



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*

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What to Teach (and
not Teach) your
Children about Israel
By Jonathan S. Tobin

As if Jewish educators didn't have enough problems these days, actor Seth Rogen set off a controversy which, along with giving his new Jewish-themed

Commentary...

The Beirut Blast Changes Everything By Yoav Limor

Even before all the details emerged about the enormous explosion that rocked Beirut on Tuesday, it was clear that this event would change things completely.

Because things in the Middle East don't tend to blow up on their own, one's first instinct is to look for the party responsible for the blast. WhatsApp groups and tweets rushed to finger Israel, but a quick probe prompted all political and defense officials in Israel to issue a flat denial.

Past experience also shows that Israel is very careful in selecting its targets, and even more careful in trying to ensure that its actions will not result in collateral damage. Not only due to a desire not to kill innocent people, but also due to the understanding that an incident like this could launch a cycle of bloodshed and revenge that could even become a war. Errors can happen, but one of this magnitude—with thousands of wounded and vast damage—would be highly unusual for Israel.

In the first minutes that followed the event, some feared that Hezbollah would accuse Israel to avoid being blamed. But the organization, with help from news outlets in Lebanon, rushed to make it clear that Israel was not involved.

Things will become clearer once it is determined what exactly blew up in Beirut, and whether it was a military incident (involving a weapons storehouse) or a civilian one (stocks of some explosive material)—rumors in Lebanon on Tuesday said that it was stores of nitrogen).

Either way, Israel and Hezbollah still haven't settled their accounts. The organization wants to avenge the death of its operative two weeks ago in a strike on a weapons storehouse in Damascus that was attributed to Israel. The IDF is following all reports from Beirut closely, and for now is not dropping the level of alert on the northern border.

But the Beirut blast could upend everything for Hezbollah. It happened at a historic low point for Lebanon: The country is in the midst of an unprecedented economic crisis, with growing unemployment and on the verge of bankruptcy. Hezbollah is being blamed for thwarting economic reforms that were a condition for aid from the World Bank and European nations. Between that and the coronavirus pandemic, the Lebanese public has very little tolerance for any escalation of security tensions Hezbollah might cause by attempts to kill Israel Defense Forces' soldiers.

Now, after what might be the worst incident in Lebanon's history, the public will have even less inclination for needless security headaches caused by Hezbollah's foolishness. Given Israel's clear warnings—originally reported in Israel Hayom—that any attack on Israelis would lead to strikes on Lebanese national infrastructure, we can expect growing pressure within Hezbollah's ranks to avoid dangerous capers.

In addition to that pressure, an international tribunal is expected this weekend to publish its findings on the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The prevailing belief is that the court will blame Hezbollah for the murder directly and demand that it hand over the operatives who carried it out.

The organization will deny the accusations (leader Hassan Nasrallah is expected to make a speech on Wednesday evening), but it's doubtful whether 15 years after Hezbollah shocked Lebanon by murdering a popular prime minister, the group will now choose to destabilize the country again through a war with Israel. And to hamper Hezbollah even more, Israel on Tuesday was quick to offer humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

Lebanon will probably reject the offer, but the gesture was made not only to show that Israel was not involved, but also to make it clear to Lebanon who the good guys offering aid are (Israel), and who the bad guys are who want to drag the nation into a war (Hezbollah).

(Israel Hayom Aug 5)

movie undeserved publicity, focused attention on the failures of Jewish facilities to produce students that understand and care about the state of Israel. Rogen set Twitter aflame last week with comments made on the popular "WTF" podcast with host Marc Maron in which he seemed to question Israel's right to exist. But the collateral damage in what ultimately proved to be a successful ploy to gain publicity for Rogen's upcoming movie "An American Pickle" was the whole concept of Jewish education.

Rogen's rant, during which both he and Maron agreed that Israel's existence "didn't make sense," focused on how he felt that he'd "been fed a huge amount of lies about Israel my entire life." Understandably, it infuriated much of the Jewish world.

The diatribe seemed to be straight out of the playbook of anti-Zionist groups like IfNotNow and Jewish Voice for Peace, which falsely assert that young Jews are fed lies about Israel that can only be counteracted by subjecting them to anti-Israel propaganda about it being an "apartheid state." Rogen's comments exemplified the contempt for Jewish rights and history that characterizes the attitudes of the woke set that controls so much of popular culture these days.

That's bad enough, but as we learned the details about Rogen's background—something about which many of us were blissfully ignorant prior to the last week—the more it appeared that fingers weren't being pointed to leftist Hollywood culture as they were for the failures of Jewish education in North America.

Rogen was rightly blasted for demonstrating a lack of understanding of history, as well as for arrogantly dismissing the rights of the 7 million Jews living in Israel. But contrary to the assumptions of many of his critics, he actually received a day-school education growing up in Vancouver, Canada. And unlike many American Jews who really do know nothing about Israel, that isn't true of Rogen. His parents met there while volunteering on a kibbutz and the actor has visited Israel a few times.

Yet anyone who heard the podcast got the impression that Rogen has as much contempt for his old day school and the Zionist summer camp he attended (Habonim Dror), where he apparently disliked the Israeli counselors, as he has for the Jewish state.

Afterwards, Rogen flip-flopped about whether he was joking. He spoke with Jewish Agency head Isaac Herzog and apologized. Later, he insisted that he hadn't apologized and then told Haaretz that he was a proud Jew, opposed anti-Semitism, supported Israel's existence and mentioned that his old school wasn't so bad, even if he now has no use for religion.

It's not clear whether Rogen was upset at the idea of angering Jews, of being perceived as being unduly influenced by pro-Israel Jews or if he just didn't want any bad PR on the eve of the release of a movie with a Jewish theme whose primary audience may consist of the very people most offended by his words. Perhaps the correct answer is all of the above.

Rogen's Jewish bona fides and opinions about Israel are of little interest. What is important is the way his comments seemed to confirm the low opinion most alumni of the various forms of Jewish education offered to kids, particularly during the time he attended, in the United States and Canada have about their experiences.

More clichés about subpar Jewish schools are the last thing that families, teachers and administrators of the beleaguered system need right now. With so many schools closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, and children and parents overwhelmed by the problems associated with enforced makeshift "home-schooling," Jewish education is not merely suffering along with other aspects of daily living, but is also likely being treated as a lower priority by many families.

And with Jewish institutions being hit hard along with other nonprofits by the economic recession caused by the pandemic, the future for many full-time day schools and synagogue schools appears bleak.

So, if anything, the current situation may make for even poorer

Jewish educational experiences that will turn off yet another generation of kids on the values and the greatness of Judaism, Jewish history and Israel.

But rather than crack wise like poster boy Rogen or lament the inexorable advance of assimilation that is already imploding the demographics of non-Orthodox Jewry, it's time for Jewish parents to seize this singular moment to rededicate themselves to ensuring that their children are not losing out on their heritage.

As difficult as current circumstances may be—with parents and children often working and learning at home at all hours in all rooms—families need to recognize that Jewish education cannot be given short-shrift, and that this moment provides an opportunity as well as formidable challenges.

As hard as it may be to think about anything beyond the struggle to survive both economically and psychologically in the midst of a health crisis, the situation that has thrown so many families together is also one that affords parents a chance to engage with children on Jewish topics that run the gamut.

This doesn't mean lecturing kids about what Judaism or Israel means to you. Rather, it represents an opportunity to learn together from the host of online resources available in the 21st century. Indeed, family education—the key to success in any Jewish format—has never been easier to pursue. For all of the challenges of life during COVID-19, the time and amenities to devote to Jewish learning and practice are there. All it requires is the effort and commitment.

Jewish and Zionist education has never really been the mind-control propaganda session that Rogen and Israel's critics make it out to be. While enthusiasm for Israel's miraculous rebirth and survival is atypical and well-deserved, American Jews have never been shy about talking about both sides of the conflict with the Palestinians—something especially true of the Labor Zionist summer camp that Rogen attended. Empathy for the tragedy of the Palestinians is typical of most Jewish educational and even religious systems. If anything has generally been in short supply, it's the sort of in-depth learning about Zionist history that would better define to youngsters the justice of Israel's cause.

While misinformation about the Middle East is commonplace, the main source of falsehoods is the mainstream media, and not the overworked and underfinanced Jewish educational system.

If parents don't want the next generation to grow up both ignorant and resentful about the inadequate Jewish education they received, then the place to start is at home by demonstrating that learning is as important to the busy heads of the household as it is to children who right now have too much time on their hands. The outcome isn't dependent on other people or institutions, as important as they may be. The impact of at-home learning activities, coupled with family trips to Israel once they become possible again, is incalculable.

Seth Rogen's complaints about what he did or didn't learn about Israel, the Jewish people and the Palestinians when he was young aren't important. Ensuring that other Jewish children in America won't grow up without knowing the beauty of living traditions and the glories of their heritage is dependent on their families and their extended communities. If they can't get that right, then there is no one to blame but themselves. (JNS Aug 4)

Look Who's Calling Whom 'UnXeptable' By Ruthie Blum

Israeli expatriates living in California gathered on Friday near the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to protest Prime Minister Benjamin ("Bibi") Netanyahu.

Singing the Hebrew song "Kol Haolam Kulo Gesher Tzar Me'od" ("The world is a very narrow bridge")—the lyrics of which are from Likutei Moharan, a collection of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's teachings—the dozens of expats accused Netanyahu of destroying Israeli democracy.

The organizers of this and similar rallies—held in solidarity with the mass protests that have become part of the weekend scenery in the country of their birth—are former Israelis who call their movement "UnXeptable."

This otherwise scattered crew from different locations in the United States and Europe has in common the type of attachment to the land they love and left as to cause them to pine for activism in their mother tongue. And it's no wonder, considering the errors in English on their Facebook page, starting with the second half of their title: "Saving the Israeli democracy."

Given the seriousness of their quest, they might have asked a native to proofread their copy before posting it on social media. Apparently, they were in too much of a hurry to bother, however, what with the urgency of the task at hand.

In a mistake-laden mission statement from July 25, the group states, "... Israelis understand that the current crisis of COVID-19 with the 20% unemployment it caused, can't be handled by an indicted prime minister who is fighting to save himself rather than the country. Netanyahu's legal situation makes him unfit to take big decisions about the future of our country, such as his annexation declarations. Israelis in the Silicon Valley and all across the US are standing with our brothers and sisters, saying: we've got your back! We are raising donations for marketing materials, transportations, signs, sound equipment, and any other needs that can help save Israeli democracy. Our democracy depends on stopping Netanyahu from taking more power to himself and reducing the individual's freedom."

With all their verbiage, the one question that neither the expats above nor their brethren back home are able to answer is how Netanyahu is harming democracy. That's because he isn't.

A snap lesson in recent history is in order.

The April 9, 2019 Knesset elections resulted in a surprise impasse. The Blue and White Party, headed by Benny Gantz, tied with Netanyahu's Likud and though the right-wing bloc had a majority, Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman decided at the last minute not to join either side.

The second round of Knesset elections, held on Sept. 17 of that year, also ended in a deadlock—this time with Blue and White having garnered one seat more than Likud, but with no chance of cobbling together a coalition. A third-round was scheduled for six months hence.

Meanwhile, the naysayers claiming that Netanyahu had run his course as the longest-serving prime minister in the country's history were left with egg on their faces when he won the Dec. 26 Likud primary by a landslide, despite looming criminal charges against him.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit formally issued the indictments—for bribery, fraud and breach of trust—on Jan. 28, mere hours before Netanyahu attended the unveiling of U.S. President Donald Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" Mideast plan at the White House.

The third round of Knesset elections, which coincided with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, took place on March 2, 2020. This time, voters (some of whom had contracted COVID-19 and were provided special polling stations in protective tents) gave Likud a greater number of mandates than Blue and White, but still not enough to form a coalition. After weeks of wrangling, Gantz finally agreed to enter into a national-unity government with Netanyahu.

According to the coalition agreement, which was signed on April 20, the premiership would rotate—first with Netanyahu at the helm and then, after 18 months, with Gantz assuming the role.

Gantz angered many of his voters by reneging on his vow never to sit in a government with Netanyahu. But those most livid were not really his supporters per se; they were a diverse bunch with different political affiliations who had come together for the sole purpose of defeating Netanyahu. This is why as soon as Gantz sealed the deal, the parties that made up Blue and White splintered off into their original factions—returning Likud to its status as the largest party in the Israeli parliament.

The process was grueling, due to the electoral system. But there was nothing undemocratic about it, including Gantz's decision to stave off a fourth round of elections, which nobody wanted and that the country could ill afford.

This brings us to the current mob-fest that is gaining momentum in Israel and spurring expats to want in on the action. The unrest basically boils down to money, or rather a lack thereof, caused by the two months of lockdowns imposed by the government to curb the spread of the virus.

Small businesses were hit particularly hard, as they were not eligible initially for the kind of benefits awarded to laid-off salaried workers. Netanyahu, a free-market champion, was sympathetic to their plight.

Against the judgement of various health experts, he proceeded to reopen much of the economy in mid-May, when the coronavirus curve had flattened. He would have gone further with the policy if there hadn't been an uptick in contagion and a steady rise in the death

toll.

His main blunder was bureaucratic. The distribution of cash to the self-employed was chaotic; it was also too little, too late. The fury among those who lost their livelihoods was both legitimate and palpable, yet had nothing to do with Netanyahu's legal troubles.

As for the emergency measures that he has adopted to monitor carriers and conduct epidemiological surveys: All are temporary and have been approved by the Knesset, as Israeli democracy requires.

Like every world leader today caught between fiscal woes and public-health concerns, Netanyahu is criticized simultaneously for ruining the economy and endangering lives. That citizens are disgruntled and panicked is understandable.

But what any of this has to do with the hysteria and vulgarity at the protests is beyond comprehension.

If the demonstrations are about Netanyahu's "corruption," well, his trial is underway, and he is innocent until proven otherwise. Moreover, those who feel that he cannot serve the country under such conditions should not vote for him the next time around.

If, on the other hand, the protests are about the tragedy of small businesses, then why are Palestinian and anarchist black flags flying overhead? And how is it connected to the proposed "annexation" of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria? In any case, all such issues are repeatedly on the proverbial and literal ballot.

Indeed, each person at these weekly riots near Netanyahu's residence has the right to vote—a right that was exercised, much to everyone's dismay, three times in the course of the past year. Nor is there any guarantee that the outcome of a fourth-round would be different. It is even possible that Netanyahu would do better if elections were held today, since Blue and White is no longer a large bloc.

Still, if the protesters were calling for new elections, that at least would be a tangible goal. Instead, they are behaving like a bunch of 1960s' radicals in weird get-ups and pornographic props: a guy wearing a pig's head, pointing his middle fingers at TV cameras; a girl with Netanyahu's face painted on each of her bare breasts; another using filthy terms for female genitalia; a young man in fishnet stockings wrapped in crime-scene tape; and several people carrying large inflatable penises, on which is written something that Netanyahu said to his wife a decade ago: "Come on, Sara'leh, let's get out of here."

Describing any of this as Netanyahu "taking more power to himself and reducing the individual's freedom" is truly "unXeptable." (JNS Aug 4)

The Sovereignty Debate, Down on the Ground By Naomi Kahn

The debate surrounding the application of Israeli law to Judea and Samaria—all, part or none of Area C—has taken up quite a lot of the airwaves, columns of print, seemingly endless hours of public discussion and debate and international diplomatic energy.

Thus far, the debate has been high-brow, focusing on geopolitical scenarios, legal rights and wrongs, ethics and history, but has failed to explain how sovereignty—or a lack thereof—impacts the lives of the people living in Judea and Samaria, no matter who they are. When it comes down to it, how will the application of Israeli law to Jewish communities in what is known as Area C, the portion of the disputed territory designated for full Israeli jurisdiction under the Oslo Accords, affect regular people living there?

To sharpen the focus on this seemingly simple question, we must first understand the current reality—the "temporary" situation that has existed since June 1967, and the mechanisms through which Israel continues to administer this territory and to oversee the lives of its residents.

After Israel's crushing victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israeli government was apparently frightened by its own success. Rather than taking the natural, normal, standard steps that have always been taken by governments to secure their own borders after a war of self-defense, Israel did not restore the originally intended and internationally recognized borders of the Jewish State by reinstating its sovereignty over the liberated territory of Judea and Samaria—which had been occupied illegally by Jordan for 19 years. Instead, Israel voluntarily placed this territory in a state of limbo, relegating its status to "disputed territory" and placing it under military rule. The law that would be enforced in these areas regarding property rights, it was decided, would revert to the system enacted by the last known

sovereign—in this case, the Ottoman Empire.

Unbelievable as this may seem, Ottoman Land Law continues to be the law of the land in Judea and Samaria. Contrary to what far too many journalists and foreign "Middle East experts" whom I have met believe, the Ottoman legal system is enforced by the State of Israel across the board; it applies to both Jewish and Arab residents of Area C.

This anomalous situation is, in a nutshell, what makes the application of Israeli sovereignty in these areas so important, so logical and so beneficial for everyone who lives there, and for the State of Israel and its neighbors, as well. Simply put, Ottoman Land Law makes no sense in today's world, and the situation as it stands is untenable.

The system of law currently in force in Judea and Samaria is so outmoded that it was abandoned everywhere else in the world more than 100 years ago. Some of the most egregious aspects of this bizarre system are rarely discussed. For example, under Ottoman law, you can steal someone else's property simply by using it for awhile; under Ottoman Land Law, women are not allowed to own, inherit, buy or sell property; under Ottoman law, private individuals may lay claim to public property simply by planting trees on it.

Many of these loopholes have been exploited to Israel's extreme disadvantage, but the underlying principles of this outrageous system are infuriating even on paper—and this is the law that Israel's courts (headed by a female chief justice and administered by great legal minds) enforces upon on Jews and Arabs alike, only because the State of Israel has not had the nerve to replace it.

To make matters worse, the most recent State Comptroller's report on the Civil Administration (the arm of the Israeli defense and civilian systems tasked with serving the population of this area and enforcing the strange, multi-layered system to maintain law and order), spotlights the procedural nightmares, the jurisdictional morass and the outrageous discrimination—against Israelis—that has been caused by the failure to extend Israeli law to these areas.

Even a cursory read between the lines of the State Comptroller's report is a shock to the senses. The purpose of the State Comptroller's report is to identify the gaps, failures and lacunae that inevitably occur within and among the bureaucracies and branches of government, but the quantity and quality of the failures of the Civil Administration outlined in this report illustrate that there is a fundamental problem that cannot be resolved without the application of Israeli sovereignty. Patchwork solutions will not turn the worn and tattered blanket of law that is meant to stave off chaos in the heart of Israel into a more just and democratic instrument.

The State Comptroller's report highlights the Civil Administration's built-in "fatal flaws"—flaws that Regavim, an NGO dedicated to preserving Israel's land resources through the equal and universal enforcement of the law, has been battling for over a decade.

First, the administrative flaw. The Civil Administration is the servant of two masters, as it were—the Israel Defense Forces/Ministry of Defense security apparatus, on the one hand, and the civil sector and each of the government ministries that comprise it, on the other. These two masters don't get along, don't communicate and can't decide who's in charge of what.

The various unit commanders, who parallel the work of each of the relevant ministries, essentially operate as independent fiefdoms, with no oversight or coordination. The list of gaps goes on and on, and the residents of Area C pay the price when they are forced to deal with the most byzantine bureaucracy on the planet. So, too, do all Israeli taxpayers, who are footing the bill for this ridiculous duplication of services and procedures.

A second massive failing in the system is the basic fact that the Land Registry for Judea and Samaria is not available to Israeli citizens—which in and of itself constitutes a severe infringement of property rights and freedom of information, and a form of discrimination that would not be allowed anywhere else in the world. Additionally, the administration of the Land Registry is completely outmoded. The painstaking, glacial pace of hand-written record-keeping is fertile ground for forgery, and leads to further violation of property rights, making it nearly impossible to conduct property transactions in a normal fashion.

Israel's failure to carry out the necessary registration and regulation of land in these areas has enabled the Palestinian Authority to carry out a well-planned, carefully-timed and well-funded land-seizure program: Hundreds of thousands of dunams of land in Judea

and Samaria have been commandeered through illegal construction and agricultural projects. To make matters worse, the Palestinian Authority has done precisely what the State of Israel has failed to do for more than 50 years, creating its own land registry in areas under full Israeli jurisdiction and redefining reality with facts on the ground.

Those opposed to the application of Israeli law in Judea and Samaria are either ignorant of the glaring injustices that are part and parcel of Ottoman Land Law, or are willing to sacrifice the rights of Jewish residents of Israel's historic heartland. Those who would maintain the status quo of Civil Administration responsibility for the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of people, Jews and Arabs alike, are holding those people hostage and denying them all a minimum standard of public service and government responsiveness, stymying development and prosperity and squandering the precious natural, human and economic resources that we all could share.

Replacing Ottoman law with the modern, democratic system in force throughout Israel simply makes sense. It will benefit whoever is brought under Israeli sovereignty—Jews and Arabs alike—and will have no impact whatsoever on the path toward a negotiated resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Although this step is long overdue, now is the time to take advantage of the opportunity to correct historic injustices. Residents of Judea and Samaria deserve the same standards of justice, professionalism and public service as every other citizen of Israel and all other Western societies. (JNS Aug 5)

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Don't Forego an Historic Opportunity By Isi Liebler

Virtually overnight, the coronavirus pandemic descended upon us, inflicting sickness and death. Not surprisingly, this depressed us and made us angst-ridden, as it did to others around the world. An unprecedented economic crisis, with massive unemployment, social dislocation and suffering, compounded our health concerns.

There is no complete solution in the short term although there is optimism that a vaccine will be created within a year. But even the most pessimistic doomsday prophets concede that, despite impending further tragic loss of life, humanity will overcome this challenge, especially as it is rarely lethal for younger people.

While understandably the coronavirus now dominates everyday life, we must continue to face our ongoing domestic and global security issues.

For the government, this includes not foregoing the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of progressing toward applying sovereignty to the major settlement blocs and ensuring our security and borders.

For months, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly proclaimed that, in line with the Trump peace plan, he would apply Israeli sovereignty to all settlements and the Jordan Valley.

Although Netanyahu's coalition partner, Blue and White, has expressed its desire to ensure that other international parties be consulted in the framework of the Trump plan, it has not reneged on its commitment to adopt it. Had Netanyahu sought to launch the plan, Blue and White would have been obliged to approve, even if subject to minor modifications. However, even before the second wave of the coronavirus swept the country, Netanyahu failed to advance its implementation.

The radical right's rejection of the Trump plan is irrelevant. The plan provides for a demilitarized Palestinian state in which the Palestinians would be required to agree to an end of conflict, discard all claims against Israel, reject terrorism, dismantle the Hamas and terrorist infrastructures, cease all incitement against Israel, forego the so-called Palestinian right of return, and unconditionally recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

It is inconceivable that the Palestinians would ever accept such terms. But if in the far distant future they did, such a Palestinian state would not be a threat to Israel and would certainly be a massive improvement on the current state of affairs under the corrupt Palestinian Authority.

By refusing to contemplate even the remotest possibility of compromise, the far right sacrifices not only Israel's long-term national security interests but also the continued viability of their own communities. There could be no greater example of self-destructive madness blinded by an uncompromising, irrational messianic zeal.

Most Israelis would not approve a solution in which all of Judea and Samaria, including large Arab populations, is annexed. The

absorption of such a mass of hostile Arabs into the state with full civil rights would achieve the Palestinian objective of a binational state and the erosion of the Jewish state.

Despite the coronavirus, should Netanyahu proceed now with the Trump plan, the parameters of the national unity government would ensure his success. Even more importantly, subject to minor concessions, he would be able to obtain consensus with Blue and White, setting a long-term precedent of applying Israeli sovereignty to Judea and Samaria with international recognition led by the US. The US administration has indicated that it will provide full support to annexation of major settlement blocs and the Jordan Valley if supported by the Israeli consensus and within the framework of the Trump plan.

But Netanyahu appears to be prioritizing a short-term political need, compounded by the impending trial he faces, to freeze this issue. Indeed, he has hinted that if he does not achieve agreement with his coalition partner over the budget, this would trigger a fourth national election in November. In the meantime, he would continue leading a caretaker government.

This would be scandalous and intensify the current outrage over his behavior. It would impact on our battle against the coronavirus and would close the narrow window of opportunity that might never recur, to apply Israeli sovereignty over the major settlement blocs and enhance our security. The primary blame would rest with Netanyahu for pursuing his own interests rather than the national interest.

US President Donald Trump is currently concentrating on his re-election campaign and the coronavirus crisis. Israel may not be his major priority but if our government reflects the national consensus and speaks in a unified voice, Trump would in all probability still actively support the implementation of his plan and formally recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan valley and settlements in Judea and Samaria .

We cannot rely on the backing of American Jews because, aside from the Orthodox, most have shown that their hatred for Trump far exceeds their support of Israel, which has now become a marginal issue. But the Christian evangelicals who back the Trump plan have tremendous influence on the current administration. They will have no political clout should Joe Biden win the presidency.

Indeed, should Trump lose the election, we are likely to be confronted with a radicalized Biden-led Democratic administration that would be far more hostile to us than was the Obama White House. The Democrats for the first time include a number of highly influential outright anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic elements.

Backed by the Europeans, they would see moral equivalence between us and the terrorists, and call for negotiations that take the 1967 boundaries as their starting point. They would accept at face value fake Palestinian peace statements made simultaneously with open calls to their people to intensify terrorism until the Jewish state is destroyed.

Biden has also pledged that he would seek to resurrect the infamous Iran nuclear deal, which would make Israel more susceptible than ever to pressure.

Until the US elections, we are in a unique position, with an American administration that is more supportive of us than any administration has ever been and that confronts the Palestinians on terror and their ongoing obscene financial rewards for Jew-killers.

We now have a so-called national unity government in which all parties pledged to accept the American peace plan. We should not allow Netanyahu to torpedo our chances for long-term security and viability.

Despite the coronavirus, we must take advantage of this United States initiative to accept a plan that enables us to incorporate into Israeli boundaries the large settlement blocs and the Jordan Valley. Failure to proceed will be viewed as a historical act of madness and an unforgivable betrayal by dysfunctional leaders who missed this unique opportunity because of short-term personal and political factors. Netanyahu must not dillydally. Even though Netanyahu deserves credit for the formulation of the Trump Plan, if the government does not act now, it will be recorded in the annals of history as having lost an historic opportunity that may never repeat itself. (Jerusalem Post Aug 4)