



Jerusalem 7:09
Toronto 8:44

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*

march through
institutions, the
cultural struggle sessions, the
rewriting of history, the
reframing of reality through
social media and sound bites.

When these ideologies
converge—and they have—you
get something far more

Commentary...

Glastonbury—and the Purge of the Jews By Ayaan Hirsi Ali

At first glance, and from the panoramic shot provided by a shaky iPhone, the scenes out of Glastonbury resemble an energetic protest. The red and green flags waving in the hot breeze; the keffiyehs; the chants. But turn up the volume and listen closely to what tens of thousands of people are shouting, led by the lead singer of the punk duo Bob Vylan: "Death, death to the IDF."

This took place on one of the festival's main stages. It was broadcast live on the BBC.

Lest there be any confusion about what the singer meant: Later that evening he posted a selfie eating ice cream: "While Zionists are crying on socials," he wrote, "I've just had a late night (vegan) ice cream."

Bob Vylan was followed on stage by Kneecap, an Irish rap trio named after the IRA punishment of shooting someone in the knee. They, too, are fond of sprinkling anti-Israel chants throughout their shows, and last month one member was charged with a terror offense after waving the flag of Hezbollah, a proscribed terror group, on stage. In video footage, members of the group can be heard shouting "up Hamas, up Hezbollah."

The Bob Vylan incident was bad enough that papers across the world were forced to cover it. The New York Times, in framing that was typical, described their chants as "against Israel's military."

This is nonsense. Just as it is nonsense to hear chants of "Free Palestine" as being about Palestine any more than during the 1930s slogans about lebensraum were about a bigger backyard.

What happened at Glastonbury over the weekend is part of a coordinated, ideological insurgency against the Jewish people. Not just against the Israeli military. Not just against Israel. Not just against Zionism. Against Jews.

Jews are no strangers to accusations of secret plots: banking plots, media plots, world domination. They're always scheming, according to the people who can't stop obsessing over them. What's unfolding now is a real plot not being orchestrated by Jews, but against them. And it's happening in broad daylight.

While Jews are endlessly forced to disavow this, condemn that, prove their decency—the other side advances, unencumbered. No need for facts or logic. Just raw power and moral hysteria.

It's called the "Free Palestine" movement. But the branding is a smoke screen. What we're dealing with is not a grassroots plea for peace, for statehood. It's Islamism soaked in Maoism, weaponized for the social media era, and sharpened to a point by ideological warriors who've read more Foucault than Quran.

Perhaps this will sound hyperbolic to you. But I have been researching and writing about subversive movements for decades, especially movements emanating from the world of political Islam.

What makes this moment uniquely dangerous is the merging of two ideologies that, historically, have operated in very different arenas: Islamism and Maoism.

The former is fueled by absolutist theocracy and tribal vengeance; the latter, by class war and ideological conformity. One invokes the divine; the other pretends to be secular. Both demand submission. Islamism seeks to restore a seventh-century caliphate through bombs, blood, and barbarity. Maoism seeks to flatten all hierarchies under the boot of "equity," enforced through surveillance, humiliation, and fear. One dreams of paradise after death. The other promises utopia after sufficient political and social purges.

But both share a core instinct: Crush the infidel, purge the impure, seize control of the narrative. Islamism brings the fire—holy rage, a fixation on martyrdom, and a visceral hatred for Jews that predates the state of Israel by centuries. Maoism brings the strategy—the long

dangerous than a political protest. You get a cultural movement. And this one has a clear mission: Erase not just Israel "from the river to the sea," but the Jewish people from the moral map.

Maoist frameworks like "decolonization" and "privilege" provide the ideological cover—abstract enough to sound academic, blunt enough to justify destruction. Islamist fervor supplies the moral justification for violence—wrapped in the language of liberation, but aimed with surgical precision at Jewish identity. Together, they offer a single, horrifying message, one offered up by Twitch influencers and radical clerics alike. Zionism is evil. Jews are the oppressor. Therefore, they must be driven out of polite society.

The strategy is brilliant in its simplicity: Paint Israel as the nexus of evil, then paint every Jew who doesn't loudly renounce it as complicit. Force them to choose between their dignity and their safety.

Look online—at X accounts like "Zionists in Music," which are simply a digitized version of the kind of lists the Nazis drew up in their time. Consider what has already occurred in the music industry to shame, humiliate, and stigmatize Jews.

Look closely at the streets of America and Europe today—and especially our elite institutions. Jewish students are being harassed on campus. Synagogues, Jewish community centers, even kosher delis are defaced. A Jewish family dines out in Los Angeles or New York, and suddenly a stranger is in their face, phone camera rolling: "What are your thoughts on Palestine?"

This is not a protest, it is a predicate for violence. At best, these people are filmed and shamed online. At worst? Just look at what happened outside of the Jewish museum in D.C. Or in Boulder, Colorado, days later.

The scariest part is that there is no centralized command, no imam issuing decrees, no party chairman drawing strategy. It's organic now. The algorithm is the accelerant. The more aggressive the footage, the more viral the cause. You don't need a pulpit or a politburo—you just need a phone and a target.

One day it's a video. The next, it's a knife or a pistol or a Molotov cocktail hurled through a synagogue window—because the digital applause doesn't just permit the violence, it practically demands it.

You can laugh it off as fringe, or imagine I'm being hysterical. But I am not. I grew up in the clutch of Islamism, and I know where it and its derivations lead. Wait until it's your friend. Wait until the chants echo through your neighborhood. Until you realize that what once required a uniform, a manifesto, or a mosque now needs little more than a hashtag and a trending tab. That the machinery of radicalization no longer lives in caves or compounds—but on the piece of glass inside every one of our pockets.

I am not Jewish. I am Christian, which means that right now I do not have the immediate concern of my own children being harassed, or my house of worship being desecrated (in most parts of the West, as it happens). But I have no doubt that if this ideology spreads, they will come for us, too.

Don't think it ends with Israel. Israel is just the pretext. The prize is broader. The Jewish people have always represented something larger: a people that refused to assimilate to their surrounding society, that carved an identity through ritual, law, memory, and resilience. In a world increasingly allergic to distinctions—between man and woman, citizen and foreigner, reality and fiction—that makes the Jew an existential threat to the new order.

And while Jews are endlessly forced to disavow this, condemn that, prove their decency—the other side advances, unencumbered. No need for facts or logic. Just raw power and moral hysteria.

So what do we do?

We name it. We expose it. And we snuff it out. That means

rejecting the lie that the “Free Palestine” movement is a harmless expression of solidarity with oppressed people. It’s not. It is a political warfare operation run on Maoist principles and Islamist grievances.

We must stand with the Jewish community. Not quietly, not conditionally, but unequivocally. Because the alternative is absolute hell on Earth. Jews are once again being cornered, othered, and isolated. Not in the shadows, but in classrooms, boardrooms, and brunch tables—masked by politeness, cloaked in progress, and met with applause.

History doesn’t repeat. It evolves. The next pogrom won’t start with a storm trooper. It will start with a stare across the room, a whisper in the hallway, a question that isn’t really a question. It will start with a meme. “Never again” was never meant to be symbolic. It was a vow. (The Free Press Jun 29)

When the World Chants, ‘Death to the IDF’ By Yehoshua Pfeffer

The same week in which Israel struck a profound blow to global evil, severely weakening the Iranian terror regime and incapacitating its proxies, also saw a surge in anti-Israel vitriol around the world.

One of the most grotesque expressions came from British punk artist Bob Vylan, who chanted (together with his audience) “Death, Death to the IDF” at England’s largest music festival, broadcast by the BBC to millions.

These and similar phenomena are deeply disturbing. They also intensify my gratitude at having left England more than 30 years ago. I wish my good friends who remain there every blessing and I am happy to recommend some Israeli real estate agents. Yet perhaps they are best understood as part of a still-unfolding process.

To confirm the divine election of Aharon and the tribe of Levi, Moshe, at Hashem’s command, asked each tribal leader to submit a wooden staff engraved with his name. The staffs were placed overnight in the Tent of Meeting. When retrieved the next morning, Aharon’s staff had miraculously blossomed, producing buds, then flowers and finally almonds.

The fruit was the proof. Yet the Torah makes a point of describing the process: First buds, then blossoms and only then fruit. Holiness is revealed not merely in the result, but in the unfolding. It is a process, not a magic trick.

This concept strongly echoes the Tree of Life, rooted at the center of Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden)—the tree of divine intimacy, whose fruit granted eternal life. As with Aharon’s staff, the Tree of Life is a symbol of holiness that takes shape in the form of a tree. And like it, the righteous, says Tehillim (The Book of Psalms, 95), blossom and flourish like date palms and cedars—planted in the House of Hashem. Their growth, too, is a process. There are no instant results.

So it is with the Jewish people and so it is with the State of Israel. We are living through a sacred process, one that began 3,500 years ago. In our time, we are witnessing extraordinary fruit: Israel standing at the forefront of the global fight against evil. But the process is not complete. It continues to unfold, with all its trials and contradictions.

The struggle between good and evil is not limited to Iranian nukes or Hezbollah cells. The calls of “Death to the IDF” or the astonishing comparison by New York Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani (slated to become the next mayor of New York and its huge Jewish population) between the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and “globalizing the Intifada” reveal the deeper scope of the battle.

As enemies of the Jewish state raise their voices, so do those who stand with Israel and the Jewish people—inspired to fight for what is good, and to draw down the Divine blessing promised to those who bless Israel.

The historical arc of Am Yisrael—a journey of holiness—entered a new phase with the founding of the State of Israel. This fact could endure plausible denial in 1910, and even in 1950, there were many, of diverse denominations, who chose to close their eyes.

Today, as this ancient journey bears new and wondrous fruit unseen for millennia, it falls upon all of us to stand with Israel. This is not a partisan cause or denominational debate—it is a calling for every Jew who sees themselves as a link in the eternal chain of our people, whether Orthodox, Haredi, Reform or otherwise.

The journey is far from over. Since Oct. 7, 2023, it has only intensified, reaching a new crescendo with the recent campaign against

Iran—yet it continues still. Wherever we find ourselves and in whatever role we are called to play, we must be prepared to rise to its great summons. We must be ready to harvest its fruit. (JNS Jul 2)

Wartime, Up Close and Personal as an ‘Oleh’ By Howard Blas

The kids went back to school on Monday. The adults returned to work. And the pools, gym and tennis courts reopened.

Early next week, summer camps should be in full swing.

Still, the sense of sudden normalcy doesn’t feel normal. It certainly doesn’t for me. I just made aliyah, and as such, experienced war as a new immigrant. I had more at stake this time.

And this war, it was different. I don’t think there has been a conflict in recent memory when friends outside of Israel could follow events so closely in real time. From WhatsApp groups like Jewish Breaking News and Israel Live News, to i24News, coupled with apps of the Israel Defense Forces Home Front Command and the incessant Red Alert one, there is an overabundance of reporting from the Jewish state—and the Mideast as a whole—these past 21 months. Because that’s how long it has been. It started with the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, followed by a regional wave of terror and transformation ever since.

In past wars and periods of tension in the Middle East, I was one of those who sat in the United States, glued to the news. Now that I am here for good, I have a new perspective. When friends and colleagues in America reach out and check in, it’s clear that the news sources they follow are not nuanced or always accurate.

When we were greeted on Friday, June 13, at 3 a.m., to a shrill sound on our phones, no one knew at first what was happening. It turns out that the alert was meant to inform Israelis to “sit tight.”

Something, of course, was happening. Israel was bombing Iran, and retaliation was imminent.

As the day unfolded, that “pre-snowstorm in America” feel was in the air. Something was about to happen for sure; it was just a matter of time. The Home Front Command announced no school, no work (except for essential services), no social outings, no simchas. Ben-Gurion International Airport was closed.

By 7:45 a.m., I ventured to the nearest grocery store for essentials for Shabbat. We all knew the azakah, or “warning siren,” could go off any minute. We grabbed the basics—milk, challah rolls, fruit and vegetables, hummus, some snacks—and hustled home, relieved that we could all survive the next few days, if necessary.

Shabbat services were soon canceled countrywide. A popular Tel Aviv Modern Orthodox synagogue sent a message in the WhatsApp group telling people to come by the shul at 4 p.m. to pick up some “take-home cholent, since it is already made.”

Parents of young children who look forward to the weekly camaraderie and kiddush associated with the Children’s Tefillah session arranged to meet at 10:30 a.m. on Shabbat in the local playground, which features a huge bomb shelter seconds away. Bleary-eyed moms and dads, who found themselves in and out of shelters with kids and even with their own parents between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. Friday night and into Saturday morning couldn’t stop talking about their experiences.

The lucky ones have a mamad, a safe room in their apartment or apartment building. Most Israelis don’t. Instead, they rely on small, dusty bomb shelters serving an entire apartment building, or they go a few blocks to a local community shelter. Some, like in Tel Aviv, are like modern Jewish Community Centers with multiple safe rooms. These often feature electrical outlets, children’s sleep mattresses and air-conditioning, if you are lucky enough to get a coveted spot. They fill quickly. Hundreds come, along with babies, kids of all ages, even pets. They fill to capacity with the overflow waiting it out in the stairwells.

For parents, work is put on the back burner and is optional for most. Some have spouses—doctors, nurses, other caretakers—who staff Israel’s hospitals, which means that one parent is flying solo with few activities available. Caretakers often can’t make it to work due to erratic public transportation or because they have their own kids or parents to manage. I have learned that in some industries, parents of children up to age 15 or parents of children with disabilities up to age 21 cannot be called in to work; there are similar

rules protecting those whose spouses are on IDF reserve duty.

Waze, unsurprisingly an Israeli innovation, just announced a new feature where the user can easily locate the nearest bomb shelter while out driving or with kids at a playground. It offers some peace of mind to veteran Israelis and new immigrants alike.

On several playgrounds, I saw kids playing a game called azakah and mamad. One child screams out azakah—"bomb alert." The others scream mamad—"bomb shelter." They run, pointedly, in search of safety. They must know what psychologists have known for decades: Play is an effective medium for processing trauma. Maybe so, but I'd prefer to see these kids on a swing set.

It is both mind-blowing and beautiful to watch Israel return to normal following two straight weeks of anxiety, terror and the unknown. Yes, we still always remember the hostages in Gaza, the soldiers who have given their lives in battle, and sadly, those who died in the Iranian missile attacks. But by 7 a.m., there were 20 people in front of me at the Maccabi Health Clinic waiting for blood and other lab tests. The local tennis center was open for business. All nine courts were in use by 9 a.m.

Just two days ago, a couple with two young children were considering a temporary move to the States via Jordan so they could do their jobs, so that their children could get a good night's sleep and maybe even attend a local summer camp.

Now, that's off the table. Ben-Gurion International Airport is open. Some foreigners are trying to get out, and Israelis are trying to get in. Summer programs that were recently canceled will be jump-started next week, including the Birthright Israel program. It's too late to bring the Maccabiah Games back, but athletes are sure to be here in even greater numbers next summer.

It may just be a wonderful summer, after all. Israelis are hopeful, but realistic. Everything can change in just about the time it takes to get to the nearest bomb shelter. (JNS Jul 1)

The Blessing of Christian Support for Israel By Gabe Groisman

The American political landscape is continuously shifting, but some things remain constant. The growing support of the evangelical Christian community in the United States for Israel is a constant that impacts national politics more profoundly than many realize. It is no exaggeration to say that without the evangelical Christian community, U.S. support of Israel would look different today.

Nowhere is this support more visible than at the annual Christians United for Israel (CUFI) Summit in Washington, D.C., the largest pro-Israel gathering in the country. Some 3,000 Christians (and a handful of Jews) from across America come together every year, led by Pastor John Hagee, his wife, Diana, and their daughter, Sandra Hagee Parker, to express their support of Israel in our nation's capital.

Hearing Hagee, the founder of CUFI, state with conviction: "If a line has to be drawn, then draw that line around both Christians and Jews. We are one," is powerful, clear and moving.

For them, standing with Israel is not a choice; it is a religious imperative. They pray for the peace of Jerusalem, donate generously to Israeli causes, speak out loudly against antisemitism and powerfully lobby the U.S. government to support Israel.

This movement is not fringe. It represents millions of Americans, and it is growing.

This stands in stark contrast to the claims by some who are weaponizing Christianity to attack Jewish people and the Jewish state. Of course, none of this is new. Replacement theology, which is the belief that the Christian church has replaced the Jewish people as God's chosen covenant community, rendering God's promises to Israel and the Jewish people as obsolete, is making a comeback. Once used as an excuse for crusades and inquisitions, today it is being used by podcast hosts and others in politics and media to support their isolationist, anti-Israel, and at times, antisemitic viewpoints.

Thankfully, most American Christians either increasingly marginalize or outright reject replacement theology, but it remains influential in certain circles. Its resurgence in any form should concern everyone, however. Instead, those who espouse replacement theology as a tool to divide the growing relationship and partnership between the Christians and Jewish communities should be rejected outright.

The bond between American Christians and Jews extends far

beyond support for Israel. It includes a shared commitment to religious liberty, school choice, family and other core traditional values. This week's CUFI Summit highlights the strength of that alliance. Working together to bolster this partnership, while fending off the naysayers, isn't just the right thing to do; it is essential. (JNS Jul 1)

Israel Owes Trump, But That Can't Mean Hamas's Survival

By Jonathan S. Tobin

President Donald Trump's decision to order a strike on Iranian nuclear targets was yet another example of how he has proven to be a reliable friend of the State of Israel. If, as both Jerusalem and the Pentagon say, Tehran's quest for a bomb have been set back at least two years—and can again be smashed by subsequent Israeli and American military efforts as needed—then it's clear that the president has altered the strategic equation in the region in favor of the Jewish state and against its enemies. He has also continued to supply Israel with the arms it needs, rather than slow-walk them, and to encourage its campaign to destroy Hamas in Gaza, rather than to hamstring its efforts, as the Biden administration did.

Put in context to his groundbreaking pro-Israel decisions during his first term, the president added to a record that eclipses the support offered by any other administration since the founding of the modern-day Jewish state in 1948. All of which means that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is obligated to Trump above and beyond the normal deference owed to Israel's superpower ally.

Yet exactly how far should Netanyahu go to pay that debt when the president demands that he go along with plans that may or may not be in his country's best interests?

It may be that in the coming days, weeks and months, the world will find out the answer to that question.

It is now being widely reported that Israel has agreed to the terms of another ceasefire-hostage release deal with the Hamas terrorists that is being pushed by the president. If leaks about America's offer to the Islamist group are true, it will mean the release of 10 of the remaining living hostages (without being first humiliated by revolting ceremonies in which they would be forced to thank their kidnappers) and 18 bodies of deceased captives in exchange for the release of Palestinian Arab terrorists and a 60-day halt to fighting.

If that's all there is to it, that's a deal that Netanyahu, who will visit Washington next week, can live with, as can even the most right-wing members of his government. But as the prime minister has stated, he believes that any deal must not obligate Israel to end the war on Hamas without forcing the surrender of all remaining hostages and bodies, as well as the leaders of the end of the Islamist terror group's rule in Gaza and the exile of all of its leaders. Should the United States force an end to the conflict without that happening, no amount of rhetoric from Trump or Netanyahu will prevent Hamas from claiming victory. And despite all the losses they have sustained since starting this war while committing unspeakable atrocities on Oct. 7, 2023, such boasts will be largely accurate.

Will the post-Oct. 7 war against Hamas end in that fashion? We don't yet know.

In keeping with the eliminationist beliefs that have been at the core of the Palestinian national movement since its inception in the 20th century, Hamas could well refuse to accept the terms that Trump's envoys have exchanged with them, and with Egyptian and Qatari intermediaries that have been part of the negotiations. Even if they do, their intransigence—and ideological and religious commitment to violence and the shedding of Jewish blood—could prevent any talks during the 60 days of a ceasefire from blossoming into a long-term agreement that could be represented as the end of the war.

The willingness of Hamas to postpone the achievement of its commitment to Israel's destruction and the genocide of its population is not the only variable here. There are other factors to consider.

One is the constant domestic pressure on Netanyahu from both the families of some of the hostages and his political opponents to end the war and to achieve the release of all the captives, regardless of whether it means allowing Hamas to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Just as important as the back-and-forth among Israelis about whether it's time to end the fighting without first securing the defeat of Hamas is what Trump wants out of all this. The president has openly expressed a desire to end the war in Gaza and to use that, along with the crippling of Iran and its terrorist proxies, to expand the Abraham Accords. That is the X factor in the negotiations that could well force Netanyahu to make concessions he wouldn't otherwise be inclined to give up.

To date, Netanyahu has reiterated that he won't allow that to happen. But if Hamas is prepared to act in accordance with its best interests as opposed to its bloodthirsty ideology and Trump demands it, would he be forced to give in?

That's likely the assumption in Trumpworld. It's also something that many of Netanyahu's supporters fear.

There's no question that the U.S. president is willing to pressure Israel, whether publicly or privately, when he thinks that it's in his interests. His profane demand that Israeli planes be turned around before striking Iran again when Tehran violated the ceasefire is an example.

It's also necessary to reiterate the obvious fact that, as much as the interests of the two allies are aligned, they are not identical. Perhaps the president thinks that holding Israel back from finally finishing the job against Hamas in Gaza can lead to what he wants: an expanded Abraham Accords with, as its centerpiece, Saudi Arabia formally recognizing the State of Israel.

That's something Netanyahu has also stated as the main goal of his diplomatic plans. If it happens, it would be a remarkable achievement considering that the desert monarchy is the guardian of Islam's holiest places and, for the first seven decades of Israel's existence, was the lynchpin of the Arab and Muslim world's unflinching hostility to the existence of the Jewish state.

It also fits perfectly into Trump's transactional vision for the Middle East, in which all nations act in their self-interest, and prioritize trade and good relations with the West while turning their backs on rogue terrorist regimes like that of Iran.

While the prospect of such a game-changing diplomatic event has been endlessly talked up by both the Trump administration and Netanyahu's government as not merely possible but inevitable, some skepticism about this is warranted.

If, as we have every reason to believe, not only the nuclear threat but the power of Iran to create mayhem in the Middle East has been seriously degraded, that effectively removes a key incentive for the Saudis to recognize Israel.

Their shift toward a productive, albeit under-the-table relationship with Israel dates back to the Barack Obama administration's attempt to appease Iran. Far from being motivated by the royal family's conversion to Zionism from the extreme Wahabi strain of Islam that was the driving force behind its rise to power in the Arabian peninsula, it was fear of being left at the mercy of the Shia mullahs in Tehran that led them to reach out to the Jewish state as a military ally. The ties between Israel and the Saudis have grown since then as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's efforts to modernize his nation have moved in tandem with a decision to stop funding Islamist fundamentalists around the globe. That's an unfortunate practice that has been taken up by Qatar, despite Trump's embrace of that emirate as a supposed U.S. ally.

But if the Saudis now have fewer reasons to fear Iran, that also means they are bound to be less interested in full peace with Israel.

The cost-benefit analysis of normalization of relations with Jerusalem for the Saudis is not as simple as optimists about an expanded Abraham Accords like to pretend. There are real risks for the Saudis to give their seal of approval to Israel as a permanent addition to the Middle East. It goes against the Saudis' faith and ideology, as well as the prevailing anti-Jewish sentiments of most Muslims and Arabs. That's true even if many of their governments have come to the logical conclusion that peace with Israel is to the benefit of everyone except the Palestinian Arabs and their supporters, who still cling to fantasies about its annihilation.

The Saudis like their sideline relationship with Israel just fine since it gives them the benefits of a strategic alliance without the cost of undermining its stature as the regime most associated with Muslim legitimacy. The only thing that might tempt them to risk normalization

would be if the United States were to give what they requested when Riyadh told the Biden administration in March 2023 what its price for such a move would be.

The Saudis asked for the moon. They not only wanted the United States to formally guarantee their security; they also wanted aid to start their own nuclear program. Neither request is ever likely to be granted, as Congress is unlikely to pass such a treaty, and no conceivable American administration would go along with letting them go nuclear.

Since then, the Saudis have publicly spoken about adding to their wish list by demanding that Israel agree to start a diplomatic process that could lead to the creation of a Palestinian state. Riyadh is opposed to such an outcome since another failed Arab state in the regime would likely fall into the hands of Islamist fundamentalists—something not in their interests. But since Oct. 7, greater pressure has been exerted on the Saudis to at least pretend to support the Palestinians.

The administration believes the Saudis may be willing to agree to normalization without granting their extravagant requests. But that brings us back to the first step toward expanding the Abraham Accords: a deal that would end the war in Gaza.

It's important to remember that the war aims of the Israeli government—the defeat of Hamas and the return of all of the hostages—are still mutually exclusive. As has been obvious since the terrorist invasion of southern Israel, getting all the remaining live hostages back will require Netanyahu to let Hamas survive in Gaza. He has rightly stated that means giving the terrorists the opportunity to rebuild and rearm, and to make good their pledges to commit more assaults like those that occurred on Oct. 7.

Like the wildly unrealistic plans for a state in Judea and Samaria to be given to the Palestinian Authority and its corrupt Fatah leadership, which was embraced by the Biden administration and European nations, the prospect of a withdrawal from Gaza without the eradication of Hamas is inconsistent with any idea of preserving Israeli security.

It's also inconsistent with Trump's vision for Gaza's future, which, whether or not the idea of the coastal enclave being turned into a resort is possible, relies on Hamas being destroyed. That would be true of even far less grandiose schemes. No progress toward peace of any sort is imaginable until the end of the terrorist organization is secured.

That's something that Trump—and his foreign-policy team—have periodically shown signs of understanding despite promoting ceasefire agreements with the terrorists. It is to be hoped that Trump is prepared to assure Netanyahu that Israel will be free to resume the war against Hamas if its demands for their surrender of Gaza are not met by the time the proposed 60-day halt in the war is concluded. If so, Netanyahu will likely go along with it.

However, if Trump's appetite for putative peace deals is great enough for him to buy into the idea that there is no point in continuing the fight against Hamas, then Netanyahu will eventually be forced to make a difficult choice.

The president has reason to think Israel owes him a lot for what he has done. But that gratitude cannot take the form of agreeing to measures that are not merely antithetical to its security but the realities of its post-Oct. 7 existence. Netanyahu is loath to say “no” to Trump. Doing so could spoil an essential relationship with an irreplaceable ally, further isolate the Jewish state abroad and put him in a difficult political position at home. No one in Israel wants to find out how Trump, despite his consistent support for Israel, will react to being thwarted when he thinks a deal is on the table.

Friends of Israel have to hope it never comes to that.

Hamas may prove again to be too wedded to its insane dreams of annihilating Israel to agree to the sort of deal Trump might propose. And the president may, despite the expectations of so many of his Jewish detractors and the noises coming from him and the White House about wanting the war to end now, be too sensible ever to go along with something that will let Hamas survive. But if not, it will be up to Netanyahu to hold his ground, however difficult that might be. (JNS Jul 2)