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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...

Yes, a Biblical Right By Yisrael Medad

Those Jews who will be in a synagogue on the first day of Rosh Hashanah will be listening to the reading of the Haftarah, just after the Torah portion will have been cantillated. It relates the story of Hannah, the childless wife of Elkanah.

Hannah decides to take fate into her own hands and, in an early act of feminism, approaches the Tabernacle to pray for a son. She walked into the sanctuary and, facing the Holy of Holies, sobbed. While not raising her voice above a faint whisper, she assumed an oath that if God would only grant her a child, she would consecrate him to the sacred service at the Tabernacle. She prayed, and her prayer was answered.

As the Bible relates in the first two chapters of the first book of Samuel, this extraordinary scene took place at Shiloh. As described at the end of Judges 21, Shiloh is "north of Bethel, south of Levonah and on the east side of the highway that proceeds from Bethel to Shechem."

Shiloh is an indeed biblical location. It is in the hills of Efraim, in the region of Samaria. In fact, the vast majority of the events described in the Bible occurred in the hills of Judea and Samaria, what is contemporarily termed "the West Bank." Christians know that Jesus was born "in Judea, in Bethlehem" (Matthew 2), and that the Apostles walked through "Judea and Samaria" (I Acts 8). Muslims know that God had desired that the Israelites live in the holy land (see Sura 5:21 and 17:104).

Is the Jewish people's claim to its national territory only based on the Bible, the Scriptures and the Koran?

Not every claim based on the Bible is one of religion or faith, or one that must be taken without physical or rational proof. There is also the biblical period of time, when Jews resided in the country, where they established a tribal federation, and later, a monarchy. A time when priests and prophets were active. When houses were constructed and vineyards planted. Battles were fought in the hills and valleys of the land. Great deeds were done, and unworthy sins were committed there.

And we have proof of that. Extra-biblical accounts from Egypt and Rome exist. More importantly, scientific archaeological excavations and studies have uncovered physical material proof of events that took place more than 2,000 years ago. Haaretz's Sept. 18 headline reads, on an excavation on Edomite sites, "Archaeology Confirms Book of Genesis." There are the Merneptah Stele, and the Karnak and Mesha Inscriptions, as well as all that is coming out of the City of David and so much more, including the digs at my home village of Shiloh.

Indeed, Shiloh is a classic example of the Jewish people's link to its land, beginning with the biblical era.

Shiloh is where Jacob and his sons fought a battle with the sons of Shechem [Genesis 48:21, "with my sword and with my bow"]. It is the place associated with Jewish sovereignty [Genesis 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh is come"] and where the Tabernacle was erected [Joshua 18:1, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them"].

Shiloh was the location of the sounding of the exhortation to settle throughout the Land of Israel [Joshua 18:3, "And Joshua said unto the children of Israel: 'How long are ye slack to go in to possess the land?']. It was to Shiloh that Elkanah ascended in annual pilgrimage [I Samuel 1:1/3, "Now there was a certain man ... of the hill-country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah. ... And this man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh"] and where Hannah praised God [I Samuel 3:2/7, "... the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed ... they that stumbled are girded with strength"].

do that only which was right in Mine eyes; but hast done evil ... therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam ..."].

This is a recounting of our history as a people. It is testimony to our heritage, our way of life, that continues until today, and it represents events and persons who set us on our moral, ethical and cultural path through history. Indeed, from Shiloh comes a call to all humankind—Jews and non-Jews—to recognize the right and obligation of the Jewish people to live in its historic homeland and for all nations to act with goodness.

And not only from the biblical period. Throughout history, Jews have lived in Judea and Samaria, and it was only because of the Arab ethnic-cleansing campaign that was carried out between 1920-1948 that the Jews who survived the violent attacks were forced to leave. They were expelled from Jerusalem's Old City; the nearby moshavim of Atarot and Neve Yaakov; the neighborhoods of Shimon Hatzadik and Sham'ah (current site of the Cinematheque); Hebron; Jericho; Kibbutz Bet HaAravah at the Dead Sea; and much more.

This was not a "biblical" Jewish presence, but one of the past century. Indeed, Israel is the Jewish national homeland from a biblical circumstance, but not only. When the League of Nations decided that the Land of Israel be reconstituted as the Jewish national home, it did so also on the basis that: "recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country."

We Jews have not only an ancient history with this land, but one that extended, consistently, over 1,800 years of loss of sovereignty—an ongoing connection throughout the generations. Jews continued to

live in the country, despite it being occupied by foreign powers and being oppressed. That history is one that is not just religious in character, but based on a presence that is provable and undeniable. (JNS Sep 24)

כתיבה וחתימה טובה

Why BDS Fails My 3D Test on Anti-Semitism By Natan Sharansky

The global resurgence of anti-Semitism that we are experiencing today began almost 20 year ago, mainly in Europe. At the time, I was serving as Israel's Minister for Diaspora Affairs and was grappling with the question of how to distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism.

That is when I came up with what I call "the 3D test for anti-Semitism"—the three Ds are demonization, delegitimization and double standards.

If we watch a 3D movie without 3D glasses, we see a blurred, partial picture. But when we put on our 3D glasses everything becomes clear—and when we use the 3D test for anti-Semitism we can easily distinguish between legitimate criticism and anti-Semitism.

These 3Ds—demonization, delegitimization and double standards—are the three main tools that anti-Semites employed against Jews throughout history. For thousands of years, Jews were demonized, they were charged with blood libels, with poisoning wells, and, later, with controlling the global banking system. The Jewish faith and the Jewish claim to nationhood was delegitimized. And double standards were applied to Jews, either through the imposition of special laws—from the Middle Ages in Europe, to the Russian Empire and Nazi Germany— or through de-facto government policy discriminating against Jews, as I experienced in the Soviet Union.

Throughout history, demonization of Jewish people, delegitimization of their faith or nationhood, and double standards applied to Jews created fertile soil for pogroms, expulsions and genocide.

My 3D test shows that if we see these same tools of delegitimization, demonization and double standards that were used

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against Jews in the past being used against the collective Jew, the Jewish State, today—we know we are witnessing a new face of the old anti-Semitism.

Many who support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement may do so out of a naive belief that it is working to achieve a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While there is a network of civil society organizations that promote boycott of Israel, the movement takes its cue by the BDS National Committee, established in 2005 and based in Ramallah, in the West Bank.

It has but one goal: the destruction of the State of Israel. This goal is cleverly masked behind the veneer of fighting for human rights and legitimate criticism of Israel. When caricatures against Israeli leaders repeat the worst anti-Semitic caricatures of Czarist Russia or Nazi Germany, and this time it is Israelis who are crucifying Palestinians or making ritual use of their blood, and when Palestinians are portrayed as living in Nazi death camps—that is demonization; that is the blood libel of today; that is anti-Semitism. You can find over 80 examples of such tropes being disseminated or tolerated by prominent figures in the BDS movement in the report we released earlier today.

When the legitimacy of the Jewish State is denied and, in the language of some of the founders and key promoters of BDS, there is no place for a Jewish state in the Middle East in any borders—that is delegitimization; that is anti-Semitism. The true aim of many of the movement's key figures has been the destruction of Israel as we know it. Indeed, the movement's co-founder and leader Omar Barghouti has said so, unequivocally: "Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine."

And when the Jewish State is singled out for criticism that not even the vilest dictatorship is subject to and it is held to standards that not even the most vibrant democracy is judged by—those are double standards; and that is anti-Semitism.

There is always place for criticism of Israel, as there is for criticism of any other free society. But it must not cross the line of anti-Semitism. When people talk about Israel, we have to identify whether these three elements of delegitimization, demonization and double standards apply to judge whether that criticism is tainted with anti-Semitism.

This week Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs released a report that provides great detail on the links between BDS and anti-Semitism. The report cites over 80 examples of leading BDS activists and organizations making statements or promoting content that is anti-Semitic.

Just as the anti-Semites of yesteryear sought to prepare the ground for the expulsion and murder of Jews, leaders and key figures in the BDS movement seek to use the ancient tools of demonization, delegitimization and double standards to put in place the foundations for a world without Israel. The movement seeks to bring the level of hatred against Israel today to the level of hatred against Jews in the past, to delegitimize the Jewish state to the point where it is seen by the world as a cancer that should be removed. It is the same approach that created the atmosphere that can lead to bloodshed.

We all have to work together to improve the world. Those who want a better world shouldn't give a hand to those whose aim is to see a world without Israel. (Newsweek Sep 25)

Israel's Do-Over Election Performed a Vital Service for Democracy By Evelyn Gordon

Like many Israelis, I was horrified when April's election led to another in September; it seemed a colossal waste of time and money. But the do-over election proved critical to maintaining Israel's democratic legitimacy among half the public—the half that would otherwise have thought that April's election was stolen from them.

In April, rightist parties that explicitly promised to support Benjamin Netanyahu for prime minister won 65 of the Knesset's 120 seats. In other words, a clear majority of voters seemingly cast their ballots for a rightist, Netanyahu-led government. But after the election, Yisrael Beiteinu chairman Avigdor Lieberman refused to join such a government.

Thus even if an alternative government could have been formed—whether a unity government or one led by Netanyahu's rival, Benny Gantz—it would have undermined rightists' faith in the democratic process. Any such government would have looked like a product not of the majority's will, but of the whims of a single individual who "stole" right-wing votes and gave them to the left.

The do-over election showed this wasn't the case. Lieberman's party not only maintained its strength, but increased it, thereby proving him right that his voters cared more about curbing ultra-Orthodox power than about keeping Netanyahu in office. Moreover, the pro-Netanyahu bloc shrank even further—from 60 seats (excluding Lieberman) in April to 55 in September—due entirely to Netanyahu's

own appalling behavior in the intervening months, which prompted a nontrivial number of center-right voters to either switch sides or stay home and a massive increase in Arab turnout.

That doesn't mean Gantz won; the bloc he heads can't form a government on its own. But neither can Netanyahu's bloc. Any possible solution—a unity government, a Netanyahu government with leftist partners or a Gantz government with rightist partners—will require compromise between the blocs. And nobody will be able to claim the election was stolen when that happens.

This matters greatly because the democratic process has been subverted far too often over the past 25 years, usually in the left's favor, with enthusiastic applause from the left's self-proclaimed democrats.

It began with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who gained the center-right votes he needed to win in 1992 thanks to two promises—no negotiations with the PLO and no retreat from the Golan Heights. He promptly broke both, signing the Oslo Accord with the PLO in 1993 and offering Syria the Golan in exchange for peace (Syria refused). The effect on voter trust was devastating, as evidenced by one centrist colleague who told me that she agreed with demonstrators chanting "Rabin is a traitor": Having voted for him due to those promises, she felt betrayed.

Far worse, however, was the way Rabin ratified the Oslo-2 agreement in 1995. He achieved his 61-59 Knesset majority by openly buying two votes from the right-wing Tzomet party in exchange for government posts with all the attendant perks (free mail and telephone for life, a government pension, etc.). Since this was illegal at the time, as confirmed by a High Court of Justice ruling on the deal, he then amended the law to retroactively legalize it. Needless to say, both the blatant vote-buying and its retroactive legalization were heartily cheered by the left's self-proclaimed democrats.

Eight years later, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon further viscerated the right's belief in democracy. The 2003 campaign revolved around the Labor party's plan to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza; Sharon won in a landslide by opposing this idea. But after being elected, he promptly adopted his rival's policy, prompting fury among his own voters and cheers from the self-proclaimed "pro-democracy" camp.

To quell the uproar, Sharon promised to put the plan to a referendum among his Likud party's registered membership. So the right-wing democrats who had gone door-to-door to secure his election victory launched another door-to-door campaign, with equal success: Sharon lost the referendum by a decisive 60-40 margin. But he simply ignored the results and implemented the pullout anyway. And once again, his undemocratic behavior won plaudits from the left's self-proclaimed "democrats."

This chain of events resulted in a non-negligible minority of rightists becoming completely disillusioned with democracy. They came to view it as a system whose rules were gamed in the left's favor, rather than applying equally to everyone, because they saw election results and even laws repeatedly being ignored with impunity when this served the left's purposes. The only rule seemed to be that anything furthering left-wing policies was "democratic," while anything furthering right-wing policies was "undemocratic." And this has been reinforced by 10 years of watching the left tar Netanyahu—who, until the past five months, never did anything remotely as undemocratic as Rabin and Sharon—as "anti-democratic."

The pernicious consequences are obvious. People who have lost faith in democracy are more likely to see violence as a legitimate means of achieving their goals or fantasize about some form of absolutism (theocracy, monarchy, etc.). Indeed, it's a tribute to the resilience of the right's democratic instincts that these are still marginal phenomena. But they have undeniably grown, and another "stolen" election would have reinforced this trend.

Democracy's *sine qua non* is that voting actually matters. When people stop believing this, democracy dies; that's precisely why the left's consistent support for undemocratic moves that serve its goals is so dangerous. And people who actually live in undemocratic countries understand this very well. As Dima Eygenon, who recently immigrated to Israel from Russia, told JTA, "It's pretty exciting and new to me that voting could actually make a difference, lead to a real change in the country's fate. You can vote in Russia, but it will make no difference."

Thanks to the Sept. 17 do-over election, which Netanyahu almost singlehandedly forced on an astonished nation, Israel was spared a situation in which half the electorate once again concluded that voting makes no difference. Given the outcome, it could be his final service to Israel, but it turned out to be an important one. And though I doubt he'd appreciate the irony, that wouldn't be a bad ending to a long career of public service. (JNS Sep 25)

A Nation Divided about Netanyahu, not the Peace Process

By Jonathan S. Tobin

The answer as to who will govern Israel now seems to rest in the hands of a few politicians playing a game of “chicken” with each other. After a second election within five months that failed to provide a decisive result, the only way to avoid a third trip to the polls is for the two leading parties to join together in a national unity government. That appears to be what President Reuven Rivlin is encouraging and negotiations to achieve such a compromise have already started between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his principal opponent, Blue and White Party leader Benny Gantz.

The defection of Avigdor Lieberman’s rightist but secular Yisrael Beiteinu Party from Netanyahu’s coalition after the April vote because he refused to serve any longer with the haredi parties made such a cross-party coalition the only logical outcome. Lieberman said he would serve only in a government of secular parties, and since neither Netanyahu’s Likud and its right-wing and religious allies nor Gantz’s Blue and White and its left-wing allies can muster a majority in the Knesset, he may get his way.

However, it would also probably mean the end of Netanyahu’s career, as it’s hard to imagine Blue and White serving under the man it was organized to unseat. Similarly, Netanyahu could not accept serving as a minister under Gantz, as that would mean he would be forced to resign if he is indicted on corruption charges hanging over him.

But while most of the commentary about this possibility has centered purely on the personalities and the politics behind these maneuvers, the viability of such a scheme rests on something more fundamental about Israeli society.

A national unity government would mean an acknowledgement that the organizing principle around which Israeli politics has been conducted since its birth—the left-right divide over security and territorial issues—is an obsolete paradigm.

The fact that the main obstacle to a unity government is a matter of how offices are to be divided, rather than policies, illustrates that this is true. Israelis are no longer fundamentally divided on questions of war and peace. The ideological gap between the two leading parties has narrowed to the point where the differences between them are minimal. That was made clear when the reaction of the Blue and White to Netanyahu’s pre-election declaration that he would annex the Jordan Valley and never abandon settlements—a statement that angered liberal American Jews—was not outrage, but a claim that he was trying to steal their platform.

Likud, and Blue and White, are part of a national consensus that there is no Palestinian peace partner, and that further territorial concessions would only be possible in a theoretical future where this was no longer the case.

If so, that reflects how Netanyahu’s worldview has not merely prevailed, but has essentially marginalized the views of his left-wing opponents. In a stroke of bitter irony for the prime minister, it’s also bad news for him since his claim to be the only person who can be trusted with Israel’s security would also be undermined.

It would also be calamitous for the religious sector since it would mean those who represent these communities in the Knesset have lost their leverage over the major parties, and that measures that would restrain their power—Lieberman’s declared objective—would become possible.

Indeed, many Israelis who voted for either Likud or Blue and White might be perfectly happy with a secular coalition dedicated to marginalizing the haredim. It’s also true that the religious parties know that they can’t trust the Likud to stick with them since Netanyahu dumped them in favor of Yair Lapid (now part of Blue and White) and his secular Yesh Atid Party in 2015.

Though it all sounds logical, it’s still just as likely that the negotiations will fail. Netanyahu may be cornered, but as long as he maintains his grip on his party, he isn’t going anywhere, and his fate is the only roadblock to unity that cannot be finessed or overcome with political bargains.

Were Israel narrowly divided as it was in 1984 between two great camps that were far more split on ideology, a government of “national paralysis”—as the unity government formed that year was often called—might be viable since the consensus was that the nation was prepared for a virtual truce until one side gained an advantage.

While Lieberman fought the election on the secular-religious divide, the most potent issue hampering Israeli voters in the second round was Netanyahu himself. Even as threats still loom from Hamas to the south, Hezbollah to the north and Iran generally, the results last week can be seen as not a defeat for the prime minister’s ideology, but a blow to the idea that he is the country’s one indispensable man.

Seen from that perspective, a third election seems more an

inevitability than a nightmare scenario. That’s especially true since both Netanyahu and Gantz think they will do better next time (though I think the latter has far more reason for his faith in the voters).

That the divisions between Israelis on the one issue that has always counted the most have narrowed so much ought to make national unity an imperative is remarkable. But as long as the question is not so much how to pursue peace, but whether or not Netanyahu should remain in office, unity may be more a figment of Rivlin’s imagination than a realistic plan. (JNS Sep 24)

Why the World Fails to Stop Islamist Terrorism

By Rachel Avraham

Islamist terror is on the ascent across the world and shows zero signs of abating. Just a few random examples: On September 14, Islamic terrorists – allegedly from the Islamic Republic of Iran though Houthi rebels took responsibility and there were also reports of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Force involvement – launched a drone attack on the Saudi oil processing facilities at Abqaiq. Five French Muslim converts are now on trial for attempting to detonate a car bomb near Notre Dame Cathedral in 2016. Singapore recently detained three Indonesian Muslims on suspicion of financing ISIS terrorism. And a Palestinian Muslim from the Gaza Strip was recently given a life sentence for murdering an Israeli woman in 2015.

While it is a positive development that countries across the globe are prosecuting radical Islamist terrorists, we are still nowhere near winning the war on Islamist terror.

Mendi Safadi, head of the Safadi Center for International Diplomacy, Research, Public Relations and Human Rights, stated in a recent interview: “Terrorism is spreading and we are engaged in a pursuit of those who commit terrorist actions but we have still not learned that terrorism is based on an ideology, not people. We have still not learned the essential basis of the War on Terror. We still have not given the victims of terrorism the consolation that there will be no more victims. What more needs to happen until we understand that the solution is in our hands and that we only need the courage to face up to it until terrorism is destroyed?”

“We cannot fight against terrorism using democratic tools and human rights laws,” he explained. “We clearly see that a radical terrorist state is building an atomic bomb and in the West, they are exploring how to take care of it without collateral damage. They do this as followers of the mullahs’ regime shout “Death to America and death to Israel” while educating their people to hate and be bloodthirsty.”

Safadi believes that the best way to take care of this threat is to go after the ideology that stands behind the terror.

The question remains: If the root of Islamist terrorism is the ideology and not the people, then why until now have we gone after the terrorists but not their ideology? According to Dr. Mordechai Kedar of Bar-Ilan University, “The ideology is embedded in the religion. Jihad is an obligation, a mitzvah. There are all kinds of modern interpretations, such as jihad being against one’s evil inclinations or the devil but these do not convince those who are sure that jihad is against the infidel. It is a very big problem to fight against the ideology, so we take the weapons from them and convince them that the damage that will be caused to Muslims and Islam will be much worse than the gain from jihad. It is called a credible threat. Only credible threats will change their decision.”

To prove this point, Kedar explained that the only time Iran halted its nuclear program was when former US President George W. Bush invaded Iraq and the Iranians thought that they were going to be next: “But once they understood that America was a paper tiger that was going to do nothing against them, they resumed it. Economic measures will not make them change their policies. They only have to survive a year with the sanctions and just hope that Trump won’t be re-elected. Trump’s strategy will only work if he is re-elected. Nevertheless, the ideology is very well-rooted in the culture. It is 14 centuries old. You cannot tell them to leave basic tenets of Islam. It is not easy at all. This is what makes it very hard.”

While Kedar thinks that the Iranians will only stop their terror if they face a credible military threat or Trump is re-elected, former Consul General Dr. Yitzchak Ben-Gad believes that the only way to stop the terrorist ideology in the Palestinian arena is to go after the people who promote it: “We cannot tolerate a strategic danger to our society.” He believes that after the terrorist leadership is eliminated in Gaza, most Palestinians will come to the conclusion that terrorism is not the solution: “We have to be very strong. They must understand that terror is not the solution. Once they understand this, the second stage is to find a solution for the people to live with peace and

dignity. We cannot negotiate with Hamas. It is like negotiating with the Nazis." According to Ben-Gad, the ideology of terror is based on the Quran and this makes it difficult to root out without eliminating those who promote it.

However, just because it is difficult to go after the terrorist ideology does not mean it should not be addressed. Irshad Manji and other moderate Muslims are seeking to reform the Islamic faith to bring more peaceful interpretations to the fore. We should support their efforts to reform Islam so that in increasingly wide circles, jihad is no longer seen as a war on "infidels" but is limited to the internal struggle that each of us faces against our evil inclinations.

(Israel Hayom Sep 26)

The writer is a political analyst at the Safadi Center for International Diplomacy, Public Relations, Research and Human Rights and is the author of "Women and Jihad: Debating Palestinian Female Suicide Bombings at the American, Israeli and Arab media."

The Hebrew Word Bibi Must Learn to Resolve Israel's Political Crisis By Asaf Romirowsky

The Israeli notion of mamlachtiyut does not translate well into English. Coming from the word mamlacha, or kingdom, the word suggests the quality of acting in sovereign-like fashion. It was the term David Ben-Gurion invoked when he spoke of Jews' ability to have military power while at the same time exercising caution with their political power. Read Israeli history, and you'll see this term conjured every time the nation faced a major juncture that required individuals and factions to transcend their partisan loyalties. Israelis are a cynical bunch, yet the fact that we have a specific term for putting one's own interests aside for the greater good speaks volumes and makes clear precisely what it is that we truly value.

If this sounds like so much platitude to you, consider Israel's rocky political history. When Menachem Begin was elected in 1977, for example, his victory was known as the mahpach, or turnover, having ended 29 years of Labor rule over the nation. You'd expect the victor, long maligned by Labor's lords, to take a moment and enjoy the spoils, maybe even exact political revenge here and there. Begin did no such thing: He embraced mamlachtiyut in his governance and decorum.

It was one of his guiding principles. In his book *The Revolt*, Begin wrote that he was confident that, despite opposing political beliefs during the British Mandate, the Jews would never reach a point of civil war.

"Two factors saved the people from the catastrophe of civil war," he wrote. "In the first place we did not teach Irgun fighters to hate our political opponents. One-sided hatred is obviously a threat to national unity. Mutual hatred brings almost certain civil war. Whenever we saw manifestations of hatred against us we grieved and were astonished. Was such brother-hatred possible, we asked ourselves."

Begin also displayed mamlachtiyut when, enraging many of his right-wing supporters, he proceeded to hold peace talks with Egypt and eventually agreed to give back the Sinai Peninsula in return for peace. This historical opportunity, he realized, was greater than any one party's narrow political agenda, and it was up to a leader to rise to the moment.

How things have changed.

For starters, whereas mamlachtiyut has traditionally been discussed in the context of balancing the delicate equilibrium between Israel's left and right, the country's political system has been thoroughly transformed during the last 25 years. Today, the left and right in Israel don't really exist: At best there is a right and a center right. As Yossi Klein Halevi astutely observed, Israelis are "centrist [as] regards a Palestinian state as an existential necessity for Israel—saving us from the impossible choice between Israel as a Jewish and a democratic state, or the moral burden of occupying another people, from growing pariah status. But a centrist also regards a Palestinian state as an existential threat to Israel—risking rocket attacks from the Samarian highlands on the coastal plain, where most Israelis live, transforming greater Tel Aviv into Sderot, the besieged Israeli town bordering Gaza that has been on the receiving end of thousands of rockets over the last decade. A centrist has two nightmares about Israel's future. The first is that there won't be a Palestinian state. The second is that there will be."

Under such murky circumstances, it's not easy defining precisely what mamlachtiyut still means these days. Is it about balancing Jewish tradition with the dictates of democracy? Is it about resolving the simmering arguments between Israeli and American Jews? Opinions differ, which is one condition that mamlachtiyut was not designed to address.

But while Israel lacks a clear directive of the sort that guided Begin or Ben-Gurion, it still needs to revert to the idea of

mamlachtiyut writ small to overcome its current gridlock.

Take a look at the latest round of elections, and you'll see that the contest wasn't between opposing ideas or even political parties but rather between Bibi Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, two men who seem to agree on almost everything except for which one of them ought to be prime minister. This small-mindedness and obsession with power at the expense of everything else is already having an adverse affect. Very tellingly, Menachem Begin's son, Benny Begin, revealed in a radio interview just days before the Sept. 17 general elections that he will not vote for Likud, his historic political home. "It seems the leadership of the party is doing everything to ensure I will not vote for them," he said. The same was true for nearly any Israeli supporting any party.

It is true that Netanyahu, whatever else you may think of him, has many accomplishments to his name and can retire peacefully, now or at some point in the future, and rest on his laurels. It is also true that he may believe himself, as several pundits familiar with his circle suggested this week, to be indispensable, a singular leader who alone can save his nation from collapse. But Bibi is neither greater nor more indispensable than Begin and Ben-Gurion, and it is now time that he adopt the principle, mamlachtiyut, that characterized these two divergent Jewish leaders. (Tablet Sep 26)

How Israel Achieved the Impossible at the UN

By Ambassador Danny Danon

For years, we in Israel thought that the hostile reality at the UN was something unalterable. We became impervious to automatic condemnations and stopped getting upset when Palestinian incitement was met with open arms.

To clear the air the anti-Semitism that pervaded the corridors of the organization, we launched a long but justified battle, possibly the most justified one ever waged in the UN.

In the past few years, we have spearheaded a number of precedent-setting initiatives that helped us throw off the hostile atmosphere and strengthen our status in the organization.

It started on the day I was appointed chairman of the Justice Committee, an unprecedented occurrence that proved that Israel can win, even in the UN. The new balance of power stood out especially when ambassadors from the countries hostile to Israel were forced, for the first time, to face a senior committee head who was also Israel's ambassador to the UN, and ask for the right to speak.

In every fight, we assemble the moral majority, led by our friend the US. Together we have led proposals for resolutions that were voted on in the General Assembly and designed to isolate nations that support terrorism and block anti-Israel declarations.

Eighty-seven countries stood alongside Israel and the US when we brought to the vote a resolution to condemn Hamas in the General Assembly. A broad coalition of nations openly stated that the loathsome terrorist group was an international problem.

We are proudly making Jewish culture and legacy part of the organization. For the first time, Yom Kippur was recognized as an official UN holiday, kosher food was made available in the cafeteria, and Jewish holidays are marked by official events.

We have not allowed the rise of modern anti-Semitism to go ignored. The General Assembly was summoned for a special session to discuss the fight against anti-Semitism, and a proposed resolution to condemn hate crimes and anti-Semitic crimes passed.

This past year, we have also fought against the Palestinians' culture of lies, along with a true friend to Israel – former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. The time when the US remained silent while the world condemned Israel is over. Together, we are fighting a just war that is strengthening Israel as well as the US.

I'm proud to say that the US is no longer a home court for those who oppose Israel. Terms like "war crimes" and the "Goldstone Report" are fading memories from a dark time in the organization's history. In 2019 many countries are supporting Israeli initiatives in international forums, and multilateral cooperation is rising.

Israeli innovation strengthens not only Israel but the rest of the nations of the world, as well. Israel's cyber capabilities, a "superpower" as Singapore's UN ambassador put it, are used to defend other countries, too. The UN is being exposed to Israeli technology and this past year invested \$200 million in acquiring Israeli goods and services.

All these achievements are just the beginning. We will continue to represent Israel at the 74th General Assembly with our heads held high, and build more bridges thanks to Israel's amazing technology and spirit. (Israel Hayom Sep 24)
