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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...

Trudeau Sides with Israel's Enemies By Lorrie Goldstein

It's no secret why Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has, suddenly and without prior notice, reversed Stephen Harper's policy of refusing to support the never-ending deluge of Israel-bashing resolutions passed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Canada under Harper and his Conservative government was Israel's strongest ally in the world, more than even the U.S. under Barack Obama, before he was replaced by Donald Trump.

Maintaining Harper's policy, as Trudeau did during his first term in office, put Trudeau at a huge disadvantage in his campaign for Canada to win a temporary, two-year seat on the UN Security Council, starting in 2021.

Canada's already in a tough fight against Ireland and Norway.

Trudeau had no hope of winning the Security Council seat as long as the Israel-loathing UN General Assembly viewed Canada as a strong ally of Israel and aligned with Trump on the Mideast.

Especially now that the Trump administration says it doesn't consider Israeli settlements in the Occupied West Bank in violation of international law.

Trudeau's new position is in keeping with the traditional Liberal view of the Mideast, less supportive of Israel than the Conservatives, and what the Liberals call "nuanced", meaning more pro-Palestinian.

That fits with the views of the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council, which have a history of selectively denouncing Israel for violating the rights of the Palestinians, while ignoring far worse human rights abuses all over the world.

Last year, the Israel-obsessed General Assembly passed 21 resolutions condemning Israel compared to a grand total of six for all other nations on Earth.

The UN Human Rights Council, going back to its creation in 2006, condemned Israel 10 times that year, without criticizing any other country, establishing its long-term bias against Israel.

The UN resolution Trudeau endorsed — one of 16 aimed at Israel the General Assembly passes every year — was sponsored by North Korea, Zimbabwe and the PLO.

It "reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to live in their independent State of Palestine" and "urges all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the UN system to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination."

In isolation, that's Canada's position on the Mideast.

But Harper and, until now, Trudeau, refused to endorse this resolution because it condemns Israel's construction of its border wall for impeding the rights of the Palestinians, but makes no mention of Hamas terrorism against Israeli civilians, violent intifadas and rockets fired into Israel from Gaza and Syria.

Canadian-born lawyer Hillél Neuer, executive director of UN Watch, tweeted Canada has joined the "jackals" who selectively condemn Israel by "trading Canada's bedrock principles of fairness & equality for a UN Security Council seat."

He called it a, "Faustian bargain with dictatorships that does not bode well for a free and democratic society."

Trudeau knows the UN singles out Israel year after year as part of its ongoing campaign to demonize and delegitimize Israel.

While the Trudeau government says it will continue opposing the vast majority of its anti-Israel resolutions, Trudeau has embarked on a major foreign policy reversal in the Mideast he said nothing about during the election.

All in the hopes of securing a temporary seat on the Security Council by gathering enough votes in the Israel-bashing UN General Assembly.

What a disgraceful way to betray an ally. (Toronto Sun Nov 20)

Trump makes pro-Israel history again

By Ruthie Blum

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's dramatic announcement on Monday that the "establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law" sent shockwaves around the world. In retrospect, however, it shouldn't

have come as such a surprise.

Since his election three years ago, U.S. President Donald Trump has been consistent in his efforts to reverse the policies of the administration of his predecessor, Barack Obama. Not only in relation to Israel. But his pro-Israel stance

has been steady and unapologetic from the get-go, which is as it should be.

Indeed, each of his decisions—such as recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moving the embassy accordingly, defunding the Palestinian "pay for slay" machine and acknowledging Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights—has been geared towards cementing the natural U.S.-Israel relationship in a healthy way. Every action that his administration has taken stems from the understanding that the so-called "Israeli-Palestinian peace process" has failed repeatedly—not only as a result of being based on a false premise, but of following the same old paradigm.

Team Trump has been engaging in what the high-tech sector refers to as "disruption."

Its shift in settlement policy is part of the program. As Pompeo pointed out, calling settlements illegal "hasn't worked. It hasn't advanced the cause of peace."

That's for sure.

Fittingly, Washington's latest bombshell came on the heels of a horrifying European Court of Justice ruling that all E.U. countries must label goods produced in Israeli settlements, so as to enable consumers to make "informed choices"—a euphemism for giving shoppers a heads-up over which "made in Israel" merchandise they should boycott.

Though much has been made of the proximity of the European and American decisions, the latter has been in process for weeks, with U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman and Israeli Ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer reportedly having worked in tandem to iron out the details.

Critics of the move have been implying that this is the Trump administration's most recent attempt to bolster Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Aside from the fact that Netanyahu can't be helped electorally at this point—as the current coalition negotiations/impasse are not affected in the least by outside factors—the suggestion on the part of those who oppose both Trump and Netanyahu is laughable considering the gleeful claims they made in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 17 Knesset elections of a broken "bromance" between the two leaders.

When the votes were being counted and it became apparent that Netanyahu was heading for a similar coalition deadlock to the one that followed the April 9 Knesset elections, Trump was asked by reporters whether he had spoken to his Israeli counterpart.

"I have not," he responded. "Those results are coming in, and it's very close. ... Everybody knew it was going to be very close. We'll see what happens."

Trump concluded by adding, "Look, our relationship is with Israel."

Journalists at home and abroad promptly pounced on this statement, attacking the U.S. president for ostensibly dumping the Israeli prime minister when the chips were down. Trump, they said, in "typical fashion," was distancing himself from a "loser."

It was a classic "two-fer" takedown of both leaders, purposely obfuscating the most important element of Trump's remark: that his administration would remain steadfastly supportive of Israel, no matter who is at the helm in Jerusalem.

That welcome message was conveyed two months ago, even as the U.S. administration's yet-to-be-revealed Mideast peace plan was put on the back burner—yet again. Pompeo's blessed declaration is further proof, if any were needed, that Trump meant what he said. It is great news for Israel, regardless of the makeup of the next government. (JNS Nov 19)_

A Profound Diplomatic Revolution By Amnon Lord

US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo were apparently asleep in class when Hagai Elad, Zahava Galon, Amos Shoken and Talia Sasson were conducting their lessons. Suddenly, according to Pompeo's declaration on Monday, it appears that the legality or illegality of Jewish settlements beyond the 1967 Green Line was nothing more than opinion – political opinion.

Essentially, as many pre-eminent Israeli legal scholars – among them late Chief Justice Meir Shamgar, Prof. Yehuda Blum, Meir Rosenne and others – argued in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Jewish settlement up to the Jordan River is completely legal

according to international law. I can only presume that Israeli representatives in Washington, such as Ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer and Dr. Dore Gold, have explained to Trump administration officials what international law actually says about the West Bank. What it says, and which is the position Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has adopted, is that the West Bank is "disputed" territory, not "occupied" territory.

Without a doubt, this is perhaps the most significant shift in American diplomatic policy toward Israel and the territories it liberated in 1967. Pompeo's announcement reverses the position espoused by previous US President Barack Obama. But this wasn't exclusively Obama's position. It was commonly accepted within the US State Department for years. Peter Beinart and his New York Times readership also won't love Pompeo's declaration.

This is proof that standing tenaciously for years on solid and consistent legal ground ultimately ends in international recognition. If Israel had surrendered to the views of the "new-wave" jurists, who created a propagandist and false presentation of the legal status of the territories in Judea and Samaria and Jordan Valley – even the most supportive administration, Trump's for example, wouldn't have lifted a finger on the matter. From this perspective, anyone who has argued and expounded on this legal and historical position over the years in American, international and local forums deserves credit for the Trump administration's diplomatic revolution.

What's needed now is the establishment of an Israeli government capable of providing significance and substance to the new American policy. The declaration further enhances Trump's policy, which he has been unfurling for three years now, whereby: The 1967 lines no longer represent a baseline for a future peace deal. This new policy does not negate or supersede the possibility of a deal with the Palestinians; but at the same time, it also doesn't prohibit Israel from possibly imposing its sovereignty over these strategic territories, which are so crucial to, or over specific settlement areas themselves. Israel's Supreme Court also recognizes the legality of these communities. The imperative for the country is a national unity or right-wing government capable of using this diplomatic gift. And it is a gift that in many ways is more important than moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem. Avigdor Lieberman, who holds the keys to the next government, must now add this profound development to his list of political considerations. (Israel Hayom Nov 19)

Paving the Way to Total Boycott By Itai Reuveni

The European Union's supreme court, which now requires all 28 member states to label Israeli products manufactured in Judea and Samaria, yet again bared its peculiar list of priorities in the areas of human rights and international law for all the world to see.

The Europeans and the organizations they fund have never labeled products from any of the world's other disputed areas, such as northern Cyprus, Western Sahara and dozens others, while EU member states even transfer money to and invest in these places. Every inquiry into other conflicts, unlike the Arab-Israeli conflict, has ended in the rejection of the idea to mark certain products.

This is because the European Court of Justice has direct links to the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israel. This is more than a "classification" – all boycotts begin by singling out those designated to be ostracized. Proof of this can be found in the series of measures that have been implemented by EU-funded organizations, which have always argued that marking goods is merely the start of an evolving boycott campaign – with clear and intended ramifications for the Israeli economy inside the Green Line.

A study conducted by Israeli group NGO monitor points to a broad coalition of rights groups working to carry out an ideology of boycotting through product labeling. As early as 2012, for example, the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation asked for EU funding to "precisely mark settlement products as a first step," and suggested intensifying the sanctions until "the complete prohibition of settlement imports... and the prohibition of money transfers to settlements and related activities." The code-speak "related activities," incidentally, also includes Israeli and international business initiatives that have nothing to do with the settlements.

This strategy is aptly expressed by the "Platform of French NGOs for Palestine" – an umbrella organization of 40 NGOs in France. Immediately following the French government's decision to adopt the European Commission's recommendation in 2015 to label settlement products, the "Platform" rushed to demand credit for the measure. In other words, the organization appropriated the European Court of Justice's ruling and is one of the leading BDS organizations in France.

Although the Platform claims its campaigns "aren't part of the boycott movement," its president, Claude Léostic, said in an interview that "we certainly support it." In a report that Léostic and other boycott groups published in June 2018, they call on French companies such as Egis, Systra and Alstom to "terminate their contracts with the Israeli

authorities" and urge the French government to "take all the measures needed" to prevent French public operators SNCF, RATP and CDC from fulfilling their contracts with the Jerusalem tramway.

Another boycott group working alongside the Platform is the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Together, they established the "created illegally" campaign in France, which calls on the French government to sever its economic ties with the "Israeli settlements" and any business with connections to them. The campaign's demands include prohibiting the import of products from these communities to France, convincing French companies "not to invest in the settlements," and providing information to tourists in order to "ensure they avoid supporting local companies or tourist sites in the settlements."

The innocuous rhetoric is meant to divert the discussion from its true goal: A complete boycott of Israel, sans actual effort to promote co-existence or human rights in the region. Indeed, these measures will also hurt Palestinians trying to make a living, but a senior EU official justified the initiatives by saying the Europeans "regret it, but need to look at the wider picture."

When the EU decided in 2015 to recommend labeling Israeli products from Judea and Samaria, the Golan Heights and east Jerusalem, the EU's ambassador to Israel at the time said the move was "just a technical matter." Two days ago, the current EU ambassador to Israel said the European Court of Justice's ruling reflects "parts of the EU's consumer policy."

We must ask, are assisting and funding boycott campaigns against Israel, harming Palestinian employment, discriminating on the basis of nationality and seeking to return the Golan Heights to terrorist groups in control of what was once Syria – also technical matters and part of the EU's consumer culture?

(Israel Hayom Nov 17)

Why do American Jews Oppose an Israeli Consensus on Settlements? By Jonathan S. Tobin

When Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced this week that the United States no longer considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be in violation of international law, most Israelis were clearly pleased. But a good portion of American Jews weren't. This tells us more about American Jewish priorities and indifference to what Israelis think than it does about what's good for the Jewish state or arguments about international law.

As was the case with the Trump administration's moves on Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the Iran nuclear deal and accountability for the Palestinian Authority's support of terrorism, all the major Israeli political parties greeted the announcement with support. Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his leading rival, Blue and White Party leader Benny Gantz, agreed that America was right to scrap its old insistence that Jews had no right to live outside the 1949 armistice lines.

That latter point is crucial to understanding a basic fact about Israeli political reality. Gantz, who remains locked in a standoff with Netanyahu and his allies over the composition of the next Israeli government, actually received a heads up about Pompeo's impending statement before it was issued.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman called Gantz and informed him of the decision. Had Gantz expressed opposition or had he asked that the Americans delay their announcement, a State Department source told the press that the administration would have complied with the request. To the contrary, after Pompeo spoke, Gantz approved of his move, saying explicitly that the fate of the "settlements and the residents of Judea and Samaria should be determined by agreements that meet security requirements and that can promote a peace that will serve both sides while reflecting the reality on the ground."

That's because the claim that they are illegal is at odds with the goal of a negotiated settlement. Labeling these Jewish communities in that manner renders negotiations over the territories effectively moot. The Palestinians have never seriously negotiated with Israel about a peace deal on the West Bank. As long as the world considers the territories to be stolen property that must be returned to the Arabs—rather than disputed land whose fate must be arrived at by give and take by both sides—there's nothing to negotiate.

Gantz's stand on the peace process left little daylight between them on security or diplomacy during the recent election campaigns. This reflects a consensus that stretches from the moderate left to the right about the lack of a peace partner. Like Netanyahu, Gantz understands that Israel must maintain control of the Jordan River Valley and most of the settlements even in the theoretical event that the Palestinians eventually choose to make peace as opposed to continue holding onto their century-old war on Zionism. He is no more interested in uprooting settlements without obtaining real peace—as former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did in Gaza in

2005—than Netanyahu.

The Geneva Convention against occupying powers moving its population into captured land doesn't apply to Israelis in the West Bank because these territories have no legal owner. Israel seized these lands in a defensive war from Jordan, an illegal occupier. The 1922 League of Nations Mandate for Palestine specifically guaranteed the right of Jewish settlement throughout the country.

The U.N. ruling on settlements did not nullify Jewish rights there that are rooted in faith, history and international law. If those rights are to be surrendered, it can only be done in return for Palestinian concessions—not as the result of interpretations of international law that are influenced more by anti-Semitic prejudice than legal logic.

What the United States has done is merely to put the Palestinians on notice that if they want an end to the status quo, then they will have to talk to the Israelis. They cannot sit back and wait for the international community to hand them Israeli concessions on a silver platter. That's why even if you think settlements are unwise or that many of them should be evacuated if it made peace possible, the notion that they are illegal is a pernicious myth.

Yet rather than join with Gantz, some leading American Jewish groups, such as the Union of Reform Judaism, criticized the decision or remained conspicuously neutral. So, too, did many Democrats, including those who claim to be friends of Israel.

Why?

Many liberal Jews truly believe that Israel's presence in the territories will lead to Israel becoming an "apartheid state" or a binational country without a Jewish majority. This is untrue since the continued anomalous status of the territories is due to Palestinian rejectionism. Israelis also have no intention of allowing the creation of a Palestinian state that would, like the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, constitute a threat to Israel's existence.

But there's more to this than American Jewish misconceptions about Palestinian intentions, which Israelis rejected in the aftermath of the collapse of the Oslo process.

As loyal Democrats, liberal Jews simply oppose everything Trump does, whether or not it's right or good for Israel. That's why they opposed the move of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, even though they would have cheered had Barack Obama done it.

Much like the U.S. acknowledgment of reality on Jerusalem, Trump's discarding of a policy based on a falsehood won't set the world on fire. But in a political universe in which Democrats regard everything the president does as inherently illegitimate, it comes as little surprise that their presidential candidates and Jewish supporters want no part of a Trump diplomatic revolution that the foreign-policy establishment rejects. That's true even if means defending longstanding failed policies based in falsehoods, such as the claim that the settlements are illegal.

Liberal Jewish groups may say that they are upholding the peace process against Trump's destructive impulses. But this is partisanship, not principle. It's high time groups that purport to represent the consensus of American Jewry started listening to the consensus of Israelis. (JNS Nov 19)

Democrats and Israel: Nothing but Daylight

By Matthew Continetti

Someday we'll be telling stories round the campfire about what life was like when support for Israel was bipartisan. Republican and Democratic congressmen reliably voted for aid to the Jewish state. The majority of Republican and Democratic officials defended Israel in the public square. Republican and Democratic candidates reassured voters that they had Israel's back. "Israel's security is sacrosanct," Barack Obama told the 2008 AIPAC policy conference. "Israel's security is nonnegotiable," Hillary Clinton told the same audience eight years later.

Pleasant memories. When AIPAC gathered in Washington in March, none of the major Democratic candidates then running for president bothered to attend. Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, and Pete Buttigieg appeared instead at the October meeting of J Street, the left-wing alternative to AIPAC founded in 2007. The message Biden delivered over video was commonplace. The others were not.

"What is going on in Gaza right now is absolutely inhumane, it is unacceptable, it is unsustainable," Sanders growled. In a Sanders administration, he went on, aid to Israel would depend on the status of the Hamas-controlled territory. When he ran for president four years ago, Sanders was fringe. Now he's the pacesetter.

"We must find ways to make tangible progress on the ground toward a two-state solution," Warren said. How? Well, a week earlier, Warren had said, "All options are on the table."

Israel is one issue on which Warren and Buttigieg agree. "We have a responsibility as the key ally to Israel to make sure that we guide things in the right direction," Mayor Pete said. For Buttigieg and

Warren, the way to "guide things" is to cut aid that flows to settlements or to an Israeli government that annexes territory in the West Bank.

Three of the four highest-polling Democratic presidential candidates are talking about Israel in language other politicians reserve for rogue states. It's the latest and most worrisome sign that a growing number of Democrats place a higher value on pandering to progressives than on Israeli sovereignty and security. The aggressive rhetoric is another reminder of the energy on the political left. Bernie Sanders's political revolution may be in trouble, but his foreign-policy revolution in how the Democratic Party sees Israel is going swimmingly.

Bernie is capitalizing on long-running trends. In his recent book *We Stand Divided*, Daniel Gordis notes that relations between Israel and the American Diaspora have often been fraught: "For most of the time since Theodor Herzl launched political Zionism at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, the relationship between American Jews and Herzl's idea, and then the country it created, has been complex at best and often even openly antagonistic."

What many assumed was a durable pro-Israel consensus was in fact a consequence of specific historical circumstances. The American left's goodwill toward Israel was based in large part on images: Israel the scrappy underdog, Israel the land of social democracy and the kibbutzim, Israel the participant in Camp David and the Oslo Accords. The picture today is different.

For the left, the state created in the aftermath of the Holocaust and invaded by Arab armies has become a conquering power. The nation of communes has become the nation of start-ups. The governments of David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Rabin have become the governments of Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu.

Americans who belong to the millennial generation or to Generation Z have no memory of the Middle East "peace process." Nor can they recall the second intifada or the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Many American Jews express their identity not through religious practice and Zionism but through social-justice activism and tikkun olam. To them, Israel is an oppressive state with un-egalitarian religious and political systems. In a 2007 study, fewer than half of American Jews age 35 or younger said, "Israel's destruction would be a personal tragedy."

The following year, Barack Obama won two-thirds of the millennial vote and 78 percent of the Jewish vote. While he was sure to pay obeisance to the imperatives of Israeli security, Obama's actions as president created the space for anti-Israel and anti-Zionist activism within the Democratic Party. "When there is no daylight [between Israel and the United States], Israel just sits on the sidelines, and that erodes our credibility with the Arabs," he said in 2009.

Aided by J Street, Obama opened the shutters and blinds and flooded the U.S.-Israel relationship with daylight. His demand that Israel freeze settlement construction gave the Palestinians the opportunity to refuse talks. His decision not to punish Bashar Assad for gassing Syrians damaged American credibility and regional stability. His nuclear agreement with Iran not only endangered Israel but also divided and demoralized the pro-Israel community. In his final month in office, Obama broke 35 years of precedent and declined to veto a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlements.

Ironically—and predictably—these actions failed to build up credibility with Arab governments terrified by Obama's attempted rapprochement with Iran. What Obama did do was prepare the ground for politicians and activists hostile to the Jewish state and Jews. When party leaders reinstated mentions of God and of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in the 2012 Democratic Party platform, some of the convention-goers booed. When Benjamin Netanyahu in 2015 criticized the Obama administration's negotiations with Iran before a joint session of Congress, 56 Democratic legislators didn't show up. Earlier this year, when the Senate took up a pro-Israel bill that included anti-Boycott Divest Sanction language, 22 Democrats voted against it.

Obama's second term in office saw an explosion in far-left activity that manifested itself on campus and in Black Lives Matter, intersectional theory, and the Sanders movement. The same young people drive the anti-Semitic BDS Movement and join groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine and If Not Now. They campaign for Sanders and for his friends Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Rashida Tlaib. They find insignificant, if they acknowledge at all, the threats to Israel and to Israelis from Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian terrorism. A few quietly hope for the success of Israel's enemies. In their view of the world, Palestinians and other members of victimized classes have no agency and therefore no responsibility.

In 2019, *If Not Now* published something called "Five Ways the American Jewish Establishment Supports the Occupation." Gordis writes: "Though the lengthy document assailed Israel's violation of

Palestinian rights and the American Jewish establishment's ostensible support of those violations, the report was no less noteworthy for the fact that nowhere did it mention Palestinian violence against Israel, the continued pledge of many Palestinians (including the Hamas government of Gaza) to destroy Israel, any mention of the Jewish right to sovereignty, or even the word 'Zionism'."

J Street and If Not Now represent neither the whole Democratic Party nor the entire American Jewish community. But numbers matter less than influence. Progressives are becoming more anti-Israel as the Democratic Party experiences generational and cultural change. It is revealing that Sanders denounced Israel at the J Street conference while two former members of Obama's administration looked on approvingly. Among the few remaining legacies of Barack Obama is his transformation of the Democrats from a pro-Israel party into an anti-Israel one. (Commentary Magazine Nov 2019)

Settlements and the Smelling-Salts Brigade By John Podhoretz

The remarkable decision by the State Department to declare that Israeli settlements on the disputed territories of the West Bank are not inherently illegal or illegitimate has already occasioned the bringing-out of the foreign policy smelling salts. The New York Times's news story instantly declared that this might "doom any peace efforts with Palestinians," as though there are any peace efforts with the Palestinians to doom right now or in the foreseeable future.

The decade-long withdrawal of the Palestinians from any realistic effort to forge a future for themselves in a land they might take as a state—following a decade of specious pseudo-negotiations torpedoed by Palestinians when and if they ever got anywhere near a resolution, after which Palestinians began a three-year terror war—is the only fact on the ground when it comes to "peace" and the West Bank. (Meanwhile, Israel is girding for a potential two-front war with Iranian proxies launched from Gaza and Lebanon.)

More important is the argument that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's decision transgresses settled international law. Balderdash and poppycock. Yes, it is the general understanding of the panjandra of the Smelling Salts Elite that Israel's "settlements" stand in the way of a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and Pompeo himself acknowledged that certain settlement activity can be understood as a means of making agreements more difficult.

But difficult does not mean illegal.

The idea that the West Bank is "occupied territory" itself is based on a problematic reading of international law. As Eugene Kontorovich has said, "the relevant international law instruments speak only of people being 'transferred or deported' by an occupying power." Israel has not deported anyone from the West Bank, nor has it "transported" people there in the sense of forcing its colonization. Israelis have chosen to move to the West Bank. You can interpret that fact broadly to suggest they have "transferred" themselves, but that will result in a Talmudic argument that will never come to a resolution.

If the law were settled, the anti-Semites and Israel-haters at the United Nations would not have felt the need to seek the passage of the infamous Resolution 2334 in December 2016—which declares settlement activity a violation of international law. This is the resolution that Barack Obama allowed to pass without a veto from the United States, because he just wasn't going to leave office without blowing a childish raspberry at Bibi Netanyahu. It was the existence of this resolution that led the Trump State Department to initiate a study of the legal basis of the Israelis' settlements—a study whose conclusion is that while the settlements might indeed be an obstacle to peace, that does not make them, as a legal matter, illegitimate.

So don't listen to the caterwauling and the wailing and the gnashing of teeth. What Secretary Pompeo and the Trump administration have done is speak truth. Odd, isn't it, how the simple telling of the truth is so agonizing to people who claim to be realists? (Commentary Magazine.com Nov 18)

Who are the Real Anti-Zionists in Israel? By Jonathan S. Tobin

In a speech that sparked condemnations from the left, right and center, Avigdor Lieberman, the head of Israel's Yisrael Beiteinu Party, ended speculation as to whether he would support a minority government that would end the country's coalition crisis.

Had Lieberman decided to throw in his lot with Benny Gantz and the Blue and White Party, the result would have been a government that would have depended on the votes of the Joint List—the coalition of Arab political parties—to survive. He would have savored the opportunity to topple Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which has been the entire point of all the maneuvering he has been doing for the past year. Aligning himself with a faction that he has always denounced as a subversive "fifth column" seeking to destroy the Jewish state, however, was too high a price to pay.

That means Israelis will likely be forced to head to the polls for the

third time within a year sometime next spring. To justify his decision, Lieberman issued a statement that repeated his past denunciations of the Arab parties. But he also said his party would no longer serve with religious parties.

His answer was to claim that the haredim and their political representatives were just as anti-Zionist as the Arabs. He blasted their efforts to both exempt their young men from serving in the military and to siphon portions of the national budget into their schools and other institutions.

Lieberman is not alone in lamenting the outsized influence of the haredim.

The ultra-Orthodox domination of Israeli life infuriates Diaspora Jews, who want the State of Israel to adopt religious pluralism, as well as to give the non-Orthodox equal rights at the Western Wall.

Many serious thinkers have long considered that having a large and growing portion of the population not fully participating in the work force—as is the case with many haredi men who study in yeshivahs, whether or not they are serious scholars—as well as not serving in the army constitutes an existential threat to Israel's future.

The rabbinate's control over life-cycle events is also lamented by a large majority of Israelis from all walks of life. That's why denouncing the haredim has always been political gold for Israeli politicians. Lieberman gained three Knesset seats in the September election as a result of his decision to abandon Netanyahu so as to avoid serving with his previous ultra-Orthodox coalition partners.

But the notion that these are just two sides of the same anti-Zionist coin doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

Many on the Israeli left, as well as liberal Americans, are deeply angered by Netanyahu's repeated talk of the Arabs' Joint List as enemies of Israel, which Lieberman echoed in his remarks. They consider it to be racist.

But it's not slander to speak of the Joint List as anti-Zionist and even to suggest that its activists sympathize with the forces trying to destroy Israel.

The Joint List is composed of four parties.

Hadash is Israel's Communist Party. Balad is a secular pan-Arab nationalist party. The United Arab List, or Ra'am, is Islamist and endorses policies somewhat akin to those of Hamas. Ta'al is also Arab nationalist and secular. All seek the elimination of a Jewish state and oppose its measures of self-defense.

Their presence in the Knesset is testimony to the fact that Israel is a democracy where all are equal under the law, rather than the "apartheid state" slander that the BDS movement promotes. But they don't so much represent the interests of Israeli-Arab voters as they do the hope that the one Jewish state on the planet will be eliminated.

Rhetoric from Netanyahu and Lieberman may seem over the top. Still, they are not wrong to regard these parties as having a purpose that is antithetical to the interests of the state. Including them in a government or even allowing them to decide its fate from outside the cabinet would be a mistake.

But to put the haredim—no matter how much they and the rabbinate may be rightly resented—in the same category is not accurate.

Branding all haredi Jews as being anti-Zionist as the Arabs is wrong. Some do support Israel and its institutions. Only a small minority, such as those who back the Satmar sect or the even more extreme Neturei Karta, actively seeks the state's end and will have nothing to do with it.

Other haredim actively oppose secular Zionism and don't want their children to serve in the army, but also have a pragmatic point of view about Israel and seek to influence its policies by taking part in government. The Agudat Yisrael Party represents the interests of such Jews in the Knesset. But to describe their complicated feelings about the state as morally equivalent to Arabs who identify with Israel's enemies is mistaken.

Such characterizations of the other haredi party in the Knesset are even more misleading. Shas, which depends on the support of Mizrahi Jews who trace their origins to the Arab world rather than to Eastern Europe, is officially Zionist, which befits the nationalist leanings of their voters. Like Agudat Yisrael, they support exemptions from army service and draining the treasury to fill the coffers of their own institutions. But they also support the state.

Many Israelis would welcome a government that would constrain the power of the ultra-Orthodox. But as long as security issues continue to dominate the country's agenda, right-wing Israelis will prefer an alliance with the haredim to one with Blue and White or left-wing parties.

In a third election, Likud might lose more seats, and Lieberman might be able to form a coalition with Gantz without being dependent on anti-Zionist Arab votes. Even if you sympathize with his goal, lumping in the haredim with forces actively seeking Israel's destruction is neither fair nor accurate. (JNS Nov 20)