



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Commentary...

Don't Force it By Yitzhak Neriah

For the record, I served in the military and got called up for reserve duty. My oldest son is now in the Israel Defense Forces, serving in a yeshiva that combines military services with Torah study, and I believe that serving in the IDF is a great privilege.

That said, I think Tuesday's High Court of Justice decision that struck down the current arrangement to exempt ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students from the mandatory service is yet another miserable decision by the court, which has engaged in extreme judicial activism that is to a large extent divorced from the public sentiment.

Only someone living under a rock would be oblivious to what is taking place among the ultra-Orthodox community. It is going through changes that are commensurate with the haredi way of life and its spiritual world. As a result of these incremental baby steps the walls that have separated them from society have begun to crack, and a healthy integration among the larger population is underway.

Yes, this may be happening more slowly than what some would have preferred. So what?! Unfortunatley, Justice Noam Solberg's dissent did not sway the rest of the panel. He provided a succinct analysis of the existing reality in which the two sides are coming together. He showed that haredim are slowly but surely joining academia and the job market and contributing to the economy. These changes have occurred not because of some law mandating equality but because of a deeper appreciation of the various segments of Israeli society.

It is beyond me why the justices, who are extremely bright and enlightened, are playing right into the hands of the extremists in our society. It is plain obvious that a law to draft all haredim would make the extremists among them say: "We told you so, arrangements with the state mean nothing."

Using the courts to impose social views and cultural codes is bound for failure. This will only reverse progress and make the haredim become defensive and close ranks. The very fact that government social policies founded on anthropological considerations are evaluated using an inflexible legal analysis is a fundamental mistake.

Having judges meddle in such matters is wrong and does more harm than good. I still don't understand why the rule of law overrides common sense, but what is more troubling is the attitude toward those who study Torah. Every sector of Israeli society has shortcomings that must be addressed. But to think that yeshiva students don't contribute to the general public? Every religious person, every person of faith, would reject such a claim.

However justified the demand for "equal sharing of the burden" may be, it also implies that the contribution of the Torah to society is inferior to that of military service. Let's not forget how important Torah study proved to be over Jewish history, how it sharpened the Jewish mind and how tradition preserved us as a nation.

A Jew who considers this a problem must look in the mirror and find his or her identity again. Because our nation will cease being a nation without its Torah. (Israel Hayom Sep 14)

The writer is the co-dean of the Torah B'Tzion Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Who is Running this Show? By Yehuda Shlezinger

The ultra-Orthodox sector has been on an almost impossible roller-coaster ride with the High Court of Justice this week. One moment it is applauding the court's rejection of the appeal to operate public transportation on Shabbat; then in a blink it is condemning the court in the strongest possible terms, declaring for the umpteenth time it will not abide by the court's ruling, while accusing it of being eager to fire the opening salvo in a holy war.

That's how things are when the High Court runs the country – the court

is the prime minister, and the haredim quickly shift between the coalition and the opposition.

Without the people having any vote in the matter, in recent years High Court justices have acted as an alternative government. The national gas deal, a tax on owning a third

apartment, policies against migrants illegally in the country – the government has made decisions on all these issues, but the High Court has had different ideas. The situation is even worse in matters of religion and state, where the court has become the undisputed sovereign shaping the character of the state: supermarkets, work on Shabbat, conversions, mikvehs, the numerous incarnations of the draft law – when passed on to the judges, all received a makeover.

The draft law, which was ratified by the current government and now needs to be changed on the High Court's orders, is smart more than it is just. It does not satisfy the secular public's simple demand for equality and indiscriminate military enlistment. It is smart because it curbs the inventive of Yair Lapid's previous version of the law toward some portions of the haredi public, which do not view enlistment as a calamity but as a springboard into the labor market.

It is reasonable to argue over a law of this sort. The question is who should make the final decision: the nine judges or the 8 million citizens, including those who serve as officers and in the reserves, or regular civilians who simply care about the country. Israeli citizens are the ones who carry the burden and they are the ones who should decide the punishment for those who do not share the load.

Perhaps a party will receive 40 mandates with a platform of total equality and prison time for those who don't serve in the IDF. That's fine. Maybe another party will want the IDF to be only a small, professional army that exempts haredim from enlistment, and maybe that party, too, will receive 40 mandates and form the next government. That's also fine.

We live in a democracy. Let us decide. (Israel Hayom Sep 13)

Much Ado About a Meme By Dror Eydar

I didn't like the cartoon meme Yair Netanyahu shared. But I didn't think it was anything important. So he shared it; not a big deal. But given the enormous wave of righteousness about it on almost every media outlet, the immense pressure on the public consciousness to be "horrified" and "condemn" it, and of course, to blame the prime minister (how could they not?) -- it's important to present the other side, for the sake of free thought.

What do you know, the denouncers accused, anti-Semitic sites shared the cartoon. I went onto the site of Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke and saw that he had shared not only the cartoon, but the report about it from the Haaretz English website. There's a reason he keeps tabs on that paper. We can express harsh criticism over the bad cartoon, but if a share on neo-Nazi websites is a test for criticism, you should know that the Israeli paper that stars on such sites (as well as on Islamist and pro-BDS sites) is Haaretz.

"Yair Netanyahu's anti-Semitic cartoon," Yedioth Ahronoth screamed, "crosses not only a red line, but a black one. Anti-Semitism in the name of the fight," it wrote. Wow. About a year ago, Yedioth published a banner headline stating that "the new IDF chief rabbi" had ruled that "rape is permissible in war." Read it again, the anti-Semitic lie that ran on one of the most widely distributed papers in Israel. Israel Hayom was the only paper that condemned that falsehood. It barely ruffled the media's feathers compared to the cosmic horror we experienced yesterday over a stupid cartoon, as if it was the earthquake in Mexico or Hurricane Irma, both of which were marginalized in Yedioth to make room for about 80 pages on meals at the Prime Minister's Residence. Who needs George Soros and his pack of anti-Israeli groups when you have a headline in Yedioth that glorifies everyone who has ever hated Israel and the Jewish people? Now they're coming to educate us.

Over the past few decades, thousands of poisonous articles have been published against the pioneers in Judea and Samaria that used descriptions lifted directly from anti-Semitic literature. The part of the Jew is now played by the "settler." And how do the papers that insist on teaching us to be horrified about the crappy cartoon regularly portray haredi society? Yesterday on the "Kalman-Lieberman" radio program, Barak Ravid of

Haaretz said that the original cartoon, rather than the meme Netanyahu Jr. shared, showed "a haredi Jew with a long nose. There's no debate about whether it was anti-Semitic." When was the last time Ravid looked at how his own paper presents haredim and "settlers" in the cartoons by Amos Biderman or the slanderous pieces in the op-ed section? Where does he get the audacity to instruct us about when and how to be horrified, when anti-Semitic headlines and portrayals appear regularly in both Hebrew and English in the home of the professionally appalled?

Let's revisit the meme Yair Netanyahu shared. It shows an Israel-hating Jew (Soros) controlling Israeli politicians and activists. Some elements were supposedly taken from anti-Semitic cartoons. "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" described Jews as controlling the world through their money. Did that horrify you? Let's see.

In March 2015, the prime minister of Israel set out to give the speech of his life before the U.S. Congress. He wanted to persuade both houses not to support the imminent nuclear deal with Iran. I was there, and I understood how deep the ancient Jewish concept of "kiddush hashem" (sanctification of God's name) runs. Later, I went down to the floor to read how Israel Prize for journalism laureate Nahum Barnea, writing in Yedioth Ahronoth, saw it: Why did the American elected officials "welcome Netanyahu with great warmth, far beyond what protocol called for, far beyond accepted politeness" -- was it because he convinced them, or caused them to wonder about the deal? Not at all. Pay attention to this: "The members of Congress ... are applauding according to orders from the stands." Who was sitting there? "From the stands, Jewish billionaires were supervising their proteges downstairs. They came to watch their investment bear fruit, firsthand. American politics is currently enslaved to big money." This is Barnea's "Protocols of the Elders of Yedioth Ahronoth": The Jews control American politics through their money. So what if your imagination omitted the lizard that was stuck to Soros in the meme -- is that what kept you from being horrified? (Israel Hayom Sep 11)

Abbas's Appalling Record By David M. Weinberg

Next week, Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas will once again stand at the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly. Once again, an American administration is begging Abbas to put on his "moderate" mask, and not to "exacerbate" the situation with an inflammatory speech or with extreme moves against Israel.

I say that this not a real test of presumed Palestinian moderation. The real question is: How far can Abbas go in opposing real negotiation and compromise, encouraging violence, venerating terrorists, and pushing the criminalization of Israel internationally -- while still being considered a paragon of peace by the global community?

Consider: For almost two decades, Israelis have been told that Mahmoud Abbas was the most reasonable Palestinian leader they could hope for; that he was Israel's best partner for peace; that he was the moderate with whom a grand compromise deal could be reached. Israelis wanted to believe this so very much.

But then came the Abbas who walked away from prime minister Ehud Olmert's outrageously generous territorial offer in 2008; and the Abbas who refused peace talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu even after Netanyahu froze settlement construction; and the Abbas who left US secretary of state John Kerry out in the cold in 2014.

Then there was the "PaliLeaks" opportunity to ready the Palestinian public for compromise with Israel. But Abbas ran away from that gateway, too, vigorously denying the hints of compromise with Israel (about refugees, Jerusalem, and borders) that were in the leaked documents.

Ever since then, Abbas has used every international forum to spew forth extremist vitriol against Israel and seek the criminalization of Israel. His record of speech-making at the UN General Assembly is particularly appalling.

In his 2011 speech at the General Assembly, Abbas called Yasser Arafat a man of peace. He spoke of Israel as a "brutal," "aggressive," "racist," "apartheid," "horrific" and "colonial" military occupier. He accused Israel of a "multi-pronged policy of ethnic cleansing" and of "targeting Palestinian civilians by assassinations, air strikes and artillery shelling." He spoke of Christian and Muslim historical connections to the Holy Land -- and only theirs. And, most tellingly, he spoke of 63 years of Israeli occupation, implying a threat to the sovereignty of pre-1967 Israel.

In 2012, Abbas sought to turn the established framework for peace upside-down; to get his statehood "declared" by the international community without having to compromise with Israel; to claim the result of the peace process without having to engage in any process.

He called upon international community to "compel" the government of Israel to respect the Geneva Conventions and "impose" a solution on Israel. Abbas then accused Israel of numerous crimes, including ethnic cleansing, terrorism, racism, inciting religious conflict, apartheid, house demolitions, dispossession, imprisoning "soldiers of freedom" and settlement

colonization.

In 2013, Abbas told the General Assembly that Israel is preparing a new "nakba" for the Palestinians. He demanded that the UN invoke "the full and complete implementation of international law" to penalize Israel's presence as an occupying power in Palestinian territory. He threatened to indict Israel in the International Criminal Court.

He subsequently swore to "never" recognize Israel as the national state of the Jewish people, "never" forgo the so-called right of return to Israel of Palestinian refugees, "never" accept Israeli security control of the Jordan Valley and other key air and ground security assets, "never" allow Jews to live in Judea, and "never" accept Israeli sovereignty in any part of Old Jerusalem.

In 2014, Abbas stood before the General Assembly and accused Israel of waging a "war of genocide" in the Gaza Strip. He said that instead of rectifying "the historic injustice" of the 1948 "Nakba" (again, note the reference to 1948, not 1967), Israel had committed "absolute war crimes" and "state terror." He went on to rant about "racist and armed gangs of settlers who persist with their crimes against the Palestinian people, the land, mosques, churches, properties and olive trees," and talked about a "culture of racism, incitement and hatred" in Israel. Even Tzipi Livni was forced to call this a "horrible" speech, and the Obama administration State Department spokesman admitted that the speech was "unhelpful" and worthy of "concern." (But note: Barack Obama and John Kerry did not rush to publicly reprimand Abbas, as they notoriously did repeatedly with Netanyahu over much lesser offenses.)

In 2015, Abbas accused Israel of plans to "undermine the Islamic and Christian sanctuaries in Jerusalem," and he took to explicitly exhorting and inciting Palestinian violence against Israel in Jerusalem. "We must prevent the settlers from entering the Noble Sanctuary in any way. This is our al-Aksa and our church. They have no right to enter and desecrate them. We must confront them and defend our holy sites," Abbas fulminated.

Abbas's intemperate rhetoric essentially paved the way toward the attempted assassination of Yehudah Glick, and it gave a Palestinian Authority presidential imprimatur to this year's attempts to turn the Temple Mount into the hottest battleground between Israel and the Arab world.

He also warned that the PA was not any longer bound by Oslo Accords.

In 2016, Abbas demanded that Britain apologize to the Palestinian people for the "catastrophes, miseries and injustices" of the Balfour Declaration. He continued to rant about Israeli "aggression and provocations against the Holy al-Aksa Mosque," and even wildly accused Israel of extrajudicial executions.

So, what will it take for the Israeli Left and the international diplomatic community to move beyond Abbas and consider other options?

This is an important question because of a critical historical precedent. Israel suffered similarly with Yasser Arafat during the Oslo process. Then, too, the Left and the Clinton administration become so attached to the Palestinian leader and the concept of negotiations with him that they ignored his support for terrorism and his stoking of hatred for Israelis and Jews.

When critics of the Oslo process brought up evidence of Arafat's actions they were dismissed as enemies of peace. Any attention paid to Arafat's "flaws" was considered a distraction from the need to concentrate on advancing peace negotiations.

The same pathetic process is repeating itself with Abbas. His extremism is ignored; his obstructionism is overlooked; his corruption tolerated; his crackdown on democratically minded critics is dangerously disregarded.

And yet, everybody waits with baited breath to see whether, under Trump administration pressure, he'll give a "softer" speech at the UN next week.

Does it make a difference? (Jerusalem Post Sep 14)

Palestinian Human Rights and Wrongs By Michael Freund

After more than two decades, one of the most underreported stories in Israel is at last beginning to garner the attention that it most assuredly deserves.

Thanks to a groundbreaking decision by the Jerusalem District Court in July, the sordid saga of the Palestinian Authority's treatment of alleged "collaborators" with the Jewish state is finally coming to light, and the picture is anything but pretty.

In a detailed ruling that is nearly 2,000- pages long, Judge Moshe Drori unambiguously concluded that more than 50 Palestinian plaintiffs could sue the Palestinian Authority in Israeli courts for their detention and mistreatment at the hands of the Palestinian security forces.

The "accumulation of evidence," Drori wrote, "shows that the

Palestinian Authority used severe violence, including harsh torture, against the plaintiffs” because of suspicions that they been cooperating with Israel.

The cruelty which many endured is chilling and demonstrates the depths of inhumanity to which the regime in Ramallah is only too happy to resort in order to punish those whom it views as traitors.

Indeed, from the accounts offered by the plaintiffs, it would appear that the Palestinian Authority has treated detainees in ways that even the most infamous of Mafia gangsters would find appalling.

Prisoners reported being forced to drink from toilets and physically coerced to sit down on broken glass bottles and sharp objects. Fingernails were torn from their bodies and many were deprived of sleep, food and drink, as they were held incommunicado for extended periods. Others were stabbed with kitchen utensils, and some were tied to moving vehicles and dragged through the streets, adding to their pain and public humiliation. In an account published on the front page of this newspaper on Thursday, reporter Yonah Jeremy Bob movingly told the stories of two of the Palestinian plaintiffs, each of whom suffered unspeakable horrors.

One of the victims, using the pseudonym “Sami” to protect his identity, described an incident in which he was taken to the dentist after he complained of pain in his teeth. When the dentist was told that Sami had “helped Israel,” he “ripped out” several of Sami’s teeth, only not the ones that he said had been hurting. “This was because they said I had helped Israel,” Sami said, adding that the incident prompted him to attempt suicide.

Adding insult to injury, the NRG website reported earlier this week that in the wake of the district court’s ruling, lawyers for the plaintiffs could not find a single human-rights organization that would assist them with finding specialists who could determine the physical, psychological and emotional damage the Palestinian victims had suffered.

“Every NGO we turned to refused to help us. They said that they only assist people who sue Israel,” said Barak Kedem, one of the attorneys involved in the case.

Well, isn’t that ironic. And revealing.

After all, many of the self-proclaimed defenders of human dignity profess to be motivated by the highest ideals and deny any anti-Israel bias. They are simply defending the defenseless, they assert, when they condemn Israel for its alleged mistreatment of Palestinians.

But if that were the case, if it was truly noble principles which underpinned their work, rather than a narrow, left-wing political agenda, then one would have expected the numerous human rights groups to have gone out of their way to support the Palestinian plaintiffs.

To their lasting shame, however, apparently none of them had the courage of their purported convictions, preferring instead to give priority to their anti-Israel animus over their commitment to human dignity.

This cautionary tale merely highlights something that we already know: Many of those who parade themselves as guardians of human rights are in fact using it as a cover for ulterior purposes, exploiting the universal concern for fair treatment as a one-sided, blunt instrument with which to bash the Jewish state.

Through their actions – and selective inaction – these NGOs bring shame to the very cause they say they want to uphold. By refusing to give voice to Palestinian victims of the Palestinian Authority, they are replacing human rights with human wrongs.

And by refraining from assisting those Palestinians who have the courage to stand up to their tormentors, they betray the interests of justice and peace.

It is time to expose many of the human rights organizations for what they truly are: political wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Here’s hoping that the Palestinian victims of the PA get the justice and recompense which they seek and that the world finally realizes that the establishment of an oppressive and authoritarian Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria will not serve to free Palestinians, but rather condemn them to lawless and unconscionable brutality at the hands of their own leaders. (Jerusalem Post Sep 14)

Much Ado about Nothing By Haim Shine

For 20 years, the Israeli Left and its emissaries in the media have been on a ceaseless witch hunt in pursuit of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his wife Sara and his children. Under the guise of moral high ground and self-righteousness, organizations, movements and committees have attempted to discredit the prime minister's conduct. Using the communist methods of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Wilhelm Muenzenberg, these groups have turned propaganda, mob psychology and the fake news media into powerful machines.

In recent years, the Left has also enlisted Twitter personalities, budding criminals, self-hating Jews and a host of useful idiots. They have one objective: to unseat the rightist government without holding democratic elections; to replace the current government with one that will realize the delusional “courageous peace” imagined by Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin

and their close partner, the mass murderer Yasser Arafat.

The state wasted millions of shekels as hundreds of investigators, dozens of witnesses and a handful of attorneys tirelessly worked to reconstruct the chain of events that were brought to their doorstep by interested parties. Who can count how many newspaper editions, commentary sections and newspaper headlines dealt with Sara Netanyahu's recycled bottles? Who can count the speculations and manipulations surrounding one anonymous electrician? Can anyone quantify how much slime and filth has been hurled at the Netanyahus because of their garden furniture? Not to mention the great deal of evil and wretchedness hurled at the prime minister's wife regarding the hospice aid for her dying father. After sifting through the smears, mudslinging and slander, all that is left of all the allegations and speculations is one single charge involving takeaway meals.

Contrary to the chief protesters, who try with all their might to undermine the rule of law and cast doubt on the integrity of the country's gatekeepers, I am convinced that Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit's decision to indict Sara was not influenced by former Prime Minister's Residence custodian Meni Naftali and Labor political strategist Eldad Yaniv one bit -- not one bit -- even though these two model Israelis have headed efforts to picket outside of Mendelblit's house, demanding he indict Netanyahu.

In all probability, after a court hearing is held with open hearts and minds, it will become clear to the court that filing an indictment for a takeaway meal is completely unreasonable. Moreover, it will become clear that this is nothing more than a case of selective enforcement. I cannot remember any time in the history of the State of Israel where someone investigated and reviewed state comptroller reports on the cost of events, meals, birthdays and going away parties for presidents -- let alone the funding itself for these events and the people who provided the funding. In this crusade of self-righteousness and purism, it is astonishing how easy it is to get carried away when it comes to Netanyahu.

As a veteran jurist, I am hard-pressed to find another developed and enlightened country in which criminal courts review food receipts, takeaway trays, menus and food deliveries, whether it is to the prime minister's house or to any other publicly elected figure.

Only the future will tell what price democracy and the media has paid for the obsessive witch hunt against the Netanyahu family. What is certain is that fake news brings fake indictments -- and that the opposition is doing everything in its power to cause a regime change without voters' ballots.

In light of the sheer number of investigations in cases 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000, as well as the declarations that state witnesses must be secured at any cost, I have a feeling that all of this will amount to a bunch of stale cigars. Therefore, my suggestion to the Left is this: If you want to return to the government, formulate a convincing vision and enlist capable professionals to realize it. It appears toppling the government through corruption investigations is not a winning hand. (Israel Hayom Sep 10)

Yair Netanyahu And The Angry Left By Caroline Glick

Yair Netanyahu, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 26-year-old son, has been getting some harsh press in recent weeks.

Yair walked (or toddled) onto the stage of public life when he was five years old as he and his then two-year-old little brother Avner accompanied their parents, Bibi and Sara, into the Prime Minister's Residence for the first time in 1996.

For nearly 20 years, the Netanyahu boys were little more than a silent presence standing to the side of their parents on election nights. But while Avner remains on the sidelines while serving as a combat soldier, Yair is no longer a stage extra in his parents' story.

In recent years the older Netanyahu boy has taken to Facebook. And it works out that he is quite an iconoclast.

Yair's iconoclasm is unsurprising. The Israeli establishment has been bludgeoning his parents since Yair was learning to finger-paint. It would be bizarre if he sought its approval.

Not only does he not seek acceptance from the leftist elite, he clearly hold its members in contempt.

And he's happy to tell everyone what he thinks about them. Indeed, over the past month, as the criminal probes against his parents have dominated the news cycle, the frequency of Netanyahu's controversial postings has steeply intensified.

In the last month alone, Yair's posts have caused media furors three times.

At the beginning of August, Molad, a far-left NGO that supports the BDS movement, published a scathing attack on him on 61, a satirical website it runs.

Titled “Five things you didn't know about Crown Prince Yair Netanyahu,” the piece attacked him for his political views, for continuing

to live with his parents and for having publicly funded security guards, and a publicly funded car and driver.

In response, after pointing out that Molad never criticized the children of any other premier despite ample reason to do so, Yair referred to Molad as a “radical, anti-Zionist group financed by the Fund for Israel’s Destruction, and the European Union.”

Molad, which is funded by the New Israel Fund, European EU-funded foundations, anti-Israel, Jewish-born billionaire George Soros’s Open Society Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, responded in fine democratic form.

It filed a libel suit against Yair Netanyahu.

Two weeks after the Molad brouhaha, there was the face-off between the neo-Nazis and the violent leftists from Antifa at Charlottesville which left one leftist demonstrator murdered by a neo-Nazi.

The Israeli political and media classes stood as one with the US political establishment and condemned the neo-Nazis while ignoring the violent far-left protesters.

In so doing Israel’s national leadership incidentally or, in some cases deliberately, lent support to the US establishment’s condemnations of President Donald Trump for his decision to condemn “both sides” for their resort to violence rather than just the neo-Nazis.

Just as the conventional wisdom that only the neo-Nazis were to blame was getting set in stone, along came Yair Netanyahu and his Facebook page.

In a post in English, Yair condemned the neo-Nazis as “scums” who “hate me and my country.”

But, he said, “Their breed is dying out.”

Netanyahu continued, “The thugs from Antifa and BLM [Black Lives Matter] who hate my country (and America too in my view) just as much are getting stronger and stronger and becoming super dominant in American universities and public life.”

Netanyahu’s view of the neo-Nazis as a spent force is probably incorrect. True, their numbers aren’t very big, and to be sure, they do not hold sway in either major political party. But they do have the capacity to incite Jew-hatred on both sides of the ideological divide.

At the same time, his assertion that antisemitic groups on the Left are “getting stronger and stronger” is entirely accurate.

Netanyahu said what Israel’s political leaders didn’t say. In so doing he blew the lid off the Left’s self-righteous lather over right-wing antisemites by asserting, accurately, that the bigger problem is in their political camp.

Not surprisingly, his statement enraged the leftist establishment. MK Micky Rosenthal, for instance, referred to Netanyahu as “Hitler Youth.”

This brings us to last weekend and Yair Netanyahu’s most recent media storm.

Last Friday the news broke that Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit is about to indict Sara Netanyahu for ordering take-out from restaurants even though one of the cleaning ladies at the Prime Minister’s Residence was doubling as a cook.

The next day, Yair Netanyahu published an extraordinary cartoon on his Facebook page.

Under the headline “Food Chain,” the cartoon featured Soros holding a globe and pulling the strings controlling a lizard.

The lizard in turn is pulling the strings controlling the Literati – or in current parlance – the elite.

The Literati image is pulling the strings controlling the prime minister’s arch-rival, former defense minister and prime minister Ehud Barak.

Barak is pulling the strings controlling Eldad Yaniv, Barak’s former political strategist. Yaniv is now leading the weekly protests outside Mandelblit’s home demanding that he indict Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Finally, Yaniv’s image is pulling the strings controlling Meni Naftali, the former manager of the Prime Minister’s Residence. Naftali was fired from his position in 2014 and turned against Netanyahu ahead of the 2015 election, alleging that Sara Netanyahu is guilty of multiple acts of graft and breaches of faith.

Naftali’s testimony against Sara Netanyahu forms the basis of what will likely become the criminal indictment against her.

As soon as Yair posted the image, Haaretz published it as a news story. Haaretz, like the rest of the leftist universe, condemned the image as antisemitic and condemned Yair Netanyahu for trafficking in antisemitic incitement. Conservative and Reform American Jewish leaders were quick to join the anti-Yair bandwagon.

The truth is, they have a point. It is hard to deny that the cartoon he posted is antisemitic in effect if not in substance.

In the face of the onslaught against Yair, some right-wing commentators and political allies of his father have come to his defense. The general argument made by a dozen or so Netanyahu defenders was that it is rich, to say the least, that the same leftists who call their political foes Nazis and fascists on seemingly a daily basis, have the nerve to take offense at young Netanyahu’s post. And there is a great deal of truth to the claim.

Haaretz, which has been leading the charge against Yair, and against his parents, cannot seem to stop calling members of the nationalist camp fascists and Nazis.

Haaretz writers constantly attack Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, for instance, as “Mussolini” or a “Nazi” or a “fascist” for trying to advance a judicial reform agenda that is supported by the vast majority of the Israeli public.

So indeed, it is absurd that Haaretz can dare to wail about antisemitism from Yair Netanyahu, whose parents have been subjected to pathological attacks, for decades, by the far-left publication.

But again, while the Left’s wounded cries are hypocritical, they aren’t wrong.

True, George Soros is a major engine behind the worldwide campaign to delegitimize Israel’s right to exist generally and the BDS movement in particular.

True, George Soros is a major engine of a parallel campaign within the American Jewish community to convince American Jewry to abandon its support for Israel.

And true, in an interview with 60 Minutes in 1998, Soros proudly admitted that he collaborated with the Nazis during the Holocaust.

But despite all of this, it is undeniable that some of the attacks against Soros over the years have been antisemitic. During the Asian currency crisis in 1997, for instance, then-Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohammed accused Soros of leading a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to harm the Muslims.

And then there is David Duke, the white supremacist leader behind the Charlottesville riot. After Haaretz reported and published Netanyahu’s Facebook post, Duke republished the Haaretz article and proclaimed that it gave credence to his claim that Soros controls America.

The thing is, Yair Netanyahu is smart enough to know an antisemitic image when he sees one.

So how did he dare to publish it? And this brings us back to the Left’s favored mode of public discourse.

The purpose behind the Left’s constant use of loaded terms like Nazi and fascist to describe its political foes is not to win a substantive policy dispute.

Rosenthal didn’t call Yair Netanyahu a Hitler Youth because he wanted to prove that Antifa and Black Lives Matter are not powerful engines of antisemitism on the Left.

Leftists use terms like these to demonize their political opponents and render them toxic so that the public will be too embarrassed to support them or agree with them.

These assaults are not limited to one issue. They span the spectrum of all the Left’s hot button issues, from women in combat to gay marriage to climate change to public funding of anti-Israel movies and plays to judicial reform and the Palestinians.

Anyone who rejects the Left’s positions is subjected to a campaign of demonization that is unrelenting, unsubstantiated and always over the top.

These campaigns have delivered two results – both of which are far different from the ones the Left intended.

First, they have made a very large portion of the public hate the Left. Whereas in the past the public sympathized with the Left but voted Right because it believed the Left was well-meaning but misguided, today little of that goodwill remains.

The other, deeper, consequence is that terms that should be deeply meaningful have now become virtually meaningless.

If Shaked is a Nazi for trying to advance a wildly popular judicial reform agenda, then the term “Nazi” is meaningless. If attacking Soros, one of Israel’s most dangerous and powerful enemies in the Western world, is antisemitic, while endemic, genocidal Jew-hatred throughout the Muslim world is strategically insignificant, then antisemitism is an empty term. And so on and so forth down the line.

In other words, Yair Netanyahu could use antisemitic imagery to attack the people he believes are persecuting his mother because as far as he is concerned, the concepts behind the images more powerfully evoke the Left’s campaign against his parents than they resonate centuries of antisemitic imagery.

Again, this isn’t to say that Netanyahu was right to use the image. He was wrong. But his decision is no mere personal failing. Rather it is a symptom of a far greater problem.

The Left’s constant misuse of intrinsically important terms has caused these terms to lose their meaning.

And as a consequence, our national discourse is becoming more irresponsible, crass and untethered from substance, to the detriment of our society and our future. (Jerusalem Post Sep 14)