

Focus on ISRAEL

Selected articles concerning Israel, published weekly by Suburban Orthodox Toras Chaim's (Baltimore) Israel Action Committee

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What Happened to Israel's Reputation?

By Michael Oren The Wall Street Journal May 14, 2012

How in 40 years the Jewish state went from inspiring underdog to supposed oppressor. *This year Israel is celebrating . . . a series of accomplishments that have surely exceeded the expectations of its most visionary founders. It is one of the most powerful small nations in history. . . . [It] has tamed an arid wilderness [and] welcomed 1.25 million immigrants. . . . The Israelis themselves did the fighting, the struggling, the sacrificing in order to perform the greatest feat of all—forging a new society . . . in which pride and confidence have replaced the despair engendered by age-long suffering and persecution.*

So Life magazine described Israel on the occasion of its 25th birthday in May 1973. In a 92-page special issue, "The Spirit of Israel," the magazine extolled the Jewish state as enlightened, robustly democratic and hip, a land of "astonishing achievement" that dared "to dream the dream and make that dream come alive."

Life told the story of Israel's birth from the Bible through the Holocaust and the battle for independence. "The Arabs' bloodthirsty threats," the editors wrote, "lend a deadly seriousness to the vow: Never Again." Four pages documented "Arab terrorist attacks" and the three paragraphs on the West Bank commended Israeli administrators for respecting "Arab community leaders" and hiring "tens of thousands of Arabs." The word "Palestinian" scarcely appeared.

There was a panoramic portrayal of Jerusalem, described as "the focus of Jewish prayers for 2,000 years" and the nucleus of new Jewish neighborhoods. Life emphasized that in its pre-1967 borders, Israel was "a tiny, parched, scarcely defensible toe-hold." The edition's opening photo shows a father embracing his Israeli-born daughter on an early "settlement," a testament to Israel's birthright to the land.

Would a mainstream magazine depict the Jewish state like this today, during the week of its 64th birthday?

Unlikely. Rather, readers would learn about Israel's overwhelming military might, brutal conduct in warfare and eroding democratic values—plus the Palestinians' plight and Israeli intransigence. The photographs would show not cool students and cutting-edge artists but soldiers at checkpoints and religious radicals.

Why has Israel's image deteriorated? After all, Israel today is more democratic and—despite all the threats it faces—even more committed to peace.

Some claim that Israel today is a Middle Eastern power that threatens its neighbors, and that conservative immigrants and extremists have pushed Israel rightward. Most damaging, they contend, are Israel's policies toward the territories it captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, toward the peace process and the Palestinians, and toward the construction of settlements.

Israel may seem like Goliath vis-à-vis the Palestinians, but in a regional context it is David. Gaza is host to 10,000 rockets, many of which can hit Tel Aviv, and Hezbollah in Lebanon has 50,000 missiles that place all of Israel within range. Throughout the Middle East, countries with massive arsenals are in upheaval. And Iran, which regularly pledges to wipe Israel off the map, is developing nuclear weapons. Israel remains the world's only state that is threatened with annihilation.

Whether in Lebanon, the West Bank or Gaza, Israel has acted in self-defense after suffering thousands of rocket and suicide attacks against our civilians. Few countries have fought with clearer justification, fewer still with greater restraint, and none with a lower civilian-to-militant casualty ratio. Israel withdrew from Lebanon and Gaza to advance peace only to receive war in return.

Whereas Israelis in 1973 viewed the creation of a Palestinian state as a mortal threat, it is now the official policy of the Israeli government. Jewish men of European backgrounds once dominated Israel, but today Sephardic Jews, Arabs and women are prominent in every facet of society. This is a country where a Supreme Court panel of two women and an Arab convicted a former president of sexual offenses. It is the sole Middle Eastern country with a growing Christian population. Even in the face of immense security pressures, Israel has never known a second of nondemocratic rule.

In 1967, Israel offered to exchange newly captured territories for peace treaties with Egypt and Syria. The Arab states refused. Israel later evacuated the Sinai, an area 3.5 times its size, for peace with Egypt, and it conceded land and water resources for peace with Jordan.

In 1993, Israel recognized the Palestinian people ignored by Life magazine, along with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the perpetrator of those "Arab terrorist attacks." Israel facilitated the creation of

a Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza and armed its security forces. Twice, in 2000 and 2008, Israel offered the Palestinians a state in Gaza, virtually all of the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. In both cases, the Palestinians refused. Astonishingly, in spite of the Palestinian Authority's praise for terror, a solid majority of Israelis still support the two-state solution.

Israel has built settlements (some before 1973), and it has removed some to promote peace, including 7,000 settlers to fulfill the treaty with Egypt. Palestinians have rebuffed Israel's peace offers not because of the settlements—most of which would have remained in Israel anyway, and which account for less than 2% of the West Bank—but because they reject the Jewish state. When Israel removed all settlements from Gaza, including their 9,000 residents, the result was a terrorist ministate run by Hamas, an organization dedicated to killing Jews world-wide.

Nevertheless, Israeli governments have transferred large areas to the Palestinian Authority and much security responsibility to Palestinian police. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has removed hundreds of checkpoints, eased the Gaza land blockade and joined President Obama in calling for the resumption of direct peace talks without preconditions. Addressing Congress, Mr. Netanyahu declared that the emergence of a Palestinian state would leave some settlements beyond Israel's borders and that "with creativity and with good will a solution can be found" for Jerusalem.

Given all this, why have anti-Israel libels once consigned to hate groups become media mainstays? How can we explain the assertion that an insidious "Israel Lobby" purchases votes in Congress, or that Israel oppresses Christians? Why is Israel's record on gay rights dismissed as camouflage for discrimination against others?

The answer lies in the systematic delegitimization of the Jewish state. Having failed to destroy Israel by conventional arms and terrorism, Israel's enemies alit on a subtler and more sinister tactic that hampers Israel's ability to defend itself, even to justify its existence.

It began with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's 1974 speech to the U.N., when he received a standing ovation for equating Zionism with racism—a view the U.N. General Assembly endorsed the following year. It gained credibility on college campuses through anti-Israel courses and "Israel Apartheid Weeks." It

burgeoned through the boycott of Israeli scholars, artists and athletes, and the embargo of Israeli products. It was perpetuated by journalists who published doctored photos and false Palestinian accounts of Israeli massacres.

Israel must confront the acute dangers of delegitimization as it did armies and bombers in the past. Along with celebrating our technology, pioneering science and medicine, we need to stand by the facts of our past. "The Spirit of Israel" has not diminished since 1973—on the contrary, it has flourished. The state that Life once lionized lives even more vibrantly today.

Mr. Oren is Israel's ambassador to the United States.

While I was unable to send the newsletter out by e-mail, Note that all of the newsletter archives (including current editions) can be found on the Suburban Orthodox webpage (Israel Action section) at <http://www.suburbanorthodox.org/israel-action.php>.

As we did last year, my family is sponsoring the Race For Hope DC, to raise money for brain cancer research. I was stricken with brain cancer a little over two years ago. To donate on-line, please go to www.curebraintumors.org and look for our team, SHELDON'S STEIBEL. If anyone wants to send me a check, I will be happy to submit your donation. E-mail me at sabasheldon@gmail.com for more information.

The race was May 6 and was a tremendous success – THANK YOU to all who contributed to make our team one of the top-10 teams (out of almost 600 teams entered). Sheldon

The Echoes of '67: Israel Unites to Democracy

By Charles Krathammer The Washington Post May 10, 2012

In May 1967, in brazen violation of previous truce agreements, Egypt ordered U.N. peacekeepers out of the Sinai, marched 120,000 troops to the Israeli border, blockaded the Straits of Tiran (Israel's southern outlet to the world's oceans), abruptly signed a military pact with Jordan and, together with Syria, pledged war for the final destruction of Israel.

May '67 was Israel's most fearful, desperate month. The country was surrounded and alone. Previous great-power guarantees proved worthless. A plan to test the blockade with a Western flotilla failed for lack of participants. Time was running out. Forced into mass mobilization in order to protect against invasion — and with a military consisting overwhelmingly of civilian reservists — life ground to a halt. The country was dying.

On June 5, Israel launched a preemptive strike on the Egyptian air force, then proceeded to lightning victories on three fronts. The Six-Day War is legend, but less remembered is that, four days earlier, the nationalist opposition (Menachem Begin's Likud precursor) was for the first time ever brought into the government, creating an emergency national-unity coalition.

Everyone understood why. You do not undertake a supremely risky preemptive war without the full participation of a broad coalition representing a national consensus.

Forty-five years later, in the middle of the night of May 7-8, 2012, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shocked his country by bringing the main opposition party, Kadima, into a national unity government. Shocking because just hours earlier, the Knesset was expediting a bill to call early elections in September.

Why did the high-flying Netanyahu call off elections he was sure to win?

Because for Israelis today, it is May '67. The dread is not quite as acute: The mood is not despair, just foreboding. Time is running out, but not quite as fast. War is not four days away, but it looms. Israelis today face the greatest threat to their existence — nuclear weapons in the hands of apocalyptic mullahs publicly pledged to Israel's annihilation — since May '67. The world is again telling Israelis to do nothing as it looks for a way out. But if such a way is not found — as in '67 — Israelis know that they will once again have to defend themselves, by themselves.

Such a fateful decision demands a national consensus. By creating the largest coalition in nearly three decades,

Netanyahu is establishing the political premise for a preemptive strike, should it come to that. The new government commands an astonishing 94 Knesset seats out of 120, described by one Israeli columnist as a "hundred tons of solid concrete."

So much for the recent media hype about some great domestic resistance to Netanyahu's hard line on Iran. Two notable retired intelligence figures were widely covered here for coming out against him. Little noted was that one had been passed over by Netanyahu to be the head of Mossad, while the other had been fired by Netanyahu as Mossad chief (hence the job opening). For centrist Kadima (it pulled Israel out of Gaza) to join a Likud-led coalition whose defense minister is a former Labor prime minister (who once offered half of Jerusalem to Yasser Arafat) is the very definition of national unity — and refutes the popular "Israel is divided" meme. "Everyone is saying the same thing," explained one Knesset member, "though there may be a difference of tone."

To be sure, Netanyahu and Kadima's Shaul Mofaz offered more prosaic reasons for their merger: to mandate national service for now exempt ultra-Orthodox youth, to change the election law to reduce the disproportionate influence of minor parties and to seek negotiations with the Palestinians. But Netanyahu, the first Likud prime minister to recognize Palestinian statehood, did not need Kadima for him to enter peace talks. For two years he's been waiting for Mahmoud Abbas to show up at the table. Abbas hasn't. And won't. Nothing will change on that front.

What does change is Israel's position vis-a-vis Iran. The wall-to-wall coalition demonstrates Israel's political readiness to attack, if necessary. (Its military readiness is not in doubt.)

Those counseling Israeli submission, resignation or just endless patience can no longer dismiss Israel's tough stance as the work of irredeemable right-wingers. Not with a government now representing 78 percent of the country.

Netanyahu forfeited September elections that would have given him four more years in power. He chose instead to form a national coalition that guarantees 18 months of stability — 18 months during which, if the world does not act (whether by diplomacy or otherwise) to stop Iran, Israel will.

And it will not be the work of one man, one party or one ideological faction. As in 1967, it will be the work of a nation.

Myth of a two-state solution

By Rep. Joe Walsh The Washington Times May 4, 2012

Palestinians fighting Israel and each other put peace out of reach

It has been 64 years since the United Nations General Assembly approved the Partition Plan for Palestine and the struggle to implement a “two-state solution” began. Today, we are no closer to that end. That reminds me of the definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. By that definition, everyone who continues to cling to the delusion of a two-state solution is insane. There is no such thing as a two-state solution. It cannot work, it has not worked, and it will not work.

The only viable solution for the Middle East is a one-state solution: one contiguous Israeli state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. There will not and cannot be lasting peace in the Middle East until then.

Ever since the Palestinians and Arab countries refused to accept the Mandate for Palestine in the 1920s, the original two-state solution, the international community has been catering to Palestinian and Arab demands for a divided Israel. The Palestinians and Arabs, however, repeatedly have rejected those proposals, including the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan, which they are using to justify their demands for a divided Israel. Enough is enough. Why is the international community continuing to kowtow to these demands when, for 64 years, the Palestinians and Arabs have worked against peace? Israel is the only country in the region that has shown that it wants and will work toward peace. Since 1947, the Palestinians and Arab countries have fought more than five wars against Israel over territory, and at each opportunity, a victorious Israel has returned land it acquired in exchange for peace.

The Palestinians have broken their word again and again. They continue to fire rockets directly at innocent Israeli families and children, and they have betrayed the fundamental tenet of the two-state solution they tout by cutting Israel out of negotiations and going directly to the United Nations. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to incite violence against Israelis. It pays the salaries of imprisoned terrorists convicted of killing Israelis and glorifies suicide bombers at public events. The PA’s magazine *Zayzafuna* recently presented Hitler as a role model for Palestinian youth because of all the Jews he killed.

Most important, how can a people divided between radically different and violently opposed factions possibly govern a single state overnight? Right now, the

Palestinians are divided between Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Fatah in the West Bank. Those factions fought a civil war no more than five years ago and are fundamentally irreconcilable. Who would govern a unified Palestinian state?

The two-state solution can never work when one of the domains, the Palestinian state, does not even acknowledge the other state’s (Israel’s) right to exist and has as its entire purpose in life wiping Israel off the face of the earth. Never will peace come when one side possesses such hate and routinely expresses that hate through violence and blood. It is time to let go of the two-state-solution insanity and adopt the only solution that will bring true peace to the Middle East: a single Israeli state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel is the only country in the region dedicated to peace and the only power capable of stable, just and democratic government in the region.

This solution is the best for everyone, especially the Palestinians. They will trade their two corrupt and inept governments and societies for a stable, free and prosperous one. Those Palestinians who wish to may leave their Fatah- and Hamas-created slums and move to the original Palestinian state: Jordan. The British Mandate for Palestine created Jordan as the country for the Palestinians. That is the only justification for its creation. Even now, 75 percent of its population is of Palestinian descent. Those Palestinians who remain behind in Israel will maintain limited voting power but will be awarded all the economic and civil rights of Israeli citizens. They will be free to raise families, start businesses and live in peace, all of which are impossible under current Arab rule.

The two-state solution has failed. Only a one-state solution - a single, undivided Israel - will bring peace, security and prosperity to Israelis and Palestinians alike. It’s time for the United States to lead toward this. For more than 60 years, though peace has been the goal, common sense and basic human morality have been ignored. So peace has never come. We’ve had it backward all these years: The goal should not be peace at all costs. The goal should be a strong, free and prosperous Israel. The United States should not be some honest broker between two sides, but rather should stand publicly with one side - Israel. Then, and only then, **will real peace truly come.**

Rep. Joe Walsh is an Illinois Republican

The Failure of Arab Liberals

By Sohrab Ahmari **Commentary Magazine** May, 2012

Lamenting the illiberal fruit of the Arab Spring has become a favorite pastime of the Western commentariat. A year and a half after the movement's outbreak, pundits from across the political spectrum compete daily for valuable editorial real estate to announce, in so many words, "We told you so." For the left, Islamist ascendance across post-revolutionary North Africa provides ample evidence of the limits of American influence and the need for a foreign policy even more humble than that espoused by the Obama administration. On the realist right, the rhetoric differs, but the underlying message—that America must finally abandon global democratization as a core element of its national strategy—is very much the same.

Developments on the ground since the heady first days of the Arab Spring have indeed been dismaying. The first omen came on February 18, 2011, dubbed the Egyptian revolution's "Victory Day." On that day, the Egyptian masses filling Cairo's iconic Tahrir Square looked markedly different than those that had taken to the square at the height of the uprising. Islamist activists, with their distinctive Salafi-style beards and stern expressions, were the ones dominating Tahrir, not smartphone-wielding young dissidents in Western outfits. They listened intently as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's beloved televangelist, back in Egypt after years spent in exile, called on Egyptians to "liberate" occupied al-Quds (Arabic for Jerusalem). Wael Ghonim, the Google executive who came to embody the revolution for Western audiences, was barred from addressing the Square that day.

Islamist forces have since scored one triumph after another. In Egypt, the Islamist bloc composed of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi al-Nour party has won overwhelming control of both houses of parliament. The rise of Islamist parties has been accompanied by ever worsening violence against Coptic Christians, assaults on the Israeli embassy, and threats to nullify Anwar Sadat's peace. In Tunisia, the Brotherhood-linked Ennahda party has won a decisive plurality, a once tolerated gay and lesbian community has come under severe attack, and the country's robust secularist and feminist traditions have been on the retreat amid growing anti-Western sentiment. In Libya, some rebel forces have traded their NATO flags for al-Qaeda's black banner; others have targeted the country's vulnerable black African and Amazigh minorities. Torture is reportedly rampant in the prisons of free Libya.

While its extent has been shocking, the Islamist threat to the Arab Spring was clear all along. What we are witnessing in North Africa today is a rerun of the dreaded "Algiers syndrome"—the tragic reality that free and fair elections in the Middle East more often than

not yield Islamist power. The term was first coined in the early 1990s, when the jihadist *Front Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Front) won the first round of a relatively free election in Algeria. In response, the fiercely secularist Algerian officer corps cancelled the second round and reimposed military rule, triggering a brutal and oft forgotten civil war that claimed roughly a quarter million lives.

Long before the Arab Spring, many in the West—neoconservative thinkers above all—blamed the region's autocrats for the persistence of the Algiers syndrome. By effectively suffocating all forms of secular dissent, the reasoning went, the autocrats had left mosques and Islamist organizations as the only available outlets for channeling opposition. This is still the best account of why liberalism has failed to take root in the Middle East and North Africa and why Islamist politics have made such significant inroads among the Arabs. Other accounts, which rely on religion and culture to explain the perennial fragility of Arab liberalism, are not entirely without merit. But in elevating Islamism to the status of an inherent, immutable, and permanent characteristic of Arab politics, such accounts betray one of the central premises of liberalism itself: universality—the notion that all people are endowed with and aspire to the same fundamental rights, which all states have an obligation to protect.

To place the blame for the Algiers syndrome solely at the feet of the autocrats, however, is equally mistaken. The region's self-proclaimed liberals and democrats must be held accountable for having articulated an Arab liberalism that is inchoate and incoherent and that often betrays liberal first principles in the name of political expediency and opportunity. The tactical and ideological shortcomings of Arab liberalism have been on full display for months now, and there are no signs that Middle East liberals are adapting to the new realities on the ground. If there is any hope of reversing the Arab Spring's current trajectory toward more stagnation, obscurantism, and demagoguery, these weaknesses must be systematically confronted and their root causes addressed—tasks that only engaged, combative, and even heavy-handed U.S. leadership in the region can help achieve.

"The word *liberal* is a word primarily of political import," Lionel Trilling wrote in the famous preface to *The Liberal Imagination*. "But its political meaning defines itself by the quality of life it envisages, by the sentiments it desires to affirm." At its noblest, the Arab Spring was propelled by a Trillingian version of liberalism. Most of its young protagonists, who risked death to defy some of the world's cruelest regimes, did not appreciate liberalism as a complex, philosophical commitment to popular dignity and individual rights. Yet, intuitively,

they aspired to something better than the suffocating repression and corruption that had surrounded them since birth under the rule of entrenched dictators. If beneath the rage on the streets the Arab Spring contained a liberal kernel, it was very much a liberalism of sentiments.

But it must be remembered, Trilling was writing in an American context in which liberalism was “not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition.” Liberalism anywhere, moreover, is about more than sentiments and intuitions. In the final analysis, it is a political ideology that must be vigorously defended, especially in a Middle East climate that is naturally hostile to individual liberty, gender equality, and the rights of minorities. At this most basic, tactical level, Arab liberalism has been woefully deficient. Social media may have offered effective tools for mobilizing youth against authoritarian figureheads such as Mubarak and Ben Ali.

But they did not and could not offer the right resources for seizing the postrevolutionary aftermath. Liberal manifestos could not be developed and articulated using 140-character tweets and homemade YouTube videos; party cadres did not form out of Facebook groups. By contrast, the Islamists could rely on well-established, non-virtual networks—not to mention the financial generosity of Gulf petrol-patrons eager to co-opt the revolutionary moment and prevent the emergence of genuine freedom—to advance their message.

Even more damaging have been Arab liberals’ frequent deviations from liberal first principles and their mimicry of Islamist discourse. Consider the Egyptian-American columnist Mona Eltahawy. Next to Ghonim, the Google executive, Eltahawy is undoubtedly the Egyptian revolution’s most visible representative and a self-proclaimed Muslim liberal. When the Egyptian revolution broke out, the former Reuters correspondent, having justly earned plaudits for her courageous stance against the burka and other forms of female subjugation in the Muslim world, was already a superstar among Arab journalists. Since Mubarak’s ouster, Eltahawy has been traveling frequently to Egypt to report on postrevolutionary developments there and to join her compatriots in calling for a speedy transfer of power to civilian institutions.

One would think that this sequence of remarkable life experiences—both before and after the Arab Spring—would immunize Eltahawy against populist demagoguery. Yet, sadly, as Egyptian politics have turned ever more anti-Western, so has Eltahawy’s rhetoric. Take, for example, her reaction to last May’s killing of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by U.S. forces. The demise of the jihadi mastermind responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans and Muslims complemented perfectly the renewal of genuine politics in the Arab lands. Eltahawy, however, took to the pages of the *Guardian* to decry the throngs of jubilant young people in New York City she witnessed celebrating bin

Laden’s death. “The scene at Ground Zero was like a parody of *Team America*, the film created by the South Park team to parody Bush’s America gone wild on nationalism,” she wrote. Americans should not have permitted themselves this “frat boy” moment: “One man has been killed; dozens courageously staring down despots are slaughtered every day.”

But bin Laden wasn’t just any one man. He was the leading ideologue and practitioner of a nihilistic ideology that for decades has wreaked havoc across the Middle East and that threatened to hijack the Arab revolts. Rather than turn her critical energies against bin Laden’s ideological brethren in Egypt—the Muslim Brotherhood, with which al-Qaeda shares intellectual roots—Eltahawy set her sights on alleged American jingoism.

As the summer gave way to fall and the Brotherhood began flexing its political muscles in earnest, Arab liberals remained in a state of practical and ideological disarray. Rather than gearing up to defeat Egypt’s version of the Iranian ayatollahs, they continued down the path of misplaced hatred, primarily against the West. Thus, when an epidemic of riots and wild looting—with no discernible political objective other than illicit acquisition of flat-screen televisions—broke out across England, Eltahawy heard an echo of the Arab Spring and saw a replay of Mubarak-style repression in the Cameron government’s response. “Compare...[British and Egyptian] leaders’ uncannily similar reactions to what they perceive as crises,” she lectured in another *Guardian* column. “It’s enough to make you wonder if Mubarak is moonlighting as a consultant on the most effective ways to chip away at civil liberties around the world as he awaits the next session of his trial for murder and corruption.”

In fewer than 700 words, Eltahawy placed her own compatriots’ inspiring, grassroots movement for change in one of the world’s most militarized societies on the same moral plane as a senseless bout of rioting in the world’s oldest parliamentary democracy. Meanwhile, the Islamists quietly prepared the way for a massive electoral thumping that will take secular forces years if not decades to recover from. Late last March, the Brotherhood announced plans to field its longtime deputy supreme guide, Khairat el Shater, as a candidate for the upcoming presidential elections—breaking repeated pledges not to contest the presidency and all but guaranteeing an Islamist takeover of post-Mubarak Egypt.

No issue, however, tests Arab liberals’ commitment to liberal first principles more than Israel’s right to exist and live in security in its neighborhood. As anti-Semitism exploded out of post-Mubarak Egypt, with soccer mobs openly demanding a second Holocaust and popular calls for abrogating the Camp David accords, the liberals had a real opportunity to take a principled stance and serve as a tempering influence. After all, Israel remains the region’s only genuine liberal state and a model for what a Mideast democracy should look like.

Alas, in many cases, liberals took the lead in demonizing Israel and calling for violence against the Jewish state.

The most remarkable case of such moral abdication was that of the Egyptian novelist Alaa al-Aswany—justly renowned for his magnificent portrait of Mubarak-era decline in *The Yacoubian Building*. When, last August, Israeli forces accidentally killed Egyptian troops while chasing Palestinian terrorists across the Sinai, al-Aswany took to his blog on the website of *World Affairs* to advocate war. “Outrage at Israeli aggression is commendable and legitimate,” he claimed:

Egyptians feel that it’s now time for the insulting treatment they suffered from Israel in Mubarak’s time to end. Israel must understand that Egypt has changed, that its ally Mubarak is on trial for felonies, and that the Egyptian people will not allow the murderers to escape punishment when its citizens are killed.

To respond to Israeli “aggression,” al-Aswany recommended, Egypt should “expel the Israeli ambassador from Cairo and recall the Egyptian ambassador from Israel”; “review or repeal all the agreements between us and Israel”; amend the Camp David accords “in a way that allows Egyptian forces to deploy throughout Sinai”; and, most ominously of all, support the armed forces so they “can devote themselves to their combat mission and Egypt can set out towards the future it deserves.” Never mind that instigating such a war against the Jewish state is the surest way to doom liberal reform in Egypt and across the Arab world for a generation or more. For al-Aswany, Eltahawy, and dozens of other liberal intellectuals, the urge to maintain “authenticity” and “credibility” in the new Arab landscape—not to mention feeding the angry Twitter mobs—trumps fidelity to liberal values any day.

When, last February, Khader Adnan (a West Bank baker and spokesman for the Iranian-funded Islamic Jihad who is kept under administrative detention by Israeli authorities) became the latest Palestinian cause célèbre, the new Arab Spring liberals jumped at the chance to chest-thump. Adnan, they insisted, was the Palestinian equivalent of Martin Luther King Jr. or Gandhi. The fact that Adnan had been captured on video urging young Palestinians to blow themselves up in Israel did not give his supporters among Arab liberals the slightest pause. If anything, it impelled them to ratchet up the shrillness of their rhetoric. Sultan al-Qassem, a celebrated liberal writer for the United Arab Emirates-based *National* took to Twitter, for example, to condemn the United States as a “fake democracy” for

its bipartisan support of Israel—quite a charge coming from a columnist for a newspaper owned by the feudal UAE regime.

Some of these figures may privately concede that their pan-Arab posturing is purely tactical in nature, driven by the need to position themselves as sufficiently anti-Western in a difficult political environment. They could not be more mistaken. As the experience of Iran’s 1979 revolution demonstrates, liberals are already suspect when it comes to their anti-American and anti-Israel *bona fides*; Islamists and other radicals will always “out-compete” them on the anti-Western front. Liberals do themselves no favors by seeking to placate illiberal impulses—however popular they may be—and hoping to tame them further down the road through the electoral process. If liberal values are worth fighting and dying for when it comes to confronting autocracy, they must be guarded more jealously against Islamists, who hate liberalism even more than did the likes of Mubarak and Ben Ali.

The moral and cultural crisis of Arab liberalism is serious. It threatens nothing less than the future of freedom in the Middle East. Yet, as daunting as it may seem in light of recent developments, there really is no other path than the freedom agenda as far as U.S. policy should be concerned. After the Arab Spring, the U.S.-led order in the region is frayed, but it still stands. If it is to persist and thrive, that order must be decoupled from classical Arab authoritarianism.

Our liberal allies in this fight are deeply flawed. Disengaging from the region and adopting a “humble” posture, however, will only leave them more vulnerable to the Islamists—and to their own worst urges. As a number of writers have already suggested, the Middle East today is desperately in need of an ideological plan similar to the Marshall Plan deployed in postwar Europe. But to make the investment worth its while, the United States should not hesitate to assume the role of the democratic teacher, as it did in Europe, to shape and articulate a Middle East liberalism that is at peace with Israel, that refrains from anti-Western rhetoric and prioritizes individual and minority rights over the whims of demagogic mobs. There is no other cure for the Algiers syndrome.

Sohrab Ahmari, an Iranian-American journalist and nonresident associate research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, is co-editor of *Arab Spring Dreams*, a new anthology of essays by young Mideast dissidents (Palgrave Macmillan).

Perverse Palestinian pride

By Daniel Mandel The Washington Times May 15, 2012

Palestinians fighting Israel and each other put peace out of reach It has been 64 years since the United Nations General Assembly approved the Partition Plan for Palestine and the struggle to implement a “two-state solution” began. Today, we are no closer to that end. That reminds me of the definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. By that definition, everyone who continues to cling to the delusion of a two-state solution is insane. There is no such thing as a two-state solution. It cannot work, it has not worked, and it will not work.

The only viable solution for the Middle East is a one-state solution: one contiguous Israeli state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. There will not and cannot be lasting peace in the Middle East until then.

Ever since the Palestinians and Arab countries refused to accept the Mandate for Palestine in the 1920s, the original two-state solution, the international community has been catering to Palestinian and Arab demands for a divided Israel. The Palestinians and Arabs, however, repeatedly have rejected those proposals, including the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan, which they are using to justify their demands for a divided Israel. Enough is enough. Why is the international community continuing to kowtow to these demands when, for 64 years, the Palestinians and Arabs have worked against peace? Israel is the only country in the region that has shown that it wants and will work toward peace. Since 1947, the Palestinians and Arab countries have fought more than five wars against Israel over territory, and at each opportunity, a victorious Israel has returned land it acquired in exchange for peace.

The Palestinians have broken their word again and again. They continue to fire rockets directly at innocent Israeli families and children, and they have betrayed the fundamental tenet of the two-state solution they tout by cutting Israel out of negotiations and going directly to the United Nations. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority (PA) continues to incite violence against Israelis. It pays the salaries of imprisoned terrorists convicted of killing Israelis and glorifies suicide bombers at public events. The PA’s magazine *Zayzafuna* recently presented Hitler as a role model for Palestinian youth because of all the Jews he killed.

Most important, how can a people divided between radically different and violently opposed factions possibly govern a single state overnight? Right now, the Palestinians are divided between Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Fatah in the West Bank. Those factions fought a civil war no more than five years ago and are fundamentally irreconcilable. Who would govern a unified Palestinian state?

The two-state solution can never work when one of the domains, the Palestinian state, does not even acknowledge the other state’s (Israel’s) right to exist and has as its entire purpose in life wiping Israel off the face of the earth. Never will peace come when one side possesses such hate and routinely expresses that hate through violence and blood. It is time to let go of the two-state-solution insanity and adopt the only solution that will bring true peace to the Middle East: a single Israeli state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel is the only country in the region dedicated to peace and the only power capable of stable, just and democratic government in the region.

This solution is the best for everyone, especially the Palestinians. They will trade their two corrupt and inept governments and societies for a stable, free and prosperous one. Those Palestinians who wish to may leave their Fatah- and Hamas-created slums and move to the original Palestinian state: Jordan. The British Mandate for Palestine created Jordan as the country for the Palestinians. That is the only justification for its creation. Even now, 75 percent of its population is of Palestinian descent. Those Palestinians who remain behind in Israel will maintain limited voting power but will be awarded all the economic and civil rights of Israeli citizens. They will be free to raise families, start businesses and live in peace, all of which are impossible under current Arab rule.

The two-state solution has failed. Only a one-state solution - a single, undivided Israel - will bring peace, security and prosperity to Israelis and Palestinians alike. It’s time for the United States to lead toward this. For more than 60 years, though peace has been the goal, common sense and basic human morality have been ignored. So peace has never come. We’ve had it backward all these years: The goal should not be peace at all costs. The goal should be a strong, free and prosperous Israel. The United States should not be some honest broker between two sides, but rather should stand publicly with one side - Israel. Then, and only then, will real peace truly come.

Settlement Challenges

By Robert O. Freedman **The Baltimore Jewish Times** May 4, 2012

As Israel celebrated its 64th birthday, it had much to be proud of: the Hebrew language and culture's rev-ival; successfully resettling millions of immigrants; developing a high-tech economy; and making its armed forces among the world's best.

Yet, serious domestic problems exist. This week, I will deal with the growing religious problem; next month, I will tackle income inequality and Israel's Arab community.

Israel's religious problem has two parts: First is the growing secular-Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) conflict. Secular Jews (20 to 25 percent of the country) and many Religious Zionists (about 10 percent) resent that Haredi youth rarely serve in the military, but draw taxpayer stipends to maintain their religious lifestyles. The Haredim say studying Talmud is as important in preserving Israel as serving in its military; secular Jews, they say, are Jews in name only.

In the past, the primary conflict also centered on how to keep Shabbat and kashrut. Today, however, it includes women's role in Israeli society. Haredim have demanded that women: sit in the back of buses serving their neighborhoods; stay away from public areas during Jewish holidays; not sing at public events; and dress "modestly" (even little girls).

Meanwhile, growing Haredi power and influence have alienated America's non-Orthodox Jews. Haredi support is important to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition and he is loath to move against them.

One possible change, however, could come if: Yair Lapid and his new secular political party gains between six to 10 Knesset seats; a resurgent Labor Party gains 20 seats; and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu Party successfully expands from its Russian immigrant and

anti-Israeli Arab base and increases from its 15 seats to 18 to 20 seats — admittedly big "ifs."

But with secularists in Netanyahu's Likud Party, a secular bloc could limit the money to the Haredim and to crack down on their pressure on Israel's women.

A second religious issue pits the Religious Zionist soldiers, who serve in the army but have some rabbis who bitterly oppose evacuating Jewish settlements, which they say would reverse the Messianic Process. Consequently, as during the 2005 Gaza withdrawal, some rabbis will call upon religious soldiers — an increasing percentage of the junior officer corps — to refuse evacuation orders.

If there is expected U.S. pressure on the settlement issue in the coming years, and if Netanyahu (or his successor) is less dependent on settler support — more big ifs — the pro-settlement forces (including West Bank Jewish "Hilltop Youth" thugs) could cause a massive confrontation to prevent settlement dismantlement.

In this context, settlements already have negative repercussions that could intensify. In the Knesset, there are efforts to limit both the Israeli Supreme Court's power — a defender of Palestinian interests — and overseas funding and political support for Israeli NGOs such as Peace Now, which opposes settlements.

In addition, "price-tag" attacks against both Peace Now officials in Israel proper and Israel Defense Forces soldiers on the West Bank have sought to deter settlement outpost and settlement dismantling.

In sum, how the Israeli government deals with settlements may have a major impact on Israel's future.

Daniel Mandel is a fellow in history at Melbourne University in Australia and director of the Zionist Organization of America's Center for Middle East Policy.

Resisting threat of fanatical Islam

By Geert Wilders The Washington Times May 7, 2012

West must not surrender permanent liberty for temporary tolerance As I write these lines, there are police bodyguards at the door. No visitor can enter my office without passing through several security checks and metal detectors. I have been marked for death. I am forced to live in a heavily protected safe house. Every morning, I am driven to my office in the Dutch Parliament building in an armored car with sirens and flashing blue lights. When I go out, I am surrounded, as I have been for the past seven years, by plainclothes police officers. When I speak in public, I wear a bulletproof jacket.

Who am I? I am neither a king nor a president, nor even a government minister; I am just a simple politician in the Netherlands. But because I speak out against expanding Islamic influence in Europe, I have been marked for death. If you criticize Islam, this is the risk you run. That is why so few politicians dare to tell the truth about the greatest threat to our liberties today. The Islamic threat to the West is worse than the communist threat ever was. Think of it this way: Politicians who warned against the Soviet threat weren't forced into hiding, as we who speak out against Islam are.

I received my first death threats in September 2003 after I asked the Dutch government to investigate a radical mosque. When the death threats became more frequent, the Dutch authorities assigned me a team of police bodyguards. In November 2004, after a Muslim fanatic murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh for making a movie about the abuse of women under Islam, policemen armed with machine guns came to my house, pushed me into an armored car, and drove me off into the night. That was the last time I was in my house. Since then, I have lived in an army barracks, a prison cell and now a government-owned safe house.

I have grown accustomed to this situation. After more than seven years, the security detail has become part of my daily routine, but in a free society, no politician should have to fear for his life because he addresses issues voters care about.

Nor should special-interest groups be allowed to trump our Western rights of free speech, as Islamic and leftist organizations tried to do by dragging me to court on accusations of "hate speech." After an almost three-year legal ordeal, I was acquitted of all charges.

More Islam means less freedom

I used to travel widely and frequently in the Islamic world, but now it's no longer safe. I have read the Koran and studied the life of Muhammad. It made me realize that Islam is primarily a totalitarian ideology rather than a religion. I feel sorry for the Arab, Persian, Indian and Indonesian peoples who have to live under the yoke of Islam. It is a belief system that marks apostates for death, forces critics into hiding and denies our Western tradition of individual freedom. Without freedom, there can be no prosperity and no pursuit of

happiness. More Islam means less life, less liberty and less happiness.

That is why I consider it my duty to sound the alarm about the relentless expansion of Islam. While many Muslims are moderate, Islam is not. Some Muslims take Islam seriously and wage jihad - holy war - against the West, and they do so from within our borders.

Fifty-seven percent of the Dutch people say that mass immigration was the biggest single mistake in Dutch history. Many politicians, however, downplay the most dramatic sociological change of their lifetime. They ignore the worries of the people out of political correctness and cultural relativism, which insist that all cultures are equal; hence, immigrants do not need to assimilate: Islamic values are just as good as Dutch, British or American values.

What we stand to lose

If we do not oppose Islamization, we will lose everything: our freedom, our identity, our democracy, our rule of law. To preserve Western civilization, we must do four things: Defend freedom of speech, reject cultural relativism, counter Islamization, and cherish our Western national identities, whether we are Dutch, French, British or American.

Of all our liberties, freedom of speech is the most important. Free speech is the cornerstone of a free society. So long as we are free to speak, we can make people realize what is at stake. In Western democracies, we do not settle our disagreements with violence, but through spoken and written arguments. In the search for the truth, we allow everyone to express his or her honestly held views. That is how we outgrew barbarism and became a free and prosperous society. We must pass it on to our children.

I have written a book in defense of liberty and freedom of expression, titled "Marked for Death." It explains the many ways in which Islam has marked for death not only me, but all of Western civilization. The book warns Americans about the danger of turning a blind eye to the true nature of Islam.

Though Islam threatens Europe and America, the West is not yet lost. It will survive as long as the spirit of freedom remains unbroken. While Islam has marked me for death, a growing number of Dutch voters have given me their support. In the Netherlands, we have begun to turn the tide against Islamization. So can other countries.

I will never keep silent because we must not let violent fanatics dictate what we say and what we read. We must rebel against their suffocating rules and demands at every turn. We must, in the words of Revolutionary War veteran Gen. John Stark, "Live free or die."

Geert Wilders is a member of the Dutch Parliament. He is leader of the Party for Freedom and author of Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me" (Regnery, 2012).

Jewish State a Talking Point as Election Nears

By Ben Birnbaum The Washington Times May 14, 2012

Candidates for Egypt's highest office have sharpened their anti-Israel rhetoric with barely a week left until voters cast their ballots in the first presidential election since last year's revolution.

Israel emerged as a flash point Thursday night in a debate between the two front-running candidates, former Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Islamist Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh.

Mr. Aboul Fotouh called the Jewish state an "enemy" and challenged Mr. Moussa to do the same. Mr. Moussa demurred, saying a president should not use "emotive expressions."

Steven A. Cook, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of "The Struggle for Egypt," said the exchange offers a window into the candidates' strategies.

"Aboul Fotouh's goal was to show that Moussa was 'falul,' " said Mr. Cook, using an Egyptian expression for remnants of the old regime.

"And the old regime was different from where most Egyptians are on the peace treaty [with Israel], whereas Moussa was intent on showing that Aboul Fotouh was irresponsible - that, yes, Egyptians, in fact, have a case to be made, but to call Israel an 'enemy' was not necessarily in the interest of Egyptians."

To longtime Egypt observers, the idea of Mr. Moussa being put on the defensive over Israel was ironic. Mr. Moussa, who served as longtime President Hosni Mubarak's foreign minister and then as secretary-general of the Arab League, earned Egyptian affection with his famed tirades against Israel.

The campaign also has forced Mr. Moussa to dispel rumors that he has an Israeli half-brother.

Egyptians will cast their initial presidential votes May 23 to 24. If no candidate gets the majority, as seems likely, the top two vote-getters will compete in a second round June 16 to 17.

In addition to Mr. Moussa and Mr. Aboul Fotouh, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi and former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik also are contenders.

On Saturday, Mr. Shafik's campaign boasted that he, a former air force commander, had shot down two Israeli planes during his military career.

Mr. Morsi also has railed against Israel, though he has pledged to respect the 1979 Camp David Accords that normalized relations between the countries.

Mr. Moussa leads most polls, though few analysts will make predictions because of the unreliability of Egyptian polling.

Whoever wins will preside over a new chapter in relations with Israel, which have suffered since the ouster of Mr. Mubarak, whom Israelis saw as an anchor of stability.

All major candidates have pledged to end natural gas sales to Israel. They also have called for revisions to the peace treaty.

In his debate with Mr. Moussa, Mr. Aboul Fotouh called the treaty a "national security threat" to Egypt, citing its limitations on Egyptian military forces in the Sinai Peninsula.

Obama administration officials have downplayed the anti-Israel campaign language.

"People say things in a campaign and then when they get elected, they actually have to govern," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Friday.

But in Israel, the rhetoric has fueled suspicion about the "Arab Spring" - a term many Israelis abhor.

"It's Arab, but it's not spring," said former army chief Gabi Ashkenazi at a recent conference, suggesting the substitute term "Islamic storm."

Iranians Have Democratic Values By Yoav Porat The Wall Street Journal May 13, 2012

New research reveals that Iranian society has a pro-liberal value structure deeply at odds with the fundamentalist regime.

In the high-stakes international discussions surrounding Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Iran's 80 million people are often forgotten. So I, along with a small team of Israelis, decided to explore the driving forces of Iranian society. There have been signs, on the streets and over the Internet, of a battle raging between the country's Islamic fundamentalists and the proponents of freedom. The question we set out to explore is where the majority of the people stand.

Soon we were joined by leading experts in the fields of social psychology, cross-cultural research, the Shiite Muslim religion, statistics, and dozens of Farsi-speaking volunteers.

Circumventing Iran's "electronic curtain"—as President Obama described the Iranian government's efforts to control contact with the outside world—our research team conducted telephone interviews in late 2011 and earlier this year with nearly a thousand Iranians. The latter constituted an accurate representative sample of Iranian society, including all of Iran's 31 provinces as well as a representative distribution of all ethnic groups, ages and levels of education. The interviews were conducted anonymously and the country the calls came from was concealed in order to ensure the safety of the respondents.

To overcome the challenge of measuring the potential for freedom and democracy in an autocratic country like Iran, we had to innovate. Typically, researchers use questionnaires that include questions such as "are you for or against democracy?" Or "have you ever signed a petition?" However, citizens in authoritarian countries are often afraid to respond to such explicit questions, and if they do respond their answers are likely to be distorted by fear.

Therefore we used a psychological questionnaire that measures the basic values of society without posing a single question in political terms. The questions described the views of a figurative third person and then asked the Iranian interviewee to what extent that person was similar to them. The third person was described in sentences such as "It is important to him to make his own decisions about his life," "thinking creatively is important to him," and "it is important to him to be the one who tells others what to do."

The questionnaire used in Iran was developed by cross-cultural psychology expert Shalom Schwartz as part of his "Theory of Basic Human Values," which is widely used by psychology researchers. In cooperation with Prof. Schwartz, our team created an index which

measures the potential of a society to foster democratization, based on its values.

We validated the index by representative samples from 64 countries, and 162,994 respondents, from the United States and Sweden to Indonesia and Ghana. This revealed a strong correlation between a society's score on the index and its degree of democratization (based on the Freedom House measure of what constitutes a liberal democracy).

Conducting the interviews in Iran, we were amazed by how forthcoming the Iranian people were.

An analysis of the Iranian sample showed that alongside conservative values, such as conformity and tradition, Iranian society is characterized by strong support for pro-liberal values such as a belief in the importance of self-direction and benevolence. For example, 94% of the respondents identified with the sentence "freedom to choose what he does is important to him," and 71% of the respondents identified with the sentence "being tolerant toward all kinds of people and groups is important to him."

Once we had samples from Iran, we could analyze them with global samples using the new index. Iran was placed on a continuum measuring the tendency of societies world-wide to foster liberal democracy. Remarkably, in comparison to 47 countries surveyed in the World Values Survey, Iranian society's potential for liberal democracy was found to be higher than that of 23 others—including Arab countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Jordan, and Asian countries such as South Korea, India and Thailand. In comparison to 29 countries surveyed in the European Social Survey, Iran was found to have higher tendencies toward liberal democracy than Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia and Romania.

We also discovered an abnormally large gap between the societal potential for liberal democracy in Iran and the actual level of democracy in the country. In most countries there is a high correlation between the two. When such a gap exists, there is a strong tendency for the country's level of democracy to adjust in accordance with the society's potential.

Our findings demonstrate that Iranian society as a whole is characterized by a pro-liberal value structure that is deeply at odds with the fundamentalist regime. This presents considerable potential for regime change in Iran and for the development of liberal democracy.

Mr. Porat is an Israeli political strategist. His full report can be found at www.iranresearch.org.

Peter Beinart, I Quit

By Yoel Finkelman JewishIdeasDaily.com April 2, 2012

In a 2010 article in the New York Review of Books, pundit and writer Peter Beinart accused the U.S. Jewish establishment of alienating young American Jews by refusing to criticize Israeli government policies. He has now published a book, *The Crisis of Zionism*, which expands on his argument and proposes that Zionists support "democratic Israel" but boycott goods produced in the settlements. In advance of the book's publication, Beinart launched a blog on the Daily Beast titled *Open Zion* (formerly *Zion Square*)—dedicated, he said, to an "open and unafraid conversation about Israel, Palestine, and the Jewish future." The blog engaged Dr. Yoel Finkelman to report regularly on the ultra-Orthodox community. Finkelman was enthusiastic about participating in the project. But after several weeks of *Open Zion*, he has concluded that its conversation is not, in fact, open—and is not one in which he can continue to take part. In the letter below, he resigns his position. —The Editors

Dear Peter,

Unfortunately, I must resign from my role as regular columnist for *Zion Square*, now *Open Zion*.

When you contacted me several months ago about writing a weekly post for the Daily Beast summarizing developments in ultra-Orthodox media, I was enthusiastic. You offered me a high-profile venue for publishing on a topic close to my heart, plus a little something to supplement my salary as a Torah teacher and lowly adjunct. More important, you asked me to provide an important service for the community: namely, serving as a tour guide into the complex and increasingly influential Haredi community.

Yet, as *Open Zion* has taken shape, my conscience as a Zionist and writer has made me uncomfortable associating with the blog.

Politically, you and I have much in common, as we both lie firmly on Israel's left. (In the religious-Zionist circles in which I run, that makes me a bit of an oddball.) I, like you, have significant moral and political misgivings about the occupation, which we both understand to be an existential threat to Israel's status as a Jewish and democratic state. I agree that American and Israeli Zionism require some important new conversations that will expand the range of what is currently being said. More, I thought it important for Zionists to hear directly from Palestinians in more robust ways than television sound bites allow.

But *Open Zion* quickly staked out its territory in the troubling location where left-wing Zionism drifts into post-Zionism which drifts into anti-Zionism. Perhaps that is the wave of the future—the result, as you suggest, of young American Jews' discovering real or imagined contradictions between liberalism and

Zionism. You offered that generation an opportunity to debate the questions concerning them: Must we leave Zionism completely, or can we remain ambivalent Zionists even today? Should we boycott some, all, or none of Israel?

But if those are the questions of central concern to tomorrow's leadership, the Jewish people is in significant self-induced trouble. If those are the questions of great concern to today's young Jews, I can only stake my own territory elsewhere.

Open Zion has emerged as a site with a few rich discussions of complex issues, but also as a venue for unbalanced accusations against Israel, Zionism, and settlers. I found a few thoughtful and thought-provoking articles, but they were interspersed among simplistic arguments, one-sided claims, Twitter-feed journalism, snarky prose, and an unexamined assumption of Zionist guilt.

I wanted serious discussion of how, without sacrificing its vital security interests, Israel can help empower moderate Palestinian leadership, foster the creation of a stable and trustworthy Palestinian state—and, crucially, diminish Palestinian suffering until such time. Instead, I got morally confused debates over whether Israel is or is not an apartheid state. I wanted insight into the complexities of how and under what circumstances Israel might relinquish more territory to Palestinian control now that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza has brought on a Hamas takeover. Instead, I hear far too much self-righteous moralizing about Zionism's culpability for the evil of the occupation. I wanted serious consideration of how Zionist proponents of territorial compromise can minimize conflict and violence between the State and the settler population that stands to lose so much. Instead, I hear cavalier posturing about Jews boycotting other Jews.

What am I to make of the frankly silly article suggesting a negotiated peace agreement between Israel and Hamas, without even a nod to Israeli doubts about Hamas's reliability in honoring whatever agreement might be reached? Another article described the 1948 Nakba [tragedy] as involving "the depopulation of Palestine of the majority of its native inhabitants," which it certainly did—at least if Jews born in the Land of Israel do not qualify as native inhabitants, and if one uses the terms "depopulation" and "majority" loosely.

But one would expect a discussion of the Palestinian tragedy of 1948 to mention an Arab world that rejected the UN Partition Plan, then lost an aggressive war designed to eliminate the State of Israel and "depopulate" (read: kill) its Jewish population. And what about this howler of a journalistic sentence: "As it always does, the IDF blamed the civilian deaths on the

Palestinians, whose fighters often shoot from populated areas"?

You see, in a few short weeks, Open Zion has become very much like the Haredi press that I survey as an academic. In both, a small but increasingly influential group, enormously self-confident about the righteousness of its own path and dismissive of others, reports on matters as it wishes they were and not as they actually are. In both, there is an obsession with a narrow set of topics written about constantly in a limiting and limited language. In both, there is room for some debate and disagreement; but the boundaries of dispute are set by a priori dogmas, stated and unstated.

And, in both, the conversation pads the egos and supports the self-confidence of the participants but often provides little depth or understanding.

In my academic life, I am fascinated by the study of that kind of journalism. But I do not want to be involved in producing it.

With wishes that Passover will bring genuine and honest peace between Israel and its neighbors.

Dr. Yoel Finkelman lives with his wife and five children in Beit Shemesh, Israel. He is the author of Strictly Kosher Reading: Popular Literature and the Condition of Contemporary Orthodoxy.

While I am currently unable to send the newsletter out by e-mail, Note that all of the newsletter archives (including current editions) can be found on the Suburban Orthodox webpage (Israel Action section) at <http://www.suburbanorthodox.org/israel-action.php>. My hope is to re-start the e-mail distribution system sometime during the summer of 2012.

If anyone would like to receive this newsletter by a weekly e-mail, please drop us a line at sabasheldon@gmail.com and we will be glad to add you to our growing list of subscribers.

As we did last year, my family is sponsoring the Race For Hope DC, to raise money for brain cancer research. I was stricken with brain cancer a little over two years ago. To donate on-line, please go to www.curebraintumors.org and look for our team, SHELDON'S STEIBEL. If anyone wants to send me a check, I will be happy to submit your donation. E-mail me for more information. The event on May 6 was a MAJOR success raising over \$2 Million. Our team raised in excess of \$37,500 thanks to so many of our readers becoming contributors. I thank each and every one of you. Sheldon

If anyone is in the Suburban Orthodox area on Shabbat morning, please be sure to attend services there (starting at 9:00am) as the Shul and many wonderful sponsors are making a festive Kiddush in honor of my many years of service to Suburban Orthodox Congregation and to the general Jewish community. Your attendance will be noted and will be greatly appreciated.