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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*

### Commentary...

#### **We Have Pride - Trump Shouldn't Visit Wall Alone** By Aaron Lerner

We also have pride.

An American official preparing President Trump's visit to Israel broke protocol when he explained that the reason our Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu can't accompany President Trump when he visits the Western Wall is that it is located in the "West Bank."

I'll be clear about this: If the American official had simply said "it's a private visit to the Western Wall - no Israeli officials to be involved" we might have looked the other way.

But once this was said there is no turning back.

No alternative explanation for Mr. Netanyahu's absence from the photo op will matter.

The White House has only added salt to the wound.

The visit sans Israelis to the Western Wall is being billed as being in the context of visiting holy places of the three monotheistic religions.

So is Mr. Trump visiting the Western Wall or the Buraq Wall?

According to the Palestinians the Jewish presence at their Buraq Wall offends their pride.

There is a long history to this.

During the time of the British Mandate, there were strict limitations on Jewish activities adjacent to the Western Wall so as not to offend the Arabs. We were even barred from blowing a shofar.

Mr. Trump has a simple explanation for the Arabs: "An American official who is a carryover from the Obama administration screwed up big time. Now I am left with damage control. And if the choice is between profoundly offending and embarrassing our ally Israel on my first visit or annoying the Arabs for including Netanyahu in a visit to a location that will most definitely be accessible to Israelis under any conceivable deal - I visit with Netanyahu.

If you want to be angry be annoyed that an American who clearly embraces your positions was responsible for this screw up." (IMRA May 17)

#### **The Next Failed Peace Talks** By Ruthie Blum

As part of US President Donald Trump's trip to Israel and the Palestinian Authority on May 22-23, he will meet with PA President Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem. It will be the second time this month that the two leaders will have sat down to discuss the impasse in the peace process; the first took place at the White House just over a week ago.

During their chat in Washington, Abbas fed Trump his usual lies. Among these was the claim that Palestinian children are raised to be tolerant and peace-loving. That the US president did not burst out laughing at this absurdity is more a function of his being new on the job than having good manners. It is also probably due to his belief that he will be able to apply the "art of the deal" to the Israeli-Palestinian context and broker a successful agreement.

Trump will soon learn, however, that his methods will not work. Even a business deal cannot be forged when the true aim of one side is failure. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of Palestinian statehood that has been Abbas' meal ticket internationally — and the only thing that has kept him the least bit relevant at home. Well, that and cultivating, honoring and paying the salaries of terrorists.

In fact, as Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) revealed on Wednesday, while Abbas was sitting in the Oval Office, his Fatah faction was openly lauding suicide bombers and other murderers of Jews.

On its official Facebook page on May 3, Abbas's faction Fatah sent "blessings" to 12 of the "heroic prisoners" currently staging an open-ended hunger strike in a number of Israeli prisons. According to PMW, these included Abbas Al-Sayid, mastermind of the infamous suicide bombing at a Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya, and Marwan Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences for orchestrating several deadly attacks. Incidentally, being incarcerated did not prevent Barghouti from being re-

elected to the PA parliament from jail. On the contrary, it made him even more popular.

There is nothing novel about the glorification of terrorists in the PA or about the hypocrisy of killers like Barghouti. Nor is it new for an American administration to fantasize about finding the magic formula for

striking peace between Israel and the Palestinians. But it is interesting that Abbas reportedly requested of Trump that the starting point of any new talks be based on the parameters of his negotiations with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2008. He also was said to have presented the US president with maps and other documents related to Olmert's offer, which involved a nearly complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and east Jerusalem. It was an offer — as Abbas acknowledged for the first time in an interview with Israel's Channel 10 in 2015 — which he then flatly refused.

During the interview, which appeared in a three-part series about the peace talks between PLO chief Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Ehud Barak in 2000 and those between Abbas and Olmert eight years later, Abbas made the preposterous statement that one of the reasons he rejected the deal was because he didn't understand Olmert's map. Apparently, he has been boning up on his cartography ahead of the next round of bad-faith negotiations that will be marked by and culminate in Palestinian violence.

The only question now is how Trump will respond to the inevitable failure of such negotiations, if they take place at all. Will he follow in the footsteps of his shameful predecessor and hold Israel responsible, or will he realize he's been duped? Let us hope it is the latter. (Algemeiner May 12)

#### **Change the Narrative, Mr. President** By Melanie Phillips

Recent stories about President Trump's initiatives in the Middle East have been causing consternation among Israel supporters.

First the World Jewish Congress president, Ron Lauder, reportedly told a group of Israeli politicians that the president was confident he could persuade the Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas to make concessions that would renew the peace process.

The only concession that matters, though, is to abandon the Palestinian goal of destroying Israel. That one wouldn't currently seem to be on the cards.

The next day, Prime Minister Netanyahu was reported to be furious with Lauder for having briefed Abbas before he met President Trump.

Then came a report that the White House had told Netanyahu that Trump had decided not to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem after all. Israel promptly denied this report, saying no such communication from the Trump administration about the embassy move had been received.

These reports may all be fake news. They have deepened nevertheless the mood of nervousness and even despair among Israel supporters after Trump invited Abbas to the White House for what seemed to be a warm and encouraging meeting.

The Palestinians say they were pleasantly surprised. The London-based Arab newspaper Al-Hayat reported senior Palestinian officials saying Trump might use his upcoming visit to Israel to announce the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel supporters fear all this suggests Trump is going down the same peace-process rabbit hole as previous administrations.

Such reports, however, should be taken with a large dose of salt. The first relied on what Israelis said Lauder said, which he may or may not have done; Trump may or may not have thought Abbas would make concessions; Netanyahu may or may not have been furious; Trump may or may not be planning a resumed peace process. It's all spin and hype.

What we do know is this. Trump wants to broker a deal between Israel and the Palestinians, acting as a "mediator, an arbitrator or a facilitator." He has said so repeatedly.

Ahead of his visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority later this month, Trump will stop in Saudi Arabia. He wants to show that he respects the Muslim world in order to seek Saudi help in promoting a regional approach to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he wants Arab leaders to help pressure Abbas to make concessions.

Well, over the years Palestinian "concessions" have all popped like soap bubbles as soon as they are floated. I am told, however, by those who

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know the president that he will never, ever betray Israel.

And the fact is that he has set the Palestinians a high bar to jump. They must stop paying terrorists' families; they must stop teaching their children to hate Jews. And there may be other requirements he will make.

The Palestinians will never meet them. There will come a point, therefore, when it will become clear that Trump's conditions have been rejected. So what will he do then? Faced with implacable Palestinian rejectionism, previous administrations never changed course. The peace process had to proceed regardless because it was assumed there was no alternative.

But there is an alternative. Trump should seize the opportunity to change the narrative altogether. He should say that having offered the Palestinians the opportunity to make a deal, he can now see their real agenda is not to live alongside Israel at all but to destroy it.

That is the only possible interpretation of their demand to flood Israel with Arabs, to refuse to stop paying terrorists' families and to continue to teach their children to hate and to murder Jews.

Their agenda is thus unconscionable and nonnegotiable. So there can be no more possibility of negotiating with them than of negotiating with al-Qaida or ISIS.

Accordingly, until and unless they abandon their aim of exterminating Israel, they will receive no more money from the US, no diplomatic recognition and no political engagement.

Trump is the ultimate big picture man. He thinks with his gut. He doesn't do detail.

So he should be told this simple fact: that the reason the Arab-Israel impasse continues without end is that America and the West have treated the Palestinian agenda as a reasonable basis for compromise, when in fact it has the unconscionable goal of destroying the homeland of the Jewish people. And negotiating with an unconscionable agenda encourages its proponents to twist the screw still further.

It's possible that Trump knows all this and, having given Abbas enough rope with which to hang the Palestinian cause, will now pull the noose tight.

It's also possible, though, that among all the pro-Israel people in his administration there isn't one who has ever told him the inconvenient truth: that the reason the Arab war against Israel goes on and on without end is that it is the only war of extermination where the so-called civilized world has systematically rewarded and incentivized the aggressor.

Donald Trump wants to go down in history as the president who solved the Arab-Israel impasse. What the author of *The Art of the Deal* needs to realize, however, is that the solution lies in grasping that a deal here is impossible, and what is needed instead is to defeat the vile aim of destroying Israel.

Change the narrative altogether, Mr. President, and your place in history will be all but guaranteed as the person who faced down an agenda of falsehood, hatred and extermination to pave the way for a more decent, stable and safer world. (Jerusalem Post May 12)

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### **A Step in the Right Direction** By Dror Eydar

A letter written by pastor John Hagee, the leader of millions of Christians in the U.S. and the world, urging U.S. President Donald Trump to move his country's embassy to Jerusalem is the right direction for this political saga to take.

Neither Israel nor right-wing leaders should be putting public pressure on the Trump administration. It's important that contact between the administrations in Jerusalem and Washington on this matter is made far away from the camera lenses. Israel officialdom shouldn't beg. Jerusalem is not ours because the world recognizes it, but because of thousands of years of history. The pressure should come from Trump's constituency. As a candidate, he promised them he would move the embassy to Jerusalem, and they are the only ones to whom he has an obligation.

In his letter, Hagee mentioned then-President Harry Truman, whose secretaries and advisers, including senior officials in the State and Defense departments, opposed recognizing the Jewish state in 1948. That tradition hasn't changed. Then, they argued that doing so would harm U.S. relations with the Arab world, and that recognition of Israel would inflame regional tensions and lead to the extermination of the Jews. Today, people talk about hurting the peace process and ties with the Arab world, and (once again) inflaming regional tensions. But we didn't yield to their dictates then, and we don't today.

The report about a senior U.S. diplomat who supposedly told Israeli officials that the Western Wall is "not your territory" is so stupid that we should doubt its veracity. Until Trump arrives, we'll keep hearing reports like this, most of which are meant to manufacture artificial crises and torpedo the success of the visit and the possibility of real change in U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For eight years as president, Barack Obama served as a beacon of hope to those among us who want a peace deal (in my opinion, a suicide deal) to be forced on the unruly Israelis. The last thing they need now is for Trump to change direction. So

we should take the report with a healthy dose of skepticism.

When Trump was sworn in, I wrote that he was not the messiah, and I asked my friends in the Israeli Right to lower their expectations. Now Trump has become the messiah for the part of the Left that likes to withdraw, just like Obama was the messiah for eight years. They haven't lost hope of dividing up the country. They can rest easy -- our history has taught us that messiahs disappoint. If the Israeli conservative-right camp wants to influence the Trump administration, they should close ranks and not put out incendiary declarations. As far as the traditional opponents in the American establishment are concerned, the noise is pleasing to their ears. This way, they can execute a policy of divide and conquer. But it is the American public that should be making declarations about the Trump administration when it comes to keeping promises.

Then-secretary of State John Marshall was looking out for the interests of his country as he understood them when he fiercely opposed recognizing Israel back in 1948. Years later, his historical short-sightedness is revealed. In contrast, Truman chose to recognize Israel for a number of reasons, some religious (he believed in the return of Jews to Zion), and history was made. David Ben-Gurion would later tell him, "I don't know what the Americans are saying about you ... but in the eyes of the Jewish people you will live forever!"

Trump, too, could go down in history as the person who led the free world to recognize David's city as the modern capital of the State of Israel. If only. (Israel Hayom May 17)

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### **The Meaning of Self-Determination** By Jonathan S. Tobin

A week ago, U.S. President Donald Trump's national security adviser said his boss would express support for "Palestinian self-determination" on his upcoming visit to the Middle East. Trump won't be the first American leader to back the idea that Palestinians should rule themselves. But as Trump prepares to take a deep dive into the same diplomatic rabbit hole that swallowed his predecessors, it's fair to ask if the president has a firm grasp about what that seemingly anodyne phrase means to Palestinians.

That statement and others coming from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson indicate that expectations that the Trump administration will be handing a blank check to Israel on settlements, borders or even recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state were mistaken. But rather than this being another sign of Trump learning on the job, at least so far as foreign policy is concerned, it might show a susceptibility to the same delusions that were embraced by past administrations.

If accounts from inside the White House are accurate, Trump was influenced by what Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said during their meeting earlier this month. Whether he is acting on the assurances of his friend Ronald Lauder, who has reportedly gone from a supporter of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a cheerleader for the PA leader, or simply trusting his own instincts, Trump is betting on Abbas' sincerity when he said: "We are aspiring and want to achieve our freedom, our dignity, and our right to self-determination. And we also want for Israel to recognize the Palestinian state just as the Palestinian people recognize the State of Israel."

If he means it, then those who think the terms of a peace deal should be roughly along the lines proposed by Ehud Olmert in 2008 -- involving mutual recognition, re-partition of Jerusalem and territorial swaps that would allow Israel to keep the settlement blocs -- are right. That would mean negotiations between the two sides aren't about an existential struggle but rather the sort of big, complicated real estate deal that Trump thinks he knows how to make happen.

But even as the administration lays the groundwork for a peace conference predicated on the assumption that Sunni Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Egypt can help pressure the Palestinians to make peace, Trump needs to ponder whether Abbas means what he says.

As Trump began his diplomatic foray this year, there were few even on the Left who thought there was any chance that the Palestinians were ready to make peace. Abbas' decision to torpedo then-Secretary of State John Kerry's last efforts solidified his reputation as a man who was always willing to talk about peace but could be counted on to blow up negotiations -- or walk away from them as he did in 2008 with Olmert -- if there was any chance they might succeed.

His behavior and the Palestinian Authority's continued support of incitement against Israel and Jews, as well as financial support of terrorists, discredited advocates of territorial withdrawal in the foreseeable future. Earlier this year, the leaders of the two leading opposition parties to Netanyahu issued statements about how they would pursue peace if they won the next election. Isaac Herzog of the Zionist Union said a two-state solution would have to wait at least 10 years until the Palestinians proved they had given up terror and wanted peace; Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid said a peace pact would have to wait at least 20 years. Their attitudes reflected a solid consensus from the Center-Left to the Center-Right that two states might be a good idea in principle but would be impossible to

implement in the foreseeable future.

Trump's initiative may tell us more about his hubris than about a genuine opportunity for a breakthrough. While Trump may be sincere about his quest for peace, unlike the majority of Israelis, Trump may not understand what the concept of self-determination has meant for Palestinians. The problem at the core of the conflict has never been so much about how to divide the real estate. Rather it was whether Palestinian Arab national identity could be reconciled with the acceptance of Israel that Abbas says he is ready to embrace.

Two states for two peoples and the coexistence implied in that formula makes sense but not if Palestinian nationalism is still inextricably tied to their century-old war on Zionism and opposition to a Jewish state no matter where its borders are drawn. So long as the Palestinian Authority refuses to change its views about incitement and support for terror and its Hamas rivals also remain committed to Israel's destruction, Trump's confidence in Abbas is misplaced.

Unless a sea change in Palestinian political culture has happened while no one was looking, their definition of self-determination will -- sooner or later -- defeat Trump's diplomatic ambitions just as they did other presidents who dreamed of Middle East peace. (Israel Hayom May 19)

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### McMaster's Western Wall Evasion By Ruthie Blum

In a press briefing at the White House on Tuesday -- ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia, Israel and Europe -- National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster stammered when asked by a journalist if his boss believes that the Western Wall in Jerusalem is "part of Israel."

"Part of what? I'm sorry," McMaster replied, leaning forward, as if he had not heard the question. He did, however, answer the first half of the query: about whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be accompanying Trump on his visit to the Jewish holy site in the Israeli capital.

"No ... I don't ... no Israel leaders will join President Trump to the Western Wall. He's going to the Western Wall mainly in connection with the theme to connect with three of the world's great religions. And to advance, to pay homage to these religious sites that he's visiting, but also to highlight the theme that we all have to be united against what are really the enemies of all civilized people. And that we have to be joined together in a ... in a ... with an agenda of, of tolerance and moderation."

This was his first evasion. His second came a few minutes later, when a different reporter pressed him to answer the original question about whether the U.S. administration considers the Western Wall part of Israel.

"Oh, that sounds like a policy decision, for, for ... and you know, uh," he said, laughing uncomfortably. "And that's the president's intention. ... The president's intention is to visit these sites to highlight the need for unity amongst three of the world's great religions."

McMaster's refusal to state that the Western Wall is Israeli was highly significant, as it came in the wake of a scandal surrounding the issue. A day earlier, two officials from the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem -- later named as Obama administration leftovers David Berns and Jonathan Shrier -- snapped at the Israeli team assisting in the preparations for Trump's visit for asking about the possibility of Netanyahu and/or local film crews accompanying the president to the holy site, saying: "It's none of your business. It's not even part of your responsibility. It's not your territory. It's part of the West Bank."

The outcry from Netanyahu's office was quick to follow, as was a swift denial from the White House. "The comments about the Western Wall were not authorized communication and they do not represent the position of the United States and certainly not of the president," a senior administration official told The Times of Israel.

This reaction from Washington could have been expected. Shortly before the spat erupted, the first thing that incoming U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman did upon landing in the Holy Land was to pray at the very place that the consular officials deemed "none of Israel's business."

In a video released by the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Friedman said of his family, "We're a bit tired, but we wanted to come straight to the holiest place in the entire Jewish world, the 'Kotel Hamaaravi,' the Western Wall."

This was not the only clue that McMaster's dodging reflected his own political unease about Israeli sovereignty, rather than instructions from Trump. Another was the wording of the prepared statement he read at the briefing before fielding questions from members of the media: "The president will then continue on to Jerusalem, where he will meet with President Rivlin and lay a wreath at Yad Vashem. The president will then deliver remarks at the Israel Museum, and celebrate the unique history of Israel and of the Jewish people, while reaffirming America's unshakable bond with our closest ally in the Middle East." And, after "[urg[ing]] Palestinian leaders to take steps that will help lead to peace ... [Trump] will visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and he will say a prayer at the Western Wall."

McMaster's ideological differences with Trump became apparent from

the minute he accepted the offer to replace Gen. Michael Flynn in the role of national security adviser. In fact, the first piece of advice he gave to the president was to delete the phrase "radical Islamic terrorism" from his February 28 address to a joint session of Congress. Thankfully, Trump did not take the advice.

In his 1997 book, "Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam" -- written as a doctoral thesis -- McMaster examined the failure of the White House and Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide a successful plan to defeat the North Vietnamese army.

"The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of The New York Times, or on the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C., even before Americans assumed sole responsibility for the fighting in 1965 and before they realized the country was at war," McMaster wrote.

It was precisely this kind of intellectual courage, coupled with battlefield prowess, which earned the brilliant military man bipartisan support as Flynn's replacement. Sadly, these traits have not been on display where Israel and its radical Islamic terrorist enemies are concerned.

Behind closed doors, Trump recently referred to McMaster as "a pain." He certainly is turning out to be one. (Israel Hayom May 19)

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### Should Hebrew U. be Renamed, Too? By Dror Eydar

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem not playing "Hatikva" at its ceremonies is nothing new. For some years now the university has refrained from "hurting the feelings" of the Arab students. In its defense, the university argued that there is no law requiring that the national anthem be played at ceremonies. This is known as hiding behind the letter of the law. The Hebrew University is a national symbol. The idea to found it was put forth at the First Zionist Congress 120 years ago. It was actually "Hatikva," a symbol of breathing life into the Jewish people who were waking up and returning to their land, that lay at the heart of the establishment of the university on Mount Scopus, facing Zion -- Jerusalem.

The current scandal supplies us with some historical irony: Ahead of the ceremony celebrating the opening of the university in April 1925, the Arabs of the region declared a general strike and hung out black flags. This was the last thing they needed -- for the Yahud (Jews) to bring science and research here. They might wind up founding a Jewish state.

Silencing "Hatikva" at official university ceremonies is a (fleeting) moral victory for the descendants of the people who, in the War of Independence, tried not only to silence the hopes of Israel, which had arisen from dust and ashes and wipe out the nascent Jewish state, but also opposed the establishment of that same university that today "considers their feelings" and denies its own history.

Being considerate of the feelings of minorities is a good thing, but it's wrong to let the minority foist its opinion on the majority and erase its identity. The claim that "'Hatikva' hurts the Arabs' feelings" means accepting the false narrative that says we invaded their homeland and founded a state on its ruins, and that in 1948 they didn't actually want to annihilate us, they were the victims -- which is we should apologize for the anthem and be considerate of them.

Let's follow through with the absurdity: does the title "Hebrew" not hurt the feelings of those whose fathers sought to wipe out the Hebrews? Perhaps the university leaders should change its name to something neutral, which wouldn't, heaven forbid, carry any hint of Jewish nationalism.

"Hatikva" shouldn't hurt the feelings of any person to whom freedom and liberation are dear. Our national anthem is the "Internationale" of those who pursue goodness and progress everywhere in the world. It's the anthem of the Jewish people's modern-day exodus. Anyone who sees this as wrong shows where they are and where they stand. Thanks to the "2,000-year-old hope" we returned to this land, and thanks to it Israel's Arabs and other minorities enjoy the only democracy in the Middle East and the achievements that the Hebrew University, which was founded as part of the Zionist plan, has contributed to the country, the region, and the entire world.

For many years, American universities have been dancing with death, becoming bastions of anti-American sentiment that are raising generations of graduates, some of whom are cut off from their identity. Israeli academia is vital to our existence as an independent state and we must not allow similar processes to change our universities to strongholds of anti-Israeli sentiment cut off from the country's Jewish identity. Democracy can't hold up over time without patriotism. Not singing the national anthem is no big deal in and of itself, but it's a worrying process that is part of a larger phenomenon, which has to do with the great debate over our identity here. That is worth fighting for. (Israel Hayom May 19)

## **Jerusalem, the Capital by Law** By Ze'ev Jabotinsky

A visit to the Western Wall by the advance team preparing U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Israel next week ended with a diplomatic incident when the Americans demanded that the Israeli team accompanying them leave the area, saying the Israelis had no business being there as the Western Wall was "in the West Bank" and Trump's visit to the holy site was a private one. Not only was this undiplomatic conduct, this went against American and international laws.

There are four instances in U.S. law that contradict what the officials in Trump's advance team said:

First, the 1922 Lodge-Fish joint resolution endorsing the establishment of the Jewish homeland in then-British Palestine, signed by U.S. President Warren G. Harding.

Second, the 1924 Anglo-American Treaty on Palestine, which incorporated the text of the British Mandate for Palestine that had been ratified by the League of Nations. The tenets of this treaty have been part of international law ever since, and according to international law, a nation's ratification of a treaty makes its content part of its legal code.

The British Mandate clearly defines the Jewish people's exclusive right to sovereignty over the land of Israel, which they would be able to realize when the mandate elapses. It further states that while the civil and religious rights of all the territory's residents must be preserved, the political right to self-determination in Palestine is granted solely to the Jewish people.

Third, the United States adopted the United Nations Charter as part of its domestic law, as required from every U.N. member.

Fourth, the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act constitutes recognition of Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem. The president may sign a waiver every six months postponing the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but the fact the U.S. has this law on its books shows it recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

David Ben-Gurion's decision to define Jerusalem as Israel's capital went against the opinion of many countries, which to this day refuse to acknowledge Israel's sovereignty over the city. This lack of recognition is derived from U.N. Resolution 181, which determined that an international body -- not the Jewish people -- should be named as the city's sovereign.

But according to international law, the General Assembly's Nov. 29, 1947 vote on the matter is invalid because at the time, in contradicted Article 80 of the U.N.'s Charter, which states that as long as a mandate approve by the League of Nations is in effect -- and British Palestine fell into that category at the time -- the rights of any people or community subject to said mandate could not be altered in any way. Therefore, the 1947 vote infringed on the Jewish people's right to sovereignty over the land of Israel when the British Mandate was still in effect. In other words, the vote contradicted Article 80 and is therefore invalid.

Dr. Jacques Gauthier, a Canadian lawyer who specializes in international law and human rights, received his doctorate from the Institute of International Public Law at the University of Geneva, writing his dissertation on the issue of sovereignty over the Old City of Jerusalem. He concluded that the Jews alone have the right to sovereignty over the Old City, including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. The fact that an institution that cannot be suspected of being pro-Israeli accepted his thesis suggests that his conclusions are valid.

American officials would be wise to do a reality check before making statements that contradict international law. The Israeli government should make sure they are aware of their error and demand that such mistakes never happen again. (Israel Hayom May 18)

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## **Construction is our Top Priority** By Nadav Shragai

Focusing the discourse between Jerusalem and the White House on the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem could turn out to be a profound tactical mistake. Moving the American Embassy to the capital, if such a move is still relevant (and there's no guarantee that it is), will have us owing the U.S., in their eyes. The price tag could be steep, despite the reassuring message relayed by newly appointed U.S. Ambassador David Friedman in an interview with Israel Hayom this week. It could spell a continued construction freeze in most of Jerusalem. The effects of this freeze on the population of Jerusalem were also reported in this paper this week. Construction is far more important than the location of the embassy. After years of a deep construction freeze, building up all parts of Jerusalem should be our top priority. It is inconceivable that, after eight years of refraining from building in Jerusalem because of a hostile American president, we will continue to refrain from building in Jerusalem because of a friendly American president.

Moving the U.S. Embassy is merely a symbolic act. It has been in Tel Aviv for 69 years and we have lived here in Jerusalem just fine without it -- and we can easily continue to do so. However, a reality in which we are prohibited from building freely in our capital is unacceptable.

Even though we have entered the Trump era, the construction freeze remains in effect in Maaleh Adumim, in the E1 corridor between Maaleh Adumim and Jerusalem, and in the east Jerusalem neighborhoods of Givat

Hamatos, Atarot and Shimon Hatzadik. It is safe to assume that if it weren't for American opposition, the freeze would have ended by now.

Over the last few days, commentators have been talking about a possible deal with the White House -- moving the embassy in exchange for a continued construction freeze. This is fundamentally wrong, and if such a deal is indeed in the works, it should be the other way around: Let us relinquish our demand to relocate the embassy in exchange for renewed construction in all parts of Jerusalem.

It is possible, of course, that Trump is backtracking on his pledge to relocate the embassy while simultaneously continuing to pressure Israel not to build in the city. Or as Friedman so eloquently put it in his interview with Israel Hayom: achieve understandings with the Israeli government on how to handle the settlements issue.

As Jerusalem marks 50 years since its liberation and reunification, the public expects Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's leadership to withstand American pressure, even when the pressure is friendly. They are expected to clearly assert that our top priority in Jerusalem is to be free to build all its parts, without restriction. But declarations are not enough. We need action, and, if necessary, we are prepared to pay the price. After all, this is Jerusalem!

The test of the Israeli government's ability to withstand pressure from the American president, described as the one of the friendliest toward Israel in history, will be its actions, not talk. It will be tested in actual construction, not talking about it. (Israel Hayom May 18)

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## **A Step in the Right Direction** By Dror Eydar

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Neither Israel nor right-wing leaders should be putting public pressure on the Trump administration. It's important that contact between the administrations in Jerusalem and Washington on this matter is made far away from the camera lenses. Israel officialdom shouldn't beg. Jerusalem is not ours because the world recognizes it, but because of thousands of years of history. The pressure should come from Trump's constituency. As a candidate, he promised them he would move the embassy to Jerusalem, and they are the only ones to whom he has an obligation.

In his letter, Hagee mentioned then-President Harry Truman, whose secretaries and advisers, including senior officials in the State and Defense departments, opposed recognizing the Jewish state in 1948. That tradition hasn't changed. Then, they argued that doing so would harm U.S. relations with the Arab world, and that recognition of Israel would inflame regional tensions and lead to the extermination of the Jews. Today, people talk about hurting the peace process and ties with the Arab world, and (once again) inflaming regional tensions. But we didn't yield to their dictates then, and we don't today.

The report about a senior U.S. diplomat who supposedly told Israeli officials that the Western Wall is "not your territory" is so stupid that we should doubt its veracity. Until Trump arrives, we'll keep hearing reports like this, most of which are meant to manufacture artificial crises and torpedo the success of the visit and the possibility of real change in U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For eight years as president, Barack Obama served as a beacon of hope to those among us who want a peace deal (in my opinion, a suicide deal) to be forced on the unruly Israelis. The last thing they need now is for Trump to change direction. So we should take the report with a healthy dose of skepticism.

When Trump was sworn in, I wrote that he was not the messiah, and I asked my friends in the Israeli Right to lower their expectations. Now Trump has become the messiah for the part of the Left that likes to withdraw, just like Obama was the messiah for eight years. They haven't lost hope of dividing up the country. They can rest easy -- our history has taught us that messiahs disappoint. If the Israeli conservative-right camp wants to influence the Trump administration, they should close ranks and not put out incendiary declarations. As far as the traditional opponents in the American establishment are concerned, the noise is pleasing to their ears. This way, they can execute a policy of divide and conquer. But it is the American public that should be making declarations about the Trump administration when it comes to keeping promises.

Then-Secretary of State George Marshall was looking out for the interests of his country as he understood them when he fiercely opposed recognizing Israel back in 1948. Years later, his historical short-sightedness is revealed. In contrast, Truman chose to recognize Israel for a number of reasons, some religious (he believed in the return of Jews to Zion), and history was made. David Ben-Gurion would later tell him, "I don't know what the Americans are saying about you ... but in the eyes of the Jewish people you will live forever!"

Trump, too, could go down in history as the person who led the free world to recognize David's city as the modern capital of the State of Israel. If only. (Israel Hayom May 17)