionate advocates for a Jewish state.

Centuries of suffering and sacrifice would pass before the dream was fulfilled. The Jewish people endured the agony of the pogroms, the tragedy of the Great War, and the horror of the Holocaust --

what Elie Wiesel called "the kingdom of the night." Soulless men took away lives and broke apart families. Yet they could not take away the spirit of the Jewish people, and they could not break the promise of God. (Applause.) When news of Israel's freedom finally arrived, Golda Meir, a fearless woman raised in Wisconsin, could summon only tears. She later said: "For two thousand years we have waited for our deliverance. Now that it is here it is so great and wonderful that it surpasses human words."

The joy of independence was tempered by the outbreak of battle, a struggle that has continued for six decades. Yet in spite of the violence, in defiance of the threats, Israel has built a thriving democracy in the heart of the Holy Land. You have welcomed immigrants from the four corners of the Earth. You have forged a free and modern society based on the love of liberty, a passion for justice, and a respect for human dignity. You have worked tirelessly for peace. You have fought valiantly for freedom.

My country's admiration for Israel does not end there. When Americans look at Israel, we see a pioneer spirit that worked an agricultural miracle and now leads a high-tech revolution. We see world-class universities and a global leader in business and innovation and the arts. We see a resource more valuable than oil or gold: the talent and determination of a free people who refuse to let any obstacle stand in the way of their destiny.

I have been fortunate to see the character of Israel up close. I have touched the Western Wall, seen the sun reflected in the Sea of Galilee, I have prayed at Yad Vashem. And earlier today, I visited Masada, an inspiring monument to courage and sacrifice. At this historic site, Israeli soldiers swear an oath: "Masada shall never fall again." Citizens of Israel: Masada shall never fall again, and America will be at your side.

This anniversary is a time to reflect on the past. It's also an opportunity to look to the future. As we go forward, our alliance will be guided by clear principles -- shared convictions rooted in moral clarity and unswayed by popularity polls or the shifting opinions of international elites.

We believe in the matchless value of every man, woman, and child. So we insist that the people of Israel have the right to a decent, normal, and peaceful life, just like the citizens of every other nation. (Applause.)

We believe that democracy is the only way to ensure human rights. So we consider it a source of shame that the United Nations routinely passes more human rights resolutions against the freest democracy in the Middle East than any other nation in the world. (Applause.)

We believe that religious liberty is fundamental to a civilized society. So we condemn anti-Semitism in all forms -- whether by those who openly question Israel's right to exist, or by others who quietly excuse them.

We believe that free people should strive and sacrifice for peace. So we applaud the courageous choices Israeli's leaders have made. We also believe that nations have a right to defend themselves and that no nation should ever be forced to negotiate with killers pledged to its destruction. (Applause.)

We believe that targeting innocent lives to achieve political objectives is always and everywhere wrong. So we stand together against terror and extremism, and we will never let down our guard or lose our resolve. (Applause.)

The fight against terror and extremism is the defining challenge of our time. It is more than a clash of arms. It is a clash of visions, a great ideological struggle. On the one side are those who defend the ideals of justice and dignity with the power of reason and truth. On the other side are those who pursue a narrow vision of cruelty and control by committing murder, inciting fear, and spreading lies.

This struggle is waged with the technology of the 21st century, but at its core it is an ancient battle between good and evil. The killers claim the mantle of Islam, but they are not religious men. No one who prays to the God of Abraham could strap a suicide vest to an innocent child, or blow up guiltless guests at a Passover Seder, or fly planes into office buildings filled with unsuspecting workers. In truth, the men who carry out these savage acts serve no higher goal than their own desire for power. They accept no God before themselves. And they reserve a special hatred for the most ardent defenders of liberty, including Americans and Israelis.

And that is why the founding charter of Hamas calls for the "elimination" of Israel. And that is why the followers of Hezbollah chant "Death to Israel, Death to America!" That is why Osama bin Laden teaches that "the killing of Jews and Americans is one of the biggest duties." And that is why the President of Iran dreams of returning the Middle East to the Middle Ages and calls for Israel to be wiped off the map.

There are good and decent people who cannot fathom the darkness in these men and try to explain away their words. It's natural, but it is deadly wrong. As witnesses to evil in the past, we carry a solemn responsibility to take these words seriously. Jews and Americans have seen the consequences of

disregarding the words of leaders who espouse hatred. And that is a mistake the world must not repeat in the 21st century.

Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all along. We have heard this foolish delusion before. As Nazi tanks crossed into Poland in 1939, an American senator declared: "Lord, if I could only have talked to Hitler, all this might have been avoided." We have an obligation to call this what it is -- the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history. (Applause.)

Some people suggest if the United States would just break ties with Israel, all our problems in the Middle East would go away. This is a tired argument that buys into the propaganda of the enemies of peace, and America utterly rejects it. Israel's population may be just over 7 million. But when you confront terror and evil, you are 307 million strong, because the United States of America stands with you. (Applause.)

America stands with you in breaking up terrorist networks and denying the extremists sanctuary. America stands with you in firmly opposing Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Permitting the world's leading sponsor of terror to possess the world's deadliest weapons would be an unforgivable betrayal for future generations. For the sake of peace, the world must not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. (Applause.)

Ultimately, to prevail in this struggle, we must offer an alternative to the ideology of the extremists by extending our vision of justice and tolerance and freedom and hope. These values are the self-evident right of all people, of all religions, in all the world because they are a gift from the Almighty God. Securing these rights is also the surest way to secure peace. Leaders who are accountable to their people will not pursue endless confrontation and bloodshed. Young people with a place in their society and a voice in their future are less likely to search for meaning in radicalism. Societies where citizens can express their conscience and worship their God will not export violence, they will be partners in peace.

The fundamental insight, that freedom yields peace, is the great lesson of the 20th century. Now our task is to apply it to the 21st. Nowhere is this work more urgent than here in the Middle East. We must stand with the reformers working to break the old patterns of tyranny and despair. We must give voice to millions of ordinary people who dream of a better life in a free society. We must confront the moral relativism that views all forms of government as equally acceptable and thereby consigns whole societies to slavery. Above all, we must have faith in our values and ourselves and confidently pursue the expansion of liberty as the path to a peaceful future.

That future will be a dramatic departure from the Middle East of today. So as we mark 60 years from Israel's founding, let us try to envision the region 60 years from now. This vision is not going to arrive easily or overnight; it will encounter violent resistance. But if we and future Presidents and future Knessets maintain our resolve and have faith in our ideals, here is the Middle East that we can see:

Israel will be celebrating the 120th anniversary as one of the world's great democracies, a secure and flourishing homeland for the Jewish people. The Palestinian people will have the homeland they have long dreamed of and deserved -- a democratic state that is governed by law, and respects human rights, and rejects terror. From Cairo to Riyadh to Baghdad and Beirut, people will live in free and independent societies, where a desire for peace is reinforced by ties of diplomacy and tourism and trade. Iran and Syria will be peaceful nations, with today's oppression a distant memory and where people are free to speak their minds and develop their God-given talents. Al Qaeda and Hezbollah and Hamas will be defeated, as Muslims across the region recognize the emptiness of the terrorists' vision and the injustice of their cause.

Overall, the Middle East will be characterized by a new period of tolerance and integration. And this doesn't mean that Israel and its neighbors will be best of friends. But when leaders across the region answer to their people, they will focus their energies on schools and jobs, not on rocket attacks and suicide bombings. With this change, Israel will open a new hopeful chapter in which its people can live a normal life, and the dream of Herzl and the founders of 1948 can be fully and finally realized.

This is a bold vision, and some will say it can never be achieved. But think about what we have witnessed in our own time. When Europe was destroying itself through total war and genocide, it was difficult to envision a continent that six decades

later would be free and at peace. When Japanese pilots were flying suicide missions into American battleships, it seemed impossible that six decades later Japan would be a democracy, a lynchpin of security in Asia, and one of America's closest friends. And when waves of refugees arrived here in the desert with nothing, surrounded by hostile armies, it was almost unimaginable that Israel would grow into one of the freest and most successful nations on the earth.

Yet each one of these transformations took place. And a future of transformation is possible in the Middle East, so long as a new generation of leaders has the courage to defeat the enemies of freedom, to make the hard choices necessary for peace, and stand firm on the solid rock of universal values.

Sixty years ago, on the eve of Israel's independence, the last British soldiers departing Jerusalem stopped at a building in the Jewish quarter of the Old City. An officer knocked on the door and met a senior rabbi. The officer presented him with a short iron bar -- the key to the Zion Gate -- and said it was the first time in 18 centuries that a key to the gates of Jerusalem had belonged to a Jew. His hands trembling, the rabbi offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, "Who had granted us life and permitted us to reach this day." Then he turned to the officer, and uttered the words Jews had awaited for so long: "I accept this key in the name of my people."

Over the past six decades, the Jewish people have established a state that would make that humble rabbi proud. You have raised a modern society in the Promised Land, a light unto the nations that preserves the legacy of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And you have built a mighty democracy that will endure forever and can always count on the United States of America to be at your side. God bless. (Applause.)

The Miracle, at 60

By Charles Krauthammer The Washington Post May 16, 2008

Before sending Lewis and Clark west, Thomas Jefferson dispatched Meriwether Lewis to Philadelphia to see Benjamin Rush. The eminent doctor prepared a series of scientific questions for the expedition to answer. Among them, writes Stephen Ambrose: "What Affinity between their [the Indians'] religious Ceremonies & those of the Jews?" Jefferson and Lewis, like many of their day and ours, were fascinated by the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and thought they might be out there on the Great Plains.

They weren't. They aren't anywhere. Their disappearance into the mists of history since their exile from Israel in 722 B.C. is no mystery. It is the norm, the rule for every ancient people defeated, destroyed, scattered and exiled.

With one exception, a miraculous story of redemption and return, after not a century or two, but 2,000 years. Remarkably, that miracle occurred in our time. This week marks its 60th anniversary: the return and restoration of the remaining two tribes of Israel -- Judah and Benjamin, later known as the Jews -- to their ancient homeland.

Besides restoring Jewish sovereignty, the establishment of the State of Israel embodied many subsidiary miracles, from the creation of the first Jewish army since Roman times to the only recorded instance of the resurrection of a dead language -- Hebrew, now the daily tongue of a vibrant nation of 7 million. As historian Barbara Tuchman once wrote, Israel is "the only nation in the world that is

governing itself in the same territory, under the same name, and with the same religion and same language as it did 3,000 years ago."

During its early years, Israel was often spoken of in such romantic terms. Today, such talk is considered naive, anachronistic, even insensitive, nothing more than Zionist myth designed to hide the true story, i.e., the Palestinian narrative of dispossession.

Not so. Palestinian suffering is, of course, real and heart-wrenching, but what the Arab narrative deliberately distorts is the cause of its own tragedy: the folly of its own fanatical leadership -- from Haj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem (Nazi collaborator, who spent World War II in Berlin), to Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser to Yasser Arafat to Hamas of today -- that repeatedly chose war rather than compromise and conciliation.

Palestinian dispossession is a direct result of the Arab rejection, then and now, of a Jewish state of any size on any part of the vast lands the Arabs claim as their exclusive patrimony. That was the cause of the war 60 years ago that, in turn, caused the refugee problem. And it remains the cause of war today.

Six months before Israel's birth, the United Nations had decided by a two-thirds majority that the only just solution to the British departure from Palestine would be the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state side by side. The undeniable fact remains: The Jews accepted that compromise; the Arabs rejected it.

With a vengeance. On the day the British pulled down their flag, Israel was invaded by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq -- 650,000 Jews against 40 million Arabs.

Middle East musings

By Tulin Daloglu The Washington Times

The biggest stumbling block to peace in the Middle East is the mindset of suspicion, reaction and hatred among its sentient people. That "comfort zone" ultimately hurts those who practice it far more than it hurts the objects of their vitriol.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah is an excellent example. Nasrallah was once seen as the undisputed Lebanese patriot, fighting for Lebanese sovereignty. "Hassan Nasrallah enjoyed a great deal of support in Lebanon when Hezbollah was fighting the Israeli occupation troops before the Israelis withdrew in the year 2000," said Hisham Melhem, Al Arabiya's Washington bureau chief, at a New America Foundation event last week on developments in Beirut. "[He] became at least 10 feet tall when he lost his 18-year-old son fighting Israelis in South Lebanon. He has that kind of stature no Arab leader can claim," he said.

Today, however, many Lebanese people see Nasrallah's actions as impinging on Lebanese sovereignty and bringing to light the influence of

Israel prevailed, another miracle. But at a very high cost -- not just to the Palestinians displaced as a result of a war designed to extinguish Israel at birth, but also to the Israelis, whose war losses were staggering: 6,373 dead. One percent of the population. In American terms, it would take 35 Vietnam memorials to encompass such a monumental loss of life.

You rarely hear about Israel's terrible suffering in that 1948-49 war. You hear only the Palestinian side. Today, in the same vein, you hear that Israeli settlements and checkpoints and occupation are the continuing root causes of terrorism and instability in the region.

But in 1948, there were no "occupied territories." Nor in 1967 when Egypt, Syria and Jordan joined together in a second war of annihilation against Israel.

Look at Gaza today. No Israeli occupation, no settlements, not a single Jew left. The Palestinian response? Unremitting rocket fire killing and maiming Israeli civilians. The declared *casus belli* of the Palestinian government in Gaza behind these rockets? The very existence of a Jewish state.

One constantly hears about the disabling complexity of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Complex it is, but the root cause is not. Israel's crime is not its policies but its insistence on living. On the day the Arabs -- and the Palestinians in particular -- make a collective decision to accept the Jewish state, there will be peace, as Israel proved with its treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Until that day, there will be nothing but war. And every "peace process," however cynical or well meaning, will come to nothing.

May 20, 2008

Iran and Syria in Beirut. Worse, Hezbollah is targeting and killing Lebanese citizens. Unlike the civil wars in Lebanon in 1958 and 1975, recent fighting in Beirut has been deeply sectarian -- and as a result, the Saudi "[k]ing is even more hawkish than Bush and concerned about what he believes is Tehran's march through the Middle East," the Washington Post reported Saturday. "Abdullah wants to see the Bush administration bring greater pressure on Iran."

President Bush stopped in Riyadh during his Middle East tour last week, asking for help in navigating the region's challenging dynamics and dealing with surging oil prices. What Mr. Bush and the Saudi king agreed to -- if anything -- will become clear in time. Abdullah may demand that the United States be more proactive toward Iran. But for now, two things are obvious.

First, the United States cannot pressure Iran; it has no leverage. The war in Iraq and American policies in the Middle East have won the United

States no Muslim allies in the region. The Middle East's Arab-Muslim population does not want the United States to take military or even diplomatic action to halt Iran's nuclear activities. More than a year ago, the University of Maryland and Zogby International conducted a poll in seven countries — Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. An average of 61 percent of respondents said Iran has a right to its nuclear program; 51 percent said they believe Iran is developing a nuclear weapon. Only Israelis feel directly threatened by Iran's nuclear program.

However, the polled countries' leaders think differently. America's problem with Iran began with the Islamic revolution but the conflict between Iran and Sunni Arabs goes back centuries. Logically, the fight with the United States is easier to solve — and that, coupled with the debate in Washington over whether to negotiate with Tehran — makes the Arab states nervous. What seems an obvious defeat for the United States in the region may not be definitive. The Arab countries do not understand the United States' actions or motives — which makes it impossible for them to cooperate with the United States in Iraq. Yet their leaders worry about Iran's growing influence.

Second, Iran has skillfully mastered and manipulated the Palestinian issue to gain favor among Sunni Arabs. Hezbollah has gained a bigger foothold in Lebanon by being elected to the parliament and has surely placed its people in key positions, with an exclusive telecommunications network and a surveillance program at Beirut's airport. Clearly, this mode of operations does

nothing to advance Lebanese unity and solidarity. Yet the government's brief decision to halt Hezbollah's exclusive access came to a quick end. Nasrallah proved who holds the power in the country. But it's also not without historical precedent.

"Hitler justified Munich by concern for Sudeten Germans," said Stanley Kober, a research fellow at the Cato Institute. "He got the Sudeten part of Czechoslovakia. Once he was behind the Czech defenses, he took the rest of the country in 1939. At that point, British opinion hardened, but too late for the Czechs. Britain extended a guarantee to Poland. [Then] Hitler invaded Poland, and World War II [began]." Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calls for Israel to be wiped off the map.

But while hatred of Israel constantly grows in the region, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas has said he is committed to a two-state solution and to recognizing the previous agreements regarding the Jewish state's right to exist. Surely, the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma will not be solved bilaterally. Yet one wonders whether the regional players are really looking out for the Palestinians' best interests.

Israelis pay a price to live in an environment filled with hatred toward them. But in the end, the side that blames Israel and the United States for everything that goes wrong loses the most. Hatred keeps people in the dark — and is radicalizing the region. It may be time for Arab Muslims to admit and address the fact that "political Islam" has brought them more destruction than the West has.

Tulin Daloglu is a freelance writer.

Obama and the Jews

By Bret Stephens The Wall Street Journal

America's Jews account for a mere 2% of the U.S. population. But they have voted the Democratic ticket by margins averaging 78% over the past four election cycles, and their votes are potentially decisive in swing states like Florida and Pennsylvania. They also contribute an estimated half of all donations given to national Democratic candidates.

So whatever his actual convictions, it is a matter of ordinary political prudence that Barack Obama "get right with the Jews." Since Jews tend to be about as liberal as the Illinois senator on most domestic issues, what this really means is that he get right with Israel. And so he has.

Over his campaign's port side have gone pastor Jeremiah Wright ("Every time you say 'Israel' Negroes get awfully quiet on you because they [sic] scared: Don't be scared; don't be scared"); former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski ("I think what the Israelis are doing today [2006] for example in Lebanon is in effect — maybe not in intent — the killing of hostages"); and former Clinton

May 20, 2008

administration diplomat Robert Malley (an advocate and practitioner of talks with Hamas).

The campaign has also managed to clarify, or perhaps retool, Mr. Obama's much-quoted line that "nobody is suffering more than the Palestinian people." What the senator was actually saying, he now tells us, is that "nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people from the failure of the Palestinian leadership to recognize Israel, to renounce violence, and to get serious about negotiating peace and security for the region."

Still more forthrightly, Mr. Obama recently told the Atlantic Monthly that "the idea of a secure Jewish state is a fundamentally just idea, and a necessary idea, given not only world history but the active existence of anti-Semitism, the potential vulnerability that the Jewish people could still experience."

I can think of no good reason to doubt the sincerity of Mr. Obama's comments. Nor, from the standpoint of American Jewry, is there anything to be gained from doing so: The fastest way to turn

whatever dark suspicions Jews may have of Mr. Obama into a self-fulfilling prophecy is to spurn his attempts at outreach.

Yet the significant question isn't whether Mr. Obama is "pro-Israel," in the sense that his heart is in the right place and he isn't quite Jimmy Carter. What matters is whether his vision for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East – and the broader world view that informs it – will have ancillary effects favorable to Israel's core interests.

Take Hamas and Hezbollah, which pose the nearest threats to Israel's security. Mr. Obama has insisted he opposes negotiating with Hamas "until they recognize Israel, renounce terrorism and abide by previous agreements." He also calls Hezbollah a "destabilizing organization."

But if Mr. Obama's litmus test for his choice of negotiating partners is their recognition of Israel and their renunciation of terrorism, then what is the sense in negotiating without preconditions with Iran and Syria?

Alternatively, if the problem with Hamas and Hezbollah is that neither holds the reins of government, what happens when they actually do? Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006; Hezbollah sits in the Lebanese cabinet. Would Mr. Obama be willing to parley if, in the course of his administration, either group should come to power?

Or take Iran, which Israelis universally see as their deadliest enemy. Yes, there are arguments to be made in favor of presidential-level negotiations between Washington and Tehran – perhaps as a last-

ditch effort to avert military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. But does anyone seriously think Mr. Obama would authorize such strikes?

Instead, Mr. Obama says he favors "tough diplomacy," including tighter sanctions on Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps. Last fall, however, he was one of only 22 senators to oppose a Senate resolution calling for the IRGC to be designated as a terrorist organization, a vote that made him a dove even within the Democratic Party. Mr. Obama argued at the time the amendment would give the administration a pretext to go to war with Iran. It was an odd claim for a nonbinding resolution.

Or take Iraq. Israelis are now of two minds as to the wisdom of the invasion of Iraq, mainly because they fear it has weakened America's hand vis-à-vis Iran. Maybe. But is it so clear that a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq wouldn't further strengthen Iran's hand, and consolidate the so-called Shiite crescent stretching from southern Iraq to the hills overlooking northern Israel?

Finally, there is Israel itself. In the Atlantic interview, Mr. Obama declared that "my job in being a friend to Israel is partly to hold up a mirror and tell the truth," particularly in respect to the settlements. Yes, there are mirrors that need to be held up to those settlements, as there are to those Palestinians whose terrorism makes their dismantlement so problematic. Perhaps there is also a mirror to be held up to an American foreign-policy neophyte whose amazing conceit is that he understands Israel's dilemmas better than Israelis themselves.

The Lost Tribes of Israel

By Patrick J. Buchanan HumanEvents.com May 16, 2008

As Israel enters its 61st year, Israelis may look back with pride. Yet, the realists among them must also look forward with foreboding.

Israel is a modern democracy with the highest standard of living in the Middle East. In the high-tech industries of the future, she is in the first rank. From a nation of fewer than a million in 1948, Israel's population has grown to 7 million. In seven wars -- the 1948 War of Independence, the Sinai invasion of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the Lebanon wars of 1982 and 2006 -- Israel has prevailed, though some of these wars were, as Wellington said of Waterloo, "a damn near-run thing."

Israel has revived Hebrew, created a new currency, immersed her children in the history, ancient and modern, of her people, and established a homeland for Jews from all over the world, millions of whom have migrated there to settle. Israel is now home to the largest concentration of Jews anywhere on earth.

Here, however, we come to the heart of the existential crisis.

Israel became home to the largest Jewish population on earth in part because American Jews in the 1990s fell in number from 5.5 million to 5.2 million, a loss of 300,000, or 6 percent of the U.S. Jewish population.

According to Charles Krauthammer, by 2050, the U.S. Jewish population will have shrunk another 50 percent to 2.5 million. American Jews are slowly vanishing. How and why is this happening?

It is the collective decision of American Jews themselves, who have led the battles for birth control and a woman's right to choose.

As Jews were roughly 2 percent of the U.S. population from *Roe v. Wade* to today, perhaps 2 percent of the 50 million legal abortions since *Roe* were likely performed on Jewish girls or women, resulting in 1 million lost members of the Jewish community in 35 years.

And if demography is destiny, Israel's future, too, appears grim.

As former Ambassador Zalman Shoval writes, Israel's population of 7 million is 80 percent Jewish.

But the Palestinian population of Israel has risen to 20 percent and is growing much faster.

One Israel blogger, using Shoval's totals, writes that among the Israeli population between 1 and 4 years old, roughly 30 percent is Arab. The future of Israel is thus increasingly Arab and less Jewish.

According to the United Nations, by 2050, Israel will have 10 million people.

By then, the Arab population, at present birth rates, is likely to be close to 30 percent of the Israeli population. On the West Bank and Gaza, today's 4 million Arabs are to explode to 10 million, far outstripping the growth in Israel. Jordan's population of 5 million, 60 percent Palestinian, will also double to 10 million.

Thus, not even counting Palestinians in Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the Gulf states, Israel's 7 million to 8 million Jews in 2050 will be living with 13 million Palestinians in Israel, Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. If Israel is to survive as a Jewish state, a separate and independent Palestinian state would seem an imperative.

Yet, as Israelis continue to build outposts and expand and add settlements, the possibility of a Palestinian state recedes. Indeed, many Israelis, seeing what an end to the occupation produced in Gaza, refuse to consider any pullout at all from the West Bank.

Such a policy of holding on and digging in is sometimes the best one -- but only if time is on one's side. Is time on Israel's side?

According to the world population statistics from the National Policy Institute, the worldwide Arabic population in 1950 was only 94 million, less than 4 percent of the world population. But by 2050, it will be 700 million, 7 percent of a world population of almost 10 billion.

According to U.N. population experts, Lebanon's population will grow to 5 million in 2050, but Syria's will almost double from today's 20 million to 34 million. The population of Saudi Arabia will rise from 24 million to 45 million. Egypt will grow by more than 50 million to 121 million Egyptians by 2050. The Islamic Republic of Iran, 71 million today, is expected to reach 100 million at mid-century.

And, demography aside, the Islamic faith of Israel's neighbors is becoming militant. Hamas now controls Gaza. Hezbollah now controls Southern Lebanon and is becoming the power in Beirut. While Egypt is headed by a pro-American autocrat, the principal rival for power is the widely popular Muslim Brotherhood.

Those who do not like the Saudi monarchy should consider what is likely to rise in its place, should the House of Saud fall. The same is true of the Jordanian and Moroccan monarchies, and the sheikhdoms, emirates and sultanates of the Persian Gulf.

In any struggle of generations, the critical question is often: Whose side is time on? As President Bush celebrates Israel's 60th birthday, and is celebrated in turn as Israel's best friend ever, it is a fair question to ask.

How 'Nakba' Proves There's No Palestinian Nation

By Steven Plaut The Jewish Press April 30, 2008

Over the past few years, the term nakba (also spelled naqba) has become the favorite nonsense word of the Anti-Israel Lobby. Meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, it has been embraced by anti-Semites all over the planet to refer to Israel's creation, which supposedly imposed a "catastrophe" upon the "disenfranchised Palestinian Arabs."

Of course, the real catastrophe that befell the Arabs in 1948-49 was that they failed in their attempt to annihilate Israel and exterminate its population, and for that they paid a price.

Meanwhile, Nakba Nonsense has been spreading. Google finds over 85,000 web pages referring to Israel's creation as a "nakba," and a Yahoo search finds even more than that. The anti-Israel web magazine Counterpunch cannot mention Israel without using the term. Even Israel's leftist minister of education, Yuli Tamir, has ordered that the nakba be taught as part of the curriculum in Israeli schools, where Israel's schoolchildren can be taught to mourn their own country's existence.

(Tamir, who was previously a professor of education at Tel Aviv University, is so bizarre that in the summer of 1996 she published an article in the

Boston Review defending female circumcision in the Third World and denouncing those who expressed disgust at the practice -- see <http://bostonreview.net/BR21.3/Tamir.html>.)

Nakba ceremonies are now held each year by leftist professors at Israeli universities who mourn the very creation and existence of their country.

The nakba of the late 1940's and 1950's that befell large numbers of Jews living in Arab countries who were suddenly expelled, persecuted, and stripped of their property does not interest such people. Those Jewish refugees made new homes in Israel and actually outnumbered the Palestinians who fled.

Meanwhile, an urban legend has been fabricated about the origin of the term "nakba" -- a fairy tale that claims the word was a banner waved by Palestinians starting in 1948, and that its very use shows how deep the roots of "Palestinian nationality" go.

So here is a little current events quiz: What is the real origin of the term "nakba" and what is its original meaning?

If you get the answer to the quiz wrong – in other words, if you say it refers to the events of 1948 – you are in very good company. I myself would have flunked the quiz up until a few days ago, when I stumbled on the correct answer. Not only does the bandying about of the “nakba” nonsense word not point to any “depths of roots of Palestinian nationality,” it proves the very opposite: namely, that there is no such thing as a Palestinian nation or nationality at all.

The authoritative source on the origin of “nakba” is none other than George Antonius, supposedly the first “official historian of Palestinian nationalism.” Like so many “Palestinians,” he actually wasn’t – Palestinian, that is. He was a Christian Lebanese-Egyptian who lived for a while in Jerusalem, where he composed his official advocacy/history of Arab nationalism. The Arab Awakening, a highly biased book, was published in 1938 and for years afterward was the official text used at British universities.

Antonius was an “official Palestinian representative” to Britain, trying to argue the cause for creating an Arab state in place of any prospective homeland promised the Jews under the Balfour Declaration of 1917. By the 1930’s Antonius was an active anti-Zionist propagandist, and as such was offered a job at Columbia University (where some things don’t seem to change much).

He served as an academic fig leaf for xenophobic Arab nationalists seeking to deny Jews any right to self-determination in or migration to the Land of Israel. And he was closely associated with the Grand Mufti, Hitler’s main Islamic ally, and also with the pro-German regime in Iraq in the early 1940’s.

Antonius was so passionately anti-Zionist that he continues to serve as the hero and mentor of Jewish leftist anti-Zionists everywhere. For example, the late Hebrew University sociology professor Baruch Kimmerling relied on Antonius at length in his own pseudo-history, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (Free Press, 1993).

So how does Antonius provide us with the answer to the current-events quiz concerning the origin of “nakba”? The term was not invented in 1948 but rather in 1920. And it was coined not because of Palestinians suddenly getting nationalistic but because Arabs living in Palestine regarded themselves as Syrian and were enraged at being cut off from their Syrian homeland.

Before World War I, the entire Levant – including what is now Israel, the “occupied territories,” Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – was comprised of Ottoman Turkish colonies. When Allied forces drove the Turks out of the Levant, the two main powers, Britain and France, divided the spoils between them. Britain got Palestine, including

what is now Jordan, while France got Lebanon and Syria.

The problem was that the Palestinian Arabs saw themselves as Syrians and were seen as such by other Syrians. The Palestinian Arabs were enraged that an artificial barrier was being erected within their Syrian homeland by the infidel colonial powers – one that would divide northern Syrian Arabs from southern Syrian Arabs, the latter being those who were later misnamed “Palestinians.”

The bulk of the Palestinian Arabs had in fact migrated to Palestine from Syria and Lebanon during the previous two generations, largely to benefit from the improving conditions and job opportunities afforded by Zionist immigration and capital flowing into the area. In 1920, both sets of Syrian Arabs, those in Syria and those in Palestine, rioted violently and murderously.

On page 312 of *The Arab Awakening*, Antonius writes, “The year 1920 has an evil name in Arab annals: it is referred to as the Year of the Catastrophe (Am al-Nakba). It saw the first armed risings that occurred in protest against the post-War settlement imposed by the Allies on the Arab countries. In that year, serious outbreaks took place in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.”

Yes, the answer to our little quiz is 1920, not 1948. That’s 1920 – when there was no Zionist state, no Jewish sovereignty, no “settlements” in “occupied territories,” no Israel Defense Forces, no Israeli missiles and choppers targeting terror leaders, and no Jewish control over Jerusalem (which had a Jewish demographic majority going back at least to 1850).

The original “nakba” had nothing to do with Jews, and nothing to do with demands by Palestinian Arabs for self-determination, independence and statehood. To the contrary, it had everything to do with the fact that the Palestinian Arabs saw themselves as Syrians. They rioted at this nakba – at this catastrophe – because they found deeply offensive the very idea that they should be independent from Syria and Syrians.

In the 1920’s, the very suggestion that Palestinian Arabs constituted a separate ethnic nationality was enough to send those same Arabs out into the streets to murder and plunder violently in outrage. If they themselves insisted they were simply Syrians who had migrated to the Land of Israel, by what logic are the Palestinian Arabs deemed entitled to their own state today?

Palestinian Arabs are no more a nation and no more entitled to their own state than are the Arabs of Detroit or of Paris. They certainly are not entitled to four different states: Jordan, Hamastan in Gaza, a PLO state in the West Bank, and Israel converted into yet another Arab state via the granting of a “right of return” to Arab refugees.

Speaking of Palestinians as Syrians, it is worth noting what one of the early Syrian nationalists had to say. The following quote comes from the great-grandfather of the current Syrian dictator, Bashar Assad:

"Those good Jews brought civilization and peace to the Arab Muslims, and they dispersed gold and prosperity over Palestine without damage to anyone or taking anything by force. Despite this, the Muslims declared holy war against them and did not hesitate to massacre their children and women...."

Thus a black fate awaits the Jews and other minorities in case the Mandates are cancelled and Muslim Syria is united with Muslim Palestine."

That statement is from a letter sent to the French prime minister in June 1936 by six Syrian Alawi notables (the Alawis are the ruling class in Syria today) in support of Zionism. Bashar's great-grandfather was one of them.

Steven Plaut is a professor at Haifa University.

A prophetic speech? By The Baltimore Sun Editorial May 18, 2008

The political commentators, top Democrats and their leading presidential contender couldn't say enough about President Bush's reference to Nazi appeasers during his speech last week to Israel's parliament. It was a perceived slap at Sen. Barack Obama's interest in talking to Iran and Syria - the evildoers the administration loves to hate - but it struck a chord on Israel's 60th anniversary because many of its citizens view Iran as their potential annihilator.

What got less attention was Mr. Bush's single reference to the Palestinians in his speech, and it resonated in a way the president's speechwriters probably never intended.

Looking ahead to Israel's 120th anniversary, Mr. Bush said, "The Palestinian people will have the

homeland they have long dreamed of and deserved - a democratic state that is governed by law and respects human rights, and rejects terror." Here's what Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat heard: It would take another 60 years before a Palestinian state would emerge. His pessimism is not unwarranted. Despite Mr. Bush's commitment to bring Israelis and Palestinians to some agreement before he leaves office, little progress toward that end has been achieved. The administration's diplomacy has been too late and less than rigorous. The Islamic militant group Hamas retains its hold on the Gaza Strip and won't stop its border attacks against Israel. And the Israeli prime minister is now embroiled in a scandal.

Sixty years may not be soon enough.

Suicide, the path to national salvation

By Amnon Rubinstein The Jerusalem Post May 21, 2008

Gaza is becoming a symbol. We rightly emphasize Israel's need to put an end to the daily, ever-widening, shelling of our civilians; indeed, it is obvious that Israel will eventually have to take military action - no country could act otherwise - to silence the guns and missile-launchers.

Another aspect is equally significant and concerns the attitude of Hamas's rulers to the mounting tension: On the one hand, they are negotiating - with Egypt, not with the illegitimate Zionist entity - on a temporary cessation of hostilities. On the other hand, they authorize extending the range of their missile attacks, knowing full well that this will hasten the day in which Israel, under any government, will have to order its army to march into Gaza and strip Hamas of its power.

Such is the Hamas policy: not only an endless blood-letting war against the Zionist entity, but also a readiness to lose their hold over Gaza as part of this war. This signifies a readiness not only to sacrifice the lives of men, women and children, but also a readiness to sacrifice the very regime they established not long ago through a violent coup. In other words, it is a process of political suicide writ large: The shahid is not only the individual, but the regime itself.

This may sound like an extreme conclusion but, as Ari Bar Yossef, retired lieutenant-colonel and administrator of the Knesset's Security Committee, writes in the army journal Ma'arachot, such cases of Islamist national suicide are not uncommon. He cites three such examples of Arab-Muslim regimes irrationally sacrificing their very existence, overriding their instinct of self-preservation, to fight the perceived enemy to the bitter end.

- The first case is that of Saddam Hussein, who in 2003 could have avoided war and conquest by allowing UN inspectors to search for (the apparently non-existent) weapons of mass destruction wherever they wanted. Yet Iraq's ruler opted for war, knowing full well that he would have to face the might of the US.

- The second case is that of Yasser Arafat in 2000, who after the failure of the Camp David and Taba talks had two options: continue talking to Israel - under the leadership of Ehud Barak, this country's most moderate and flexible government ever - or resort to violence. He chose the latter, with the result that all progress toward Palestinian independence was blocked. The ensuing loss of life, on both sides, testified to Arafat's preference for suicide over compromise.

• The third case is that of the Taliban. Post-9/11, their leadership had two options: to enter into negotiations with the US, with a view to extraditing Osama bin Laden, or to risk war and destruction. The choice they made was obvious: Better to die fighting than to give up an inch.

In all three cases, the conclusion is plain: prolonged war, death, destruction and national suicide are preferable to peaceful solutions of conflicts: Dying is preferable to negotiating with infidels. The same conclusion, of course, is applicable to the Palestinians voting for Hamas and its suicidal path, and to Iran's decision to confront the Security Council in its insistence on acquiring nuclear weapons.

These cases, while unprecedented in the annals of history, should not be that surprising. If you glorify individual suicide, if death is the key to a happy afterlife, if war itself is sanctified, why not extend these ideas from the individual to the collective? To the regime itself? Suicide is the path to both individual and national salvation.

Luckily, not all Arab or Muslim regimes are like that. The vast majority of Arabs seek life, liberty and happiness. But when it comes to the hated Israel, madness rules, and not only the Iranians. It is a fact that Iran's explicit aim "to wipe Israel off the map" and its implicit threat to use nuclear weapons for this purpose are supported by many Palestinians - even though they too would be "wiped off" in the process.

Suicide in the struggle against Israel has acquired a degree of legitimacy the West cannot even fathom.

This unpalatable conclusion must be confronted. On the one hand, it should drive us to increase our efforts to reach some sort of modus vivendi with the PLO to decrease the impact of the fanatics (despite the fact that any such compromise will be rejected by Iran and its cohorts); while on the other hand, Israel, as well as the West, should be prepared for a long, irrational and costly war, unlike any other fought in the past.

The writer is a professor of law at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, a former Israeli minister of education.

Hezbollah's power play By The Washington Times Editorial May 18, 2008

There are four major goals behind Hezbollah's recent display of raw military power in Lebanon, in which at least scores of people have been killed. First, there was the Shi'ite terror group's determination to settle domestic Lebanese political scores with its enemies, in particular Sunni Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, and Progressive Socialist Party chief Walid Jumblatt. The second is to give Iran and Syria more military options in their struggle with Israel. The third is to embarrass the United States — in particular President Bush, who this week is visiting the Mideast. The fourth objective is to intimidate and embarrass relatively moderate Arab nations with ties to the United States like Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In effect, Hezbollah has staged a de facto coup, making it — and by extension its supporters in Tehran and Damascus — the dominant force in Lebanon.

As we went to press, the Lebanese cabinet was expected to cancel a series of May 8 decisions that Hezbollah objected to when it blockaded the Beirut Airport and took up arms against the government. Specifically, Beirut had decided to rotate Brig. Gen. Wafiq Choucair, a Hezbollah sympathizer and Lebanese armed forces officer in charge of the airport, to a new position. Also, fearful that Hezbollah was preparing to drag Lebanon into another war with Israel, the government declared "illegal" a Hezbollah military communications network that extended to the heart of Beirut. But, in the wake of Hezbollah's strategic blitzkrieg against its fellow Lebanese, the Beirut government yesterday decided to cancel the orders.

The events in Lebanon are a blow to the Bush administration's foreign policy credibility. The

Lebanese military, which stood on the sidelines as Hezbollah went on its rampage, has received nearly \$250 million in assistance from the United States since 2006. President Bush is scheduled to meet today with Mr. Siniora in Egypt. In the interim, we fully expect to hear plenty of tough talk from the Bush administration about the malevolence of Iran and Syria. But it is highly doubtful that anything can be done in the short term to reverse the Hezbollah coup that has just taken place or the fact that it gives Hezbollah free reign in northern and eastern Lebanon.

The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon is deployed south of the Litani River. To circumvent this, Hezbollah has been rebuilding a series of military bases and tunnels north of the river since the 2006 war with Israel. Its expanded presence there provides it with the opportunity to set up an expanded northern confrontation front against Israel. It sends a message aimed at deterring both the United States and Israel against taking military action against Iranian weapons facilities — should they do so, Tehran and its allies would be able to target Israel from bases in Lebanon.

Hezbollah's victory is also an embarrassment to the Arab League, and in particular, the Saudis. Riyadh was reportedly involved in financing Sunni militias in Beirut that were supposed to be able to combat Hezbollah militarily; but the Sunnis were routed by Hezbollah. Right now, the Arab League is engaged in trying to "mediate" between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government — which is a very diplomatic euphemism for establishing the terms of Beirut's surrender to Hezbollah.