

Erev Yom Ha-Atzma'ut: A Brief Reminder About Purpose

By Daniel Gordis DanielGordis.org April 24, 2009

There's a certain look to a widow who's in her mid-twenties, whose husband was killed in Gaza in January. Eyes swollen with tears, yet with steely determination at the same time. A certain vulnerability on her still very young face, and a face that seems too old for her age, all at the same time. An image of pain and of unspeakable sadness, but not asking for pity. Was it just me, or was it clear that even in the midst of her unbearable burden, she knew full well that she - like the young husband who was taken from her far too early - is part of something much larger than she is? Is that why, looking at her, I had a sense of - more than anything else - strength?

I would have liked many more people to see her. President Obama, for example, as he prepares for another stab at Middle East peace-making. Hillary Clinton, who's now telling us to make peace lest we lose American support in the looming confrontation with Iran. All those Jews out there, beating their breasts, despondent that the Jewish state is so "un-Jewish" in its seeming unwillingness to make peace.

We hear all those people - of course we do. And as we do, we can't help but wonder if the world has begun to tire of us, to regret the decision that it made on November 29, 1947. (We know without doubt, for example, that were the UN to vote today, Israel would not be created.) Calls for Israel to negotiate with Hamas despite the latter's commitment to Israel's destruction, the poisonous environment of Durban II and the Obama administration's willingness to engage with Iran even as it continues to enrich uranium, all contribute to this sense.

So to all those who are wringing their hands about Israeli intransigence and inflexibility, on this eve of Israeli Independence Day, a brief word about nations, and states, and purpose. For without understanding purpose, there's no understanding Israel.

Israelis elected Ehud Barak in 1999 because he promised peace with the Palestinians. When Barak put the majority of the West Bank and even parts of Jerusalem on the table, most Israelis went along. The deal fell apart because Palestinians unleashed the Second Intifada. The majority of Israelis supported Ariel Sharon's decision to disengage from Gaza and to uproot all the Jewish communities there. They even elected Ehud Olmert in 2006, after he ran on a platform of further withdrawal from the West Bank.

How did a country that has continually favored painful concessions for peace end up with Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister respectively? It is that which Obama, Clinton and all the hand wringers must understand if they have any hope of being heard here.

To appreciate today's Israeli sentiment, all those people would do well to keep in mind two iconic photographs on which virtually every Israeli is raised. These images have come to represent two radically different eras - Jewish powerlessness under the Nazis, and Jews at the height of their power, when they captured the Old City of Jerusalem from the Jordanians.

The former period is represented in the minds of many Israelis by a black and white photograph of a Jewish boy, probably no older than nine or ten, dressed in his finest coat and hat, his black dress socks pulled up almost to his knees. He is the model of innocence, of European-Jewish financial and social success, and yet, he is pitiful - the very picture of vulnerability. His parents are not at his side, and no onlookers have come to comfort him. His hands raised high in surrender as a Nazi points a gun in his direction, the boy's fate depends entirely on the whim and will of his enemies. He might as well already be dead.

A very different image was taken at the Western Wall in the aftermath of the paratroopers' conquering of the Old City during the June 1967 Six Day War. This photo, by David Rubinger, is equally iconic. It, too, portrays Jews and soldiers - three, in fact. But now, the Jews and the soldiers are one and the same. No longer is the Jew the frightened boy looking away from the Nazi's gun somewhere in Europe. He is home, in Jerusalem, responsible for his own destiny.

Nothing in this image celebrates war. The soldiers' weapons are nowhere to be seen. Their helmets have been removed. The figure in the center is young, almost boyish. What captured the Jewish imagination was not the Jew as soldier, but image of a Jew whose existential condition had been entirely altered in the period between those two photos, all because of the creation of the Jewish state. The Jewish state, Zionism promised, would radically alter the condition of the Jew in the world. No longer would Jews live and die at the whim of others. No

longer would our children's safety be dependent on what our enemies decided.

Today, Israelis are concerned that that has begun to change, that we are sliding inexorably back to the reality represented by the first image. For eight years, Palestinian rockets and mortars turned Israeli childhoods in Sderot and other cities into years of incessant fear. Thousands of Israeli children studied and slept - and some died - at the whim of Palestinian Kassam-launchers. And when Israel finally did respond, the world's outrage was instantaneous.

Now, Israelis wonder if the Americans have quietly resigned themselves to a nuclear Iran. If Israelis become convinced that that is the case, it will be not Netanyahu or Lieberman, but American policy, which will have caused Israeli intransigence. For an Iranian nuclear weapon, even were it never used, would reverse the change in the existential condition of the Jew that Israel made possible. Once Iran has nuclear capacity, every Israeli parent will put their children to bed at night knowing that once again, our survival and that of our children will depend not on what we do, but on what others decide our fate should be. An Iranian nuclear weapon would represent not only a failure of American deterrence, but the failure of the promise of Zionism, to create and sustain a Jewish state that could keep its citizens safe.

An international community committed to significant progress in the Israel-Arab conflict must first convince Israelis that we are not being abandoned, that the world is committed to the purpose for which Israel was created. Very few of us relish sending our sons and daughters off to war, to bear for life the scars of battle, or worse. We, too, would like nothing more than an end to this horrific conflict. Our voting record proves it.

But as we prepare to celebrate independence once again, one fact must remain clear: we will not end the conflict at all costs. That is what the international community must demonstrate it understands. For on this Erev Yom Ha-Atzma'ut, as on all the others, we, at least, know well what is at stake. Given the choice between sending our children off to fight yet again, or of returning to the world of that first photograph in which someone else will decide if we live and for how long, almost all of us will choose the former.

Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End, has now been published. The two photographs discussed above are discussed at greater length in the book, as part of a larger discussion of the purpose of the Jewish State.

Israel's Arab neighbors grasp what the Obama administration won't

By Caroline B. Glick JewishWorldReview.com April 27, 2009

It is a strange situation when Egypt and Jordan feel it necessary to defend Israel against American criticism. But this is the situation in which we find ourselves today.

Last Friday, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee that Arab support for Israel's bid to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is contingent on its agreeing to support the rapid establishment of a Palestinian state. In her words, "For Israel to get the kind of strong support it's looking for vis-a-vis Iran, it can't stay on the sidelines with respect to the Palestinians and the peace efforts." As far as Clinton is concerned, the two, "go hand-in-hand."

But just around the time that Clinton was making this statement, Jordan's King Abdullah II was telling The Washington Post that he is satisfied with the Netanyahu government's position on the Palestinians. In his words, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has "sent a message that he's committed to peace with the Arabs. All the words I heard were the right words."

As for Egypt, in spite of the media's hysteria that Egypt won't deal with the Netanyahu government and the Obama administration's

warning that Israel can only expect Egypt to support its position that Iran must be denied nuclear weapons if it gives Jerusalem to the PLO, last week's visit by Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman clearly demonstrated that Egypt wishes to work with the government on a whole host of issues. Coming as it did on the heels of Egypt's revelation that Iranian-controlled Hizbullah agents were arrested for planning strategic attacks against it, Suleiman's visit was a clear sign that Egypt is as keen as Israel to neutralize Iranian power in the region by preventing it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

And Egypt and Jordan are not alone in supporting Israel's commitment to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power. American and other Western sources who have visited the Persian Gulf in recent months report that leaders of the Gulf states from Bahrain - which Iran refers to as its 14th province - to Saudi Arabia to Kuwait and, of course, to Iraq - are praying for Israel to strike Iran's nuclear facilities and only complain that it has waited so long to attack them.

As one American who recently met with Persian Gulf leaders explained last week, "As far as the Gulf leaders are concerned, Israel cannot attack Iran fast enough. They understand what the stakes are."

Unfortunately, the nature of those stakes has clearly eluded the Obama administration. As the Arabs line up behind Israel, the Obama administration is operating under the delusion that the Iranians will be convinced to give up their nuclear program if Israel destroys its communities in Judea and Samaria.

According to reports published last week in Yediot Aharonot and Haaretz, President Barack Obama's in-house post-Zionist, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, told an American Jewish leader that for Israel to receive the administration's support for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, it must not only say that it supports establishing a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and Gaza, it must begin expelling its citizens from their homes and communities in Judea and Samaria to prove its good faith.

With just months separating Iran from either joining the nuclear club or from being barred entry to the clubhouse, the Obama administration's apparent obsession with Judea and Samaria tells us that unlike Israel and the Arab world, its Middle East policies are based on a willful denial of reality.

The cold hard facts are that the Middle East will be a very different place if Iran becomes a nuclear power. Today American policy-makers and other opponents of using military force to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons compare the current situation to what the region could look like in the aftermath of an Israeli campaign against Iran's nuclear installations. They warn that Hizbullah and Hamas may launch massive retaliatory missile attacks against Israel, Egypt, Jordan and other states, and that US military personnel and installations in the region will likely be similarly attacked by Iranian and Syrian proxies.

Indeed, proponents and opponents of an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations alike warn that Iran's deployment of terror proxies from Beirut to Bolivia, from Managua to Marseilles, and from Gaza to Giza means that things could get very ugly worldwide in the aftermath of an Israeli attack.

But all of that ugliness, all of that instability and death will look like a walk in the park compared to how the region - and indeed how the world - will look if Iran becomes a nuclear power. This is something that the Arabs understand. And this is why they support and pray for an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the Obama administration can throw its hopes for Middle East peace out the window. Today, even without nuclear weapons, Iran is the major force behind the continued Palestinian war against Israel. Iran exerts complete control over Hamas and Islamic Jihad and partial control over Fatah.

In and of itself, Iran's current control over Palestinian terror groups suffices to expose the

Obama administration's plan to force Israel to destroy its communities in Judea and Samaria as misguided in the extreme. With Iran calling the shots for the Palestinians, it is clear that any land Israel vacates will fall under Iranian control. That is, every concession the US forces Israel to make will redound directly to Iran's benefit. This is why Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's claim that it will be impossible to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians without first neutralizing Iran rings so true.

If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, the situation will become even more destructive. A nuclear-armed Iran means that any chance of marginalizing these Iranian-controlled forces in Palestinian society will disappear. For Israel, the best case scenario in the age of a nuclear-armed mullocracy would involve continuous war with Iranian proxies - sort of expanded versions of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead - in which it has little option for victory because the terror armies would fight under Iran's nuclear umbrella.

Regionally, a nuclear-armed Iran would in short order compel both Egypt and Jordan to abrogate their peace treaties with Israel. The exposure of the Iranian sabotage ring in Egypt last week makes clear that Iran seeks to either overthrow or dominate the Arab world with its nuclear arsenal. If Iran becomes a nuclear power, roundups of Iranian agents like the one in Egypt will be inconceivable. Iranian agents will be given free reign both regionally and worldwide.

For Israel, the abrogation of its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan would raise the danger of regional war to an all-time high. Goaded by Iran, and operating with Iran's US- and Turkish-armed Lebanese proxy and Teheran's Syrian slave, Egypt and Jordan may well be made to decide that the time has come to invade Israel again.

These scenarios, of course, are likely because they compare favorably to the worst case scenarios in which a nuclear-armed Iran decides to simply detonate its nuclear bombs over Israel, either in the form of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack or in the form of a direct nuclear strike. An EMP attack would not immediately kill anyone, but would destroy the country's electricity grid and permanently paralyze its military and civilian infrastructures, rendering the population defenseless not merely from its neighbors, but from disease and starvation. If successful, a direct nuclear strike would likely kill between 50,000 and several million Israelis, depending on how many warheads reached their targets.

Globally of course, a nuclear-armed Iran would be well positioned to take over the world's oil markets. With Saudi Arabia's main oil installations located in the predominantly Shi'ite eastern provinces, it would be able to credibly threaten to

destroy Saudi oil installations and so assert control over them. With Iran's strategic alliance with Venezuela, once it controls Saudi oil fields, it hard to see how it would not become the undisputed ruler of the oil economy.

Certainly Europe would put up no resistance. Today, with much of Europe already within range of Iran's ballistic missiles, with Iranian-controlled terror cells fanned out throughout the continent and with Europe dependent on Persian Gulf oil, there is little doubt of the direction its foreign policy would take in the event that Iran becomes a nuclear power. Obviously any thought of economic sanctions would disappear as European energy giants lined up to develop Iranian gas fields, and European banks clamored to finance the projects.

Finally, there is America. With Israel either barely surviving or destroyed, with the Arab world and Europe bowing before the mullahs, with much of Central and South America fully integrated into the Iranian axis, America would arguably find itself at greater risk of economic destruction and catastrophic attack than at any time in its history since the War of 1812. An EMP attack that could potentially send the US back to the pre-industrial age would become a real possibility. An Iranian controlled oil economy, financed by euros, would threaten to displace the dollar and the US economy as the backbone of the global economy. The US's military options - particularly given Obama's stated intention to all but end US missile defense programs and scrap much of its already aging nuclear arsenal - would be more apparent than real.

Yet what Clinton's statements before Congress, Emmanuel's statements to that American Jewish leader and Obama's unremitting pandering to Teheran and its Syrian and Turkish allies all make clear is that none of these reasonable scenarios has made a dent in the administration's thinking. As far as the Obama White House is concerned, Iran will be talked out of its plans for regional and global domination the minute that Israel agrees to give its land to the Palestinians. The fact that no evidence exists that could possibly support this assertion is irrelevant.

On Sunday, Washington Post columnist Jim Hoagland claimed that Obama will not publish his administration's policy on Iran until after he meets with Netanyahu at the White House on May 18. It will be during that meeting, Hoagland wrote, that Obama will seek to convince Netanyahu that there is no reason to attack Iran.

The fact that Obama could even raise such an argument, when by Israel's calculations Iran will either become a nuclear power or be denied nuclear weapons within the next 180 days, shows that his arguments are based on a denial of the danger a nuclear Iran poses to Israel and to global security as a whole. It is true that you can't help but get a funny feeling when you see the Arabs defending Israel from American criticism. But with the Obama administration's Middle East policy firmly grounded in La La Land, what choice do they have? They understand that today all that stands between them and enslavement to the mullahs is the Israel Air Force and Binyamin Netanyahu's courage.

Address by Prime Minister Netanyahu at the Memorial Service for Israel's Fallen Soldier, Ammunition Hill April 27, 2009

Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, President of the Supreme Court, Justice Dorit Beinisch, Bereaved Families, Mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, Israel's Chief Rabbis, Rabbi Shlomo Moshe Amar and Rabbi Yona Metzger, Chairman of the National Yad La'Banim Organizations, Eli Ben Shem, Chairman of the Jerusalem Yad La'Banim Organization, Eli Dahan, Generals and Commanders, Distinguished Guests:

The soil of this land on which we are standing is "Yad Labanim" – sanctified in our sons' boundless devotion. Every piece of land, every rock or crevice is a reminder of the fierce nocturnal battle that took place here for the liberation of Jerusalem.

The fighters of the IDF in the Six Day War, not only on the Jerusalem front, carried in their hearts, upon marching to battle, the song we all remember from those days, "Jerusalem of Gold", which was written shortly before the war. Jerusalem and Zion are one and the same – Zionism stems from Zion, and the State of Israel stems from Zionism. Everything comes from Jerusalem and everything

returns to Jerusalem. Every fallen soldier in Israel's battles wears the crown of Jerusalem, and we are dust at their feet.

Dear Families, In a short while, at dusk, a memorial siren will be heard all across the nation. The people of Israel will unite in memory of those who fell in that long, continuous battle for our existence and independence.

The battlefields of this massive campaign, in which the defenders of the state fought and fell, are scattered all across the country and its borders.

It did not help them, Israel's haters. The State of Israel triumphed. It absorbed millions of immigrants from all ends of the earth, settled and built the land and developed a thriving economy, while maintaining a free, democratic, cultural society. In spite of all its enemies, Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, and despite the difficulties, we will continue in the effort to complete the circle of peace with the rest of our neighbors until we succeed.

The State of Israel owes all these achievements to its fighting heroes – the ones who safeguarded, with their bodies and valiant spirits, our country. They are the ones most worthy of all to wear the nation's crown of glory and be the object of its love and deepest sense of gratitude.

We are people who seek life, and therefore we must continue consolidating our defensive shield – the Israel Defense Forces, the General Security Service, the Mossad, the Israel Police the Border Guard and all our security services. They are the guarantee of security, they are the key to peace.

The price we have paid, and continue to pay, for living in our country, is heavy, too heavy to bear, I know. My family was also affected by bereavement. Your grief is my grief, and like you, I feel the scorching pain in the depth of my heart.

Like you, I bear the memory, the longing and the loss.

Vera, you touched my heart. I am very familiar with your suffering, our suffering. There are levels of torment in the hell of grief and a high level is reserved for brothers and sons, but at the highest level is the agony of parents, fathers and perhaps even above them, mothers. I know.

At twilight, when darkness falls, the Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers will commence. The spirit of everyday life will fade away at once, the pace of the day will be slowed, and Israel and the entire nation will be wrapped in sadness.

Iran's New Target: Egypt

By Abdel Monem Said Aly The Wall Street Journal April 28, 2009

On April 8, Egypt announced it had uncovered a Hezbollah cell operating inside its borders. This startling pronouncement offers a rare insight into the way Iran and its proxies are manipulating Middle East politics.

According to Egyptian authorities, the cell was tasked with planning attacks against tourist sites in Sinai, conducting surveillance on strategic targets including the Suez Canal, and funneling arms and money to Hamas. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has admitted that the ringleader of the cell was indeed a member of his organization to provide "logistical support to help the Palestinian brothers in transporting ammunition and individuals."

These latest actions by an emboldened Hezbollah have been spurred on by Iran, which is seeking to further its quest for power in the Arab Middle East. In the past six months, there have been irrefutable signs of Iran's determined effort to sabotage Egypt's attempts at regional stability. At Tehran's instigation, Hamas rejected the renewal of the six-month, Egypt-brokered cease-fire last summer between it and Israel. This rejection led to the Gaza war in December. At the height of that war, Mr. Nasrallah called on the people of Egypt and its army to march on the city of Rafah to open the

border to Gaza by force, a highly inflammatory appeal aimed at causing insurrection.

On this special day, the entire people, in complete national unity, will rise above every dispute and unite around the bereaved families with a profound sense of shared destiny, because every person in Israel has a relative, companion, friend or acquaintance from among the fallen, whose image they carry with them with an aching heart. There is always one person we remember more than any other, but in the end, we all remember all of them.

That is why the unity we are demonstrating on this day is natural and obvious. But on this day of unity, I wish to say that unity is needed in this nation on all days of the year. It is what helped us in the past to overcome great hardships and difficulties, and even now, it will help us face the great challenges of tomorrow. Our existence as a people and a state depends on our unity.

Today, while remembering the fallen, we will also think of the injured and disabled soldiers and wish them full recovery and rehabilitation. We will spare no effort in locating our missing soldiers and bringing home our kidnapped IDF soldier, Gilad Shalit.

Before our 61st Independence Day begins, we will unite in brotherly solidarity with you, members of the bereaved families, bring you closer to our hearts with love, and will remember and cherish our beloved ones – heroes of this nation – with eternal glory.

May the memory of the fallen be blessed.

After the war ended, Egypt resumed its efforts to reach a long-term cease-fire. Iran pressured the Hamas leadership to resist. Cairo's ongoing effort to build a Palestinian unity government, by bringing together Fatah and Hamas, has also been undermined by intense Iranian pressure on Hamas.

Tehran sees Egypt as its greatest rival in the region, and the most formidable Arab bulwark opposing its influence. It is in this context that Hezbollah actions in Egypt should be assessed. Acting as a front for Iranian objectives, Hezbollah is tasked with distracting Egypt from the diplomatic process that will hopefully lead one day to a two-state solution in the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Egypt's persistent attempts to bring about peace in this arena and its encouragement of other Arab countries to follow its path with Israel threaten to deprive Iran of the single most potent regional issue that it can exploit to further its radical agenda. Thus Tehran seeks to undermine the prospects for this peace -- and it, along with its clients, believe the way to do this is by undermining Egypt. Similarly, Egypt's security interests in the Gulf, and its traditional role as a force for regional stability,

present a clear obstacle to Iran's wider regional ambitions.

For President Barack Obama and members of his administration watching from the sidelines, the implications should be clear. A final settlement of the Palestine-Israel conflict is indispensable if the U.S. wishes to check Iran's expanding influence in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration will have to contend with a right-wing Israeli government that has yet to subscribe to the principle of a two-state solution in defiance of international consensus. It will also have to press Israel to halt its illegal settlement activity, which now more than ever endangers the fundamental basis for a solution.

The administration's focus on the immediate issue of Iran's nuclear program should not distract it

from addressing Tehran's overall posture towards the peace process or its support for terrorism. Iran's challenge to the regional status quo is multifaceted, which is why Washington must adopt a comprehensive approach as it formulates its nascent engagement with Iran.

It is said that Mr. Obama is still weighing when and where to deliver a major speech to the Arab world. If he were to make such a speech in Cairo, it would give heart to millions in the region who want to see the peace process succeed. It would also send a firm message to Tehran that America stands with Egypt on the side of peace and stability.

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The Real 2-State problem is the Hamas-Fatah feud

By Khaled Abu Toameh The Jerusalem Post April 17, 2009

The Obama administration, through its special Middle East envoy George Mitchell, has launched what seems to be an aggressive campaign aimed at pressuring the new Israeli government into accepting the two-state solution.

But even if Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman do finally succumb to the American pressure, they, along with Mitchell, will find that the Palestinians themselves are still far from achieving their goal of building a viable and independent state.

In fact, the Palestinians already have two separate political entities, or mini-states - one in the West Bank and the other in the Gaza Strip. These rival entities, controlled by Fatah and Hamas respectively, are acting and dealing with each other like two different countries.

Fatah representatives who participated in the last round of "reconciliation" talks with Hamas in Cairo said upon their return to the West Bank that they felt as if they were conducting negotiations with representatives of another country and not with Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Repeated attempts by Egypt and Saudi Arabia over the past few months to persuade the two parties to end their differences and form a Palestinian unity government have failed, prompting Cairo and Riyadh to come up with the idea of establishing a confederation between the two "mini-states."

However, both Hamas and Fatah have categorically rejected the confederation idea out of fear that it would perpetuate and consolidate the split between the West Bank and Gaza.

Palestinian Authority officials said that PA President Mahmoud Abbas would ask Mitchell during their upcoming meeting in Ramallah to put pressure on the Netanyahu government to accept

the two-state solution as the basis for a "just, comprehensive and everlasting peace" in the Middle East.

Abbas, the officials said, would also make it clear during his meeting with the US envoy that there was no point in resuming the peace talks with Israel as long as the Israeli government remained opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital, continued settlement activity in the West Bank and demolished illegally built houses in Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

Abbas, they added, would also brief Mitchell on the failed attempts to persuade Hamas to form a unity government with Fatah.

Spokesmen from both Palestinian parties have said over the past few days that only a miracle could lead to an agreement between the two sides. The gap between them remained as wide as ever, they noted, adding that the Egyptians were now considering canceling plans to host another round of reconciliation talks scheduled to take place in Cairo at the end of April.

For now, it appears that the Palestinians (and the rest of the world) will have to live with the fact that the split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip is not a temporary or passing phenomenon.

If the Obama administration is serious about promoting the two-state solution, it must focus its efforts first and foremost on helping the Palestinians solve the dispute between the Fatah-run state in the West Bank and the Hamas-controlled entity in the Gaza Strip.

The divisions among the Palestinians, as well as failure to establish proper and credible institutions, are the main obstacle to the realization of the two-state solution.

Less than half of the West Bank is controlled by the corruption-riddled Fatah faction, which seems to have lost much of its credibility among the Palestinians, largely because of its failure to reform itself in the aftermath of its defeat to Hamas in the January 2006 parliamentary election.

The Gaza Strip, on the other hand, is entirely controlled by the radical Islamic movement that has, through its extremist ideology, wreaked havoc on the majority of the Palestinians living there.

Hearst and the Holocaust

By Rafael Medoff The Jerusalem Post April 22, 2009

Three rare paintings once owned by media magnate William Randolph Hearst were last week returned to the family of the German Jews who were forced by the Nazis to sell them for a pittance. The return of the artwork was an act of justice made all the more fitting by the little-known fact that Hearst played an important role in promoting the rescue of Jews from the Holocaust.

The 16-century Italian Renaissance paintings originally belonged to German Jewish gallery owners Jacob and Rosa Oppenheimer, but when the Oppenheims fled Hitler in 1933, the Nazis auctioned off their confiscated assets for a fraction of their value. Hearst, an avid art collector, purchased the paintings from a different gallery two years later and was evidently unaware of their origin. "If he had found out, even after he purchased them, Mr. Hearst in all indications would have returned them," said Hearst Museum director Hoyt Fields.

Admittedly, Hearst was an unlikely ally for the Jews. His sensationalist style of journalism, strong attacks on president Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal and pre-World War II isolationism made him anathema to much of the American Jewish community. Hearst's meeting with Hitler in 1934, his sympathetic remarks about some of Nazi Germany's policies in the early and mid 1930s and his publication of articles by both Hitler and Mussolini, reinforced his image among American Jews as a reactionary, and possibly even a closet anti-Semite.

Kristallnacht appears to have been the turning point for Hearst. The nationwide Nazi pogrom in which nearly a hundred Jews were murdered, 200 synagogues were burned down and thousands of Jewish homes and businesses were ransacked convinced him that Hitler was "making the flag of National Socialism a symbol of national savagery." After Kristallnacht, Hearst began advocating creation of "a homeland for dispossessed or persecuted Jews."

When news of the mass murder of Europe's Jews began reaching the United States in 1941-1942, the Hearst newspaper chain gave it prominent coverage - by contrast with newspapers such as The New York Times, which routinely confined it to the

The Obama administration is mistaken if it thinks the power struggle between these two groups is a fight between good guys and bad guys. This is a confrontation between bad guys and bad guys, since they are not fighting over promoting democracy or boosting the economy, but over money and power.

Netanyahu and Lieberman need not worry about accepting the two-state solution, because Fatah and Hamas don't seem to be marching toward achieving the national aspirations of their people.

back pages (as Prof. Laurel Leff documented in her definitive study, Buried by 'The Times').

In 1943, Hearst served as an honorary chairman of the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe, which was organized by the activist Bergson Group to demonstrate that rescue was possible - in contrast to the Roosevelt administration's claim that the only way to rescue the Jews was to win the war.

When the Bergson group in late 1943 initiated a congressional resolution urging FDR to create a government agency to rescue Jewish refugees, Hearst directed his newspaper chain to promote the resolution and he personally authored signed editorials endorsing it. One declared: "Remember, Americans, this is not a Jewish problem. It is a human problem."

"Hearst was the only newspaper owner who supported us without any qualifications or reservations," Samuel Merlin, a leader of the Bergson Group, recalled in a postwar interview. "All his papers. He gave us pages after pages free. He gave us the whole editorial page - Hearst himself. He gave orders to print our material."

The group's leader, Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook), noted that he and his colleagues endured some criticism because of their relationship with Hearst. "We were even attacked as 'fascists' because we approached William Randolph Hearst several times," he recalled. But the Bergsonites were not dissuaded. "What right did we have to decide who should save the Jews?" Bergson asked rhetorically. "For God's sake, we would go to anybody. I mean, would we need a rabbi to say 'Save the Jews'? We were delighted that we got Hearst to say 'Save the Jews.'"

The support of Hearst's 34 newspapers gave the congressional resolution an important boost, helped keep the refugee issue in the public eye, and focused negative attention on the Roosevelt administration's opposition to rescue action. By early 1944, the combined pressure from Congress, the Bergson Group and the Treasury Department convinced FDR to establish the War Refugee Board, a government agency devoted to rescuing Jews from Hitler. During the last 15 months of the war, the

board played a major role in the rescue of an estimated 200,000 Jews.

In the minds of many Americans, William Randolph Hearst will be forever associated with the greedy and dishonest main character in the 1941 film, *Citizen Kane*. But whatever his unflattering traits, the real life Hearst had other qualities as well, including genuine compassion for the persecuted

Jews of Europe and a determination to help rescue them from the Holocaust.

The writer is director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies and author of *Blowing the Whistle on Genocide: Josiah E. DuBois, Jr. and the Struggle for a US Response to the Holocaust*.

Anti-Semitism and the Economic Crisis

By Ira Stoll *The Wall Street Journal* April 6, 2009

Many people still blame Jews for capitalism's faults. Walking down the street in my solidly upper-middle-class New York City neighborhood the other day was a neatly dressed man angrily cursing into his cell phone about "Jew Wall Street bankers."

I was headed in the opposite direction and didn't stop to interview him about his particular grievances, but the brief encounter crystallized for me a foreboding that the financial crisis may trigger a new outbreak of anti-Semitism.

It is a fear that is being articulated ever more widely. President Bill Clinton's secretary of labor, Robert Reich, frets on his blog, "History shows how effective demagogic ravings can be when a public is stressed economically." He warns that Jews, along with gays and blacks, could become victims of populist rage.

In the New York Jewish Week newspaper, a column by Rabbi Ronald Price of the Union for Traditional Judaism begins, "In the 1930s, as Germany's economy collapsed, the finger was pointed at the Jews and the Nazis ascended to power. The famous Dreyfus Affair, in which a Jew was falsely accused of treason in France, followed on the heels of economic turmoil."

At this juncture, the trepidation may yet seem like paranoia, or special pleading akin to the old joke about the newspaper headline, "World Ends in Nuclear Attack: Poor, Minorities Hardest Hit." Everyone is feeling the brunt of the recession; why worry about the Jews in particular? After all, Jews today have two refuges: Israel and America, a land where Jews have attained remarkable power and prosperity and have a constitutionally protected right to exercise their religion freely. In that case, why worry about potential danger to the Jews at all?

One answer is that the historical precedents are exceedingly grim. The causes of the First Crusade, in which thousands of Jews were murdered, are still being debated, but some historians link it to famine and a poor harvest in 1095. As for the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the foremost historian of its causes, Benzion Netanyahu (the father of Israel's new prime minister), writes of the desire of the persecutors "to get rid of their debts by getting rid of their creditors." More generally, he writes, "it is an iron-clad rule in the history of group relations:

the majority's toleration of every minority lessens with the worsening of the majority's condition."

Lest this seem overly crude economic determinism, consider that the Jews have been victims not only of unrest prompted by economic distress but of attempts to remedy such economic distress with socialism. Take it from Friedrich Hayek, the late Nobel Prize winning Austrian economist. In "The Road to Serfdom," Hayek wrote, "In Germany and Austria the Jew had come to be regarded as the representative of Capitalism." Thus, the response in those countries, National Socialism, was an attack on both capitalism and the Jews.

There are ample indicators of current anti-Semitic attitudes. A poll conducted recently in Europe by the Anti-Defamation League found 74% of Spaniards believe Jews "have too much power in international financial markets," while 67% of Hungarians believe Jews "have too much power in the business world." Here in America, the Web site of National Journal is hosting an "expert blog" by former CIA official Michael Scheuer, now a professor at Georgetown, complaining of a "fifth column of pro-Israel U.S. citizens" who are "unquestionably enemies of America's republican experiment." And over at Yahoo! Finance, the message board discussing Goldman Sachs is rife with comments about "Jew pigs" and the "Zionist Federal Reserve."

So will the Jews come under attack? The existence of the Jewish state guarantees refuge for Jews around the world, but it carries with it its own risks. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has said that if the Jews "all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them world-wide." It's a comment all the more chilling as Nasrallah's Iranian sponsors are on the brink of making a nuclear bomb.

As for the idea that Jewish professional, political, and economic success in America is a guarantee of security, that, too, has its risks. As Yuri Sleskine recounted in his book "The Jewish Century," in 1900 Vienna more than half of the lawyers, doctors and professional journalists were Jewish, as were 70% of the members of the stock exchange. In Germany, after World War I but before the Nazis came to power, Jews served as finance minister and as foreign minister. Such achievements have a way of being fleeting.

It may yet be that the Jews escape the current economic crisis having only lost fortunes. But if not, there will have been no lack of warning about the threat. When Jews gather Wednesday night for the Passover Seder, we will recite the words from the Hagadah, the book that relays the Israelite exodus

Don't Cry For Us, New York Jewry

By Gil Troy NaomiRagen.com April 10, 2009

Reports of distressed American Jews are stacking up faster than airplanes trying to land at La Guardia at rush hour. On a recent visit, lovely, passionate, pro-Israel friends shared their dismay. Some admitted they avoided talking about Israel because "it is too painful." The epicenter of the worrying – and the disdain -- seems to be New York's Upper West Side, still the capital of liberal American Jewry.

The latest trigger, of course, is the anti-Israel backlash following the Gaza War. The Israeli army has withdrawn, Hamas' rocket fire has resumed, but the condemnations of Israel have intensified. The New York Times, the New York Jew's Bible, has fed this frenzy. The Times gave splashy, repeated, front-page coverage to rehashing the unsubstantiated rumors about Israeli soldiers brutalizing Palestinians, with no independent reporting. Days later, the damage done, an article buried on page 4 treated the IDF's defense as a "he-said, she said" disagreement rather than a strong repudiation, not only by the top brass but by many soldiers who tried hard to minimize civilian casualties.

Good people should be angry with the Palestinians not embarrassed by Israel.

Inon, a 25-year-old law student turned soldier, saw an elderly Palestinian woman in pain during the war. When Israeli medics approached to help, they noticed her suicide bomb belt. "This is what we are up against," Inon sighed on www.soldierspeakout.com. During my two visits to the Gaza front most Israeli soldiers I met mentioned "HaDilemot," the Heblish word for the dilemmas fighting an enemy cowering behind civilians.

More recently, the lovely story about the Palestinian youth orchestra from Jenin that played for Holocaust survivors in Holon soured when the "moderate" Palestinian Authority shut down the orchestra, banning the conductor from the PA. The Palestinians denounced the conductor and any attempts at "normalization," which is also why Palestinians face death if they sell Jews land and many "moderate" Fatah leaders still insist they never recognized Israel's right to exist.

It is not PC to acknowledge that we are dealing with a different culture and a murderous ideology – the resulting "dilemmot" are heartbreaking, horrible.

I remain proud that under these circumstances the number of civilian deaths was far smaller than it would have been with any other army in the world – including America's. Yes, one wrong death really is too many. But given both sides' firepower, (and Hamas has smuggled in another 70 tons or so of

from slavery in Egypt: "In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us." This year, they will resonate all the more ominously.

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weaponry since the war ended), that only a few hundred civilians died reflects Israel's moral and operational discipline.

After sixty years, Israel should no longer be on probation, with its legitimacy questioned in the world, or its popularity among Jews so contingent upon good behavior. American liberals did not question America's legitimacy, even when they hated President George W. Bush. Yet many Jews and non-Jews repudiate Israel entirely because of one action, or one leader.

Nationalism, patriotism, morality, usually runs deeper.

This Upper West Side discomfort suggests that if Israel is not the Disneyland in the Desert it promised to be in the 1960s, it is not worth supporting. Yet Israel is more friendly, pleasant and in many ways progressive, than it was in the heyday of the kibbutz and Moshe Dayan. Israel today is remarkably functional with a higher quality of life than New York Times reportage suggests. The headlines overlook the vibrant community life, the warm Jewish holiday observances, the Western comforts, the openness and diversity, let alone the scientific and high tech breakthroughs.

At the same time, yes, there are struggles. Professor Ruth Gavison, the Hebrew University law professor and founding President of Metzilah, a center for Zionist, Jewish, Humanist and Liberal Thought, embraces the creative tension resulting from forging a state that is Jewish and democratic, that is moral and fights for survival. As Rabbi Daniel Gordis reminds us in his compelling new book, *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End*, the "very name 'Israel,'" the name Jacob earned after wrestling with the angel, connotes "struggling, grappling, the interaction of the human with what is beyond human." Gordis proclaims: "The real challenge facing Israel is to produce a society worthy of its name."

As Americans – and Upper West Siders in particular – adjust to the startling new economic realities, more and more are recognizing that this prolonged, Reagan-Clinton-Bush "Never, Never Land" that is ending, seemed to defy the laws of gravity, unrealistically promising a life without struggle. As a result, our collective moral conscience lost its edge – which the new age of austerity may revive.

Similarly, modern Judaism has been dulled. Many Jews have simply stopped "doing Jewish," because it was too hard, too distracting, when there

was so much money to be made and so much fun to be had. Many Jewish leaders fed this problem, watering down Judaism, trying to make Jewish life as fluffy as the rest of American life. But this unbearable lightness of being Jewish failed to compel many, who then felt if Jewish values were pale reflections of secular values, why bother?

Traditionally, the rabbis taught about "the Neshama Yetarah," the extra soul acquired on Shabbat. This weekly boost gave Jews a taste of redemption while steeling them for the week's upcoming hardships. Too many of us – and I regret to say – too many of my prosperous, self-righteous, Upper West Side friends – have lost that extra soul. Since Yasir Arafat led his people from negotiations toward terrorism, my family and I have set an extra seat at the Seder in memory of one terror victim

who is missed at his or her Seder; this year, I am tempted to set an empty place for New York Jews' deliciously constructive grit, for their Neshama Yetarah.

We need warrior Jews not just worrier Jews. Israelis should justifiably say: "don't cry for us New York Jewry (and elsewhere). Our State, for all its challenges, is thriving. Our neighbors – and the world – need fixing."

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Haaretz Editorial from the day Israel was born April 29, 2009

Today is the world's birthday for Israel. Today is the end of one period, and today is the onset of a new period. Today is the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, the Mandate for which the Jewish people held out tremendous hopes - almost messianic hopes - a quarter of a century ago, but which over the years came to symbolize a great moral failure. Today marks the expiration of the White Paper, that shameful document, which tried vainly to cloak in legal garb the vast betrayal of the historic rights of the Jewish people, but which in its nine years of existence succeeded in closing the gates of the country to tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews who could have been saved from the Nazi furnaces.

Today Hebrew independence has been revived on the soil of Israel after 1,900 years of exile. In the course of that lengthy period, the face of the world changed, the face of this land changed and so, too, the face of the Jewish people changed. But the bond between the people and its land was not severed, and today, as thousands of years ago, our ancient and rejuvenated nation, after an unexampled period of subjugation and suffering, sets about laying the foundations for a life of freedom and independence on its soil. And today we enter a new stage, a stage of heightened danger, in our desperate struggle with the neighboring Arab peoples, who have so far refused to accept the historic necessity of Israel's return to its land.

Hebrew independence is not being renewed during an hour of mercy. Nor are we being measured with strict justice by the [UN] General Assembly or in the councils of the world's rulers. We are not begging for the world's mercy and are not fearful of its judgment. But it is our obligation to protest against the harsh perversion of justice, in which attempts were made to heap obstacles on the path of a persecuted nation that aspired to a tranquil haven. It was just half a year ago that this world, the world of power and materialism, sat in judgment of us, and despite everything, despite the intriguing and the scheming, we were exonerated. But the world of

material power lacked the moral strength to execute its own judgment, and schemers and plotters of all types tried to abnegate it.

And on this day, when we shall declare our right according to the world's judgment, which was not undermined and was not annulled, we must perforce do so in a hostile atmosphere. Great nations view us as an uninvited guest as we seek to take our place at the table of the nations. But no other path is available to us. Just as we reached our present status with our own might alone, so we must continue to conquer our state with our own might, in the hope and confidence that the world of power will accept us when it sees that we, too, possess the strength to safeguard what is ours.

But the campaign will be very difficult. These days of supreme heroism and self-sacrifice of the highest degree in the Etzion Bloc and at Sha'ar Hagai must teach us that the strength of our foes is not yet depleted. To the contrary: Our foes have not yet begun to wield their full might against us. Harsh times and bitter auguries lie in store for us. Many have already fallen, but many more will fall, and the boundaries between front and rear will become blurred. The great test still awaits us and we must all meet it. We cannot fight our war through the proxy of angels and messengers. Each of us must do his duty in the same part of the front in which he can make the greatest contribution to the struggle of the entire nation.

Great is the day, but exceedingly grave the hour. May we all display the valor, the readiness for sacrifice, the psychological stability amid the vicissitudes of the campaign, the faithfulness in doing our duty and the spirit of Israeli fraternity thanks to which we shall reach our sought-after destination.

And if we meet the test and are thus privileged, this day, a day of blood and pillars of smoke, shall be the day on which we lay the foundations for a life of security and liberty for ourselves and for our children.