



Commentary...

Jerusalem Day, 50 Years Since Unification By Rabbi Sholom Gold

Jerusalem. It was love long before first sight. In my youth I prayed at Torah Vodass Yeshiva at 206 Wilson Street in Williamsburg, Pennsylvania.

The east wall of the synagogue had two huge murals on either side of the holy ark. One was of the Cave of the Patriarchs and the other of Rachel's Tomb with the lone olive tree. During the Shabbat meal my father would often exclaim, "Poor Moshe. He wanted so much to enter Eretz Yisroel but he was not permitted." With that love-inadvance that was part of the spiritual and emotional treasure the Jew carried with him throughout the long exile it was so natural that my first sighting of the Land of Israel would leave a lasting impression. It helped that my arrival was by boat with the first glimpse being from a distance, and then coming closer and closer until finally setting foot on holy ground.

It was late June 1955 (Tamuz 5715) that I first entered Jerusalem, and I feel privileged to have lived here since our aliya, for the past 35 years, and to have experienced the awesome transformation of this holy city. In 1955 it was a small town, quiet, something like a shtetl but permeated with a painful pallor of sadness. The city was divided in half by a forbidding concrete wall. The wall with its barbed wire was like a knife straight through the heart of the city.

The two cities – Berlin, the capital of evil, death and darkness, and Jerusalem, the holy city, the city of peace, life, light, Hashem's capital city.

Jerusalem has a beauty and a charm like no other place in the world. When I came on aliya in 1982, someone told me that Rabbi Meir Chodosh once said that he had observed Jerusalem for 65 years and that the sun shone on the city every day. I have been watching for 35 years and can confirm that, regardless of rain, storm, snow, sleet or gloom, at some point the sun will peek out and shine down on God's city every day.

But Jerusalem in 1955 was the border of a small Israel. The guardians on the ramparts of the Old City were Jordanian soldiers who at times shot and killed; world Jewry was cut off from the Western Wall, Tomb of Rachel and the Cave of the Patriarchs. The nation of Israel was denied access to its holiest sites.

It was the city that dwells alone, as Jeremiah lamented, the city of "Lecha Dodi": "Too long have you dwelt in the valley of tears, covered with the dust," waiting for the moment that you will be told, "Shake off the dust, arise, put on your clothes of glory. For your light has come." I have this feeling that the Creator and His heavenly hosts were impatiently waiting to unite both parts of the city and join Jerusalem and her people.

Twelve years later, in May 1967, the sounds of war thundered from Cairo to Damascus. Frenzied mobs called for the destruction of the Jewish state. A noose was being pulled tight around Israel, cutting it off from the rest of the world. Israel remained absolutely and completely alone. Anxiety and tension, to the point of real fear, gripped the Jewish world.

Were we about to witness the third destruction? Then Monday, June 5, Iyar 26 – war.

Haifa refineries burning; Tel Aviv under bombardment; Egyptian and Syrian troops on the march. From Israel – silence. Jordan began to bombard Jerusalem, Israel was attacked on three fronts. From Israel – silence.

I can't recall any more when we first began to realize that something great was happening. It had to be sometime late Tuesday, because by Wednesday the whole world was electrified by the news of the liberation of Jerusalem.

Then the truth began to emerge. The war had been won in the first hours.

It's a mitzva to read the story of those first hours that were a joint operation of God and the Israel Air Force. One who knows the story of those hours and internalizes it will have learned a lesson of faith that will last for a lifetime.

God was with them throughout.

The Shaarei Teshuva of Rabbeinu Yonah (3:17) says: "Know that the highest virtues have been transmitted through the positive commandments... the virtues of remembering His kindnesses and thinking about them as it is

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said, 'And you shall remember the entire road on which Hashem your God led you there forty years [Deuteronomy 8:2]...[A]nd it is written, 'Your kindness is before my eyes [Tehillim 26:3].'" It is 50 years later and the impossible has become fact.

The divine outpouring of blessing has made little Israel a world power militarily, agriculturally, scientifically and economically, and the great Torah center of the world, the fortress of the faith and stronghold of the spirit. I was astounded recently to learn that there are 300,000 ba'alei teshuva (lit: "master of repentance"; a Jew who returns to the faith) in Israel. Absolutely remarkable and unprecedented in our history.

I learned here in 1955 and know how small the world of Torah was then. The greatest explosion of Torah learning in history has taken place here. The relationship of the Master of the World with Israel in our time is expressed magnificently by Rashi's commentary to the Book of Ezekiel (38:8). The verse talks of the enemies of Israel gathering to destroy them: "After many days thou shalt be mustered for service, in the latter years thou shalt come against the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, against the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the peoples, and they dwell safely all of them."

Hashem says that these enemies will be destroyed.

Rashi comments: "You [the enemy] should have understood that the One who took them out from among the nations would not abandon them in your hands." I have brought them back and I will watch over them, says Hashem. Today, Jerusalem is the fulfillment of Rabbi Akiva's vision (appearing at the end of Tractate Makkos) as he looked down on the ruins of the Temple. He proclaimed the prophecy of Zechariah: "Old men and old women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with his staff in his hand because of old age, and the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets."

The city is pulsating with energy and vitality. It is taking on a new identity with the ever increasing construction blanketing her. The skyline is repeatedly changing as the many building cranes give way to beautiful residential structures. Isaiah saw it so clearly.

"Consider the place of your tent, and stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, stint not. Lengthen your cords and strengthen your pegs. For southward and northward you shall spread out mightily, your offspring will inherit nations, and they will settle desolate cities." (Isaiah 54:2-3) It is a joy to behold, as the psalmist says: "Beautiful in the heights, joy of all the earth." (Psalms 48:3) Iyar 28 is the 50th anniversary of these great and ongoing events.

Hodu L'Hashem ki tov ki leolam chasdo.

Zeh hayom asa Hashem nagila v'nismcha bo.

Yom Yerushalayim same'ach. (Jerusalem Post May 23)

Trump Breaks the Diplomatic Mold By Noah Rothman

There is perhaps nothing a global class of calcified diplomatic professionals appreciates more than subtlety and nuance. Donald Trump's tour of the world's three major religious capitals is about as unsubtle and unnuanced as you can get. To many seasoned diplomats, this administration's naïve effort to forge peace in this fashion is downright dangerous—possibly more than the administration even knows. Maybe. Or maybe the president and his team are dispensing with ossified convention in a field that could desperately use some fresh thinking. With the first leg of Trump's world theological tour complete, it is not impossible that something new is taking shape.

In Saudi Arabia this weekend, Donald Trump danced with swords, touched an ominous glowing orb, and delivered a narrowly tailored and reasonably well-received speech on radical Islamic terrorism in the heart of the Islamic world. Among many other regional power brokers, the president also met with he leaders of Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. What Trump did in the Saudi Kingdom is, however, less interesting than how the Saudis responded to him.

Upon arrival, Trump received a royal welcome. Saudi King Salman braved the 101-degree heat of the tarmac to greet the presidential plane personally. A brass band serenaded the two world leaders as cannons issued celebratory volleys and seven Saudi jets streamed trails of red, white, and blue overhead. The president and the king joined one another in

the presidential limo and rode off together to an extravagant ceremony at the Saudi Court, where attention was even lavished upon the president's aides.

The intentional contrast this reception struck with Barack Obama's 2014 trip to the Saudi Kingdom was stark. Upon Obama's arrival, King Salman dispatched only his distant nephew, the provincial governor of Riyadh, to meet the leader of the free world. The Obama White House did its best to save face, but the snub was a clear indication that tensions surrounding Iran nuclear deal, the ongoing bloodshed in Syria, and Obama's explicit antipathy toward the Saudi Kingdom as a nation unworthy of an alliance with America.

From Saudi Arabia, Trump traveled directly to Israel—itsself a shift in convention—where he was also greeted warmly. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife met the president and first lady at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv. Using his remarks alongside Trump to issue a veiled rebuke of Obama, Netanyahu noted: "We appreciate the reassertion of American leadership in the Middle East."

President Obama entered office with the objective of creating a new power balance in the region that would allow the United States to withdraw confidently. The former president's stated belief that America's alliance toward Israel "erodes our credibility with the Arab states" in combination with his mistrust toward Sunni Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Egypt left him with few ways of achieving that goal. There's a cosmic irony in the fact that Obama's navel-gazing paved the way for a radically new and promising dynamic to emerge in the Middle East. Conceptually, the strategy Trump is pursuing in the Middle East is wildly divergent from his predecessors. He is effectively abandoning the idea that there can be no resolution of the Arab World's hostility toward Israel without first creating a Palestinian state.

As recently as February, administration sources began providing details to the press about a proposed pan-Sunni military alliance designed to both counter Islamist extremism and a resurgent Iran. That alliance would include states with unfrozen relations with Israel, like Egypt and Jordan, and nations like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which do not recognize the Jewish state. According to a recent bombshell report, however, the prospect of a radical relaxation in tensions between Israel and the Arab World is real.

As Commentary's Evelyn C. Gordon discussed, in exchange for Israeli technology and intelligence, a relaxation of the Gaza blockade, and the cessation of settlement construction in "some areas," this Sunni alliance would "establish direct telecommunication links with Israel, let Israeli aircraft overfly their countries, lift certain trade restrictions and perhaps grant visas to Israeli athletes and businessmen." And all of this would occur with existing Palestinian realities utterly unchanged. Even if no further progress toward peace in the region is secured, that bell cannot be un-rung.

Donald Trump isn't the first American president to benefit from warm feelings solely because he isn't the last guy to have occupied the Oval Office. When it comes to the Middle East, crises and chaos have a habit of scuttling even the best-laid plans. Iranian power projection into places like Iraq, Yemen, and Syria has, however, created new avenues of cooperation between adversarial powers with a common enemy in Tehran. If Trump can translate this new reality into tangible accomplishment (a big "if"), he will have the makings of a potent argument for his presidency and a second term.

On foreign affairs, in particular, President Donald Trump has invited the wrath of the critics. He is "the world's most undiplomatic" diplomat who has embraced illiberal and strategically inept "lame-stream diplomacy." Indeed, his "rejection of traditional diplomacy for his own distinctive, brusque style has incurred costs without any visible offsetting benefits." In his article "Is This the End of the Free World," Abe Greenwald demonstrated that Trump has an appalling and lamentably familiar habit of alienating America's natural allies. It's a nasty feature of a distorted worldview, and it may result in the continued loss of allied faith in American vision and authority. For now, however, not only is the Middle East obviously thrilled for the Obama era to be over but that has provided Donald Trump with the opportunity for a real diplomatic triumph. A truly successful presidency in the Middle East may begin first with the abandonment of that burdensome, dog-eared diplomatic playbook. *CommentaryMagazine.com May 22)*

Trump at the Western Wall, a Carefully Calibrated Act of Respect

By David Horowitz

Whatever ensues in the turbulent presidency of Donald Trump, he made history for the revived Jewish nation on Monday afternoon when he stood alone at the Western Wall, black kippah on his head, swaying a little, perhaps praying a little.

Fifty years after Israel captured the Old City of Jerusalem, and after several previous presidents had visited before or after holding office, Trump became the first serving president to walk in reverence to the wall.

He stood for long seconds at the Jews' holiest place of prayer, part of

the retaining walls of the Second Temple, while the stills photographers snapped. Then he reached into his jacket pocket to retrieve a note, which he placed deep into a crack between the stones.

Simultaneously, at the other side of the dividing barrier that Israel's religious authorities maintain at the site, his wife Melania stood with Trump's daughter Ivanka, who converted to Judaism to marry Jared Kushner.

In turn, Melania and Ivanka also stood in silent prayer. Out of sight of each other, the president and his wife placed their right hands on the stones; his daughter, her left.

The US planners had made plain that this was a private visit, as was the president's previous stop — a visit to the nearby Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not join him at the wall. The president was not overly acknowledging Israeli sovereignty at the site. This was not an act of provocation.

It was a carefully calibrated signal of respect. And as such, immensely appreciated by his Israeli hosts. (*Times of Israel May 22*)

Trump Chose Israel's Side By Dror Eydor

Now, when it has become clear to the Left that the one they had crowned as the peace messiah has let them down, we can expect him to again be lambasted. Let's hope he delves into U.S. President Donald Trump's speech at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum.

One commentator lauded Trump for making peace "great" again, no doubt meaning the return to the process of diplomatic disintegration we experienced following the 1993 Oslo Accords. Nothing could be further from the truth. The president of the United States made no such mention. The word "peace" illustrates many options -- not just Oslo.

Former U.S. President Barack Obama's speeches had created an artificial symmetry between the Palestinians and Israel, and positioned Israel as the main problem. Trump, on the other hand, clearly chose a side and in many ways, and his speech was the antithesis to the one Obama gave during his 2009 visit to Cairo. For Obama, our ties to this land came down to persecution, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, while Trump asserted that the "ties of the Jewish people to this Holy Land are ancient and eternal. They date back thousands of years, including the reign of King David whose star now flies proudly on Israel's white and blue flag."

There is a symbolic link between Trump's visit in Israel and Tuesday's terrorist attack in Manchester. The image of the leader of the world's foremost superpower praying at the Western Wall was broadcast worldwide. The Left's haggling -- as if the absence of an Israeli government official left the visit empty of political significance -- is not serious. The world does not care about such subtleties. One image prevails over all reservations: An American president, wearing a kippah, stands at the Western Wall for the first time and prays. The Christian world saw this image, as did the Muslim world.

Israel's enemies have focused great efforts on fighting against our sovereignty in Jerusalem. They know that our hold on the country as a whole depends on our hold on the heart of the nation. The radical Islam's jihad against the West is closely linked to its war against Israel and the return to Zion. We are the West's front outpost in its fight against the old-new barbarians, and while European nations may still think of appeasing the Muslims in their countries at Israel's expense, reality does not abide by their calculations.

Trump, it seems, understands this, and this message has been reiterated in his speeches in Israel and Saudi Arabia: There is no hope for extremists, only a war against them and the ideology that fuels their actions; and the "wrath" and "frustration" of the group of "losers," as he colorfully put it, will not garner so much as an ounce of understanding.

"It is impossible to advance peace and at the same time finance terrorism," Trump told Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during their meeting Tuesday in Bethlehem, making a crucial statement that neither Obama nor Europe would make.

Trump knows that should, God forbid, a Manchester-style terrorist attack were to take place in Israel, the Palestinian Authority would pay the terrorist's family a lifelong stipend -- straight out of the European and American taxpayers' pockets.

In contrast to the disgraceful distinction between blood and blood in Europe, the current American administration does not distinguish between the terrorism directed at Israel and the terrorism directed against the rest of the world.

Still, it seems all Israeli pundits cared about during the past 24 hours, were the immortal questions of "will there be progress" in the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process, or "will there be a deal." I also heard a former prime minister passionately advocating using the U.N. Security Council's whip to force "both parties" to resume negotiations.

What blatant disregard of the profound religious foundation at the heart of the conflict; and what unfounded confidence that they could force history to bow before the smart-alecks who refuse to change the peace

paradigms in their heads despite the fact that they have so far crashed against the rocks of reality.

Finally, it has once again become clear that unlike his predecessor, Trump is free of the messiah complex. He talks about making a "deal" and as a businessman, he knows deals are multifaceted. Experience has clearly shown that the Palestinians were never interested in striking any deal. We will have to wait and see. (Israel Hayom May 24)

A Message of Unwavering Support By Abraham Ben-Zvi

The impressive speech U.S. President Donald Trump delivered at the Israel Museum on Tuesday, and which brought his visit to the Holy Land to a close, made the goals of his visits to Riyadh and Jerusalem, and the reason he found it fitting to include the promised land in his first presidential trip overseas trip, abundantly clear.

In contrast with his predecessor President Barack Obama, who in 2009 decided to skip Israel's capital and travel to Cairo, Trump chose to send the Israeli public a clear message of his unwavering personal commitment to stand with Israel, to increase security cooperation with Israel and to grant Israel steadfast diplomatic and strategic support, including in regard to the Iranian nuclear threat. All this, while deeply identifying with Israel's legacy, symbols, founding ethos and cultural and ethical assets and recognizing its deep historic ties to its capital of Jerusalem.

The sweeping expressions of stalwart friendship incorporated in his speech were meant to advance one central cause: the establishment of a broad foundation of trust among the Israeli public in America's future role in the formulation of a framework for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

Unlike Obama, who very early on in his presidency placed himself in opposition to Israel on the diplomatic front, Trump seeks to assure the people in Zion and their leadership of the nature and intent of the diplomatic path he plans to chart. Even if this path necessitates compromise, Trump hopes that the show of support and commitment to the special relationship, reiterated in his speech in Jerusalem will enable Israel to take the inherent risks that lie along the way.

This presidential need to prepare hearts and minds in Israel and to build a broad public foundation upon which the principles of an arrangement can be based -- without specifying some of its possible components, including a two-state solution -- is anchored in his belief that the Middle East is experiencing profound change. After Obama abandoned the moderate Sunni camp, the Trump administration recognized an increasing willingness among Sunnis to establish a wide regional coalition against the axis of evil and terrorism (and one of its main representatives, the Islamic State group, which went on a murderous campaign in Manchester) under the leadership of the American hegemon and with the acknowledgment of Israel's role in the process.

If, as a result, this camp is indeed ready to provide support for a renewed diplomatic process on the Palestinian front, this will also open a window of opportunity for a long-awaited breakthrough. The visit, therefore, was meant to advance this goal through the full integration of Israel in the framework and the full cooperation of the American partner.

Time will tell if the visit served as a catalyst for the renewal of a diplomatic initiative between Jerusalem and Ramallah, under a regional umbrella and with the sponsorship of the American superpower. (Israel Hayom May 24)

An Antithesis to Obama By Chen Kertcher

U.S. President Donald Trump comes from a business world of profit and loss. He practices a presidential style which sees the world in terms of good and evil, black and white. As far as the Middle East is concerned, Trump wants economic partnerships that will provide profit for the American market, not terrorism, Sunni or Shiite. He speaks much less, if at all, about how deep the rift is between the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority, and as of now has still not presented an official plan for resolving the conflict.

Trump represents an antithesis to the neoliberal approach of his predecessor, Barack Obama. In his famous speech in Cairo in 2009, Obama tried to encourage a new, reformist regional order, which would contend with radicalism but also promote values such as human rights, democracy, women's rights and freedom of religion. Trump disregards these values, which are difficult to quantify and measure. We should also not be fooled into thinking Trump is conservative in the mold of George W. Bush, who embarked on a worldwide crusade against radical global terrorism. This crusade embroiled the U.S. in several regional wars, during which the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq and undertook costly intervention in Afghanistan, all the while increasing the national debt. Trump was elected on the basis of "America first."

Through this prism we must view his multi-legged trip to Saudi Arabia and Israel as an effort to forge a new regional alliance, geared toward serving two primary objectives -- fighting terrorism in the region and economic partnership. Trump, along with his senior advisers, is not afraid

to point at the clear "axis of evil" comprising Iran, ISIS, Hezbollah and Hamas. It does not matter that Iran is fighting ISIS. For Trump, anyone who joins and helps these groups is part of the axis hostile to U.S. interests.

To counter this evil axis, Trump and his advisers formulated a simple plan. They would push for a regional alliance between "moderate" Sunni states and Israel. These are America's legs to stand on in the region, legs that were damaged by Obama's policies.

In Saudi Arabia, Trump struck massive deals that should help the sputtering American economy. He received a commitment from regional leaders to cooperate with him, and to even normalize relations with Israel. In return, these Arab leaders requested a U.S. commitment to fighting the evil axis, for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to be resuscitated, and that the U.S. would refrain from seeking to change the way their regimes rule their countries.

America's second leg in the region, as stated, is Israel. The foundations of this alliance lay in shared values and a proven track record of cooperation. Trump sees the Jewish people as an historical victim and Israelis as victims of terror. He is committed to their protection in several regards: creating a diplomatic umbrella in the international arena, continuing to supply offensive weapons in the form of the F-35 fighter jet, and funding Israel's multilayered missile defense system. However, he does not derive from this that Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of Israel and that the U.S. embassy should be moved there. Trump will not accept Israel annexing portions of the West Bank or accelerating construction in existing settlements. On the other hand, the Palestinians were slapped with a clear message: "Peace can never take root in an environment where violence is tolerated, funded and even rewarded." For Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the reward for joining the "axis of good" is boosting him as a potential partner in the economic and military alliance against terror and in negotiations with Israel.

Similar to a successful salesman, Trump is ignoring most of the controversial sticking points while trying to persuade the sides that everyone is ripe for an alliance and peace process. Similar to anyone with experience in dealing with businessmen, we must ask if the Trump behind closed doors and the Trump making public declarations is the same person. Only Trump can answer this question, and because he has already shown a knack for surprising many of the best political experts, it is at least important to keep in mind the dichotomous worldview driving him. (Israel Hayom May 24)

Trump's new deal By Boaz Bismuth

Over the past several years, conventional wisdom among pundits was that Israel had lost America. They tried to drive home this argument even forcefully after Barack Obama became president.

They told us that Israel was losing its No. 1 ally because it was not relinquishing land; because it insisted that the Arabs recognize it as a Jewish state, and because it was not in a hurry to see a Palestinian state be established. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's personal relations with Obama were thrown into the mix as well, and the bottom line was that Israel and the U.S. are no longer friends. Israel, so their thinking went, could only pine for Christopher Columbus.

And then Donald Trump came along. As Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the other day, "America is back."

It is also back in Israel. But the truth of the matter is that it never really went anywhere. It was Obama and its administration that went off course, not Israel. The experts said Israel must do a mea culpa and expected Obama to change the world, and Israel.

Ahead of Trump's visit, this chorus of experts decided they would sing the same song they sang during the 1990s, using the same lyrics: "Palestinian state"; "ending the occupation is a prerequisite for ending Israel's state of despair." We all know how well things turned out during the 1990s.

They were willing to swear that as soon as Trump came to Israel, he would apply pressure on Israel and present demands. They said Netanyahu was nervous from what may come. They warned a diplomatic tsunami was making its way to Israel's shores.

Some even borrowed medical lingo, saying Trump the candidate put some cotton wool on our skin to prepare from the shot, and now he was going to administer it.

What ultimately unfolded? It turned out that the president who visited Israel this week is the most pro-Israel we have seen in several decades. This man likes us, period. He repeatedly mentions the strong ties between Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

He has promised to protect Israel and to eradicate terrorism, and on the way he said he was determined to make sure Iran would not obtain nuclear weapons and that he would not let anyone hurt Israel. During his visit here he has repeatedly called Netanyahu "my good friend," as if to make the point that he was not Obama.

How is that possible, the experts wondered. Hasn't he visited Saudi

Arabia on his way? Hasn't he delivered a speech in front of some 50 Arab and Muslim leaders while he was there? Hasn't he visited the Palestinian Authority during his trip?

And what about Tillerson, the former head of an energy giant? He cannot possibly be pro-Israel because he is a known wheeler and dealer in the Arab world, they warned.

They also noted that Trump promised to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem but has not done so in the first 120 days of his presidency. Undoubtedly, that period is eternity. Not only that, they continued, Trump considered visiting the Western Wall with the prime minister but ultimately decided it would be a private visit. This, they insist, proves that he is actually Obama in Trump clothes.

But lo and behold, Trump's visit actually ended well, and he had us asking for more. It feels good to have that genuine embrace of a U.S. administration once again. Yes, Israel was deeply loved in America even before Trump came to power, but in recent years this was manifested in Congress, in the public opinion polls in America, among American Christians and among taxi drivers. That's it.

The Obama White House turned its back on Israel and helped, albeit indirectly, the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement flourish on U.S. campuses.

In the wake of the visit, I dared to think that maybe those experts don't really know him. After all, the same Trump who was accused of being anti-Muslim got the royal treatment when he arrived in Saudi Arabia, meeting with some 50 Muslim leaders who know full well that he is in love with Zionism.

Trump, it turns out, is not going to make the improvement of U.S.-Israel ties contingent on warmer relations between Israel and the Arabs. In his way, he apparently understands the Middle East better than most of the pundits analyzing him. He knows that in this part of the world, people respect you if you are strong; if you weaken your allies you are looked at with scorn. The players in the region respect his decision to stand by Israel - because they know this means he will keep his promises to them as well.

I have long said that Trump was good for the Jews. I said it as soon as he entered as the 2016 race. I have long maintained that Trump's new deal is actually going to be more pressure -- on the Palestinians. (Israel Hayom May 24)

Czech Recognition of Jerusalem By Ariel Bolstein

Those following Israel's recent empowerment in the international arena witnessed an additional reinforcement this week: The Czech parliament issued a courageous declaration Wednesday rejecting attempts by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to ignore Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem. The Czech parliament -- both the coalition and the opposition -- decisively ruled that the international organization's treatment of Israel, as reflected in their ridiculous resolutions, is biased, hostile and unacceptable. Beyond condemning UNESCO, another pleasing tune was heard in Prague: The Czech parliament called on the state to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel not just in Jewish history, or general history, but also in its current status as the Jewish state.

The anti-Israel front, which remained dominant for decades, is now collapsing, and the evidence is everywhere. The Czech Republic has played a special role in this process. It is no secret that interests drive international politics, but the Czechs keep proving their ability to uphold lofty principles and values, in an area that is often seen as cynical. It is no coincidence that this nation, which has historically fought so nobly for freedom, became our ally in our fight for Jewish freedom and independence in the land of Israel.

This is not the first time that a loud and clear voice, a voice of reason and morality, is heard from Prague. Last year, the Czech parliament condemned a previous anti-Israel UNESCO resolution that defiantly ignored the Jewish character of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. This time, however, the Czech condemnation was accompanied by a practical recommendation to the Czech government to stop paying membership fees to UNESCO and, most importantly, recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

There is no doubt that a fascinating development is unfolding before our eyes, namely that Israel's stance is reaching more and more sympathetic ears. The Russian foreign ministry declared their willingness some weeks ago to recognize Jerusalem -- albeit only western Jerusalem -- as the capital of Israel. As additional countries see this international taboo breaking, they are likely to join the trend. When the U.S. embassy is relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, it will likely have an immediate effect on dozens of other nations that already understand and accept the reality of an Israeli Jerusalem but are afraid to take the first step toward the city walls. At the moment, it still takes public, political and, at times, personal courage to stand beside Israel. But it won't be long before it is the anti-Israel view that make our adversaries the targets of condemnation.

To bring that day closer, Israel must cling to its fundamental principles. It is only if we steadfastly stand up for what is legally ours that we will gain support and respect. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declares

unequivocally that united Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the State of Israel, more and more people watching from the sidelines in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas become convinced that the facade must end. Let us find these people and cultivate connections with them, bringing the truth to more and more countries and communities in the world. Every nation is important in the global village of the 21st century. Those who, like us, seek to disprove the lies and conspiracy theories, need to make a concerted effort. The path of the righteous will always be fraught with hardship and harassment, but in the end it leads to victory. (Israel Hayom May 25)

The Truest Symbol By Dror Eydor

U.S. President Donald Trump's visit at the Western Wall on Monday underscored the difference between this president's visit to Israel and those of his predecessors. This time, it wasn't just about politics and diplomacy, but also about an emotional, religious story that, without a single word, supports our claim to all of Israel and particularly to Jerusalem.

Trump arrived in Israel on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem. He visited the Western Wall as the whole world watched. Those who hate Israel and deny our link to our holy land watched the American president at the Western Wall, after receiving an explanation about the structure: a small part of a 488-meter supporting wall where Jews prayed for thousands of years.

He saw, at least on paper, what this glorious wall had once supported: the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount, testimony to the Jewish people and their faith.

It is true that during our prolonged exile we stayed away from the mount itself, for halachic reasons or because the Muslims built their holy house exactly on the site holiest to us. They did this in accordance with Islamic replacement theology, which holds that when their religion came to be, it effectively nullified all other religions.

So we are left with the enormous stones of the Western Wall, which have absorbed the prayers and tears of generations of Jews who have clung to the site. The Western Wall represents our endurance in the face of persistent efforts to keep us away from Jerusalem and from the entire land.

The local Arabs understood the connection we have with these stones. Our prayers, offered at this place over 2,000 years, were not left unanswered. The link between the Jews and the wall's stones, which the Muslims could clearly see, was a prophetic promise: The Jews will not leave this place. They will ultimately return in great numbers and strength.

So they named it "al-Buraq" wall and added a story about their prophet visiting the site, possibly in a dream.

But their practical relationship with the wall exposed the lie of their claim: They built houses and stores over it, and even toilets and trash dumps, in an effort, similar to that of UNESCO, to conceal our eternal link and belonging to the place. Their efforts resembled those of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who, in a bid to sever the link between Jews and their land, recalled the Philistines (a sea people who had disappeared from the region hundreds of years earlier) and changed the name Judea to "Palestina."

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook was asked by the Shaw Commission (the British commission of inquiry led by Sir Walter Shaw established to investigate the violent rioting in Palestine in 1929) if he could prove the Jewish link to the Western Wall. He replied that sometimes official documents serve only to weaken the obvious truth, like using a candle to support the sun. He said the Western Wall was of higher status than any synagogue because "this place knows the same sanctity that enveloped our Temple."

In the Middle East, symbols don't just carry spiritual, religious or cultural meaning, but also existential, practical and political meaning. These symbols are more real than any other reality because it is thanks to them, among other things, that we returned to Zion and established an independent Jewish state. That is why the visit at the Western Wall by an incumbent American president is so important, as it pertains to our historical, religious and diplomatic claim to all of Israel.

There was another event Monday that may have appeared marginal next to the image of the American president at the Western Wall, but in certain respects it was no less touching or symbolic: Trump's daughter, Ivanka (Yael) Trump, a convert who joined our nation, convinced her father to pray and be blessed (he can use a blessing, as can we all) days before the High Holiday of Shavuot.

"Wherever you go, I will go," Ruth said to Naomi in the Book of Ruth, which is also referred to as the Scroll of Converts in Jewish tradition. "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." In her way, Ivanka deposited her own tears into the reservoir of the generations.