



Jerusalem 6:49  
Toronto 8:18

## 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*

The claim that "annexation" would destroy the possibility of a Palestinian state is untrue. Every serious Middle East peace plan has accepted the eventual incorporation into Israel of the three major settlement blocs to safeguard its security.

The undeniable fact is that it's the Palestinians who have destroyed the possibility of a Palestinian state. Offered it repeatedly from the 1930s onwards, they have refused it every time while Israel always accepted it.

How long will it take before the two-staters begin to suspect that nine decades of the Palestinian Arabs rejecting the two-state solution might possibly mean that the Jews aren't the obstacle?

How long will it take before the two-staters realize that if it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and swims like a duck, it actually is a rejectionist, murderous, exterminationist duck?

Opposition to the "annexation" is driven by the belief that Israel illegally occupies these territories. U.K. Foreign Office Minister James Cleverly said the United Kingdom was "deeply concerned" about the proposal which he claimed was "contradictory to international law."

But this is untrue. As several legal experts have pointed out over the years, the Jews are the only people to have a legal and moral right to this land. In 1922, the international community gave them the never-abrogated right to settle what is now Israel, the disputed territories and the Gaza Strip.

Restoring Israeli sovereignty to parts of Judea and Samaria will therefore actually correct a historic act of illegality. It will apply the rule of international law for the first time since the 1930s, when Britain reneged on its own treaty obligation to settle the Jews throughout the land then known as Palestine. And it will help protect Israel against its existential enemies.

So those urging communal organizations to speak against the move are in fact telling them to endorse a continued act of illegality based on a lie—on the basis that if the law is now finally enforced, this will prevent those aiming to exterminate Israel from continuing to dictate the terms that will enable them to do so.

But if these communal organizations remain silent, they will be doing nothing to combat the big lie that Israel is a rogue state that illegally steals another people's land. Not only does this lie drive hatred of Israel in the West, it also foments attacks on Diaspora Jews who are held responsible for Israel's actions.

So don't Jewish organizations have a duty to speak up for law, justice and the truths of history to combat this damage to the Jewish people? Is this really more dangerous than a consensus that does nothing to challenge a lethal big lie?

Would the cause of Israel and the Jewish people really be better served if the ZOA stopped rocking the boat by consistently speaking up, as it does, in support of truth, history and Jewish values? Or would the cause of Israel and the Jewish people actually be better served if other Jewish organizations followed its example?

Jewish history tells us that we do most damage to ourselves when we are divided. But it also tells us we have an absolute duty to stand up for truth and justice, and defeat our enemies. In the Diaspora, that last bit seems to have been all but forgotten. (JNS May 14)

## Commentary...

### A Muffled Consensus Serves not Israel but her Enemies

By Melanie Phillips

Should Jewish communal organizations aim to achieve consensus above all or bear witness to the truth?

Both in the Diaspora and in Israel, Jews are divided over politics, religion and worldview. These arguments, moreover, generally carry an emotionally fraught sub-text; that the opposing side threatens to undermine Jewish security and the existence of the Jewish people.

This makes it even more difficult for Jewish organizations whose aim is to protect and defend the Jewish people from ever saying anything about contentious issues of the day.

In the United States, J Street has called on AIPAC publicly to oppose Israel's proposed "annexation," the extension of Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, and parts of Judea and Samaria.

AIPAC has sidestepped the issue, observing merely that it would be a "mistake" to allow such a move, should it occur, to affect U.S.-Israel ties.

In Britain, some 500 young Jews have called upon the community's main leadership body, the Board of Deputies, to speak out against "annexation," which they claim would make a "two-state solution" impossible to achieve.

Their call has been echoed in a letter signed by 33 board members, ranging politically from a Conservative MP to the left-wing group Yachad, who claim that "annexation" would cause large numbers in the community to "disengage" from Israel. As their leaders "fail the test of leadership" by staying silent on this issue, they say, "the outcome would be hugely detrimental to communal life."

The board, however, has received much support for refusing to take a position one way or the other. More than 190 members have called on it to "stay silent on any change to Israel's borders."

The reason is obvious. The matter is deeply controversial. Those claiming that the board will prove its irrelevance if it doesn't speak out are making a partisan point because only one view is to be permitted. If the board were to say it supported "annexation," those same people would be the first to protest that its position was too divisive to be expressed.

The Jewish community is institutionally averse to rocking the boat, and the board is institutionally programmed to represent a claimed consensus. As a result, when it comes to contentious issues, it generally settles on the position that will attract the least flak.

In general, the only people who challenge the policy of saying nothing are the political left. So the board supports the "two-state solution" because it assumes, correctly, that there is no head of steam in the community to oppose this.

That's partly because there is no British equivalent to the Zionist Organization of America, whose support for Israel is generally far more robust, uncompromising and outspoken than the circumspect positions taken by America's other mainstream communal bodies.

Indeed, while the Conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations and the American Jewish Committee have joined AIPAC in a studied silence over "annexation," only the ZOA has supported the restoration of Jewish sovereignty over the lands in question and roundly criticized the plan's opponents.

With the U.S. Jewish community bitterly polarized over policies pursued by both U.S. President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, AIPAC makes a fetish of bipartisanship. Accordingly, the claim being bandied about by some Democrat senators that "annexation" would destroy bipartisan support for Israel exacerbates an already neuralgic anxiety.

But it is fanciful to assume that if "annexation" doesn't happen, then bipartisan support for Israel will be saved. Although the Democrats remain far more broadly supportive of Israel than any British political party, their steady slide to the left means that the party's hostility towards Israel will increase whatever Israel does or doesn't do.

Moreover, public silence has a virulent downside. It allows lies about Israel to remain unchallenged and continue to poison the atmosphere not just for Israel, but for Jews everywhere.

### The Security Border Israelis Want By Efraim Inbar

In his talks during his visit to Israel, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will certainly be discussing the application of Israeli sovereignty to parts of Judea and Samaria as part of the Trump peace plan. It should be stressed that the application of Israeli law to the Jordan Valley is not some right-wing whim, but rather the implementation of a strategic plan (the Allon plan) created by the Labor Party. The late Yitzhak Rabin believed in the plan, and the Jordan Valley settlements were established by the Labor movement. Most of the Israeli public (over 70 percent) see the valley as Israel's only viable security border to the east.

Control over the few crossings in the Jordan Valley region can prevent infiltration into Israel. The valley is also close to the heart of the country, the Jerusalem-Gedera-Haifa triangle, which is home to 70 percent of Israel's residents and 80 percent of the nation's economic infrastructure. As the crow flies, the Jordan River is only 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) from Jerusalem. The demographic question completes the strategic advantage; the few Arabs who live in the Jordan Valley do not comprise a demographic burden to the

Jewish state.

The argument that since Israel made peace with Jordan it does not need the Jordan Valley ignores the huge potential for political upheaval in the Middle East. Instability in the Hashemite Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, and the return of Syria to the radical camp as it recovers from its civil war, could revive the eastern front. The American withdrawal from the Middle East allows the Islamists greater maneuverability against western allies.

Those who support handing the Jordan Valley over to the Palestinians are dismissive of its security importance and are putting their trust in Israel's technological capability to locate and neutralize threats from afar, in a way that would supposedly make control of the valley irrelevant. But this ignores the history of military technology, which shows movement back and forth between the superiority of offensive and defensive capabilities. If Israel wants to maintain a defensible border in the valley, it needs to retain control over the road that leads from the coast to the Jordan Valley and goes through the united Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim.

This is the only east-west highway that has a Jewish majority to both sides and on which it is safe to move forces from the coast to the valley in an emergency. Ma'aleh Adumim, which was established by the first Rabin government, is an important stop on that axis. So it is important to connect it to Jerusalem by applying sovereignty to the E-1 area (five kilometers, or three miles, of desert) and build there. Jerusalem also holds strategic value.

Most Arab nations will object, but they accepted the relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. The possibility that the United States will pull out of the Middle East leaves Israel as almost the only obstacle to Iran's aspirations to regional hegemony.

We can also expect the Palestinians to object. The ongoing negotiations that lead nowhere and the continued violence have led to almost total agreement in Israel that the Palestinians aren't ready for any historic compromise with the Jewish state. Maybe the application of Israeli law to the Jordan Valley will make it clear to them that time is running out.

In any case, a unity government applying Israeli law to the valley will signal broad Israeli agreement and determination to keep that region part of the state. Now, as part of the Trump plan, the Americans are willing to back up this step, so it would be a mistake to call it "unilateral." This is an opportunity we must take. (Israel Hayom May 14)

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## **Top 10 Reasons Israel has (So Far) Survived Coronavirus**

By Alex Traiman

Why Israel fared better than most countries during the global Israelis are now once again taking to the streets in large numbers. Automotive traffic has resumed full force, schools are opening, stores and gyms are reopened, and even indoor markets and malls are now opening for business. Some restrictions limiting the number of individuals within closed spaces are in place, and face masks are required by law.

That said, many Israelis are quickly ditching the masks, or wearing them around their chins or below their exposed noses, as the number of new coronavirus infections continues to decline. Prime Minister Netanyahu has announced that all coronavirus restrictions are likely to be removed by the middle of June, provided the numbers of new cases remains low.

Death tolls in Israel have been among the lowest in the world per capita and are comparatively lower than other First World nations with similar numbers of reported cases. Since the virus first hit Israel in March, 254 Israelis have died. Most of those who succumbed to the virus lived in nursing homes. Others were elderly and had pre-existing health conditions. The number of previously healthy individuals who died from corona measures at most a few dozen.

Each and every loss of life causes tremendous pain to the entire nation. Yet somewhat shockingly, a recent health ministry report revealed that 12 percent fewer Israelis died during March 2020 than March 2019. The two months of coronavirus outbreak in Israel have literally been the safest two months to live in Israel in the last several years.

These numbers represent a dramatic contrast to many of the communities around the world where Jews live in large numbers, including in Paris, London, New York, New Jersey, Chicago and Miami.

Below is a countdown presenting some reasons why Israel may have fared better than other countries during the outbreak (so far), and why Israelis are likely to continue to get back to normal over the coming weeks, while other countries deal with the virus's harsh

aftermath.

### **10. Israel knows how to face existential danger**

Israel is a nation that is often in crisis. Israelis are not naive about the level of safety or danger they may be in. And Israelis remain instinctively ready to mobilize when a crisis breaks out, to fight an enemy and secure the homefront. In addition to securing the nation against conventional weapons attacks, Israeli security forces and private companies have pivoted in recent years to fight off cyberattacks. A virus simply represents a new type of danger and a new playing field.

### **9. Israel has strong national leadership**

Israel is a small country with centralized national government. From the moment coronavirus broke out, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu utilized his longstanding relationships with world leaders, conducting regular video calls with his counterparts to gain insight into the virus, who was most at risk and what steps needed to be taken.

Early on in the crisis, Netanyahu's opponents were squealing about the hospital system's lack of preparedness for a pandemic, claiming that a commission of inquiry would be launched as numbers of sick and dead would pile up.

Several weeks into the pandemic, Netanyahu cited a poll that ranked Israel the safest country in the world during the outbreak. While several media outlets ran hit pieces debunking the poll and questioning whether Netanyahu was connected to the poll's publishers, the raw numbers have clearly indicated that the Jewish state has indeed been among the safest countries in the world.

Israelis who support Israel's embattled prime minister and even many who oppose him agree that Netanyahu has handled the pandemic admirably well, and are by and large appreciative that an experienced world leader was at the helm as opposed to a rookie parliamentarian.

### **8. Israel has secure borders**

Israel unlike many other developed nations has very few ports of entry. Borders with Syria and Lebanon are practically permanently closed. Few lightly traveled crossings exist along our longest borders with Jordan and Egypt. Most anyone entering the country enters via Ben-Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv or Ramon International Airport near Eilat. Early on in the crisis, flights were severely restricted, preventing coronavirus carriers from entering the country.

### **7. Israel has a top-flight medical system**

In times of tragedy, Israel is known for its ability to quickly setup field hospitals, as it has in Haiti, Nepal, Syria and elsewhere. In Israel, coronavirus wards were quickly set up, including the immediate opening of a new emergency ward in the basement of Sheba Medical Center.

In coordination with Israel's Health Ministry, the Defense Ministry quickly converted suddenly empty hotels into quarantine centers for infected patients with light symptoms, so that hospitals would not be overloaded. These quarantine centers also served to house the few numbers of arriving passengers entering the country from abroad, during a mandatory 14-day quarantine period.

### **6. Israel's military is agile**

Israel raced, through the procurement abilities of the Israel Defense Forces and the Mossad secret service, to quickly import test kits, ventilators, Hazmat suits, face masks, gloves, Chloroquine and other supplies deemed necessary to fight the pandemic.

Israel's robust military industries quickly developed manufacturing capacities to produce critical infrastructure, including ventilators and oxygen tanks locally, often with vital and efficient upgrades to existing technologies.

### **5. Israelis know how to hunker down**

Israelis have been in emergency situations before. The homefront diligently took quarantine orders seriously. Rather than needing to run into bomb shelters, put on gas masks and seal rooms against potential chemical-weapons attacks, as has been necessitated in the past, the requirements placed on Israelis during coronavirus were light by comparison and easy to adhere to.

### **4. Israeli industries know how to adapt**

As most high-tech workers are graduates of the IDF, the same agility present in the military carries over into the private sector. They reacted quickly and efficiently, maneuvering military skills and medical innovation to fight the new battle. More than just looking to earn money, Israelis continuously demonstrate a willingness to develop solutions for whatever are the world's most pressing problems.

Once global markets reopen, Israeli industries will be ready to make the quick pivots necessary to provide the market with new

products and solutions, and to remain profitable.

### 3. Israelis know how to clean up the mess

Israel is a country that since its modern founding has been completely traumatized by the threat of war and ongoing terrorism. When terror strikes, Israeli emergency services quickly treat the wounded, then immediately clean up the scene. It is simply amazing how quickly Israelis get back to business even after horrific terror attacks. For Israelis, coronavirus is yet another type of attack. Once the attack is concluded, Israelis will do what it takes to clean up the mess and get back to work.

### 2. Israelis don't like to be taken advantage of

The same way Israelis are willing to hunker down and mobilize to protect themselves and others in times of danger, Israelis are not willing to hunker down or mobilize when they do not believe they are in danger. As Israelis see the numbers of coronavirus cases decline and their risk of infection continually reduced, they will be more willing to get back to normal and less willing to engage in potentially unnecessary steps like mass testing, staying out of the workplace and even to some degree wearing face masks.

If Israelis feel that they are being taken advantage of, they are notoriously less willing to adhere to the rules. While this behavior pattern often presents itself as a disadvantage—particularly to those in the West, who tend to exhibit more outward discipline and courtesy for others—the Israeli pattern often has its benefits as well.

Should it become clear that the numbers of infections again start to increase, Israelis would willingly restart employing stricter measures.

#### 1. The “miracle” factor

While Israelis are known for doing their part in times of danger, they are also known for their strong adherence to tradition and faith. In the fundamental Jewish expression of faith, Jews say: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”

Ultimately, it may be impossible to know why some nations or cities fare better against coronavirus than others that seemingly took similar decisions. In its short history, the State of Israel has managed to not only survive but even thrive despite existential threats. And while Israel has not been immune from many extremely painful losses, the Jewish State has generally had the good fortune to emerge victorious, often beyond rationale, when the stakes are highest. (JNS May 12)

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## Why the Israeli Right Need not Fear Trump's Peace Plan

By Ruthie Blum

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's upcoming visit to Jerusalem this week—to “meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Speaker of the Knesset Benny Gantz ... to discuss [American] and Israeli efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic [and] regional security issues related to Iran's malign influence”—is encouraging.

Though nobody is buying State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortogus's above description of the purpose of the trip, which is assumed to be aimed at ironing out details of Israel's intention to begin extending sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and parts of Judea and Samaria, few cast aspersions on the next part of her May 8 press release.

“The U.S. commitment to Israel has never been stronger than under President Trump's leadership,” it reads. “The United States and Israel will face threats to the security and prosperity of our peoples together. In challenging times, we stand by our friends, and our friends stand by us.”

Nevertheless, Israeli right-wingers, such as members of Naftali Bennett's Yamina Party, are wary. This is not because they doubt the sincerity of the current administration in Washington. On the contrary, they acknowledge that it has made good on U.S. President Donald Trump's many pre- and post-election promises to the Jewish state.

These include moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; withdrawing from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal; recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights; halting funding to UNRWA, demanding that the Palestinian Authority cease its pay-for-slay policy; declaring that Israeli settlements are not illegal; and never calling Israel to task for defending itself through strikes on targets in Gaza and Syria.

What Bennett and the bulk of his supporters fear is the part of Trump's “Peace to Prosperity” plan that provides for the establishment of a Palestinian state. This trepidation seemed to increase last week, following an interview that U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman gave to the Israel Hayom newspaper.

In answer to the question of whether the White House would greenlight the immediate application of Israeli sovereignty over parts

of Judea and Samaria, Friedman was vague about a timetable. He also set certain conditions for the move.

“[Right now] we have a conceptual map—it's conceptual,” he said. “It's impossible to declare sovereignty from something that was so lacking in details ... When the mapping is done, and when the government of Israel agrees [to] freeze the part of construction in Area C [of Judea and Samaria] that's not set for sovereignty—make it available for four years—and when the prime minister agrees [to] negotiate with the Palestinians on the basis of the Trump peace plan, which he's already agreed to do, ... we will recognize ... sovereignty over the area that the plan contemplates as part of Israel.”

Any anxiety aroused by the above should have been alleviated, if not erased, by the rest of Friedman's remarks, particularly those indicating his skepticism about Palestinian statehood on the one hand, and his belief in the Jewish nation on the other. His basic two points were that the Palestinians only will have a state when they “become Canadians,” and that requesting that Jews relinquish places like Hebron, Shiloh, Beit El and Ariel is as unreasonable as “asking the U.S. to give up the Statue of Liberty.”

This, too, was the gist of Trump's groundbreaking speech in January, when he unveiled his “deal of the century.”

In his address, the president warned that the Palestinians would have to take several steps before receiving American aid with which to build a flourishing economy in a demilitarized state. He explained that they would need to begin “adopting basic laws protecting human rights [and] against financial and political corruption; stopping the malign activities of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other enemies of peace; ending the incitement of hatred against Israel; and permanently halting the financial compensation to terrorists.”

The likelihood of any of that happening within the next four years is as great as the possibility of the Palestinians morphing into Canadians.

The past month alone is illustrative.

While accepting medical training and supplies from the Jewish state throughout the coronavirus crisis, powers-that-be in Ramallah continued to encourage the slaughter of innocent Israelis. As Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) recently reported, “The P.A.'s message to carry out suicide bombings—even specifying which Israeli cities to target: Haifa and Atlit—was repeated at least four times in the last few weeks on an official P.A. TV station.”

The call to violence came in the form of a musical number, first performed at a Palestinian cultural festival in 2017, with the following lyrics: “Strap on the explosive belt/ Detonate the first in Haifa and the second in Atlit/ Strap on the belt, O daughter of my land/ and detonate it in front of the enemies/ How sweet is the taste of Martyrdom/ I have found none like it.”

Meanwhile, Arab affairs expert Ehud Ya'ari told Israel's Channel 12 News on Monday evening that P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas has spent the past few days in heated meetings with the PLO leadership to formulate an apt threat to Jerusalem and Washington in relation to any possible Israeli annexation moves.

According to Ya'ari, Abbas is going to announce on Thursday—after the swearing-in of the new Israeli government and during Pompeo's visit—that the P.A. is now exempt from all commitments it has made since the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords. This includes reneging on the “recognition of the state of Israel's right to exist in peace and security” spelled out in a letter sent by his predecessor, arch-terrorist Yasser Arafat, to then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. As though the terrorist entity has fulfilled any of its obligations, particularly those requiring that Palestinians stop spilling Israeli blood.

Ya'ari said that Abbas is aiming to enlist the sympathy of the Arab world, the European Union and the U.S. Democratic Party, especially its likely presidential candidate, Joe Biden.

In that case, he need not waste his breath. They're already on his side, as are Israeli leftists. Not exactly a hot news flash.

No, the novelty lies in Trump's approach to the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the opposite of the failed “land for peace” paradigm.

The Israeli right must not squander the moment by adhering to a purist philosophy. Instead, it should back the plan, support the extension of sovereignty and let the Palestinians fail, as they always do.

Even a changing of the guard in D.C., which one hopes will not ensue in November, cannot alter that fact.

Pompeo certainly would agree. (JNS May 12)

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### **Daniel Pipes's 'Don't Annex' Advice** By Julio Messer

Daniel Pipes, the president of the Middle East Forum, has for decades been considered a strong, consistent and cogent advocate of the right-of-center policies of several Israeli governments. No wonder a recent op-ed published in *The New York Times*, in which he claimed that “annexing the West Bank would hurt Israel,” caused great dismay among his admirers and supporters of the extension of Israeli law to Judea and Samaria, especially in the aftermath of the partial greenlight provided by the Trump administration’s “Peace to Prosperity” Middle East peace plan.

Pipes’s six main reasons for his “strong opposition to Israel annexing any of the West Bank” have been convincingly refuted by the leadership of the Zionist Organization of America, the international spokesman of the Jewish community of Hebron and the editor in chief of the *Jewish News Syndicate*. Up until now, it had been most unusual for Pipes’s arguments to be so easily brushed aside.

What is more disappointing, however, is where he chose to express his new and surprising position. Had he published his article in an Israeli newspaper, it would have been perceived as an unselfish cautionary advice from a friend. The fact that he opted for the patently anti-Israel pages of *The New York Times*, even taking into account his “never-Trumper” bias, raises the possibility that his real intention may have been to attempt to curry favor with the left-of-center intelligentsia. Predictably, he received a favorable commentary from the editorial-page editor of *The New York Times*.

Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and soon-to-be appointed Defense Minister (and, in 18 months, prime minister) Benny Gantz have publicly supported U.S. President Donald Trump’s peace plan, which includes, in principle, the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian State in about 70 percent of Judea and Samaria, as well as the extension of Israeli sovereignty to the remaining 30 percent. Having pressured Trump administration officials for the concessions outlined in the “deal of the century” and having promised his supporters (who constituted 55 percent of the Jewish voters in the most recent election) that he would extend the sovereignty, it is practically inconceivable that Netanyahu would now fail to do so—regardless of the threats of retaliatory measures made by the European Union, the Palestinian Authority and others.

The most pertinent question, therefore, is whether Netanyahu will implement Israeli law at once in all parts of the disputed territories (the Jordan Valley, the so-called “settlement blocs” and the Jewish communities outside the blocs), to only one of them, or to each one in sequence, should the Palestinians repeatedly refuse to come to the negotiating table. After all, Trump’s plan was designed to convey to the Palestinians that the train is leaving the station: Either negotiate seriously, or time will bring diminishing returns—a 180-degree shift from the previous paradigm that time was on their side.

A discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches could be the subject of another article, which, if meant as sincere advice by a right-of-center supporter of Israel, ought to be translated into Hebrew and published in an Israeli newspaper—something that Pipes could have done but, regrettably, chose not to. (JNS May 12)

*The writer is a former president of American Friends of Likud.*

### **Does Media Bias Against Israel Still Matter?** By Jonathan S. Tobin

For many years, supporters of Israel have feared the impact of media bias. Ever since the first Lebanon War in 1982—the historical turning point when the media’s embrace of a false narrative in which the Palestinians became “David” and Israel became “Goliath” became the norm—there has been an expectation that the avalanche of unfair coverage would someday lead to most Americans demanding the end of the U.S. alliance with the Jewish state.

But after the last 38 years in which the bias of most leading print and broadcast outlets against Israel has become entrenched, that nightmare has not come to pass.

Polls consistently show that American support for Israel has not diminished, and instead has actually grown stronger in the past few decades. Though Republicans are far more likely to back Israel than Democrats, the overall figures demonstrate that a biased national media has seemingly had no impact on the views of most Americans.

If that is so, why then should anyone care about media bias?

This came into focus again this week due to two outrageous examples from *The New York Times*. In a piece that first appeared online on May 7, a story about the way the Israeli defense establishment has devoted its resources to fighting the coronavirus pandemic began with the following: “The Israeli Defense Ministry’s research-and-development arm is best known for pioneering cutting-

edge ways to kill people and blow things up, with stealth tanks and sniper drones among its more lethal recent projects. But its latest mission is lifesaving.”

As Ron Dermer, Israel’s ambassador to the United States, tweeted back: “The @nytimes, which buried the Holocaust, is best known for pioneering ways to libel and demonizing the Jewish state. Now it is doing the same.”

The diplomat wasn’t the only person complaining. David Harris, CEO of the liberal-leaning American Jewish Committee, called the *Times*’s phrasing “vile.” As numerous others responded, the goal of the Israel Defense Forces has actually always been to save lives by protecting Israeli citizens from terrorists and foes that sought to extinguish the sole Jewish state on the planet.

Nor was this an isolated example. Two days later, the paper published an article about the refusal of the Palestinian Authority to cease its “pay for slay” policies in which it provides terrorists who assault, wound or kill Israelis with salaries and pensions for their families. The story focused on an attempt to stop Palestinian banks in the West Bank from processing the payments.

The headline for the *Times*’s story though, put it this way: “Israel Cracks Down on Banks Over Payments to Palestinian Inmates.” A subhead further describes the issue as one about “payments the Palestinian Authority distributes to the families of Palestinians who have spent time in Israeli jails.”

Phrased that way, it makes the effort sound like a way to punish poor souls who have had the bad luck to fall under the power of the Israeli military and whose families are being prevented from getting the help they need from a benevolent Palestinian Authority. The text of the article, which vastly overestimated the number of Palestinians who have been imprisoned by Israel over the last half-century, adopted the frame of reference of those who regard the terrorists as freedom fighters and “martyrs,” and depicted those benefiting from “pay to slay” as victims of injustice. Nor did it detail the sliding scale of compensation offered by the P.A. in which the murderers of Jews get more money than those who merely wound or unsuccessfully attack their victims.

If media bias like this doesn’t impact American public opinion about Israel, should anyone bother protesting it?

In the first place, it is vital that a newspaper like the *Times*, which calls itself the nation’s “paper of record” and which does devote more resources to reporting foreign news than any other outlet, not get away with biased coverage.

Straight news reporting without a heaping serving of bias is a thing of the past at the *Times*. Their animus against the Trump administration has, whether or not you agree with them about the president, led the paper and other mainstream outlets to discard even the pretense of objective reporting with editorializing in headlines and in the text of articles becoming so routine as to be hardly worth protesting anymore.

Still, that doesn’t absolve those of us who still care about ethics in journalism from the duty to point out such egregious practices.

It’s true that most Americans couldn’t care less what the *Times*, CNN or other legacy media outfits say about any topic. But when it comes to one particular group, what the media, and in particular, *The New York Times*, says about Israel, matters a great deal.

While support for Israel among Americans in general has risen in the past decades, it has declined among Jews with a growing split between their views and those of Israelis. There are a number of reasons for this, including assimilation and the resultant shifting demography. Some of it also has to do with politics, as many in a group that overwhelmingly votes Democratic has followed the rest of their party on this issue.

But there’s more at play here than just that. We know that praise for Israel’s underdog victories in its struggles for survival and positive events like the 1976 Entebbe rescue made Jews everywhere feel better about themselves and more connected to Israel.

The opposite is also true.

While some Jews are outraged by biased coverage that unfairly depicts Israel as a villain, others internalize the calumnies and distance themselves from the Jewish state. An average consumer of news may not be influenced by the *Times*. But a not insignificant portion of American Jewry still regards the newspaper with the sort of veneration that observant Jews have for religious texts. The *Times* has been assaulting the Jewish community with the prejudices of its publishers, editors and reporters since the days when, as Dermer rightly notes, it “buried” the story of the Holocaust.

Media bias may not have turned Americans against Israel, but it has been doing a bang up job of turning Jews against each other for decades. (JNS May 11)