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ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

בס"ד

there is discontent over his performance, with some saying he has barely anything to show for his time as a member of the coalition. These voices are growing louder by the day and will become louder as the vote nears.

Events...

May 21-28

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem and to mark this extraordinary year the BAYT Brotherhood is running a second mission – in addition to its annual mission in December – to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. The *BAYT Yom Yerushalayim Mission to Israel* will incorporate the World Mizrahi mission, plus add additional touring and Shabbat in Jerusalem. For information email Larry Zeifman at LWZ@Zeifmans.ca

Commentary...

An Ideological Opportunist By Mati Tuchfeld

Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman's political worldview has always been hard to pinpoint. He sees no contradiction between being a hard-liner and waving an iron fist against the Arabs, while at the same time endorsing the division of Jerusalem like a diehard leftist. He lives in a settlement, but says he is willing to leave his home for peace. He identifies as part of the nationalist camp, but at the same time he is wholeheartedly in favor of the two-state solution.

Lieberman's ideological convictions apparently depend on the circumstances at any given time. When he needs to court right-wing voters, he dusts off the radical anti-Arab rhetoric. When he wants to placate the center, he pulls the two-state solution out from his sleeve.

He is an ideological opportunist, as evidenced by his political posturing during the trial of Elor Azaria, the IDF soldier convicted of manslaughter for shooting and killing a wounded Palestinian terrorist, both before and after he was appointed defense minister. The moment he was appointed, he changed his tone.

Lieberman has realized that by casting himself as the careful moderate in the Defense Ministry, new avenues that were previously blocked to him would open up. When he was foreign minister in Netanyahu's second government, the Obama administration considered him an outcast; now he is the Pentagon's darling and can walk into any office in Washington and beyond. He also receives praise everywhere he goes.

His comments against Rabbi Yigal Levinstein, who told pre-military students that religious girls "are being driven crazy" by army service, indicate that Lieberman is now courting a new electorate. No longer is he trying to compete with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Education Minister Naftali Bennett over the leadership of the Right; now he is trying to court the center, where issues of religion and state drive the agenda and assaults on rabbis boost popularity, especially when made in defense of liberal values and equality for women in the IDF and beyond.

It is not surprising, then, that left-wing parties applauded him on Thursday. The same Lieberman they deplored over the years has now become, thanks to one letter condemning a rabbi, their cultural hero.

Lieberman's threat that if Levinstein does not resign, he will withhold support from the Bnei David pre-military Torah academy that Levinstein heads or from the Otzem pre-military Torah academy where the rabbi made his remarks makes things difficult for Bennett and could become a real problem. Bennett did not counter Lieberman's ultimatum with an ultimatum of his own. Bennett knows that shutting down a yeshiva would outrage his constituents, and if Lieberman makes good on his threat it would definitely serve as a pretext for quitting the coalition. Bnei David is the religious Right's flagship preparatory yeshiva and has a distinguished record of producing some of Israel's finest heroes.

On the other hand, the chances of Lieberman backtracking are not high. That is why Bennett opted to attack the defense minister with cynicism and ridicule. Bennett is trying to be re-elected as party leader in the primaries. He is still considered the favorite, but in some national religious circles

Shutting down the yeshiva would intensify these critics' voices. They don't quite understand why their party, despite being in the government, could not stop the eviction of a Jewish community, the decline of religious education, and now the potential closure of the flagship yeshiva. If that's what the party is good for, what difference does it make if it has eight or 12 seats? They have a point.

Levinstein can help Bennett out of this quandary. He can tender his resignation and cool things down.

If he does not, and if Lieberman takes action and actually fires him, this could severely challenge the coalition's stability. (Israel Hayom Mar 16)

Threatening Freedom of Opinion By Dror Eydar

"And who are these?" the Queen of Hearts asks Alice (in Wonderland) in Lewis Carroll's book, pointing at the three gardeners, in fact playing cards. "How should I know? It's no business of mine," Alice replies courageously. The story continues: "The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, screamed, 'Off with her head!'"

After he "assassinated" Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, as he promised to do the day he became defense minister, Avigdor Lieberman went on to deal with the next threat in line: the mother of all pre-military preparatory academies, Bnei David in the Eli settlement. He claimed that the comments made by academy head Rabbi Yigal Levinstein harmed the greater public. Truthfully, the rabbi's manner of speaking was annoying and unnecessary and his remarks were harsh, but it is entertaining to hear criticism from someone who built much of his political career on offensive comments and who is now complaining of a "blunt manner" and "a desire to tease and provoke." Even today, Lieberman's ideological stance on any topic, other than hatred of Arabs, is unclear. Now he is seeking to ride the murky wave of public outrage over combat service for women.

Each day, we hear harsh words that have upset someone, who then takes offense and seeks revenge: Get rid of him, fire him, shut their mouths, and other such demands, competing with the Queen of Hearts, who whenever someone said something she didn't like, yelled, "Off with his head!"

We should calm down. The atmosphere of a market square demands controversial comments; public discourse benefits from sharp, pointed statements that cause the public to think about its beliefs and to deal with an attempt to question them. Hearing opinions within the limits of consensus is boring. Years ago, I resented the proposal to revoke the Israel Prize from Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, although his extreme remarks truly tested the bounds of my tolerance. The late Leibowitz played an important role in challenging the public discourse, as did Socrates in Athens thousands of years ago.

Levinstein's comments were hurtful and upsetting. So what? It is for that reason that we have the public square. It is fine to argue with him aggressively, sharply, and even with opposing extremism. The issue of female combat service is not only a religious matter. In contrast to the prevailing winds in the media, the debate on this issue has not been settled, and it continues forcefully in additional fields. Among military experts, doctors and researchers, it cannot be solved with an unequivocal ruling in favor of full combat service for women just because political correctness demands it. That is not how we seek truth and reach all-encompassing understandings.

We must fight with full force any attempts at silencing. No topic is exempt from debate. Freedom of thought and freedom of opinion are meant specifically for outrageous opinions. I have written here in favor of Joint Arab List MK Hanin Zoabi's right to protest against us. Levinstein's case stands out because those seeking to silence him are the (pseudo-) liberals, who demonstrate endless tolerance for the most extreme remarks against Likud supporters, religious people, settlers and the ultra-Orthodox and for remarks against the state made by Arabs. Time after time, it

becomes clear that the average Israeli liberal is willing to die for our right to think just like him.

The defense minister's threat to damage the status of the pre-military preparatory academy in Eli is infinitely more enraging. Firstly, he is interfering with freedom of speech and education and is harming democracy. Secondly, he has not really become a defender of political correctness; rather, as is his manner, he makes statements that align with a voting public belonging to the imaginary center, and at the same time, collects points in the battle against the settlement enterprise.

Thirdly, even if he serves as defense minister for 10 years, he will not be able to compare his contribution to Israel's security to that of the first pre-military preparatory academy, Bnei David in Eli; or of Levinstein, who is among its founders; or of Rabbi Eli Sadan, who leads it and who won the Israel Prize for his pioneering academy that inspired all other pre-military academies today. Its thousands of graduates serving in the best IDF units are testament to this, as is its list of fallen soldiers.

The preparatory academy in Eli does not belong to a religious party, but to all of Israel. One way or another, when it comes to the Lieberman issue, we hope that the Israeli Right has learned its lesson. (Israel hayom Mar 16)

Selective Outrage about Anti-Semitism By Jonathan S. Tobin

Partisans may debate just how much U.S. President Donald Trump has accomplished in his first weeks in office, but there is one thing on which there is no debate: Trump has raised awareness about anti-Semitism. It is a little ironic, considering the president's initial reluctance to address the issue, but after his strong denunciation of anti-Semitism and attacks on Jewish institutions in his address to a joint session of Congress earlier this month, as well as subsequent equally forceful statements, there is no doubt where he stands now. Yet that hasn't stopped his liberal critics from continuing to blame the increase in anti-Semitic incidents on the president. That may tell us more about the partisan divide in the United States than anything else.

For all of the lip service given to the need to combat hatred, getting Americans to pay attention to anti-Semitism isn't always easy. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, discussion of rampant Islamophobia in the U.S. became a staple of media commentary. But while the evidence for the much-ballyhooed anti-Muslim backlash has been largely anecdotal, FBI statistics have consistently shown that hate crimes targeting Jews and Jewish institutions have always far outnumbered those targeting other faiths, including Islam. But outside of the precincts of the organized Jewish world, few have paid much attention.

However, with more than 103 Jewish community centers and schools receiving over 140 bomb threats this year alongside shocking cemetery desecrations in St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Rochester, anti-Semitism suddenly became front-page news. So far, the threats have all been hoaxes. But the evacuations and concern that the next phone call will be about a real bomb spread fear throughout the community.

The assumption of many Jews as well as much of the media is that this is a result of Trump's willingness to speak disparagingly of certain groups, such as Muslims and Mexicans, while displaying a reluctance at times to condemn hate groups. Trump's critics also point to the White House's failure to mention Jews in its International Holocaust Remembrance Day statement. That is why, at least at first, the White House approached the issue as being purely a function of anti-Trump media bias rather than a problem that demanded his attention.

But the main reason why liberals -- especially liberal Jews -- blame Trump for the surge in incidents is his embrace of an "America First" economic and foreign policy. To them, the policy echoes white nationalism, if not the pre-World War II isolationist movement that was openly anti-Semitic. They view this label, as well as Trump's hostility toward opening the country to refugees, as racist, xenophobic and a not-so-subtle signal to anti-Semites and alt-right trolls who often targeted Jewish journalists who criticized Trump that he's on their side.

But after Trump's repeated condemnations of anti-Semitism in the most public of forums and with the only person arrested in connection to the threats being Juan Thompson, a left-wing writer rather than someone connected with the alt-right or white nationalists, let alone Trump, it is now incumbent on those who have been sounding the alarms about these attacks to separate their instinctive dislike of the president from the problem of Jew-hatred.

The sudden interest in the topic and the focus on the JCC threats and cemetery outrages ignores the fact that the main forces pushing anti-Semitic rhetoric and delegitimization of Jews are not those that have supposedly taken their cues from Trump's dog whistles and who are presumably now ignoring the president's overt condemnation of their behavior. Rather the engine driving what even the previous administration described as a "rising tide of anti-Semitism" has been a strange alliance of Islamist hate and far-left anti-Zionist elites who use the boycott, divest, and sanctions movement

against Israel as a thin cover for their own variant of anti-Semitism.

The fact that some of those who support BDS and attacks on Israel -- such as Linda Sarsour, a Muslim woman who is the current darling of the anti-Trump "resistance" -- condemn the JCC threats and the cemetery desecration should make their liberal Jewish allies wonder whether they would care if speaking up now was not also considered a way to take a shot at the president. Nor should it be ignored that similar crimes to the cemetery desecrations that took place under then-President Barack Obama not only couldn't be blamed on Trump but also got very little attention from the same media outlets that are now up in arms about the issue.

Many of those damning Trump for being insufficiently concerned about the topic were themselves suspiciously silent when his predecessor went quiet about Jews being singled out for murder. Obama's liberal Jewish supporters looked away when he labeled the deadly terror attack on the Hyper Cacher kosher market in Paris as "random" violence rather than anti-Semitism. Nor did they hold him responsible for being insufficiently outraged about the daily torrent of hate against Jews and Israel that emanates from the Palestinian Authority or for saying little about the BDS movement.

The anger about Trump's alleged indirect responsibility for the JCC threats also should not obscure the fact that Jews are accepted in every sector of American society in a way that was unimaginable to past generations. That is a fact that the president's own very personal Jewish connections in the form of family members, illustrates. As former Anti-Defamation League head Abe Foxman -- who is not one to downplay anti-Semitism -- noted, what is happening is a problem, not the crisis about which partisans are seeking to incite panic.

None of this excuses Trump's shortcomings nor ought it to blind Jews to the anti-Semitism that continues to simmer on the far Right. But it ought to put the issue into perspective for liberals who are genuinely concerned about anti-Semitism. Some of those raising hell about Trump have been missing in action in the fight against anti-Semitic BDS campaigns and had little to say about threats against Jews until these could be blamed on Trump. It will be up to the president to continue to speak responsibly about hate. But it is just as important for his critics to stop pretending that the problem of anti-Semitism begins and ends with their bete noire in the White House. (Israel Hayom Mar 15)

Nikki Haley Restores Morality to the UN Mission

By Noah Rothman

By standing aside at the end of its term and allowing the United Nations to indulge its obsessive anti-Israel compulsion unobstructed, the Obama administration hoped it had set the tone for future American administrations. The move had a far-reaching effect, but surely not in the way the Obama White House hoped. United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley has demonstrated in her short time at Turtle Bay the moral competence and courage her predecessor lacked. Haley's laudable mission is to tell the truth about America's enemies and its adversaries. Her refusal to tolerate this institution's fanatical preoccupation with Israel is among her most noble efforts in a nascent diplomatic career.

The disgust Ambassador Haley felt when she left her first monthly Security Council meeting on Middle East issues in February was evident in her voice. Haley presumably expected the Security Council would focus on issues that had something to do with the myriad threats to global peace. She was apparently surprised to learn that the Council regards Israel to represent as the greatest threat to stability not just in the Middle East but globally.

"I am here to say the United States will not turn a blind eye to this anymore," Haley said. "I am here to underscore to the ironclad support of the United States for Israel. I am here to emphasize that the United States is determined to stand up to the U.N.'s anti-Israel bias."

In her speech, she attacked the Obama administration's misguided decision to abstain from a resolution condemning Israeli settlement expansion (80 percent of which has occurred in blocs on the West Bank that would be ceded to Israel in any conceivable peace deal). She further noted that the U.N. has privileged Palestinian issues over the threats posed by North Korea's nuclear program, the chemical war and civilian slaughter in Syria, and Iran's support for terror and militias that are active across the Middle East. "The prejudiced approach to Israeli-Palestinian issues does the peace process no favors, and it bears no relationship to the reality of the world around us," Haley continued. "The double standards are breathtaking."

Old habits die hard, and the United Nations did not take the hint. So the Trump administration issued another shot across the institution's bow when, in February, the administration entertained the prospect of withdrawing from the United Nations' Human Rights Council. The fact that the council is itself infested with human rights abusers and is myopically focused on Israel justifies America's departure. Not only

would such a move be ethical, but it might also help the UN to come to terms with its crippling fixation. The Human Rights Council was the successor to the UN's Human Rights Commission, which sacrificed all of its authority by becoming a hypocritical cesspit of anti-Israel sentiment before its dissolution in 2006.

"What is the goal of the Human Rights Council when they allow Cuba and China to serve on those?" Haley pondered. "They are basically protecting their own interests, while they're going after other countries to make sure they give them a hard time. And so, do we want to be a part of that?"

Perhaps the most promising display of righteousness occurred this week when Ambassador Haley condemned the repulsive report issued by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The report, issued by a group based in Beirut comprising 18 Arab nations—including the non-existent "state of Palestine"—accused Israel of imposing apartheid on the Arabs in Judea and Samaria. Among the report's authors was former special UN rapporteur Richard Falk, whose anti-Israel prejudice is matched by few. Falk has praised terrorist organizations like Hamas, likening them to the French resistance, excused the targeting of Israeli Jews in attacks, and claimed that U.S. officials have given rise to "conspiratorial explanations" for the 9/11 attacks. The report is so obviously detached from reality that even the United Nations Secretary-General's office refused to endorse its findings.

"The United States is outraged by the report," read a statement from Haley. "The United Nations Secretariat was right to distance itself from this report, but it must go further and withdraw the report altogether."

She added: "That anti-Israel propaganda would come from a body whose membership nearly universally does not recognize Israel is unsurprising." It is a sad commentary on the recent history of the United Nations that displays of basic morality are in such short supply. That's in part why Haley's defenses of Israel from a depraved institution like the United Nations are so refreshing.

Haley's ascension to the post of UN ambassador represents a repudiation of the Obama administration's approach to creating "daylight" between the U.S. and Israel, but not a solitary one. Barack Obama's efforts to remake the Middle East and rehabilitate Iran had the unintended effect of drawing Israel closer to its Sunni Arab-dominated neighbors. The Trump administration's renewed commitment to Israel ensures that the Jewish State is less isolated than ever, and never has the Palestinian question been less relevant to the matter of Middle East peace. Ambassador Haley and the Trump administration deserve praise for helping to strengthen the Middle East's only democracy, but they couldn't have done it without Barack Obama. (CommentaryMagazine.com Mar 16)

Trump Embraces the PLO Fantasy By Caroline B. Glick

US President Donald Trump is losing his focus. If he doesn't get it back soon, he will fail to make America great again or safe again in the Middle East.

After holding out for a month, last week Trump indicated he is adopting his predecessors' obsession with empowering the PLO.

This is a strategic error.

There are many actors and conflicts in the Middle East that challenge and threaten US national interests and US national security. Iran's rise as a nuclear power and regional hegemon; the war in Syria; Turkey's abandonment of the West; and Russia's regional power play all pose major threats to US power, security and interests. The Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State, Hamas and other Sunni jihadist movements all threaten the US, Europe and the US's Sunni allies in the region in a manner that is strategically significant to America.

None of these issues, none of these actors and none of these threats are in any way related to or caused by the PLO and its interminable, European-supported hybrid terror and political war against Israel. None of these pressing concerns will be advanced by a US embrace of the PLO or a renewed obsession with empowering the PLO and its mafia-terrorist bosses.

To the contrary, all of these pressing concerns will be sidelined – and so made more pressing and dangerous – by a US reengagement with the PLO.

And yet, over the past week, Trump has indicated that the PLO is now his focus.

Last Friday, Trump spoke on the telephone with Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas is head of the PLO and the unelected dictator of the corrupt, terrorism-sponsoring, PLO-controlled Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria.

According to media reports, Trump told Abbas – whose legal term in office ended eight years ago – that he views him as a legitimate leader. According to the official White House report of the conversation, Trump also reportedly told Abbas that he supports reaching a deal between Israel and the Palestinians. Such a deal, to the extent it is ever reached, involves expanding PLO control over Judea and Samaria and parts of Jerusalem at

Israel's expense.

Trump also invited Abbas for an official visit to Washington. And the day after they spoke, the Trump administration moved \$250 million in US taxpayer dollars to Abbas's police state where for the past 25 years, Abbas and his cronies have enriched themselves while feeding a steady diet of anti-Semitic, anti-American jihadist bile to their impoverished subjects.

To build up his credibility with the PLO, Trump put his electoral pledge to move the US embassy to Jerusalem on ice. The real estate mogul ordered Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deny Jews the right to their property and their legal right to use state lands in Judea and Samaria.

And swift on the heels of that conversation with Abbas, Trump's chief negotiator Jason Greenblatt was dispatched to Jerusalem to begin empowering the PLO at Israel's expense.

According to media reports, Greenblatt intended to use his meeting Monday with Netanyahu to reject Netanyahu's commitment to build a new Israeli town in Samaria. Greenblatt was also reportedly intending to dictate the parameters for yet another round of negotiations with the PLO.

After meeting with Netanyahu, Greenblatt continued on to Ramallah to embrace Abbas.

Also during his stay, Greenblatt is scheduled to meet with IDF generals who are responsible for giving money and providing services to the PLO.

And Greenblatt doesn't have the Palestinians to himself.

Following Trump's conversation with Abbas, plans were suddenly afloat for Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner and Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump to visit Israel and spend an afternoon with Abbas in Ramallah.

If things develop as reported, then Trump is serious about embracing the PLO and intends to have his top advisers devote themselves to Abbas and his henchmen. If that is the case, then Trump is setting himself, his advisers, his daughter and the US up to fail and be humiliated.

The PLO is the Siren that drowns US administrations. It is to the PLO that America's top envoys have eagerly flown, gotten hooked on the attention of the demented, anti-Israel press corps, and forgotten their purpose: to advance US national interests.

If Trump is serious about repeating this practice, then rather than repair the massive damage done to the US and the Middle East by his two predecessors, the 45th president will repeat their mistakes. Like them, he will leave office in a blaze of failure.

To understand why this is the case, three things must be clear.

First, the PLO will never make peace with Israel. There will never be a Palestinian state.

There will never be a peace or a Palestinian state because the PLO wants neither. This is the lesson of the past 25 years. Both Abbas and his predecessor Arafat rejected peace and statehood multiple times and opted instead to expand their terrorist and political war against Israel.

Why did they do that? Because they are interested in two things: personal enrichment – which they achieve by stealing donor funds and emptying the pockets of their own people; and weakening, with the goal of destroying Israel – which they achieve through their hybrid war of terrorism and political warfare.

The second thing that needs to be clear is that the Palestinians are irrelevant to the rest of the problems – the real problems that impact US interests – in the region. If anything, the Palestinians are pawns on the larger chessboard. America's enemies use them to distract the Americans from the larger realities so that the US will not pay attention to the real game.

Iran will not be appeased or defeated if Trump empowers the PLO in its war against Israel and continues feeding PLO leaders' insatiable appetite for other people's money.

The Sunni jihadists will not beat their swords into plowshares if the US coerces Israel to cough up land to the PLO. To the contrary, they will be emboldened.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will not move his forces out of Syria or stop giving nuclear technologies to Iran if the US turns the screws on Israel. Putin will come to the conclusion that Trump is either weak or stupid to damage Israel, the US's most serious ally.

And of course, Israel will not be better off if Trump decides to push it back onto the peace train which has caused it nothing but harm for the past quarter century.

Trump's election opened up the possibility, for the first time in decades, that the US would end its destructive obsession with the PLO. For three months, Israelis have been free for the first time to discuss seriously the possibilities of applying Israeli law to all or parts of Judea and Samaria. And a massive majority of Israelis support doing just that.

On the Palestinian side as well, Trump's election empowered the people who have been living under the jackboot of Abbas and his cronies to think about the possibility of living at peace with Israel in a post-PLO era. Polling results indicate that they too are eager to move beyond the

Palestinian statehood chimera.

But now, it appears that Trump has been convinced to embrace the PLO obsession. The same entrenched bureaucrats at the State Department and the same foreign policy establishment in Washington that brought the US nothing but failure in the Middle East for a generation appear to have captivated Trump's foreign policy. They have convinced him it is better to devote his top advisers to repeating the mistakes of his predecessors than to devote his energies and theirs to fixing the mess that Obama and George W. Bush left him with. They have gotten him to believe that it is better to empower the PLO than develop coherent strategies and plans for dealing with the problems of the region that actually endanger US interests and imperil the security and safety of the American people.

(Jerusalem Post Mar 13)

The Diabolical PA/EU Plan for Area C By Josh Hasten

Now I don't want to ruin anyone's vacation, but the next time you are heading for some R&R at the Dead Sea via Jerusalem, pay close attention to the scenery on the sides of the road.

Over the past decade there has been a huge upsurge in the number of structures going up in illegal Beduin villages and encampments on both sides of Highway 1, from the entrance to the city through what is known as the "E1" area between Jerusalem and the "Adumims" all the way down the mountain toward the Dead Sea.

Shifts in the West: Impacts on Israel and the Jewish People

So why should some illegal Beduin structures spoil your trip? Because these aren't just small herding communities as they would appear, but strategically placed mini-towns set up by the Palestinian Authority and financed by the European Union to the tune of hundreds of millions of euros, with the explicit goal of taking over strategic lands in Area C with the aim of creating a de facto Palestinian state.

This plot is clearly outlined in a lengthy 2009 policy paper by then Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad. Known as the Fayyad Plan, the logic was that by creating substantial facts on the ground, the PA with the support of the international community would lay claim to those areas, and demand that they be part of "Palestine" in any future negotiations with Israel.

And that's where the EU comes in – to serve as the key financier of the project. Over 1,000 illegal structures – including houses, bathrooms, storage spaces, etc., with more being erected nearly daily throughout Judea and Samaria, now proudly bear the EU flag. The EU's false claim is that it is involved in these building endeavors for "humanitarian purposes" to provide for the Beduin in these areas.

Ironic though, that the EU symbol can only be seen on structures in Area C; none can be found in areas A or B, nor can they be found in Beduin communities throughout the rest of the Middle East. It makes you wonder.

Therefore in 2009 Regavim filed the initial petition against the community with the High Court of Justice. But eight years later it remains standing. Just this past summer rumors circulated that the Civil Administration was preparing to take action, starting with the dismantling of the school. But once the first of day of classes began, it was clear it wasn't going to happen.

Imagine the images broadcast to the world of the "evil" Israelis tearing down a school, regardless of its status, on September 1. The Fayyad Plan had hopes for this very type of dilemma for Israel, with its emphasis on taking over strategic areas through the building of schools.

Perhaps this time around the Civil Administration will fulfill its duties and dismantle the entire encampment once and for all, thus upholding the law. But according to the Post report, the villagers' attorney is turning to the Supreme Court asking that its decision be overturned.

Between the petition and the EU pressure, the Civil Administration has its hands full, but should nevertheless enforce the court's initial ruling.

It's important to note that despite the illegal PA/EU activity carried out by the Beduin squatting throughout the Adumim area, the government has repeatedly gone out of its way to offer permanent housing solutions for these families.

Blueprints for the establishment of a legal town to be called Ramat Nueimah near Jericho were drawn up, but that plan has been shelved for the time being. This was a result of the PA leadership (and the EU) refusing to accept a practical solution which would enhance the lives of these Beduin, but would lessen their grip on that strategic corridor.

The bottom line is that there are opportunities for these people, but at this point there are no takers.

So when you are heading down toward the Dead Sea, have a look at the situation for yourselves and realize that there is a lot more going on on the global scale than meets the eye. The shanty towns, with many structures bearing the EU logo, are there with a devious and diabolical purpose in mind. (Jerusalem Post Mar 13)

An Open Letter to Richard Gere By Daniel Doron

Dear Richard Gere,

It is an honor to have you visit Israel despite your hesitations and the pressure put on you by your so-liberal friends, to whom Israel and its West Bank settlements are the epitome of evil and must be fought day and night to make the world better.

It is most instructive to learn how a Hollywood celebrity and wonderfully talented actor like yourself intends to revivify the long-dead Middle East peace process. As a famous, dedicated peace lover Gere you came to share with us your (embarrassingly trite) insights about Jewish culture and (factually wrong) advice about how to make peace.

Your well-intentioned road to peace, Mr. Gere, is paved however with some untruthful assertions, like "the occupation destroys everything," when in fact Israeli occupation, from 1967 to the 1987 intifada, was a great humane success for the occupied Palestinian.

Yes, occupation is not pretty, but it happened because the Arabs once again ganged on Israel in an effort to destroy it. Israel had no recourse but to beat them or to perish, and liberated the West Bank from their occupation.

Under Jordanian occupation the Arab inhabitants of the West bank were oppressed, denied any human rights and made dirt-poor. Under Israeli occupation they enjoyed the rule of law and so many other benefits so that their standard of living quintupled. Agriculture and small industry were revolutionized and thrived, seven institutions of higher learning were established where none existed before.

Rigid, oppressive Arab Muslim culture, where women are habitually murdered for dishonoring their family by taking to a stranger, was somewhat opened by contact with Israel, so that the status of women, children and minorities improved dramatically. There was no terrorism. I know that human welfare and the betterment of Arab life does rate in your and your friends' eyes as high as political correctness and the belief that occupation is the essence of evil, but let us at least honor facts by mentioning them.

Alas, the Oslo "peace accords" that you would have Israel emulate put an end to this humanely beneficial process when it foisted Yasser Arafat and his terrorist PLO gangs on the hapless West Bank inhabitants. Arafat first terrorized Israelis who ate and shopped in West Bank cities, providing a third of Palestinian GNP, and disrupted all economic relations, thus creating poverty and causing high unemployment (reaching 30% among the young) that he exploited to foment rage and terrorism against Israel.

The Palestinian Authority that you would have us upgrade to a state is an utterly dysfunctional clan-based coalition made up of murderous political mafias. It deprives the Palestinians of even their most elementary rights, robs them of billions in aid from the US and Europe, keeps most of them in penury and misery, oppresses and persecutes women, gays and lesbians and all who aren't Muslims. It foments rage against Israel by incessant incitement that calls on even small children to kill Jews everywhere. Is granting it statehood, as you ignorantly recommend, really the path to peace?

How can you, a man who cherishes human rights, who claims that he cares for the oppressed Palestinians, believe that subjecting them to greater oppression by their own tyrants is justified just so that they can enjoy a putative political "self-determination" – the kind enjoyed by the citizens of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, or Iran?

You are also dead wrong, Mr. Gere, when you refer to settlements built on Arab land as "against international law." The West Bank was part of the mandate given by the League of Nations to Britain to establish there "a Jewish National home." The Arabs, who received 98% of former Ottoman territories, agreed. In 1948 when Jordan joined five other Arab armies to destroy Israel it conquered and illegally annexed the West Bank. By international law, then, the Jewish claim to these mostly government-owned West Bank lands is still paramount and Israel is legally free to exercise it now that it ejected the Jordanian usurpers.

I searched Google to find what you had to say, Mr. Gere, about the massacres in Syria, and found nothing. Not surprising, considering that your peace-loving, human-rights-zealous friends in Hollywood and elsewhere did not mount a single demonstration, or issue one strong statement demanding an American intervention to stop Syrian-Iranian ethnic cleansing, the slaughter of hundreds of thousands, the old, the weak, women and children. Like you, Mr. Gere, they were apparently too busy condemning "the settlements" or cynically exploiting the refugee's tragedy to try and undermine President Trump. (Jerusalem post Mar 13)