

## Heralding Israel's heritage

**By Aron U. Raskas The Baltimore Sun**  
**Nation must defend its historical ties to the land against those who would deny them**

The Israeli government adds two culturally rich, millennium-old historic sites to a list of national treasures, and riots break out, followed by international condemnation. Yet, it is precisely this cynical, predictable response that demonstrates why Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was right to add the Tomb of Rachel and the Cave of the Patriarchs to Israel's National Heritage Sites.

There is no nation with firmer roots in a land than the Jewish people in the greater land of Israel. Yet, that great heritage has been under assault by Arab protagonists and their pusillanimous patrons for the longest time, and this has intensified in recent years.

As the Arab people began to recognize their inability to defeat the Jewish people on the battlefield, they began to cleverly craft a strategy of burying Israel's legacy in the arena of world opinion. This strategy seeks to eradicate the Jewish connection to the land and erode the support for Israel's legitimacy and very existence. Indeed, the increasingly global campaign to delegitimize Israel has been bolstered significantly by the reticence of past Israeli governments and other Jewish opinion leaders to assert the great Jewish legacy in this land.

The arrogation to itself of the "Palestinian" mantle was the first formidable success for the Arab population that shared with the Jewish people the land that came to be known as Palestine. Likewise, 50 years ago, there was nary a reference to a "West Bank" until that term was introduced by Palestinian Arab propagandists to eliminate further references to the time-honored titles of Judea and Samaria, as the land had been routinely referred to in maps, travel guides, newspapers and even U.N. resolutions.

The continuing threats and acts of violence each time Israel seeks to take a step that reflects its great historic ties to the land are specifically calculated to deter just such steps. Thus, the true reason for the 1996 Arab riots was to prevent Israel from opening a Herodian Tunnel that demonstrated to the world that the Jewish Temple reached well into what has only in more modern times been referred to as the Muslim Quarter. This too was the basis for riots in 2000, when Ariel Sharon dared to walk on the

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Temple Mount, also known as the Haram al-Sharif, and assert the inalienable right of Jewish people to cleave to that holiest of sites.

In a similar fashion, Palestinian Arabs have sought to eradicate signs of Jewish heritage throughout the land. Brutal excavations on the Temple Mount by the Islamic Waqf destroyed Jewish archaeological treasures of great significance. Likewise, as Israel relinquished control of territories to the Palestinian Authority in 2000, Palestinians savagely destroyed Joseph's Tomb in Nablus and a 1,500-year-old synagogue in Jericho under the watchful eyes of Palestinian police.

The most recent hysterical protest over Israel simply naming two ancient sites as significant to the Jewish people is simply the thin end of a wedge designed to create yet another chasm between the Jewish people and their historic ties to the land.

Mr. Netanyahu was correct when he observed that for "a people that doesn't remember its past, its present is uncertain and its future is unclear." Yet, the far more troubling paradigm is that a world disabused of a nation's rich historic past might ultimately deny that nation's claims to its land.

A nation that declines to assert its historic truths does not deserve its place among the community of nations. And a government that cowers in the face of its enemies' condemnations and muzzles its historic claims in response has abdicated its basic obligation to defend the rights of its people.

Mr. Netanyahu - beginning with his decision to open the Herodian tunnel in 1996 and continuing with his recent emphasis on teaching Jewish values and history, and the public assertion of Jewish ties to important historic sites - has correctly recognized the critical need to trumpet the historical narrative of the Jewish people in their land. The raw nerve that he exposed in doing so only demonstrates just how important this is.

For Israel to survive, it must continue to carry this message to the world at large, precisely because its enemies seek to prevent it from doing so.

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## Israel's Challenge to the U.S.

By The New York Times editors March 10, 2010

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. was unpleasantly surprised in Israel on Tuesday when the country's Interior Ministry declared that it would expand housing units for Jews in East Jerusalem. Mr. Biden, who earlier that day had expressed American support on Israel's security needs, condemned the announcement, which had been made without the knowledge of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

What did the incident reflect about the state of the Obama administration's relations with Israel and the future of talks with the Palestinians?

**Aaron David Miller**, Woodrow Wilson International Center

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### *Dancing With a Bear*

**Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. negotiator for Republican and Democratic administrations, is now a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, where he is writing a new book "Can America Have Another Great President?"**

When you're dancing with a bear, the old adage goes, the only problem is that you can't let go.

The last thing an overextended president needs is a big fight with Israel and its supporters.

Nowhere was that image more colorfully captured than in this week's brouhaha over settlements played out during Vice President Biden's visit to Jerusalem.

If you're hoping for an Israeli-American war, I wouldn't bet on it: shared values, a strong pro-Israeli community and America's need to cooperate with Israel to advance and protect its own interests preclude it. And it's likely that the Obama administration, having spent the better part of its first year trying to decide whether to punish, or pander to, the Israelis, is warming to that reality.

You couldn't have scripted a worse outcome for American credibility than the one that played out this week during the Biden visit.

Sent to coordinate with Israel, Joe Biden (a longtime friend of Israel) was embarrassed by an Israeli Ministry of Interior announcement on the building of an additional 1,600 units in East Jerusalem, almost at the very time that hard-won proximity talks between the Israelis and Palestinians brokered by Washington were notionally scheduled. Indeed, one of the reasons the Palestinians didn't want to come back to the negotiating table was fear of additional Israeli actions of this sort.

But beyond some very tough words by America, don't expect much more.

The fact is the U.S. is in an investment trap when it comes to Israel. A close ally, with solid support at home (a February Gallup poll ranked Israel fifth from the top of 20 countries that Americans were asked to rank on the basis of favorability, while the Palestinian Authority ranked 16th), America needs the Israelis' cooperation to achieve its goals on both the peace process and Iran.

Admittedly, both goals look very doubtful at the moment. Still, the last thing an overextended president (at home and abroad) needs is a big fight with Israel and its supporters, particularly on the settlement issue in Jerusalem.

The administration has yet to figure out how to maintain America's special relationship with Israel (which can serve U.S. interests), yet prevent that bond from becoming so exclusive that Israel acts without consequence or cost, and America has little independence of its own on peace process policies. Until it does, most likely through a serious strategy on Israeli-Palestinian peace that has both incentives and disincentives for both sides, the dancing is going to continue.

### *A Region Devoid of Trust*

**Daniel Gordis is senior vice president of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. His most recent book, "Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End," received a 2009 National Jewish Book Award.**

Admonishing Israel that planning additional Jewish housing in East Jerusalem "undermines the trust we need," Vice President Biden accidentally pointed to a problem his own president has helped create — a complete absence of trust.

Obama is unwittingly fueling the pro-settlement movement.

Israelis do not trust Barack Obama. Insisting that Israelis freeze settlement expansion without making some equally explicit demand of the Palestinians — and using the same term "settlement" for both massive neighborhoods that are home to tens of thousands and for illegal outposts that most Israelis want dismantled — Obama has convinced Israelis that he has no command of the issues, and that he is predisposed to pressuring Israel much more than the Palestinians. It is Obama who is unwittingly fueling the pro-settlement movement.

Nor do Israelis trust the Palestinians. For years, Mahmoud Abbas negotiated with Israeli governments without insisting on a settlement freeze.

But Obama has afforded him an excuse to avoid the critical concessions Palestinians will have to make for peace, and Abbas is exploiting it cynically and fully. Few Israelis believe the Palestinians have the stomach for a genuine deal.

And Israelis do not trust Netanyahu's government, a fragile coalition born of desperation when Tzipi Livni defeated Netanyahu in the popular vote. Netanyahu appears unable to either manage his coalition or articulate a strategy. Deputy Foreign Minister Ayalon humiliated the Turkish ambassador when Netanyahu needed quiet on that front, and now the interior minister, Eli Yishai, has cast a dark cloud over Biden's visit. Netanyahu can make no assurances to the U.S., or tell Israelis what he genuinely plans, because he is too busy trying to survive.

So Israel is left utterly rudderless. The right, determined not to be America's patsy, demands expansion of settlements, with no plan for settling the conflict. And the left, appalled by a government devoid of strategy, protests the East Jerusalem housing plans, as if this is the reason for Palestinian recalcitrance.

Tragically, those who hope for a deal could not have been dealt a worse hand than the Obama-Netanyahu combination. Until these players are replaced, real progress will remain all but impossible.

#### **U.S. Restraint, Israeli Demands**

**Amjad Atallah is director of the Middle East Task Force at the New America Foundation.**

Israel's announcement of 1,600 new settlement units in Arab East Jerusalem, coming during Vice President Biden's visit, and the previous day's announcement of 112 new settlements elsewhere in the Occupied West Bank, should not be seen as one-off slaps at the United States.

For the Israeli government, this was a chance to 'teach' the U.S. what it can and cannot do in the Mideast.

In many ways they are a culmination of this Israeli government's efforts to "teach" President Obama what he can and can't do to defend American interests in the Middle East.

Vice President Biden came with two important messages for the Israelis: the first was to reiterate what Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and the national security adviser, James Jones, have reportedly already told them: that there is no military solution to the international community's issues with Iran; his second and more immediate message was that President Obama remains committed to ending the occupation of Arab territory and thereby securing American and Israeli interests in the region.

The Israelis have been giving the United States a counter-message since Likud came to power in Israel last year.

That message has been that Israel demands that the United States take a military confrontational approach with Iran. Its second message, no less vociferous, has been that Israel has no intention of ending its control over the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Settlements are the most important, but not only, element in that system of control.

The United States has been sending its messages with carrots and great diplomatic restraint. The current Israeli government, in stark contrast, has been responding like a petulant child, outraged that it hasn't been able to get U.S. acquiescence to its own short-term political strategy.

There is a great deal at stake in this public and private dispute between Israel and the United States. President Obama should consider responding in a similar manner, by creating his own facts on the ground, and ending all forms of U.S. cover and support of the settlement enterprise and other policies that sustain the occupation.

#### **Netanyahu and the Blind Side**

**David Makovsky, the Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the director of its Project on the Middle East Peace Process, is the co-author with Dennis Ross of "Myths, Illusions and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East."**

Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Interior Minister Eli Yishai have expressed regret that the announcement of 1,600 units in East Jerusalem occurred during Vice President Biden's visit.

It would have been self-defeating for the Israeli leader to sabotage a friendly visit.

While critics insist the move by Netanyahu was deliberately aimed at angering the Obama administration and doubt that Netanyahu was blindsided as he insists, such an accusation seems unlikely to be true.

It was widely known that the Biden mission was a fence-mending visit designed to improve U.S.-Israel relations after a period of friction in bilateral ties during the past year. Indeed, until the incident, Biden's comments have been pitch perfect for Israeli ears. His trip was intended to assure Israeli concerns about U.S. commitment to their security.

Moreover, it is also known that his trip was designed to deal with another area of crucial concern for Israel: the depth of the Obama administration's commitment to ensuring that Iran does not gain nuclear weapons capability. Along with the restarting of peace talks with the Palestinians, U.S.-Israel relations and Iran are the key themes of Biden's visit.

It would be suicidal for Netanyahu to seek to sabotage such a friendly visit given Israel's supreme interest in both of these issues. A deliberate move to

undermine the Biden visit could fatally undermine Netanyahu's efforts to improve ties with the Obama administration. Even Netanyahu's biggest critics do not think he would act in a manner so counterproductive to Israel's own concept of the national interest.

But two lessons must be learned from this incident. It is the second time that the prime minister of Israel claims to have been blindsided by his own bureaucracy. The first time was last November, a week after Netanyahu had what he has called his best meeting with Obama, in which no aides were present. At the time, it was announced that 900 housing units would be built in the Gilo neighborhood of East (actually southern) Jerusalem.

Given the political sensitivities of building in Jerusalem, decision-making on this issue in the future must be concentrated in the prime minister's office. It is unthinkable that bureaucrats under the prime minister can make decisions that have a great impact on Israel, while the leader remains a bystander. The prime minister is accountable to the Israeli people, and therefore he must decide.

A second lesson is about Jerusalem itself. Even if Senator George Mitchell's efforts make serious strides on demarcating Israeli and Palestinian borders in the West Bank, it is unlikely that the status of Jerusalem will be agreed on tomorrow. As it stands, Mitchell has not been successful in winning acceptance of a housing freeze in East Jerusalem.

Therefore, something more practical is required: namely that Israelis and Palestinians reach a baseline agreement that neither party will expand into the neighborhoods of the other in East Jerusalem. This is more attainable than a freeze, and could avoid flashpoint incidents in the future.

#### **A Dust-Up Obscures Far Deeper Problems**

**Nathan Brown is a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University and a nonresident senior associate in the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.**

The Obama administration is soldiering on in the quest for Israeli-Palestinian peace by tweaking the approaches of its predecessors. It now seeks to further Palestinian institution building and economic development in the West Bank, isolate Hamas and Gaza, and get some kind of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations started that will move things in the direction of a two state solution.

The idea of negotiations right now will only lead to talks for the sake of talks.

Each of these ingredients may have made sense at a different time. The best time to have focused on Palestinian institution building, for instance, would have been in the late 1990s when there was a serious effort — with the support of the parliament — to

build strong, professional and democratic institutions.

But since Hamas seized control of Gaza and Mahmoud Abbas seized control of the West Bank, the institutions being built have little connection with the societies they govern.

Some economic recovery will be possible — and has been taking place in the West Bank — but sustained economic development will not occur without a resolution of the underlying political problems. The policy of isolating Hamas and Gaza has not only had devastating humanitarian consequences; it has actually led to the Islamist movement's entrenching itself even more deeply in control of the economy and political system of Gaza.

And the idea of negotiations at the present time — when the Palestinian leadership lacks the ability and the Israeli leadership lacks the willingness to build the basic elements of a two state solution — will lead to talks only for the sake of talks.

If a two state solution were to occur then a reversal of Israeli settlements would be a necessary condition. But it is nothing close to a sufficient condition. The current dust-up over building in Jerusalem obscures how much the other conditions are lacking.

#### **When Obama Blinked**

**Daoud Kuttab is a Palestinian journalist and a former Ferris professor of journalism at Princeton University.**

Sometimes when a difficult relationship is in its formative phase something occurs that establishes its parameters. This is exactly what happened between Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Obama administration has itself to blame for what happened to Vice President Biden.

The two had climbed their respective opposing trees on the issue of the prerequisite of a total settlement freeze as a prelude to beginning of peace talks. When they met in New York last Sept. 20, President Obama blinked first, leaving the embarrassed Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, hanging on the tree.

In his public statement the U.S. president scaled down from his (and Secretary Clinton's) previous calls for a settlement "freeze" to accepting Israel's offer of a settlement "restraint." Once it became clear that the Americans will not stand up to Israel on settlements, everyone knew their place in this relationship.

Despite the White House's latest protestation of the embarrassment meted to Vice President Biden, the Obama administration has only itself to blame.

Israel's announcement March 9 to build another 1,600 units of housing in East Jerusalem, to be added to 112 units approved for a settlement outside Bethlehem a few days earlier, as well other announcements made since that September standoff,

all are a result of the American president's weak knees. The sliding slope that began that day in September has continued and will ultimately derail America's goals of bringing peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinian leadership's refusal to have direct talks until there is a true freeze on settlements in all areas occupied in 1967 shows that the authors of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 were right by stating in the preamble of that resolution the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war."

All attempts to appease and reward Israel for its acquisition by war has resulted in pushing peace away. If President George W. Bush truly believed, and President Obama truly believes — as they both publicly stated — that an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state is in the "national interest" of the United States, Washington must resolve once and for all that any Jewish settlement built on Palestinian territory forcefully taken in 1967 will not be tolerated.

Once America regains its resolve in this area, the peace train can proceed to its destination.

### ***III Will All Around***

**Michele Dunne is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and editor of the Arab Reform Bulletin, a monthly online journal.**

While there is absolutely nothing surprising about an Israeli decision to build 1,600 units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo, the ill-timed announcement during Biden's visit exposes painfully the poor state of relations between the Obama administration and Israel. Although Prime Minister Netanyahu most likely was blindsided by the announcement, others in his coalition apparently thought it unproblematic to insult Biden and by association Obama.

The Obama team was so overconfident that it failed to develop either a serious strategy to persuade the Israelis and Arabs, or a Plan B in case of failure.

And why should they? President Obama has shown Israelis neither consideration nor resolve. He failed to visit and use his much-vaunted powers of persuasion directly on Israelis last spring when he visited Egypt and Turkey; Obama also failed to show strength by imposing some consequence on Netanyahu when the Israeli leader refused to order a real freeze on settlements.

So now there is ill will and a lack of respect all around. The Palestinians probably hope this will redound to their benefit in the form of U.S. pressure on Israel, but it is more likely that Obama will see this episode as reason to disassociate himself from peace efforts even more than he has done in the past few months.

The Obama administration's calls for a settlement freeze during 2009 differed from those of previous administrations because they were clear and unambiguous. The idea was to restore faith in the possibility of a negotiated solution to the Arab Israeli conflict by persuading Israel to make a gesture on this very important issue and Arab states to take steps toward normalizing relations.

The problem was that the Obama team was so overconfident that they failed to develop either a serious strategy to persuade the Israelis and Arabs or a Plan B in case of failure.

What this episode shows is not that it was wrong to focus on settlements, but that it was wrong to embark on a risky diplomatic venture without having the strategic thinking or fortitude to stick with it when the going got rough.

In this case, failed diplomacy did not leave the situation back where it was before Obama entered office, but did actual damage and set the diplomatic clock back nearly two decades, to an era when Israelis and Palestinians could not even sit at a table and talk directly.

## **Obama Talks, Syria Mocks The wages of appeasement**

**By Elliott Abrams The Weekly Standard March 15, 2010**

The Obama administration has from the start seen Syria as a leading case for engagement. Barack Obama said so during his presidential campaign (announcing he would meet Bashar al Assad without preconditions) and repeated this policy view again last summer:

We've started to see some diplomatic contacts between the United States and Syria. There are aspects of Syrian behavior that trouble us, and we think that there is a way that Syria can be much more constructive on a whole host of these issues. But, as you know, I'm a believer in engagement and my hope is that we can continue to see progress on that front.

The engagement with Syria continues apace. Here are the key elements.

\* High level envoys have been sent to Damascus: Under Secretary of State William Burns visited Syria in mid-February, the highest ranking U.S. official to set foot there in more than five years, and Middle East envoy George Mitchell has visited three times. High-ranking Central Command officers have been sent to Damascus to discuss cooperation against terrorism.

\* President Obama has now nominated an ambassador to Damascus, the first since Margaret Scobey was withdrawn in 2005 after the murder of former prime minister Rafik al-Hariri in Lebanon (which was widely blamed on the Assad regime).

\* The president has also removed the American block to Syria's attempt to join the World Trade Organization.

\* The United States has eased some export licenses for Syria, mostly in the area of aircraft.

\* Syria's deputy foreign minister was invited to Washington in October, the first such visit in several years.

So there is certainly "progress on that front," to use the president's words. But when does "engagement" become "appeasement"? The case of U.S. policy toward Syria suggests that, here at least, the two approaches may not be far apart.

"Engagement" constitutes "appeasement" if it fails to change Syrian conduct, and the failure to change is overlooked while the "engagement" continues and accelerates. This would not just be fooling ourselves but condoning, rewarding, and thereby inducing even more bad conduct by the Assad regime.

Which is precisely what has happened during this year of American engagement.

\* Syrian support for terrorism continues. Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas, the DFLP, and the PFLP continue to be housed and protected in Damascus. Last August Iraq actually withdrew its ambassador from Damascus in protest over Syrian involvement in deadly explosions in Baghdad. Our commanding general in Iraq, Raymond Odierno, stated as recently as November that Syria continues to facilitate the movement of jihadists and explosives into Iraq.

\* Syria continues serving as the route for Iran's rearmament of Hezbollah, in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions prohibiting such trafficking in weapons into Lebanon. And Syria's activities in Lebanon remain aimed at diminishing that nation's sovereignty, even though Syrian troops were forced to leave Lebanon in 2005.

\* Internal repression in Syria remains as vicious as ever. Human Rights Watch reported that "Syria's poor human rights situation deteriorated further in 2009."

In fact, however the Obama administration views its overtures to Syria, the best evidence that these steps now constitute appeasement is found in Syria's response. On February 25, Assad hosted an Axis of Evil party, meeting with Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The *Washington Post* reported that "the presidents of Iran and Syria on Thursday ridiculed U.S. policy in the region and pledged to create a Middle East 'without Zionists,' combining a slap at recent U.S. overtures and a threat to Israel with an endorsement of one of the region's defining alliances." More striking was the headline the *Post* put on the story: "Iran, Syria Mock U.S. Policy."

Assad's conduct is surprising only if you view him as a seeker after peace, waiting merely for the hand of friendship from Washington to reorient his regime toward the West. That appears to have been the Obama approach. But Assad's reaction is entirely predictable if you view him as a vicious dictator dependent on Iran's regime for political, financial, and military support. Similarly, the notion that American "engagement" is the road to a Syrian-Israeli peace deal over the Golan Heights is sensible if you believe he needs only a bit of American encouragement to ditch his alliance with Iran and turn West. But the terrorist trilateral just held in Damascus should be all the proof anyone needs that George Mitchell may as well stay home: A Golan deal is not in the cards. No Israeli prime minister is foolish enough to hand the Golan to a Syria whose main allies are Israel's two most dangerous enemies: Hezbollah and Iran.

What has the engagement of Syria actually produced, besides mockery in Damascus? Depression in Beirut, where Sunnis, Christians, and Druze only a few years ago defied Syria, but now see an American policy that appears willing to abandon them. Incredulity in Baghdad, where our willingness to engage Syria while it helps jihadists blow people up in Iraq must seem incomprehensible. Resistance in Jerusalem, which only three years ago blew up a North Korean-supplied nuclear reactor Assad was building along the Euphrates and must see our continuing blindness to Syria's actual conduct as stubborn—and dangerous.

What is to be done? First, the United States should acknowledge that engagement has failed and end it. No more high-level visits, no ambassador, no WTO. If the Obama administration insists on crawling forward, the Senate should not confirm the nominee for ambassador, and Congress should by legislation prevent any further weakening of our economic sanctions against Syria. Second, the United States should loudly and frequently condemn continuing Syrian human rights violations; there are fish in this barrel and we should start shooting them. Third, we should raise in the United Nations Syria's continuing violations of Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701 (barring violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and arms supplies to Hezbollah).

None of these steps will change Syrian policy; that will only happen if and when the regime in Iran, Assad's mainstay, falls. But they will restore to U.S. policy the element of self-respect and respect for facts that is now missing. In Damascus in January, George Mitchell said, "I look forward to building on the positive relationship we have formed to make tangible progress on our effort toward peace and on the bilateral relationship between the United States and Syria." At the very least, let us have no more such statements, whose willful ignorance of Syria's

actual conduct—and the victims of that conduct—is embarrassing to American honor and damaging to American interests and allies.

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## They Need to Be Liberated From Their God

**By Matthew Kaminski The Wall Street Journal March 6, 2010**

**The 'Son of Hamas' author on his conversion to Christianity, spying for Israel, and shaming his family.** "I absolutely know that in anybody's eyes I was a traitor," says Mosab Hassan Yousef. "To my family, to my nation, to my God. I crossed all the red lines in my society. I didn't leave one that I didn't cross."

Now 32, Mosab is the son of Sheikh Hassan Yousef, a founder and leader of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Throughout the last decade, from the second Intifada to the current stalemate, he worked alongside his father in the West Bank. During that time the younger Mr. Yousef also secretly embraced Christianity. And as he reveals in his book "Son of Hamas," out this week, he became one of the top spies for Israel's internal security arm, the Shin Bet.

The news of this double conversion has sent ripples through the Middle East. One of Mr. Yousef's handlers at the Shin Bet confirmed his account to the Israeli daily Haaretz. Hamas—already reeling from the assassination of a senior military chief in Dubai in January—calls his claims Zionist propaganda. From the Israeli prison he has occupied since 2005, Sheikh Yousef on Monday issued a statement that he and his family "have completely disowned the man who was our oldest son and who is called Mosab."

For the past two years, Mosab Yousef has lived near San Diego, where he's kept a low profile out of concern for his security. The U.S. is currently weighing his application for political asylum, and until his confession to espionage and the publicity blitz that accompanied it this week, only knew him as the son of a terrorist who sometimes attends evangelical churches in California. The book is intended to launch a new life in America.

Mr. Yousef, whose large, engaging eyes sit prominently on an oval face, says he was confused for many years himself, and realizes many people will be as well. His family has been shamed and old friends refuse to believe him. The book, a Le Carré-esque thriller wrapped in a spiritual coming-of-age story, is an attempt to answer what he says "is impossible to imagine"—"how I ended up working for my enemies who hurt me, who hurt my dad, who hurt my people."

"There is a logical explanation," he continues in fairly fluent English. "Simply my enemies of

**(Mr. Abrams will be speaking at the Suburban Country Club in Baltimore on Sunday, April 25 at the BZD Israel Symposium - call BZD at (410) 484-4510 for ticket purchase information.)**

yesterday became my friends. And the friends of yesterday became really my enemies."

The first half of his memoir describes a childhood in Ramallah marked by close familial ties and the Israeli occupation. He describes a kind and unusual Muslim father who cooks dinner, treats his mother well, and cares for his neighbors. An imam trained in Jordan, Sheikh Hassan Yousef rises to prominence in their hometown, and in 1986—along with six other men including the wheelchair-bound cleric from Gaza, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin—forms Hamas at a secret meeting in Hebron. The first Palestinian Intifada—or uprising—breaks out the following year. Mosab did his part, throwing stones at Israeli settlers and army vehicles.

"Most people heard about Hamas after Hamas started carrying out terrorist attacks," he says now, speaking near his agent's home here in Nashville. "Hamas started out as an idea. Let's say a noble idea—resisting occupation." Those early clashes with the Israelis begat worse violence, and the cemetery near his house began to fill up with cadavers. Palestinians also turned on each other. A corrupt and authoritarian Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) sparred with the rising Hamas and other groups. All of them used accusations of "collaboration" as an excuse to torture and kill rivals or the weak.

Mr. Yousef traces his awakening to his first sustained exposure to Hamas cruelty. In 1996, he was arrested by the Israelis for buying weapons. He says he was beaten and tortured badly in custody. It was then that the Shin Bet approached him. He says he thought about becoming a double agent. "I wanted revenge on Israel," he writes. But when he was sent to serve his term at the Megiddo prison in northern Israel, he says he was more shocked by the way the *maj'd*, Hamas's security wing, dealt with other prisoners.

"Every day, there was screaming; every night, torture. Hamas was torturing its own people!" he writes. The Muslims he met in jail "bore no resemblance to my father" and "were mean and petty . . . bigots and hypocrites."

By agreeing to work with the Shin Bet, he got out of prison early. He says he was curious about the Israelis and fast abandoned his idea to become a double agent. Though he took money from Shin Bet and stayed on their payroll for a decade, his handlers

in the early years didn't ask much of him. They encouraged him to study and be a model son. His code name was the Green Prince: green as in the color of the Islamist Hamas flag, and prince as the offspring to Hamas royalty.

During those quiet years he met a British cabbie in Jerusalem who gave him an English-Arabic copy of the New Testament and invited him to attend a Bible study session at their hotel. "I found that I was really drawn to the grace, love and humility that Jesus talked about," he says in "Son of Hamas."

As a spy, Mr. Yousef wasn't fully activated until the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000. A few months before at Camp David, the late PLO chief Yasser Arafat had turned down the Israeli offer of statehood on 90% of the West Bank with East Jerusalem as the capital. According to Mr. Yousef, Arafat decided he needed another uprising to win back international attention. So he sought out Hamas's support through Sheikh Yousef, writes his son, who accompanied him to Arafat's compound. Those meetings took place before the Palestinian authorities found a pretext for the second Intifada. It came when future Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Mr. Yousef's account helps to set straight the historical record that the uprising was premeditated by Arafat.

Mr. Yousef tells me that he was horrified by the pointless violence unleashed by politicians willing to climb "on the shoulders of poor, religious people." He says Palestinians who heeded the call "were going like a cow to the slaughterhouse, and they thought they were going to heaven." So, as he writes in the book, "At the age of twenty-two, I became the Shin Bet's only Hamas insider who could infiltrate Hamas's military and political wings, as well as other Palestinian factions."

Mr. Yousef claims some significant intelligence coups for himself, and he says he isn't telling the world everything. Early on, he was first to discover that the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a terrorist group born during the second Intifada, was made up of Arafat's guards, who were directly funded by international donors. He says he found the most lethal Palestinian bomb maker and foiled assassination plots against President Shimon Peres, then foreign minister, as well as a prominent rabbi. He says he broke up cells of suicide bombers about to attack Israel. And he helped convince his father to be the first prominent Hamas leader to offer a truce with Israel.

His handler—a "Captain Loai," now retired from the Shin Bet—corroborated many of these stories to Haaretz. The paper said the Shin Bet considered Mr. Yousef "the most reliable and most senior agent."

Mr. Yousef strains to justify himself, but ultimately "the question is whether I was a traitor or a hero in my own eyes."

So we're back to *why*?

The motivation, he says, was to save lives.

"I'd seen enough killing. I was a witness to lots of death ... Saving a human life was something really, really beautiful . . . no matter who they are. Not only Israeli people owe me their lives. I guarantee many terrorists, many Palestinian leaders, owe me their lives—or in other words they owe my Lord their lives."

He says he used his influence at Shin Bet to get the Israelis to try to arrest Hamas and other Palestinian figures rather than blow them up with missile strikes. He says he saved his father from the fate of Sheikh Yassin and other Hamas leaders whom the Israelis killed by secretly arranging to have him arrested. "I know for sure that my father is alive today, he still breathes, because I was involved in this thing," he says.

Mr. Yousef has some of the evangelist in him, even as he insists he is not a particularly devoted Christian and is still learning about his new religion. He wants Palestinians and Israelis to learn what he did from the Christian God.

"I converted to Christianity because I was convinced by Jesus Christ as a character, as a personality. I loved him, his wisdom, his love, his unconditional love. I didn't leave [the Islamic] religion to put myself in another box of religion. At the same time it's a beautiful thing to see my God exist in my life and see the change in my life. I see that when he does exist in other Middle Easterners there will be a change.

"I'm not trying to convert the entire nation of Israel and the entire nation of Palestine to Christianity. But at least if you can educate them about the ideology of love, the ideology of forgiveness, the ideology of grace. Those principles are great regardless, but we can't deny they came from Christianity as well."

Mr. Yousef says he felt burned out and decided to stop working for the Shin Bet in 2006, against their wishes. He made his way to friends in southern California whom he'd met through Bible study.

As the son of a Muslim cleric, he says he had reached the conclusion that terrorism can't be defeated without a new understanding of Islam. Here he echoes other defectors from Islam such as the former Dutch parliamentarian and writer Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

Do you consider your father a fanatic? "He's not a fanatic," says Mr. Yousef. "He's a very moderate, logical person. What matters is not whether my father is a fanatic or not, he's doing the will of a fanatic God. It doesn't matter if he's a terrorist or a traditional Muslim. At the end of the day a traditional Muslim is doing the will of a fanatic,

fundamentalist, terrorist God. I know this is harsh to say. Most governments avoid this subject. They don't want to admit this is an ideological war.

"The problem is not in Muslims," he continues. "The problem is with their God. They need to be liberated from their God. He is their biggest enemy. It has been 1,400 years they have been lied to."

These are all dangerous words. Of the threats issued to his life by Islamists, he says, "That's not the

worst thing that can happen to you. I'm OK with it, I'm not afraid. . . . Palestinians have reason to kill me. Some Israelis may want to kill me. My goal is not to defeat my enemy. It is to win over my enemy."

*Mr. Kaminski is a member of the Journal's editorial board.*

## The hidden agenda behind 'Israel Apartheid Week'

By Dore Gold The Jerusalem Post March 6, 2010

**As 'Israel Apartheid Week' heats up, the question must be asked, what – if anything – makes the Israeli case similar to South Africa?** The organizers of "Israel Apartheid Week" (March 1–March 13, 2010) are hoping to replicate what they claim was an unprecedented success for their cause last year when they sponsored events in 40 cities around the world. Yet the arguments against their charge – that Israel is guilty of apartheid – are overwhelming. In fact, given the difficulty in applying the apartheid model to Israel, one wonders what the true hidden agenda is behind this campaign.

To begin with, in apartheid South Africa (1948–1994), blacks were not allowed to vote or to be candidates in the general elections, they could not attend white universities or be treated in white hospitals, and they were forcibly removed from white cities. Anyone who is the least bit familiar with Israel knows that Israeli Arabs vote for the Knesset and that there are Israeli Arab Knesset members, who also serve as deputy speakers of Israel's parliament; an Israeli Arab judge sits on Israel's Supreme Court; Israeli Arabs study in all Israeli universities and there are mixed Arab-Jewish cities, like Haifa, Jaffa, Ramle and Jerusalem.

In 2006, Benjamin Pogrund, a former anti-apartheid activist, who now lives in Israel (he also served as a deputy editor of Johannesburg's Rand Daily Mail) responded to a report in The Guardian comparing Israel and apartheid South Africa. As a journalist, Pogrund had specialized in apartheid, and was even imprisoned by the South African authorities for his reporting. Looking at the situation in Israel, he noted that when he had been hospitalized in Jerusalem for surgery, he looked around and noticed that the patients, nurses, and doctors were both Arabs and Jews.

"What I saw in the Hadassah-Mt. Scopus hospital was inconceivable in the South Africa where I spent most of my life," he said.

The apartheid system was based on legalizing racism. As former Foreign Ministry legal adviser Robbie Sabel has pointed out, in Israel even incitement to racism is a criminal offense.

Israel's accusers also try to focus on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but here too their arguments are extremely weak. The majority of

Israelis do not want to annex the whole West Bank, but rather feel that they are entitled to "defensible borders" in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242. This is not a case of establishing a different legal system for a specific racial or ethnic group within the Israeli state, but rather a territorial dispute between the parties over Israel's future borders. In fact, it is the Palestinian Authority that has legal jurisdiction over the Palestinians in these disputed territories, not Israel.

Even one of the most vicious anti-Israel UN officials, John Dugard, a South African professor of international law, wrote in his annual report to the UN Human Rights Council in 2007 that Israel's "laws and practices" in the territories "resemble aspects of apartheid," but he could not bring himself to make a clear legal determination that Israel was an apartheid state.

In any case, the organizers of Israel Apartheid Week do not confine their claims to the West Bank, either. In their official film clip that they loaded to YouTube, they make mention of Israeli Arabs, and also demand "the right of return"—the infamous Palestinian claim to allow Palestinian refugees to move into Israel and demographically destroy the Jewish state.

Thus, what underlies the Israel Apartheid Week campaign is not international law, but rather a highly politicized interpretation of Israel's history in which the Jewish people are viewed as a colonialist movement that recently came from Europe to usurp lands from the indigenous Palestinian population, rather than the authentic claimants to sovereignty in their historical homeland.

Years ago, former Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat picked up these themes, when he argued that the Palestinians date back from the ancient Canaanites and Jebusites. According to this narrative, the Jews arrived only in the late 19th century on the wings of European imperialism. This is why Arafat had to deny the existence of the Temple of Solomon in July 2000 at Camp David, for any evidence of Jewish civilization in the Holy Land clashes with the depiction of the Jewish people as Middle Eastern Afrikaners who only recently arrived in the region.

Here also the Palestinian case falls apart when it faces the force of history. Using Christian and Jewish sources, Prof. Moshe Gil of Tel Aviv University wrote in his 900 page monumental work, *A History of Palestine: 634-1099* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), that as late as the seventh century, Jews still had a massive presence in most parts of what had been their sovereign territory up until the Roman invasion. There are some who suggest that the Jews were still the majority. According to Gil, on the eve of the Muslim conquests, the Jewish presence in the land was nearly 2,000 years old.

Moreover, there was a constant effort of Jews to return to their land in the centuries that followed, despite the dangers. By the 1860s the Jews, in fact, reestablished their majority in Jerusalem, well before the arrival of the British Empire. When the League of Nations decided to recognize the Jewish claim to a national home in 1922, it specifically recognized the pre-existing right of the Jewish people to what was to become British Mandatory Palestine.

Regardless of what the Palestinian propaganda machine asserts on this issue, many among the Palestinians were actually relative latecomers. Many of the noble Palestinian families in Jerusalem, like the Nashashibis, the Nusseibehs and the Husseinis trace their origins to the Arab conquests in the seventh century under the second caliph, Umar bin

al-Khatab or even later to the 12th century and the defeat of the Crusaders by Salah ad-Din.

In the Arab world, there is no special status to be derived by saying that your ancestors were Canaanite pagans as opposed to claiming that they came from those Arabian families who accompanied the Prophet Muhammad. In any case, the current Palestinian population also contains many new immigrants; it was US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt who commented in 1939 that more Arabs came into Palestine since the establishment of the British Mandate than Jews.

The resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict will not be reached by just waging historical debates, but by mutual recognition and accommodation. Israel Apartheid Week is not about respect for human rights; it is an incredibly hypocritical initiative that ignores the apartheid practiced by the Palestinians themselves, who make the sale of land to Jews punishable by death. It is also not a movement dedicated to making peace, but rather to denying the historical rights of the Jewish people. The answer to the challenge is to expose the true intentions of its backers, who clearly seek to dismantle the State of Israel and deny its people their inherent right of self-determination.

*The writer is the president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and served as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.*

## **An unholy campaign: Presbyterian Church elders are poised to defame Israel** By The New York Daily News editorial March 7, 2010

The U.S. Presbyterian Church is on the verge of a blunder that would severely damage interfaith harmony. Its 3 million lay members must call the hierarchy to its senses.

A nine-member special committee of the religious denomination is set to release a report on the Middle East that takes moral equivalence to dangerous new heights - and embraces parts of a manifesto by Christian Palestinians who call for an end to Israel as a Jewish state.

The document has yet to be published, but the church news service revealed it regurgitates the most specious anti-Israel canards. It even puts a footnote on the phrase "the right of Israel to exist."

It reads: "The phrase 'the right of Israel to exist' is a source of pain for some members of our study committee who are in solidarity with Palestinians, who feel that the creation of the state of Israel has denied them their inalienable human rights."

How to stop Israel's sins, in the mind of the Presbyterian special committee?

The U.S. ought to employ "the strategic use of influence and the withholding of financial and military aid in order to enforce Israel's compliance with international law and peacemaking efforts."

Meaning tighten the screws on an ally until it stops defending itself from terrorism.

No similar tactics are recommended against anyone else in the region. Not against Hamas, which fires rockets at Israeli homes and schools. Not against Iran, which pursues nukes and dreams of erasing Israel. Not against Hezbollah.

As for the manifesto by Christian Palestinians known as Kairos Palestine, the news service said the panel endorsed its "emphasis on hope, love, nonviolence and reconciliation." Saying nothing of how the manifesto ridicules the notion of Palestinian terrorism by putting quotation marks on the word. For example: "The roots of 'terrorism' are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation. These must be removed if there be a sincere intention to remove 'terrorism.'"

Most perniciously, Kairos Palestine asserts that Israel itself is an error on the map: "Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state ... and transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another."

Those are the seeds of horrid divisiveness, not coexistence. Presbyterians - and everyone of sincere faith - should reject them.