



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*

write opinion pieces
justifying this
delusional claim.

After 2,000 years we won our independence, at the basis of which is our ability to defend ourselves. The Jews are no longer at the mercy of a patron's protection, and never will be. As the moment of truth arrives and as

the threats facing Israel materialize, the Israeli government and the IDF need to deal with them, near or far. Therefore, it is important for Israel's leadership to insist on the country's interests and for Israelis not to tire from paying the price of liberty. (Israel Hayom May 1)

Events...

Monday May 6, 8pm

Dr. Mordechai Kedar of Bar Ilan University will speak on "Understanding the Arab and Muslim world: Why do so many Muslims Hate the West?" at Clanton Park Synagogue.

Wednesday May 8 - Yom Yerushalayim – Chag Sameach!

Commentary...

Strength in the Face of Terrorism By Dr. Haim Shine

The murder of Evyatar Borovsky should be investigated in connection with the increase in terrorist acts along Judea and Samaria roads and shooting from the Gaza Strip toward Israel. You don't need to be a fortune teller to understand that this is a trend which is only going to get stronger.

The United States, the strongest power in the history of mankind, has grown tired. The spirit of liberty has waned, its strength to manage global crises has dwindled. It is hard for its civilians and leadership to carry the weight of more flag-draped coffins, unloaded under the cover of darkness from military planes arriving from Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Libya and other places in recent years. Military cemeteries across the U.S. are filled with the tombstones of brave fighters who sacrificed their lives on the altar of values, which most Americans don't believe in anymore or aren't prepared to die for. The difficult economic situation is also reinforcing these winds of isolationism.

For decades the U.S. has debated between the responsibilities of protecting democratic values throughout the world and caring for its own needs and the safety of its citizens. President Barack Obama doesn't project the authority and leadership required to lead campaigns against hostile state-sponsored terrorism threatening world peace.

One disconcerting example of American conduct pertains to the use, or not, of chemical weapons by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad against rebel forces. The American administration was worried about confirming the reliable information provided by the Israel Defense Forces that chemical weapons were deployed, so that the U.S. wouldn't have to intervene in Syria. This hesitation is the opposite of leadership.

Every time the U.S. realizes its own weakness, the White House dusts off the old Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This is an attempt to gather support and sympathy at the expense of Israel, which will again be asked to make territorial and diplomatic concessions. The terrorists in Gaza and Ramallah understand this and embolden their terrorist activities, which will gain momentum as long as the U.S. continues to push a diplomatic process forward. On the roads in Judea and Samaria and in the communities near Gaza, Israelis are already paying the price.

Similar to the past, Israel finds itself under attack by global powers of evil. The winds of war are blowing across the Middle East and fanning the flames along Israel's borders. One spark could ignite a conflagration, the consequences of which are anybody's guess. For years now the terrorists have searched for the opportunity to drag the world into a state of chaos by stirring up conflict between states and superpowers. The U.S. weakness only serves to encourage the organizers of global terrorism and strengthens their sense of victory.

Israel has no choice; there is no country in the world that will send troops to die in the defense of Israelis. Many in the world believe that Israel is the root of all global crises due to its refusal to commit suicide by accepting the demands of the Palestinians and their supporters. It's hard for me to blame world leaders when there are journalists, in Israel even, who

The Tapuach Junction Near You By Emily Amrousi

A Jew was murdered on Tuesday. Read that last sentence again -- this time cry out the words: "A Jew was murdered." One of our own flesh and blood died. Salam Zahal wanted to murder a Jew. He couldn't care less where that Jew resided and whom he voted for in the last election. Evyatar Borovsky happened to be the closest Jew available: He stood at the junction, hands tucked in his pockets, waiting for a friend to arrive and give him a ride to the rehearsal his ensemble was about to hold. He had just said goodbye to his five kids. For them, it was the beginning of just another ordinary day: They would drink chocolate milk; someone would tie their shoelaces.

Zahal plunged the knife into Borovsky's abdomen -- our abdomen. Why? Because he was a Jew.

The evacuation of the wounded Zahal from Tapuach Junction, which for many Israelis lies somewhere beyond the Mountains of Darkness, to Rabin Medical Center in Petach Tikva, took twenty minutes. The Israel that rushed Zahal to the medical center to treat his wounds (he had been shot by Border Police as he carried out his attack) is the same Israel that had released him from prison several months earlier, and the same Israel that removed roadblocks to allow the Palestinians to lead a better life.

I wanted to ask, "But what about the life of Jews?" But then I looked at Evyatar's picture: a wonderful father; a gifted performer who wrote his own material; a man with new ideas, a big smile, and love for this land.

A life was nipped in the bud by a contaminated knife. And this, even as every Israeli radio station was reporting with great fanfare on the new Arab League peace initiative.

This is the face of peace: a medical doctor killed at a bus stop. This has been the face of peace since the Arab riots of 1929 and peace will continue to look like this.

Roadblocks are a necessary evil, a consequence of circumstances we did not seek. Over the past several years, these roadblocks have been gradually removed. Left-wing groups have proudly taken credit for effecting this change, and point to the fact that movement of Palestinians between their communities inside Judea and Samaria is no longer hindered by the checkpoints. In this new reality, Palestinians are only stopped when they try to leave Judea and Samaria. This allows tens of thousands of them to make a living in Israel. They have unrestricted access to the roads that connect Palestinian villages and towns and as a consequence, the more than 300,000 Israelis who reside behind the Security Fence live under constant threat.

A week ago, I was on the Channel 1 talk show "Politics." On my way back home, I noticed terrorists had placed rocks on the road, effectively blocking the way. Luckily, I managed to stop the car just in time. About a month ago, on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, a burning tire was hurled at my car. Driving on Samaria's roads has become impossible. The "quiet terrorism" disrupts our way of life.

If history is any guide, a new wave of terrorism that originates in "the territories" rapidly makes its way toward Israel's main population centers. This method has been tried and tested. If there is no response to terrorism perpetrated in Tapuach, soon enough it will strike Tel Aviv. When Israel remains silent in the face of attacks on Sderot, Ashdod is hit as well. It is now raining over the hills of Judea and Samaria, and unless something is done, the downpour will soon reach the skyscrapers in the Dan region. The Azrieli Center in the heart of Tel Aviv, by the way, is a 30-minute drive from Tapuach Junction. (Israel Hayom May 1)

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“Explanations” of Islamic Jew-Hatred Reveal Media’s Own Prejudices By Evelyn Gordon

The Islamic world’s rampant Jew-hatred, as I noted last week, is often simply ignored by the journalists and academics who should be bringing it to public attention. But no less troubling is the fact that on the rare occasions when they do report it, they frequently try to explain it away. These “explanations” offer little insight into the actual sources of Muslim Jew-hatred. But they offer a very disturbing insight into opinion leaders’ motives in concealing this hatred.

A good example is an article published by the New York Times in January that described two cases in which Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi made virulently anti-Semitic remarks. In one, he said Egyptians should “nurse our children and our grandchildren on hatred” for Jews and Zionists; in another, he described Zionists as “these bloodsuckers who attack the Palestinians, these warmongers, the descendants of apes and pigs.”

Both of these statements, wrote reporter David Kirkpatrick, “date back to 2010, when anti-Israeli sentiment was running high after a three-week conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza the previous year.”

The obvious implication for readers who don’t have the dates of every Mideast war at their fingertips is that the conflict probably took place in late 2009, while Morsi’s comments were made in early 2010; hence these were anguished outbursts made in the first raw throes of grief—a time when nobody should be judged too harshly for violent language. Kirkpatrick even strengthened that impression by erroneously dating both speeches to “early 2010,” when in fact, as a subsequent correction noted, one was made in September of that year.

But even without this error, the implication is ridiculous, because the aforementioned conflict ended in January 2009—which Kirkpatrick, as the Times’s Cairo bureau chief, should certainly have known. In other words, these speeches were made at least a full year after the war ended, and in one case, almost two years later. Thus, far from reflecting the first raw throes of grief, they were the deliberate product of more than a year’s reflection. As such, either they genuinely represented the deepest beliefs of the man who is now Egypt’s president, or they were cynically calculated to appeal to Morsi’s audience—an equally disturbing possibility.

Far more disturbing than what this says about Egyptian prejudices, however, is what it says about those of Kirkpatrick and his editors at the Times—because neither he nor they evidently saw any problem in “explaining” Morsi’s vile anti-Semitism on the grounds that he was still overset by grief (“anti-Israel sentiment was running high”) over a war that ended more than a year earlier. In short, like too many other journalists, Kirkpatrick and his editors are convinced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the root of all evil in the Middle East, and push that theory on their readers.

Unfortunately, this theory isn’t supported by the facts: As one Egyptian cleric helpfully explained, Jews “aren’t our enemies because they occupy Palestine; they would be our enemies even if they had not occupied anything.” And if readers were made aware of the true extent of Islamic Jew-hatred, they might well figure that out for themselves.

One can’t help suspecting that this is precisely why many journalists prefer to let this hatred go unreported: Facts that don’t fit their pet theory of Israel’s guilt are better left unmentioned. (Commentary Magazine Apr 29)

New Initiative; Same Old Tune By Zalman Shoval

“Dramatic.” “Historic.” These are the words used by some jubilant left-wing politicians (including one cabinet minister) upon hearing the Qatari prime minister announce the Arab League’s decision to support Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations on the basis of the 1967 borders with the addition of a land-swap. Not only was this declaration neither dramatic nor historic, it heralded absolutely no change in the Arab attitude toward the conflict with Israel.

We can take comfort in the knowledge that at least part of the Arab world is beginning to recognize that with the Iranian threat, and the chaos of the Arab Spring aftermath, serious efforts are required to strike some kind of deal with Israel. Some commentators remarked on the Qatari prime minister’s announcement as though it was a rekindling of the 12-year-old Saudi Initiative, but let us pray that this is not the case, because that initiative was nothing more than the ultimate edict -- one that Israel was expected to fully accept in advance, including the veiled threat of renewed violence unless Israel complies. Among other things, it is important to recall that the initiative also included the insistence on the Palestinian right of return, even if the wording was a little vague.

On the other hand, if the Arab League, or, more precisely, the Palestinians -- because after all, it is the Palestinians with whom we must make peace -- were to come to us now and say “we want to resume negotiations, without preconditions, but these are the points that we want to

discuss, including the 1967 borders,” then Israel could say “Go right ahead, but we will raise our own demands, and the 1967 borders will not be among them.”

Obviously the American administration played an extremely active role in shaping this week’s Arab League announcement (just as it did in the Israeli-Turkish reconciliation before it). It is safe to assume that the report last week, ostensibly obtained from “senior American officials,” that Washington aims to call a four-way Israel-PA-Jordan-U.S. summit in hopes of jumpstarting Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, was made in preparation of the Arab League declaration.

Even though the American administration understands that the Palestinian issue is not the most urgent of the Middle East’s problems, and certainly not the main cause of many of them, Washington thinks that progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track could establish an oasis of stability in the region and help establish a front against Iran. Furthermore, U.S. President Barack Obama hasn’t completely relinquished hope that he will succeed where his predecessors have failed.

During his recent trip to Jerusalem and Ramallah, Obama made it very clear that his ultimate objective was still a two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. For now, there is no indication that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plans to deviate from his existing strategy -- circumventing any kind of meaningful negotiations with Israel, be it by raising preconditions (right now the preconditions pertain mainly to the release of Palestinian prisoners), or by approaching international forums, namely the United Nations.

* * *

As far as Israel is concerned, this situation may provide an opportunity for new ideas, but we have to be clear -- peace is a historic process, not a timetable. Therefore, all the dates mentioned in the media are not really relevant. The “window of opportunity” touted by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will most likely remain closed as long as the Palestinian leadership and the Arab League, including all its members, refuse to accept Israel’s existence.

The reports about the possible four-way summit jive with the traditional American approach to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (or Israeli-Arab conflict in general). In other words, launch a summit to much media fanfare and ceremony, preferably on the steps of the White House, and hope that it leads to something significant in the future. But beyond the show-business factor, these summits have no real value in advancing the objectives they are called to advance. On the contrary -- this four-way summit could easily turn into an international summit, the kind that Israel has always been able to avoid so that it would not be in the position of one against many.

But rejecting a showy international summit does not mean that alliances and understandings can’t be struck between Israel and other regional players, even on the basis of mutual interests in the face of the Iranian threat. It will be for that end, one can assume, that Israel will tailor its response to the Arab League proposal. (Israel hayom May 2)

Everyone Will Wake Up When It’s Too Late By Yoav Limor

Last Independence Day [Israel Hayom photographer] Ziv Koren and I toured Israel’s borders. We went to the Egyptian and Gaza Strip borders, as well as the borders with Syria and Lebanon, the crossings to Jordan, and the West Bank separation fence in northern Samaria. We saw the incredible investment Israel put in, both in money (billions) and in the equipment (technology), to stop infiltration and reduce threats.

When we got a phone call from farmers in Lachish about the numerous break-ins in their area, we were incredulous. But the stories were so troubling, and the statistics so dramatic, that we decided to drive there on Wednesday and see things for ourselves. To speak in cliches, what we saw was not a fence, but a hole, a black hole.

Our talks with security forces revealed that everyone is aware of the problem, and every week the item appears on their desks: at the Judea (Hebron) Brigade which is in charge of the territory, at the Judea and Samaria Division, at Central Command and their counterparts in the Israel Police, at Border Police and at Shin Bet. Everyone knows just how big the hole is, the extent of the damage that has already been done, and how troubling its future potential is. Just to clarify things, since the beginning of 2013 more than 20 terror cells in the West Bank were busted and their members arrested for planning to abduct Israelis. Had one of them decided on Wednesday to use one of the surrounding Palestinian villages as a launching point, nothing would have stood in their way of kidnapping a soldier at the Lachish training base or a civilian at any one of the nearby communities.

And despite the clear and present danger, nothing is happening to remedy the situation. Members of the security establishment talk about

tactical operations, but the herders and farmers in the area can't remember the last time they saw an IDF ambush in place, or even a patrol. They now take it upon themselves to defend the fence, secure all the cattle and every tractor. Sound ridiculous? This is the day to day reality at the Lachish strip.

Even repair work on the breached fence hasn't been carried out, making the barrier that was meant to stop terrorist attacks and thievery one big inviting hole. One feels compelled to say that one day everyone will wake up when it's too late, after a terrorist attack or abduction is carried out; yet still, we should hope that someone -- the defense minister, public security minister, the chief of general staff or police commissioner, will decide this very morning to act and do what's necessary. (Israel Hayom May 2)

Stupendously Stupid or Surreptitiously Sinister By Martin Sherman
The uncontested absurdities of today are the accepted slogans of tomorrow. They come to be accepted by degrees... by dint of constant pressure on one side and constant retreat on the other – until one day when they are suddenly declared to be the country's official ideology. – Ayn Rand, 1965
O, who can hold a fire in his hand; By thinking on the frosty Caucasus? Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite; By bare imagination of a feast? Or wallow naked in December snow; By thinking on fantastic summer's heat? – From William Shakespeare's Richard II

I am appalled. Just how long will politically biased claptrap be allowed to masquerade as serious policy research?

When I wrote last week's column, "The coming canard: "Constructive unilateralism," I was unaware that, this week, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) would hold its sixth annual conference in Tel Aviv. Traditionally titled "Security Challenges of the 21st Century," the focus this year was billed as "Creative Ideas for Israel's Changing Strategic Environment."

The speaker line-up was undeniably impressive, with an array of well-known figures from Israel and abroad – politicians, senior military officers and government officials, media personalities, academics and policy analysts. The program spanned a range of worthy topics that extended beyond purely military and security spheres, including social, economic and diplomatic matters as well. On some issues the recommendations made, and conclusions drawn, seemed sensible and well-grounded – although I did puzzle over why they may merit the description "creative."

Thus for example, I found myself endorsing the findings of the team dealing with the question of how to contend with the threat of a nuclear Iran, which urged the US to opt for "strengthening the credibility of the military alternative," remarking that "the Iranian leadership does not really feel threatened. This impairs the effectiveness of the diplomatic alternative."

Likewise I tend to concur with the policy prescription for Israeli decision-makers: "... if all options have failed, and the government of Israel has to choose between an Iranian bomb and the bombing of Iran, it should choose the option of bombing Iran..."

But when it comes to the Palestinian issue, things differ dramatically. Indeed, here the only "creative" suggestion is complete – and completely counterproductive – capitulation.

Readers will recall that last week I warned that comprehensive, coordinated and concerted efforts are being initiated to promote a nonsensical notion, perversely dubbed "constructive unilateralism" (hereinunder CU). In broad strokes, CU advocates declare a priori – and independently of any reciprocal measure from the Palestinians – that Israel should:

- Renounce any claims to sovereignty beyond a pre-determined line (roughly the present route of the separation barrier, i.e. virtually the entire area of Judea-Samaria);
- Remove all Jewish civil presence across this line either by financial inducements (by offering monetary compensation for evacuation), economic strangulation (by ceasing any development of Jewish communities in the area) or physical abandonment (by transferring control to the Palestinian Authority); and
- Leave the IDF deployed in areas evacuated, and in territory over which Israel concedes it has no claims to sovereignty.

Clearly, were these measures to be implemented, the political reality that would prevail in the evacuated territories would be largely similar to that which prevailed in pre-2000 South Lebanon, and we all remember how that ended – with the hasty retreat of the IDF and the empowerment of Hezbollah.

Thus, any suggestion to replicate those realities – only this time on a much a larger scale and closer to Israel's coastal megatropolis – is based on atrociously poor political science and grievous political amnesia. Or worse, a surreptitious and sinister hidden agenda. Read on...

I pointed out that the entity publicly promoting the CU-initiative is an

organization called Blue and White Future (B&WF), which describes itself as "a nonpartisan political movement... funded by private donors in Israel... and elsewhere."

There is, however, an extensive overlap between individuals involved in, the ideas promoted and the vehicles of publication employed by B&WF and INSS, that reveal an almost seamless symbiosis between the two entities, with the former tasked with public activism and the latter with providing the intellectual bona fides.

My diagnosis was dramatically validated this week, at the INSS conference, when the major elements of the CU-concept were given extensive exposure and emphatic endorsement. In a session titled "The Palestinian Issue: Towards a Reality of Two States," the INSS findings/recommendations were presented by Gilead Sher, co-founder/chairman of B&WF and a senior research fellow at INSS, who headed the institute's team that dealt with the study of the topic.

I wish I could find a way to say this more diplomatically, as I have no personal animosity for anyone involved in the compilation of the almost seven-page document produced by the team. Indeed, in some cases quite the opposite. But, sadly I cannot.

The INSS document does discredit to all those associated with its composition – certainly professionally, and perhaps ethically as well. It is difficult to know what is more disturbing – whether the authors really believed what they wrote (stupendously stupid) or whether they did not (surreptitiously sinister).

For those of you who might find this assessment excessively harsh, I urge you: Don't take my word for it. Read the document, available on the INSS site, for yourself.

Why any self-respecting analyst or institute would wish to have its name linked with such a flawed and flimsy position paper is a mystery, riddled as it is with self-contradictions and non sequiturs.

Thus for example, on page 2, the INSS team notes that "Fatah, the moderate Palestinian negotiating partner, is growing weaker domestically, at a time that the radicals in the Hamas leadership are growing stronger..."

They reiterate this on the next page: "The past year saw... the militant Gaza leadership [grow] stronger."

Yet somehow this brings them to conclude almost immediately – one sentence removed – that this "suggests the possibility of a pragmatic policy toward Israel..." As I said, don't take my word – read it yourself.

True, they do try to base this breathtaking optimism on the claim that newly re-elected Hamas boss Khaled Mashaal "is working toward a rapprochement with Qatar, moving away from Syria and Iran, and moving toward an internal reconciliation with Fatah."

This of course is a claim that brings new dimensions to the notion of "clutching at straws."

I guess the INSS experts were too busy writing their report to have seen the recent chilling Channel 2 report that strongly suggests that rather than reconciliation with Fatah moderating Hamas, it appears that Hamas is radicalizing Fatah.

But the INSS invoking the Hamas rapprochement with Qatar, moving away from Syria and Iran, as a ray of hope is more than somewhat puzzling.

Indeed, in the preceding paragraph they write, "Hamas is continuing its relationship with Iran, particularly on military issues and weapons smuggling... Qatar's economic support for the organization has increased."

Surely, this suggests that a more plausible conclusion would be that the enhanced links with Qatar are in fact allowing greater militarization of Hamas and sustaining its ties to Iran – at least on the military level, by facilitating its procurement of arms from it? After all, although the Qatari regime is undisputably less "kinetically inimical" to Israel than the Assad regime and theocratic rulers of Tehran, let's not forget whom we are dealing with.

After all, it was Qatar that broke off relations with Israel because the IDF was compelled to defend Israeli citizens against incessant rocket attacks; it was Qatar that launched a "fund to protect Jerusalem from Jews" (Haaretz's words, not mine – March 25.); it is Qatar that is supporting the anti-Assad rebels that are if anything likely to be just as inimical towards Israel; and that, according to The New York Times (October 14, 2012), is one of the major funders of arms for "hard-line Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster."

A compelling case could be made that the Qatar-Hamas rapprochement has not made Hamas less savage, just more sophisticated, not less inimical only more influential, not more amicable, merely more affluent. But that would not sit well with the feasibility of the CU paradigm.

The bulk of the INSS policy-related conclusions are so detached from reality that they could have been written by someone trapped in a time

warp, totally isolated from ongoing events and oblivious to the tectonic changes that rocked the region in the past three years. The attitude towards other regional players, slated to play a role in ensuring the success of the CU paradigm, particularly Egypt and Jordan, seems reminiscent of the euphoric Osloian period.

Although they pay lip service to the turmoil raging across the region, stating somewhat euphemistically, “The increasing strength of those who identify with political Islam in Arab countries is... worrisome,” the INSS experts opine that the “rapprochement between Egypt and Hamas has not led to a deterioration in Egypt’s attitude to Israel or to radicalization in Hamas.”

This of course may prompt the uninformed layman to ask, “How much more radicalized can Hams get before it is deemed radical,” and to reach the conclusion that the manifest deterioration in Egypt’s attitude towards Israel must be due to factors other than the rapprochement with the “un-radicalized” Islamist terror group.

Moreover, given the Muslim Brotherhood’s takeover of Egypt and the ascendant Islamist forces in Jordan, it is not easy to understand the rationale behind the INSS recommendation: “Including Egypt and Jordan in the process would help Israel demand guarantees for peace in the Palestinian Authority’s areas....” Or that “it might be wise to invite Turkey to participate...in a third party delegation, especially given the thaw in diplomatic relations and the positions Turkey has expressed in the past...”

Thaw? Really? Past opinions? Like Zionism being “a crime against humanity.” Like berating Syria for not retaliating against Israel? Who could ask for more from an impartial honest broker!

The INSS team recommends Israel adopt a position of complete compliance with Palestinian demands, counseling that Israel should “... take steps such as releasing Fatah prisoners, reducing the number of checkpoints and allowing freer movement, refraining from imposing economic punitive measures, expanding PA security activities in Area B.”

I leave the readers to assess the prudence of these prescriptions – particularly in view of the precedents, and to ponder the operational significance of this: “At the same time, Israel will work to encourage quiet in the Gaza Strip.” I wonder how. By tiptoeing so as not to disturb the Islamists? Of course one wonders how the new Finance Minister Yair Lapid, who has become a regular (and supportive) speaker at INSS conferences, would relate to some of its other prescriptions. Addressing the conference, Lapid warned that Israel’s economy could not stand the burden of the ultra-Orthodox social welfare payments (about 0.8 percent of the national budget).

It would therefore be most intriguing to learn how he would assess the INSS recommendation that “Israel should work to strengthen the infrastructure of the Palestinian state... providing extensive economic aid such as encouraging Palestinian projects in Area C....”

It would probably take a 15,000-word essay to deal adequately with all the defects in the 2,800-word INSS document. But neither time nor space – nor editor’s patience – permit. So let me conclude with two points.

The INSS team proposes perhaps the worst of all bargaining techniques in the Mideast bazaar in which Israel exists: Showing your hand at the very outset of the negotiation. Thus, although they prescribe that Israel should pursue negotiations, the concessions it is to make should not depend on the outcome of those negotiations.

They stipulate: “The ‘independent option’ as a political strategy is intended primarily to promote two states for two peoples if negotiations with the Palestinians fail,” advocating that once it “has exhausted the possibilities for negotiating a settlement... Israel will initiate independent measures [read ‘unilateral withdrawal from almost all Judea-Samaria’].”

So Israel should exhaust the possibility of a negotiated withdrawal, presumably in exchange for some quid pro quo – but if negotiations fail, it should withdraw anyway, immediately raising the question of what could possibly induce the other side to negotiate when they know that they will get all they want if they don’t?

All this leaves us to puzzle over what would prompt well-known figures and a renowned policy institute to devise such a perverse potpourri of failed elements, and to endeavor to peddle it as an innovative, creative policy initiative, rather than a transparent attempt to revamp old, disproven efforts, in a new and misleading semantic wrapping comprised of inapt epithets such as “constructive,” “proactive” and “independent.”

For clearly, even if implemented, it will have little chance of forging a durable peace. It will, however, spell the end of the settlements in Judea-Samaria – just as the disengagement did for Gaza. As such it should be considered not a constructive, pro-peace initiative but a destructive, anti-settlement one.

Perhaps that would also explain the affinity for Yair Lapid, who once fervently endorsed the disengagement as “our only chance for a normal life” but later admitted: It had nothing to do with... the desire to make

peace... [but] merely... that the settlers should be taught a lesson in humility....” (Jerusalem Post Apr 26)

Backs to The Wall By Nadav Shragai

On the one hand, we have the resounding struggle waged by the Women of the Wall for their right to pray, in their own way, at the Western Wall on the Temple Mount. On the other hand, we have police subjecting three young Jewish boys to a humiliating strip search to prevent the entry of Israeli flags into the Temple Mount compound about two weeks ago. These two events symbolize, more than anything else, the severe distortion and upheaval in Jewish awareness about the two holiest sites to the people of Israel -- the Temple Mount and the Western Wall.

Because the truth is that we really have lost ourselves. We have forgotten that the Western Wall, for all its parts, is merely a vestibule, an atrium to the Temple Mount. We have forgotten that the status enjoyed by the Western Wall is simply derivative of what stood above it, the real thing: The Temple. We have also forgotten that had there not been a Halachic ban for many years on climbing to the Mount, which is still claimed by many, the Western Wall would not be the main attraction, but rather the Mount itself.

The fact that today the vast majority of Jews pray at the Western Wall and not on the Temple Mount is a result of circumstances and not a choice. There are good, and not so good, Halachic reasons for this, and there are also diplomatic reasons, and common interests that tie the two types of reasons together. But the main culprits behind the absence of Jews from the Temple Mount are the Jews themselves. As sad as it is, the majority of the public is detached and disconnected from the Mount, feels no need to visit it, and as they say: out of sight, out of mind. The people of Israel have grown accustomed to the substitute, the Western Wall.

It is true that it isn’t always easy to visit the Temple Mount. The Muslim Waqf generally does everything in its power to perpetuate its sole ownership over the territory -- starting with disrespecting Jewish artifacts and through misrepresenting and rewriting Jewish history. Recently, it has even come to physically assaulting Jews who visit the Mount. It is also true that the police are also making the lives of the handful of Jews who are still faithful to the Mount miserable, and severely limiting the visitation possibilities. It is truly no great pleasure to walk around the Temple Mount with a Jewish police officer to your right and a Waqf official to your left, while every word you say, even while talking on your mobile phone, is monitored to make sure you don’t mumble a forbidden prayer.

But still, we are the main offenders behind the Western Wall having become the center of our attention and the Temple Mount having all but disappeared from our collective awareness. The ban on Jewish prayer on Temple Mount will not be overturned any time soon, apparently. The police and the Israel Security Agency are currently dictating the government’s position on the matter. There is no point in banging our heads against the wall and clashing over this issue again and again.

The key to changing this phenomenon lies in motivating large portions of the public to visit, tour and study the Temple Mount. That way, the Temple Mount could become a popular site like the nearby City of David. The police won’t like it -- after all, the police prefer as few Jews there as possible. That way things are quiet and calm. But the status quo that then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan installed in 1967 -- leaving the Temple Mount under the sole jurisdiction of the Waqf -- which the police adheres to with such zeal, still permits Jews to visit the Mount. If people begin to show interest in visiting the Temple Mount, and instead of dozens of Jews per day and hundreds per month, perhaps hundreds will begin visiting each day and thousands each month, I dare say that the High Court of Justice will step in, despite the police’s resistance, and help the Jewish public take advantage of that right.

In other words, the wider and more diverse the circle of Jews who show interest in the Temple Mount, beyond the traditional Temple Mount aficionados, the better the chances that the reality will change -- both practically and consciously -- in the Mount and surrounding it.

The Temple Mount is a real roots project, at least as important as the City of David that lies to its west, which is frequented by hundreds of thousands annually.

The possibilities are many: Jews could hold awareness tours, or study tours, with maps and history books, accompanied by archeologists and historians, or rabbis, or military commanders or educators and professors. There could be tours aimed at learning our roots, acquainting Jews with the site and reminding us of what is important and what is secondary; what the significance of the Western Wall is, versus the significance of the Temple Mount; showing us where the true genealogy of the Jewish people lies in Jerusalem. (Israel Hayom Apr 29)