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From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

Commentary…

Bennett's Goals, Israel's Goals By Caroline Glick

Three weeks ago, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and Defense Minister Benny Gantz convened the ambassadors from all the U.N. Security Council member nations in Jerusalem. They told them that if Iran maintains its current pace of uranium enrichment, it will reach military nuclear break-out capacity in 70 days. If their countdown clock is accurate, Iran is now around seven weeks away from becoming a nuclear-capable state.

Given the urgency of the situation, Israel's prime minister could have been expected to fly to Washington to make clear to the U.S. president that Israel intends to attack Iran's nuclear facilities at Qom, Fordo, Natanz and Isfahan (or any combination of them) in order to stop the clock. The same prime minister could be expected to tell the president that while Israel would appreciate U.S. assistance in carrying out the mission, all Israel asks is for the United States not to undermine its operation.

On the face of things then, it makes sense to assess Naftali Bennett's trip to Washington in the context of the urgency of the hour. And on the face of things, it appears to have been carried out in this context.

Over the past few weeks, Biden has demonstrated that his judgment is impaired. The apparent absence of any strategic or operational foresight informing America's humiliating withdrawal from Kabul, and Biden's failure to coordinate the operation with U.S. allies, has decimated his credibility. U.S. allies recognize that they cannot trust America under his leadership.

If it was so important to Bennett to come in the midst of all of this, he could have been expected to leverage the current crisis to make clear that Israel is not following the United States down the rabbit hole. That Israel will defend itself and the time to act has arrived.

כתיבה וחתימה טובה

But that doesn't appear to be what happened. Bennett said that he presented Biden with a completely new strategy for blocking Iran from becoming a nuclear-armed state. And Biden helpfully said that he was committed to blocking Iran from ever acquiring nuclear weapons. But Biden also said that he doesn't think the situation is urgent at all. On the contrary. He said, "We're putting diplomacy first and seeing where it takes us." He added blandly, "But if diplomacy fails, we're ready to turn to other options."

If Iran is on target to become a nuclear-capable state in seven weeks, then the upshot of Biden's statement is that the Biden administration is willing to live with a nuclear Iran.

There was no evidence of tension between the two leaders in their joint appearance at the Oval Office. This despite the fact that Biden's claim that he would consider "other options" was far weaker than statements by then-President Barack Obama. At the height of his efforts to appease Iran through nuclear concessions, Obama said that the "military option is on the table." Even worse, when U.S. reporters asked White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki what other options are being considered, she said that at this point, no options other than diplomacy are being considered in respect to Iran's nuclear activities.

Biden failed in Afghanistan because he apparently believed that with the unstinting support of the U.S. media, he didn't need to bother putting together a coherent withdrawal plan or discussing it ahead of time with U.S. allies. He was convinced that good PR meant you don't need a good policy. His failure in Afghanistan proves that reality is unmoved by press clippings.

Israel's media are Bennett's flacks. And the reporters and commentators on TV claimed that Bennett's goal was simply to sit down with Biden. Just by sitting in the Oval Office, he showed that he is the prime minister now—not the other guy. But here too, the reality is a stubborn thing. According to Lapid and Gantz, we are but seven weeks away from Iran becoming a nuclear state. The atmospherics of the meeting had no impact on that state of affairs.

Biden's fiasco in Kabul showed the world that he is not a trustworthy ally. In their joint appearance, even the nice promise that Iran will not get nuclear weapons, which Biden read from his cue cards, could not diminish the fact that his underlying message is that he is not with Israel on Iran.

Bennett told reporters after the meeting that he had accomplished what he set out to achieve. And maybe that's true. But it will be reality, not successful public relations, that will decide if Israel got anything out of the trip. On the face of things, that doesn't seem to be the case. (Israel Hayom Aug 29)

Repatriating Israeli Captives is a Humanitarian Right under International Conventions By Alan Baker

During the Aug. 27 meeting in Washington between Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, U.S. President Joe Biden and senior American officials, among the subjects discussed were Israel's preconditions for the reconstruction of Gaza.

Bennett stressed Israel's requirement that, prior to any reconstruction of Gaza, there be an immediate commitment by Hamas to an effective termination of rocket fire against Israel, as well as an end to the stockpiling of rockets by Hamas.

The prime minister also stressed the additional and central Israeli requirement for progress on a deal to return two Israeli citizens and the bodies of two Israel Defense Forces soldiers held hostage in Gaza by Hamas and its associated terror organizations.

During the discussion, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made the surprising and even shocking observation that the issue of the return of the Israeli captives should not be a prerequisite for basic humanitarian matters, such as enabling passage into Gaza of fuel and electricity.

From this remark it would appear that Blinken does not regard repatriation of Israeli civilian hostages and the remains of Israeli soldiers as a "humanitarian matter." He evidently prefers to consider the passage of fuel and electricity as meriting greater humanitarian priority and value, more than anything else.

This shocking observation conveys a distorted and incorrect message to the leadership of the Hamas terror organization, implying U.S. support for downgrading the genuine humanitarian issue of Israel's missing civilians and dead bodies, in favor of establishing an equivalence with the mundane issue of the transfer of fuel and electricity.

Such an equivalency runs counter to all accepted humanitarian norms, and is indicative of a double standard in the thinking of the secretary, and possibly of the State Department, inasmuch as his view represents that of the department.

The right of families to know the fate of their relatives missing in armed conflict, and the obligation to handle human remains with dignity and to return them to their families, are basic, internationally accepted humanitarian norms and obligations that apply to all, in all circumstances.

Such norms have been developed over the years and stipulated in international law and practice by conventions, resolutions and recommendations of various humanitarian bodies.

Recent instruments adopted by International Red Cross conferences and European and United Nations human-rights bodies include the 2006 International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, affirming the right of families to know the fate of their relatives missing in connection with armed conflict, as well as the obligation to handle human remains with dignity and to return them to their families.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2474, unanimously adopted in 2019, called upon parties to armed conflict to take all appropriate measures to actively search for persons reported missing, to enable the return of their remains and to account for persons reported missing "without adverse distinction."

This landmark call for the return of missing persons and the remains of those killed "without adverse distinction" clearly emphasizes the importance for all involved parties to refrain from making such return conditional on other negotiating items, including, obviously, the passage of fuel and electricity.

These rights and obligations exist beneath and beyond specific tactical or strategic issues arising during negotiations for any political or military deal or settlement between conflicting parties. They cannot and should not be conditioned on such mundane issues as provision of fuel and electricity.

Clearly, trading the return of missing soldiers and civilians for other less humanitarian negotiating items is tantamount to ignoring or

downgrading the basic humanitarian obligations to unconditionally return missing soldiers and civilians.

The return of Israel's missing civilians and the remains of its soldiers should override all other matters in contacts between Israel, the U.N., Egypt, Qatar and Hamas. It should not be relegated, conditioned or linked to negotiating issues, such as civil economic and humanitarian development projects in the Gaza Strip or transfer of funds to Hamas.

Since the obligation to repatriate the missing is fully accepted by the international community, and is an inherent element in the world's great religions, it is incumbent upon all countries and organizations to do everything in their power to bring the missing soldiers and civilians back to their families, without any condition or adverse distinction, and without any political connection.

One might hope that Blinken will be correctly briefed by his advisers as to the genuine, internationally accepted humanitarian priorities, and will refrain from sanctioning a false and dual standard regarding Israel's missing civilians and remains of its soldiers. (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs / JNS Aug 31)

The Allure of Powerlessness By Ruth R. Wisse

Two jews in a wagon are traveling along a narrow country road when suddenly their horse rears to a stop. A boulder is blocking their path. The Jews begin trading ideas on what they ought to do. As they sit there deliberating, another wagon approaches from the opposite direction and stops across from them. Two peasants jump down, roll up their sleeves, and heave the rock out of the way.

"There's goyish thinking for you," says one Jew to the other; "Always with force."

I found the above item in an early-20th-century Yiddish joke collection; the following one was told to me by the Yiddish poet Avrom (Abraham) Sutzkever:

One summer afternoon, the rabbi takes his students on a stroll outside town. Soon, they all come running back in a panic. The townspeople fear a pogrom and nervously ask the rabbi what happened. "A sheygetsl attacked us," he replies, "and there we were, the 10 of us all alone."

Sheygetsl is the diminutive of sheygetz, a non-Jewish boy. Sutzkever's delight in this anecdote lay in the timbre of the reply, "un mir zalbetsent, eyninke aleyn" — and only the 10 of us, all alone — a diminutive minyan. The joke was sweetened for him by the Yiddish inflections that made the scattering Jews sound all the more willfully innocent.

What better way to introduce the thorny question of "Jews and power" than with those who turned the problem into a joke on themselves? These Yiddish humorists had good reason to think themselves more advanced than the surrounding peasantry: They were literate, well-educated, and nonviolent, qualities representing a higher stage of civilization. The premise of both jokes is that, unlike those others, Jews of their kind do not resort to force. Yet in each case they, not the peasants, are the butt of the humor, precisely because they don't use physical means — not when they're appropriate to remove the obstacle and not when they're necessary to confront the threat.

These jokes are wonderfully witty tributes to a society whose learned jokesters were so intellectually agile they could hold contradictory ideas without losing their moral balance or their sanity. They are also insiders' jokes. In turning the jokes on themselves, the humorists acknowledge that the vaunted habit of Talmudic thinking is useless when physical effort is called for; that nonviolence, however praiseworthy, can become contemptible cowardice when others aggress against you. In their own idiom, these Jews pass judgment — affectionate censure — on their unsuitable relation to power.

By the end of the 19th century, the Jews of Europe were threatened from within and without. It had taken almost a century before the Western ideas of the European Enlightenment reached Russia and Poland, but then they hit with full force. Jews like our humorists were admirably ready for the Enlightenment, yet unprepared for the kind of thinking that it encouraged. To simplify: In the past, Jews had expected the Lord of Hosts to repay their assailants in kind, in His own good time. But ever since Spinoza drew back the curtain of religious faith, denying the protective power that Jews ascribed to the Almighty, human beings have had to figure things out for themselves and assume responsibility for running the world.

Jews may have expected toleration in return for good citizenship, but no sooner did they prove their worth than they were blamed for stealing success from others.

The most exigent of these responsibilities was survival — a prospect eased for the Jews by the joining of Enlightenment to Emancipation. Waves of young men broke free of the confines of the yeshiva to think as they pleased. The results were soon evident in Europe as Jews threw themselves into the professions, the arts, banking and trade, journalism, academia, and into the development of social sciences: sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, linguistics. Fueling that creativity was the Emancipation's promise of toleration and democratic citizenship with equal rights for all. When the gates of the ghetto opened and restrictions were lifted, Jews could believe they were indeed living in the Age of Progress.

But what about the elemental question: Was God the guarantor of Jewish life, or was He not? If modern reasoning said not, then what would protect the Jews, who constituted a nation as well as a religious community? The question was unavoidable, since all of Judaism derives from the biblical covenant at Sinai whereby Jews undertake to uphold God's Law so that they may flourish and be returned to their Land of Israel. Biblical Judaism emphasizes the direct connection between national behavior and divine protection (the idea of individual reward and punishment was a later accretion). If God could not guarantee their survival, what could?

The question was moot for only as long as there was no actual threat. But conditions changed for the worse as the 19th century progressed and the sheygetsl of Sutzkever's joke became a mob of pogromists or a government intent on destroying the Jews. Jews may have expected toleration in return for good citizenship, but no sooner did they prove their worth than they were blamed for stealing success from others.

Some European political thinkers and leaders, looking for ways to explain the disruptive features of liberalization, located the source of the "problem" in the Jews themselves: the already mythologized enemy alien. As visible beneficiaries of greater opportunity, the Jews were held responsible for the harms an open society was thought to have caused. No one had foreseen the rise of antisemitism, the new political ideology and instrument that organized democratic politics against the Jews. How, in stark political terms, could an unprotected minority survive on a continent fomenting aggression against them?

At the start of the First World War, the visionary writer Franz Kafka warned that such a body could not survive. His novel The Trial charts the situation of a condemned citizen who cannot escape his fate. The book's protagonist, Joseph K., Jewish by implication, is arrested one fine morning. He can neither discover the charge against him nor learn how to prove his innocence. He is told that there are three possibilities — definite acquittal, ostensible acquittal, and indefinite postponement. Living among mistrustful neighbors and with no God in the Seat of Judgment, the defendant has no hope of attaining ultimate justice or of saving his life.

At the end of the War, Kafka hoped to settle in Palestine. Although he died prematurely, many others ascended to build the Land of Israel. Zionism was the soundest of the several Jewish responses to the perceived loss of divine protection and the manifest threat to Jewish life.

Israel is now a nation among others and a majority of the world's Jews live in the national homeland. Zionism accomplished more than one could have imagined: The force that protects Israel is its army, the Israel Defense Forces. Yet the recovery of Jewish sovereignty could not change the balance of power between Jews and the people among whom they lived. By the time Israel was founded in 1948, Jews were 6 million fewer overall, and the country itself formed a tiny base amid tens of millions of Arabs and Muslims. The Jews were prepared to live with such an arrangement, but the surrounding countries of the Middle East were not prepared to live with the Jews in a position of power, in a state of their own. Western liberals assumed that the Nazi example would serve as a permanent warning against genocide, but Arab leaders with no such liberal inhibitions inferred that they could easily rid themselves of the Jewish state.

I do not need to rehearse for the readers of Sapir the history of the war that the Arab League launched in 1948, or explain why its asymmetry means that peace can come only when the belligerents make their own peace with the fact of Israel's presence in the region. Meanwhile, the country that was supposed to have resolved the threat to Jewish survival was compelled to found its own survival on a guaranteed military defense.

Jews had indeed created the means to protect themselves, but only if they continued to develop and perfect those powers. Some Jews, both in the Diaspora and in Israel itself, were unprepared to take up the responsibility of Jewish sovereignty under these conditions, and they refused to accept that it meant soldiering and wielding power, year in and year out. They thought themselves back into the time when there was no Jewish state and yet Jews had survived; surely the strategies and moral claims of a stateless people would continue to suffice. Others just left it to God.

Foremost among the opponents of Jewish national power were a

number of strictly Orthodox rabbis who had opposed Zionism before the Second World War and who afterward strove, with the grudging acquiescence of the Israeli government, to re-create the same insular conditions among their pockets of survivors. Called haredi or ultra-Orthodox, they have preserved the traditional Jewish way of life with its commitment to the observance of halakhah (Jewish law), its special emphasis on the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, and its determination to replenish the ranks of scholars who soldier in the army of the Lord.

Jonathan Rosenblum, an American oleh (immigrant to Israel) who embraced this way of life and now signs himself Yonoson as a mark of that transformation, founded Jewish Media Resources to improve journalism about haredi Judaism. After 45 Jewish men and boys were crushed to death in 2021 in a stampede at a Lag B'Omer celebration at Mt. Meron, he wrote to demonstrate their virtues, anticipating an explosion of chesed (deeds of kindness) in the wake of the tragedy.

It seems as if each of the victims has become in death a teacher of chesed, as we learn the details of their lives. One after another, we are hearing of how they specialized in what [one of them,] Elazar Yitzchak Koltai, 13, used to call "micro-mitzvos," such as thanking the street cleaners every time he passed by for their work.

Recalling exceptional acts of kindness that some of the victims performed in their lifetime, he also relays from survivors of the crush that more than one, as their life was being squeezed from them, still had the presence of mind to gasp out, "Whoever is on top of me, I am mochel (I forgive) you completely." Rosenblum performs his own deed of lovingkindness by showing the power of ethical teachings so deep that they endure until the very last breath.

Unfortunately, as Rosenblum elsewhere acknowledges, and as some of these communities have begun to realize, these virtues do not address the challenge to the Jewish nation. Just as Moses summons recruits from among the tribes in the Book of Numbers, a sovereign Israel requires first and foremost the self-sacrifice of soldiers. Israelis honor the service of each child and grandchild who spends years in the military, and whose virtue is equal to if not greater than that of the dying forgivers quoted by Rosenblum. Among the learners, too, some of the best minds must go to saving and shielding lives.

Moreover, the highest teaching in a participatory democracy concerns civic behavior — not just thanking the street cleaners, but being the street cleaners, keeping the land clean, well-ordered, and safe. The earthly powers that Jews once relegated to local authorities now have to be performed by fellow Jews, and the virtue of respectfulness must include respect for the power and prowess of the nation. Traditional Jews were not meant to be "a people apart" from their own government.

Far more threatening to Jewish survival than those who consign exclusive protective power to the Almighty are those who would outsource Israel's fate to the international Left.

The evolution may be too slow for secular Israelis who deeply resent the special concessions granted to the haredim, but there are now members of haredi communities who serve in the IDF, growing numbers of haredim in the working population, and a school of haredi thought urging increased integration within Israeli society. Ongoing military threats and other national challenges make the exercise of power a moral and practical necessity.

Just as the birth of a child changes an option — whether to have children — into the full responsibility of parenthood, so, on May 14, 1948, questions over the viability of Zionism turned into full responsibility for the reclaimed Jewish homeland. The founding of Israel required and will hopefully continue to generate models of chesed and righteousness that now include the responsibilities of self-governance.

Far more threatening to Jewish survival than those who consign exclusive protective power to the Almighty are those who would outsource Israel's fate to the international Left. There were once as many Jewish varieties of Marxism as there currently are communities of haredim, including Soviet anti-Zionists, Jewish Socialist Bundists, and several varieties of Labor Zionists. Otherwise widely divergent, they were against Jewish power that did not subordinate the legitimacy of the nation to a consideration of class.

The Jews who were among the early Marxist revolutionaries in Europe were certain that liberating humankind took obvious priority over protecting merely fellow Jews. The paradigm for this transcendent sensitivity was revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), who insisted that socialism was there to liberate the proletarian masses rather than any particular group. Her 1917 letter from prison to her friend Mathilde Wurm is often quoted, sometimes approvingly:

What do you want with this theme of the "special suffering of the Jews"? I am just as much concerned with the poor victims on the rubber plantations of Putumayo, the Blacks in Africa. . . . They resound within me so strongly that I have no special place in my heart for the ghetto. I feel at home in the entire world, wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.

One might judge Luxemburg's tender heart more trustworthy if there had been any similar disclaimers of "special" loyalty among the radicals of Italy, France, or Russia whose countrymen were not under "special" attack. The Jews, however, were the most targeted people in Europe, facing modern antisemites as well as old-style Judeophobic churchmen, czarist edicts in Russia, xenophobic nationalists, the spontaneous anger of mobs, and, most particularly, the anti-Jewish ideology of the Left dating from Marx's identification of the Jews with capitalism. Marxism appealed to Jews by letting them join the attack on their fellow Jews from a principled position of world revolution. It takes nothing from Luxemburg's physical courage to recognize that caring for "poor victims" was a self-congratulatory excuse for abandoning Jews to their fate.

If this seems harsh, I merely follow the Marxists' example of reducing human behavior to crude self-interest. In actual debates that Jews staged between a Communist and a Zionist, victory went to the better debater, but in the world of ideas, Communism had a material advantage in promoting the liberation of all the world rather than "merely" the Jews. Having undertaken to perfect themselves according to the laws of Sinai, the Jews had developed a civilization so resilient that they were now, after two millennia in exile, poised to reclaim their rightful home. But how could Jewish self-defense compare with the solidarity of the working classes or the perpetually postponed messianic repair of the world by the historically inevitable Communist revolution?

As between the competing ideologies of Left and Right, the latter, in the form of fascism, could have no appeal for Jews. Its "will to power" affirmed the rights of the strong to impose their political will, which included curtailing competition from Jews. Nietzsche's "transvaluation of values" encouraged the exercise of power without Judeo-Christian or liberal scruples. As the alleged source of that despised "slave morality," Jews were the prime targets of the fascist ideal and the easiest pickings of a bully regime. They could flee, resist, or succumb to the far Right, but never compete for that power, because fascism opposed everything they stood for.

By contrast, Communism opened its arms to the Jews as their presumed bulwark against fascist might. Both movements aspired to the same one-party rule, but the Left claimed that right in the name of the disenfranchised. Rejecting both Jewish religion and Jewish nationhood, Communism aimed even higher than the Jews by reordering all of human society at its political foundations. By putting a Jewish face on the capitalist, Marx shamed Jews in particular for their association with the allegedly exploitative class. Fascism forced Jews to protect themselves; Communism destroyed their self-confidence.

The secret appeal of Communism to the Jews was its offer of hard power in non-Jewish form.

Those opening jokes remind us that Jewish political dependency in the Diaspora had instilled habits of mind and inhibitions deep enough to be called a will to powerlessness. Modern Jewish leaders often had reason to fear collective punishment for individual acts of self-protection or revenge, and discouraged Jewish self-defense units from forming. Police routinely punished Jews who fought back against their aggressors. The Zionist drive for Jewish self-emancipation had to struggle against an ingrained resistance to the use of force. Communism, however, was all about assassination and terror in the name of liberating the proletariat. The secret appeal of Communism to the Jews was its offer of hard power in non-Jewish form.

Here again, the great writer exposes what others fear to see. No one understood the Left's temptations better than Isaac Babel, who served as a war correspondent attached to the Red Army during the Polish–Soviet War of 1920 and then wrote Red Cavalry, a series of stories based on his experience as a Jew embedded in a Cossack regiment. Professionally tasked with disseminating Soviet propaganda, his autobiographical narrator travels through the towns where the Jewish civilian population is being brutalized by both warring armies.

In the story "Gedali," the narrator takes off from the regiment on a Friday evening to go looking for a taste of his Jewish childhood in the largely Jewish city of Zhitomir that the Reds have just occupied. He finds in the antique shopkeeper Gedali the very Jew he is looking for. To a fellow Jew, Gedali can confide his disappointment. Having welcomed the Communist victory over the Poles, Gedali cannot understand why his saviors stormed his shop with guns to confiscate his gramophone. "I like music, Pani," Gedali tells the Soviet soldiers,

expecting them to respect his values and appreciate his needs. They do not.

You don't know what you like, Gedali. I'll shoot at you and then you'll know, and I cannot do without shooting because I am the Revolution.

To our surprise, the Babel-narrator confirms their verdict. "The Revolution cannot do without shooting, Gedali," I say to the old man, "because she is the Revolution."

Babel brilliantly conveys the difference between the rough Soviet speech and the intimate Yiddish exchange. Gedali uses the Yiddish phrase, " Ikh veys nisht mit vos men est es"— I don't know what you eat it with. He means he doesn't understand how the promised Revolution turned out to be so brutal, to which our narrator replies, still in the Yiddish idiom: "You eat it with gunpowder…spiced with the finest blood."

Babel knew he was writing Communism's epitaph for Russian Jewry but did not realize that he was also writing his own. The "finest blood" turned out to be his when he was arrested, tortured, and executed in Moscow's Butyrka prison on January 27, 1940. Unlike Joseph K., he knew exactly how it had happened and, having implicated himself in Soviet brutality, he would not have denied his guilt — for betraying his Jewishness, not the Revolution. Communism got the Jews (and of course Christians, too) to justify murder.

Many thousands were prepared to sacrifice their Jewish morality to the necessary violence if they could do it under the Red flag. The Jewish Left idealized Leon Trotsky for unleashing the Red Terror as well as shaping the Red Army, and then used his "martyrdom" at the hands of Stalin to absolve him and themselves of responsibility for a murderous regime that he had helped to design and would gladly have ruled if he had not been outmaneuvered.

At the same time, the Jewish Left vilified Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who conceived the Jewish Brigade of the British Army. The Left romanticized the violence committed by Jews in the name of the world's first modern totalitarian state, but demonized efforts to create a fighting armed force for the Jewish people themselves. Jews who joined the Left may have done so for the same reason that non-Jews joined the Right: for the chance to use force and aspire to a power they could claim was legitimate, cleansing, and historically ordained.

The full history is more nuanced. When the Soviet Union was on the side of the Allies during the Second World War, Jewish Communists joined in fighting the Nazis. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, one-time Party members in the United States had become community organizers. In Israel, even members of once-Stalinist kibbutzim took up arms in defending their country. Being part of a Jewish polity under siege gradually clarified the need for military power and the right to defend it.

But once the propaganda war against Israel began making serious inroads in the rest of the world, parts of the Diaspora fell back into the patterns of valorizing statelessness. Jewish sovereignty came under attack, not just from terrorist rockets, but from the New York Times, which had been purchased by a German-Jewish owner at the very same time that Theodor Herzl was founding the Zionist movement. As Jerold Auerbach traces in his indispensable study, Print to Fit: The New York Times, Zionism and Israel 1896–2016, the anti-Zionism of the Ochs-Sulzberger family has defined its coverage of the Jews ever since, including during the Second World War, and still today the paper remains antagonistic to the idea of a self-governing Jewish people. Yet the majority of New York Jews continue to read and trust a paper that covers Israel from the perspective of those determined to destroy it. Similarly, almost 70 percent of American Jews remain loyal to the Democratic Party, even as it hands the reins to anti-Israel propagandists in its ranks. Jews become the "little 10 of us, all alone," even in the land of the free and home of the brave.

And just as in the past, the Left's contemporary attacks on Israel revive Jewish sorrow for the world's oppressed, provided they are not Jews. In late spring 2021, as over 4,000 Hamas rockets rained down on Israel, more than 100 American rabbinical students shed "tears" over the plight of Gazans, writing an open letter that failed to mention the suffering of Israelis (Jews and Arabs) even once:

How many Palestinians must lose their homes, their schools, their lives, for us to understand that today, in 2021, Israel's choices come from a place of power and that Israel's actions constitute an intentional removal of Palestinians?

In the same moment, Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian-American in Congress, sponsored resolutions protesting the sale of American weapons to Israel.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 so as not to have to rule over Arabs. Its neighbors interpreted this reluctance to dominate as proof of weakness, and so today does the Left that detests a non-socialist Israel. Rosa Luxemburg would not extend any special sympathy to her fellow Jews, but these Jewish leftists go her one better by extending their own special sympathy to the aspiring destroyers of the Jewish state.

Physical attacks on American Jews have forced even reluctant Reform and Conservative congregations to hire armed guards or mobilize protection through the (Jewish) Secure Community Network or Community Security Service, but members and even leaders of those same congregations often lack the moral confidence to fend off the political attacks against Israel. No other minority in America is "in sympathy" with the war against its members — not African Americans, Latinos, or Asians, not Native Americans or gays. Only the Jewish Left and their liberal fellow travelers capitulate in the old ways. American Jews owe it not only to the guardians of Israel but also to this country to fight back against the anti-liberal and profoundly anti-American forces that are trying hard to bring their democracies down.

The question of Jews and power boils down to whether a God-inspired and morally constrained people can hold out until the surrounding nations accept the principle of peaceful coexistence. The creation of Israel was the hopeful answer to that question: Hatikvah, literally, the hope of a people. Neither the war against Israel in the Middle East nor opposition to the Jews' right to a state will likely fade in the years ahead. Let us see if we have the power and moral stamina to keep that hope alive. (SapirJournal.org Summer 2021)

Old Tricks, New Humiliation By Nitsana Darshan-Leitner

The State of Israel has demanded that Europe and the United States impose financial sanctions on the Palestinian Authority due to the fact that it insists on maintaining a policy of making payments to terrorists. What are we supposed to tell them now, when we are doing the exact same thing?

The lax policy towards eradicating terrorism in Gaza has been in place for years, long before the current government was installed, and it has been promoted in various and bizarre versions by all seemingly right-wing governments.

These days, however, this absurdity has reached new highs: state authorities are now actually in the process of forming an agency that will skirt state laws in order to enable the Palestinian Authority to pay terrorists. Yes—this is exactly what it sounds like.

The decision was not made in a void: the same year saw a U.S. federal court order the P.A. to pay $655 million in damages to victims of terrorism. The ruling was partially based on the financial assistance Ramallah affords terrorists and its monthly payments to security prisoners jailed in Israel. Soon afterward, a verdict was handed down against the Arab Bank for financing terrorism, also in a federal court in the United States, which concluded in a $1 billion settlement in favor of the victims.

Israel's response to the local banks' decision was to force its financial institutions to keep up the practice, i.e. fund terrorism. The Finance Ministry urged Israeli banks to continue maintaining business relations with Palestinian banks, assuring them of state indemnity for any lawsuit they may face, as well as full state assistance in the event they are prosecuted. Is there a greater absurdity than this?

Yes, there is.

After victims of terrorism appealed to the High Court of Justice against the decision, the state exempted commercial banks from providing services to Palestinian banks. But Israel did not give up and in a move that can only be described as morally bankrupt, the state recently announced that it will establish a new mechanism, in the form of an independent company that would provide financial services to Palestinian banks.

In doing so, the state will, in effect, allow and endorse the transfer of payments from Palestinian banks to Palestinian prisoners and the families of terrorists.

Can you comprehend the magnitude of this absurdity? This is the same State of Israel that requires European Union member states and the United States to impose financial sanctions against the P.A. over its "pay-for-slay" policy. What are we going to say now, when we adopt the exact same policy?

The constant fear of Israeli governments of a flare-up of violence has become the agenda, and it blows up in our face time and again. A payment mechanism for murderers is nothing short of national humiliation. How can we look the families of the victims in the eyes? (Israel Hayom Sep 1)
