



## Commentary...

### Can Pro-Israel Democrats Turn Back the Intersectional Tide?

By Jonathan Tobin

According to some of the leaders of the Democrats' congressional caucus, their party is getting a bad rap on Israel. But while they're used to deflecting or ignoring Republican critiques about liberal ambivalence about the Jewish state, when The New York Times drew attention to the growing trend of anti-Israel sentiment in their party, they had to respond.

The Times' Oct. 7 story, titled "A New Wave of Democrats Tests the Party's Blanket Support for Israel," was actually late, and omitted a lot of information that could have placed its reporting about recent developments relating to the 2018 midterms in a more understandable context.

For example, it left out what happened at the Democratic Party Convention in 2012 in Charlotte, N.C., where a revolt by grassroots activists serving as delegates against a pro-Israel resolution was suppressed by the party leadership's decision to ignore the overwhelmingly negative voice vote on the issue.

It could have also pointed out that the one issue on which there was substantive disagreement between Hillary Clinton and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders during the 2016 Democratic presidential primaries was on Israel, with the latter taking a highly critical tone to the cheers of the activist left-wing faction that is likely to dominate the voting in 2020.

The article also failed to address national polling along partisan lines that has shown a sharp contrast between the overwhelming pro-Israel sentiments of Republicans and the decidedly mixed views of Democrats about the Jewish state, which show that the GOP has been the party where "blanket support" is the norm for the last 30 years, rather than the other way around.

But the Times did make it clear that a rising tide of young Democrats running for Congress on the Democratic line are more apt to adapt critical or anti-Israel positions with Socialist rock star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the openly anti-Israel Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib in the vanguard, as well as propagandists like Leslie Cockburn.

Even some other progressives who have been in the spotlight this year who now claim to be friends of the Jewish community have problematic pasts. For example, Rep. Beto O'Rourke (Texas), who is running against Sen. Ted Cruz, voted against funding for the Iron Dome missile-defense system. He also signed a letter (along with 69 other House Democrats) urging a restoration of funding to Hamas-ruled Gaza and opposed efforts to isolate the Islamist terrorist state that governs the strip.

But that isn't the message veteran Democrats want to hear, especially when it has the imprimatur of the Times. So the party establishment is doing its best to push back against the paper's reporting pretty much in the manner of a police officer at a crime scene, trying to tell curious passersby that there's nothing to see.

According to them, the talk about a trend against Israel is merely the function of a few isolated candidates who are unrepresentative of the party as a whole.

And if you look only at the people who form the leadership of the Democrats in Congress, then they have a point.

Party veterans like Minority Whip Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland have strong voting records on pro-Israel issues. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has spent his adult life in politics telling audiences that he is a shomer, or "guardian" of Israel even if—as with his decision to vote against the Iran nuclear deal, but not to persuade fellow Democrats to join him in opposing President Obama—his actions betrayed more political equivocation than pure principle.

But even looking beyond the leadership, groups such as AIPAC view most of the party's rank-and-file membership in the House and Senate as reliable supporters. There's no question that the majority of them aren't interested in associating with the positions embraced by Ocasio-Cortez, let alone Omar or Tlaib.

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That has enabled Democrats to continue to claim that talk of the GOP using Israel as a "wedge" issue is undermining bipartisan pro-Israel coalition. They also worry that U.S. President Donald Trump's wholehearted embrace of Israel and his historic policy shifts, such as

moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem or pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal, are making it harder for young Democrats who despise the president to support the Jewish state.

But blaming problems that have been brewing for decades on Trump won't wash. The issue isn't so much who is currently representing the Democrats as it is the power of intersectional ideology, which views the Palestinian war on Israel's existence as akin to the struggle for civil rights in the United States, among party activists that is all the fashion on the left.

On campuses and in deep-blue districts, the "resistance" against Trump is dominated by leftist ideologues like Women's March leaders Tamika Mallory, who is a fangirl of anti-Semitic hatermonger Louis Farrakhan, and Linda Sarsour, a virulently anti-Zionist Palestinian-American.

Ocasio-Cortez's primary victory was a big deal because it had enormous symbolic value in that her upset of Rep. Joe Crowley not only knocked off a senior member of the Democratic leadership, but also a stalwart of the pro-Israel community. Replacing him with someone who is not sure what she thinks about Israel's right to exist wasn't as much an accident as a sign of the changing political culture of the Democrats.

The example of what happened in Britain when a hard-line leftist like Jeremy Corbyn helped transform the Labor Party into a bastion of anti-Semitism isn't analogous to what is happening among most Democrats, who have little in common with him. But the drift the Times reported is real and far from isolated. Nor, given the lockstep loyalty of the majority of American Jews to the Democratic Party, is there any real pressure to push back against it. As long as Democrats are more devoted to "resisting" Trump than to resist either intersectionalism or the growing number of Israel opponents in its caucus, this issue won't be going away anytime soon. (JNS Oct 17)

### Israel, Hamas Fighting War of Attrition By Hanan Shai

The Israel Defense Forces were planned and built to win short and "cheap" wars.

However, in its earliest years, the IDF was also forced to wage lengthy wars of attrition. It eventually put an end to these, beating the enemy and destroying its fighting capability to secure quiet that would last as long as possible.

Such periods of quiet were reached after Operation Kadesh in 1956, which ended the war of attrition waged by the fedayeen; after the War for Peace in the Galilee or First Lebanon War of 1982, which put an end to the Katyusha missile threat from Lebanon; and after Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, which seriously checked the momentum of the Second Intifada.

Today, too, Israel is waging a war of attrition, this time against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

But this particular war of attrition has turned into the longest in Israel's history because of Israel's reluctance to finish it with a decisive operation.

The reason for the dawdling has to do with the tactics of Hamas' military wing, which present a threat to Israel. Its armaments include a series of fortified intelligent systems located deep inside tunnels and in the heart of a dense civilian population. Moreover, Hamas has a variety of weapons it could use against the Israeli homefront while simultaneously exacting a heavy toll on any IDF ground forces sent into the Gaza Strip.

Hamas' approach has "skewered" Israel, as military theorist B.H. Liddell Hart put it, on the horns of a triple dilemma: long-term attrition against civilians if Israel maintains its current reality of keeping its soldiers back from occupying Gaza; heavy casualties among IDF soldiers over a long period if they are sent in to put an end to the attacks on Israeli civilians; or preventing heavy military and civilian losses through a massive remote destruction of the enemies' systems, equipment and operatives, which would entail extensive casualties among the Gaza

civilian population used by Hamas as human shields, and could hurt Israel's international standing as a result.

Hamas has turned the residents of Gaza into pawns in a powerful game and is exploiting them to create a balance of power. This has neutralized the ability of the IDF – one of the most advanced armies in the world – to act and has forced Israel into this brutal war of attrition, which cannot be stopped at a "reasonable" price, as previous wars of attrition could.

Israel cannot live with the strategic helplessness that has been forced upon it by this two-bit terrorist organization and simply wait for a terrorist attack large enough to justify a major operation in Gaza with consequently heavy casualties among civilians in Gaza. Hamas is apparently calculating enough to avoid supplying Israel with such a justification.

We also cannot hide from the fact that rather than beating and deterring Hamas, Hamas is beating and deterring us.

Israel's strength has not been eliminated through military, political or economic means, but through Hamas' cynical manipulation of the moral rules that prohibit harming civilians.

However, Israel can rope in the moral system that is being used against it and work its way out of the trap. The key lies in addressing the moral question of whose lives take precedence: theirs or ours? And by answering it decisively: "Ours!"

Once free from the trap it has fallen into, and with universal morality on its side, Israel needs to declare loudly and clearly that the lives of Israelis are more important to it than the lives of its enemies, and needs to launch two operations. The first would be a military one, involving a rapid, temporary ground invasion into the Gaza Strip along routes previously cleared of enemy fire, thus avoiding heavy IDF casualties and preventing unnecessary losses of civilian lives or property. The goal would be to destroy Hamas' ability to fire rockets at Israel and wipe out the core of Hamas' wild leadership.

The second operation should be a cultural and moral one, with the goal of bringing the conscience of Israel's democratic allies in line with universal morality, according to which the entire world should take action against immoral and unconscionable terrorism. (Israel Hayom Oct 17)

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### **Beware of False Prophets** By Yehuda Shalem

"At noon, Elijah began to taunt them. 'Shout louder!' he said. 'Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened'" (1 Kings 18:17).

I recalled this biblical episode, in which Elijah proved that the followers of Baal were worshipping a false god, while watching Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the other day. Netanyahu had decided to go out of his way to answer questions from reporters. "Please, call your newsrooms, they will send you some embarrassing questions," he said when he spoke at an event that was supposed to be limited to economic matters. The reporters present were taken aback and eventually resorted to asking the boring questions on the various investigations Netanyahu faces.

Netanyahu's implied mockery of those reporters underscored the sorry state of the Israeli media, which has lost depth and creativity. To the defense of the economic reporters at the event, they were not expected to be versed with matters beyond their beat, and that's why they didn't ask Netanyahu political questions.

But even on economic matters, they could have done better. They could have, for example, asked why the government has been pursuing a policy that only encourages overpopulation in central Israel rather than incentivizing Israelis to settle in the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights.

In the 1930s, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature André Paul Guillaume Gide visited the Soviet Union. Some 20 years later, he wrote what he saw in his book "The God That Failed": "In the Soviet Union it is accepted once and for all that on every subject – whatever may be the issue – there can only be one opinion, the right one. And each morning Pravda tells the people what they need to know, and must believe and think."

In totalitarian regimes, you could expect the media to take its marching orders from Big Brother, for fear of what may happen to reporters if they defy the rulers.

But what is most troubling is that in Israel, a democracy despite the scars of Mapai's 30-year rule, some media outlets still have a monolithic approach to various issues, regardless of who is broadcasting or writing. As the famous Shalom Hanoach song goes, "Same answers, same questions, they are small from there and are big from here, and they all say exactly the same thing."

This is why the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal is so relevant in our time, with the false media prophets who are deceiving the public. Let's not forget the doom and gloom about how Israel would be destroyed because of the "demographic threat" and the "corrupting occupation." Such rhetoric has often resulted in Israel making suicidal decisions, such as its decision to disengage from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria in 2005.

These are not isolated incidents but an ongoing trend of messianism

that has inspired think tanks to formulate peace plans. Amos Yadlin, the head of the Institute for National Security Studies, recently unveiled a new plan that read as follows: "The goal is to create the conditions that would foster a two-state reality that would safeguard a democratic, Jewish, safe and moral Israel."

This single sentence clearly demonstrates the impact of those false prophecies about the demographic threat and moral corruption. Yadlin also says that the peace plan will be complemented with an "economic program that would, in the short run, seek to bolster Palestinians' quality of life."

But perhaps, against this utopian vision, Yadlin should be reminded that in the years since the 2005 disengagement, the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been facing a humanitarian crisis.

The tireless effort to promote the false promise of the two-state solution, even as incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip set the fields of nearby kibbutzim ablaze, attests to the lack of morality on the part of those two-state dreamers and proves that their false messianism is still not a thing of the past. (Israel Hayom Oct 16)

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### **The Left's Disengagement Campaign** By Haim Shine

The opening of the Knesset's winter session, Monday, provided clear proof of the disengagement campaign being led by the Israeli Left. These efforts are the result of a system failure, a lack of vision and primarily, the absence of a leadership able to differentiate between opposition to the government and opposition to the state.

An overwhelming majority of Israelis are happy. None of them any longer believe in the type of cooperation that Opposition Leader MK Tzipi Livni (Zionist Union) begged of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah. Israelis no longer naïvely believe that a withdrawal to the 1949 cease-fire lines will satisfy the Palestinians; they understand that the struggle is over the entire country. And wise Israelis have no use for the socialist slogans of the past. An entire world of beliefs and opinions has been swallowed up by a black hole, from which depression, despair and small-mindedness are constantly bubbling over.

The Left's showing in recent polls, alongside its inability to present an alternative leadership, have led it to return to the old familiar slogans. The recitation of false mantras puts a smile on the faces of veteran members of the Labour party, which, in a somewhat humorous move, is now referred to as the Zionist Union. These mantras include hatred and division, the nation-state law, the end of democracy and late Prime Minister Menachem Begin's remark that "there are judges in Jerusalem."

Former minister David Levy once spoke of a time when he worked as a day laborer on a kibbutz near Beit Shean in the country's north.

He said, "We would beg the gentlemen from the kibbutz to put the water in the shade so that it would remain cool. Did they do it? Absolutely not. It was human wickedness. They would place the buckets of drinking water in the sun, and the water would get so hot, we couldn't drink it. I thought to myself, 'Why do they hate us so much?'"

Members of the Irgun paramilitary organization, of which Livni's late father Eitan served as a commander, were turned over to the British during "Hasaison," a Hebrew and French mix short for "La Saison de Chasse" ("The Hunting Season"), the period in the mid-1940s when Jews persecuted other Jews for the benefit of their British rulers.

Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion refused to call Begin by his name, preferring instead abusive epithets. Right-wing voters are called by the leftist cultural elite "grave worshippers" and "mezuzah kissers," and that is just a brief account of their hatred. So who on the Israeli Left can preach about hatred when they are in the fact the ones responsible for it and continue to foster it.

How can someone like Livni – who in a clear reference to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in front of hundreds of thousands of viewers in 2014, remarked that she and then-Labor party leader Isaac Herzog would "take out the trash" – lecture others about baseless hate?

In the Knesset on Monday, Livni spoke loftily of the danger posed by hatred. In the same breath, though, she attacked the haredim.

Israeli society is not divided. There are disagreements between different groups, as has been the case ever since the Jewish people first graced history's stage. But to claim we are on the brink of a civil war is nothing short of a fallacy. Most Israelis love their country and what unites them is stronger than what divides them.

Israel is a model democracy. Its citizens are afforded almost unlimited freedoms. The only threat to democracy here is the attempt to impose the tyranny of the minority on the majority. Unfortunately, the courts are often seen as enlisting in this effort. Indeed, there are judges in Jerusalem, and they do not reside on Mount Olympus. They too can sometimes make mistakes. This will soon be rectified. State authorities obey the court's rulings, including those whose reasonableness is in question.

The nation-state law does not harm equality. I wish Israel's character

as the nation-state of the Jewish people was as recognized and protected in the courts as the value of equality rightfully is.

The Jews are willing to give their lives for this tough country if only out of the belief that it is their nation-state. If the ideal were a state of all its citizens, they would surely prefer New Zealand.

A vast majority of Israelis are able to recognize Netanyahu's talents and leadership, as well as the ideology in the name of which he acts. My suggestion to the Left: Find a real vision and stop fishing in murky waters. (Israel Hayom Oct 16)

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### **What the Left Doesn't Understand** By Eitan Orkibi

The nonsensical scandal that erupted after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shouted at a political activist who interrupted him while he was speaking in Kiryat Shmona is an interesting lesson in the political psychology of the Left.

Within moments, a minor incident became a watershed moment. Based on a single sentence, people are trying to draw sweeping conclusions about the prime minister's attitude toward the periphery. Here, they're saying, the cat's out of the bag, and we've seen the real Netanyahu: He is contemptuous of the periphery, he doesn't care about poor cities. A whole cabal of opinion-makers on the Left, from media figures to Knesset members, is piggybacking on the incident and smiling in anticipation of an early election – we caught him!

This failure of reasoning, this hasty and scattered generalization – as if scolding a noisy political activist if proof that the needs and welfare of an entire socio-economic sector are being systematically ignored – is ridiculous. But what's worse is the speed with which the propagandists on the Left rushed to exploit the opportunity to stir up trouble between Netanyahu and his supporters. Like unpopular junior high school boys, they wait at recess for the one who was just mocked by the popular students and try to bring him over to their side.

"You see, Bibi doesn't like you," Twitter activists nagged Netanyahu supporters. "You admire him, and he doesn't take any notice of you. He doesn't care about you."

This laughable tactic has not proved particularly effective. Not only because it's silly and transparent, but also because it rests on the simplistic view that Netanyahu supporters love and admire the prime minister and in return expect him to demonstrate empathy, warmth, or affection.

In their imaginary political universe, the idea of a warm, paternal leader who knows how to seduce residents of the periphery and Mizrahi Jews with nice words that strike right at the heart of a traditional family culture is part of Likud DNA. So, they conclude, if they can prove to the "Bibi-ites" that Netanyahu doesn't care about them, they will feel betrayed, realize that "Likud is screwing them," and jump ship and join the enlightened.

How simplistic, how paternalistic. When will the opinionated Left understand that support for Netanyahu is not based on feelings of inferiority, but on agreement with his diplomatic, economic, and political ideas? When will they realize that Netanyahu's supporters become angry at him when he deviates from his political path, not when he is caught showing impatience with an activist, a completely human moment, just as he was grieving the death of his longtime attorney Yaakov Weinroth?

Haaretz Editor-in-Chief Aluf Benn recently upset the Left when he raised a moral dilemma of whether Netanyahu should be forgiven for alleged corruption if he pursues a peace deal with the Palestinians. The Right saw that as an attempt by the leftist media to lobby the political leadership by coddling it in the media.

I don't think it was. The opposite: I am convinced that Benn brought up an important point for public debate, which might cause the Left to understand that if it is capable of "sucking up" suspicions of serious corruption in exchange for Israeli territorial concessions, then the other side can base its support for Netanyahu on its political worldview, which no stories about recycled bottles, ice cream, the prime minister's dog, or even a confrontation with a protester can suppress. (Israel Hayom Oct 17)

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### **Joining the Campaign of Lies** By Danny Danon

There is a clear through-line from the actors who worked throughout history to prevent Israel from becoming the state of the Jewish people and a Jewish, democratic state. In recent years, sadly, they include Israeli citizens who treat their own country as an enemy.

The human rights watchdog B'Tselem has made it a goal to hold Israel and the actions of the IDF up to international scrutiny. While the Israeli public loathes and opposes the organization's activity, B'Tselem has chosen to join our enemies in their campaign of slander and lies. The campaign, which crosses borders and continents, has now landed at the center of the diplomatic stage. Having been invited by Bolivia's ambassador to the U.N., B'Tselem Executive Director Hagai El-Ad will speak at an official meeting of the U.N. Security Council, the U.N.'s most influential branch, whose

decisions shape the international arena.

Aside from his ally from Bolivia, who calls IDF soldiers "murderers," El-Ad will be welcomed with open arms by representatives of the Palestinians and some European nations that send him tens of thousands of euros annually so he can keep spreading his words of hatred for IDF soldiers and the state of Israel.

Our enemies will turn the Security Council meeting, which is supposed to discuss the "Middle East," into a debate against our soldiers. The council will not discuss terrorism by Hamas and rocket fire on Beersheba or the chemical weapons attacks in Syria. The discussion will be limited to attacks on the only democracy in the Middle East.

The standout example of the strength of our democracy is the freedom of expression enjoyed by groups like B'Tselem, which are known as civil society organizations but which actually serve as a mouthpiece to slander the IDF. Most U.N. member nations would send local versions of groups like B'Tselem to prison, at best, and not allow them to slander their countries in the U.N.

Today, two Israelis will be sitting at the U.N. Security Council table. The B'Tselem representative is on the side of the Palestinians and those who wish us ill. I will be sitting on the side of truth, which will expose the Palestinian incitement, the disgrace of B'Tselem's lies and those of the rest of the groups that fan the flames of hatred for Israel. (Israel Hayom Oct 18)  
*The writer is Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.*

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### **It's Time I Break My Silence** By Yoseph Haddad

Next week, Harvard University will be hosting the Israeli organization, Breaking the Silence, an organization funded by anti-Israel groups that incites against the State of Israel and defames the IDF. BTS members speak out against the IDF; they "testify" as former soldiers, but they do not tell the entire truth of situations– they distort the truth and they tell partial stories that provide a slanted and partial picture of reality.

They do this to serve their only purpose: to slander and defame the State of Israel and the IDF. We have so many enemies all around us who want to destroy us and it is the most painful when this defamation comes from within us. BTS will be speaking before the students of Harvard University, one of the most prestigious institutions in the world – a stronghold of future leaders in every field. Many of its students will go in to hold key positions of power and influence. In speaking before the students there, BTS will be shaping the outlook of these future leaders against the State of Israel, against our country.

I cannot be silent, I must break my silence. I served in the IDF during the Second Intifada. It was a difficult time. I also stood at checkpoints, stood guard, arrested people and fought in the Second Lebanon War. As an Israeli Arab and IDF soldier in the Golani Brigade, I served together with other Israelis: Jews of all backgrounds, Druze and Bedouin. We were all equal, we were all brothers fighting side by side and I can testify that I served in the most humane and moral army in the world, with the highest code of ethics and human values. The IDF is an army that faces complex challenges and dilemmas in an explosive region, but it is an army that is level headed and always keeps as its ultimate highest value human life. The IDF is an army that will bend over backwards to save lives and to ensure that innocent individuals are not harmed, even if it means complicating the military operation.

It is possible that there were incidents that did not live up to these standards, but these were the exceptions; they were not the norm and they were not the code by which the IDF is guided. They do not reflect the IDF nor the State of Israel. I am proud to have served under commanders who not only turned me into a better soldier but into a better person. One of the commanders who most impacted me was Israeli Major Roi Klein, who lost his life while trying to save the lives of his soldiers. During the Second Lebanese War, I was badly injured after I was hit by a cornet missile that was fired by Hezbollah. My fellow soldiers saved my life while under attack; they risked their own lives to save mine. After my injury, I received full medical care from the State of Israel until I was completely healed.

I will not let BTS spread untruths and lies against my country. Two days after BTS takes it stand at Harvard University, I will be there to speak to the students with Reservists on Duty. The truth will prevail. (Jerusalem Post Oct 15)

*The writer, age 33, is an Arab Israeli Christian. A resident of Nazareth, he was injured in the Second Lebanese War while serving as a soldier in the Israeli army. A social activist in the Arab community, he is the CEO of the nonprofit organization Together – Vouch For Each Other, which builds bridges that bring together Arabs and Jews in meaningful social connections in Israeli society. He is also involved in public relations through the organization Reservists on Duty.*

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