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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*

## Events...

*Motzei Shabbat, December 7, 8pm  
Legal Forum for Israel event at the Toronto Zionist Centre,  
788 Marlee.*

## Commentary...

### New York Times Faulted for ‘Irredeemable and Indefensible’ Coverage of British Chief Rabbi By Ira Stoll

The New York Times is drawing criticism for its handling of a warning by British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis about anti-Semitism in the British Labour Party.

The Times news article reported that “Rabbi Mirvis leads a body of Orthodox congregations not only in Britain but across the Commonwealth; in Britain, those synagogues account for just over half of total synagogue membership, according to a 2010 report.” The Times went on, “Not all British Jews recognize the chief rabbi as the leader of their communities.”

The Times also reported, “some people warned that Rabbi Mirvis had sidestepped a greater threat posed to Jews and other British minority groups by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has himself been accused of making racist and Islamophobic remarks and energizing parts of the far right similar to those responsible for recent attacks on Jews in the United States.” It attributed this view to “an organization called Jews Against Boris.” The Times didn’t say how many members Jews Against Boris has, or what proportion of British Jews it represents.

It’s a classic Times double standard. When an Orthodox rabbi warns against anti-Semitism on the left, the Times bends over backwards to undercut his authority. Contrast it to how the Times, in three recent news articles, handled a Reform rabbi’s criticism of decisions by the Israeli and American governments or politicians.

Here is the Times reporting in December 2017 about reaction to President Trump’s decision to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem: “‘Jerusalem has always been the most delicate issue in every discussion about peace,’ said Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, the largest branch of American Judaism. ‘So we’re very concerned that the announcement will either delay or undermine the very, very important resuming of a serious peace process.’” Nothing from the Times in that article about how many American Jews Rabbi Jacobs does or doesn’t represent or about how not all American Jews recognize his authority.

Here is the Times reporting in July 2018 on reaction to the new Israeli law declaring Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people: “‘We will use all of the legal means available to us to challenge this new law and to promote Reform and Progressive Judaism in Israel,’ said Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the New York-based Union for Reform Judaism.” Nothing from the Times in that article, either, about how many American Jews Rabbi Jacobs does or doesn’t represent or about how not all American Jews recognize his authority.

Here is the Times reporting in September 2019 about Prime Minister Netanyahu’s floating the idea that he would annex parts of the West Bank: “‘These are unilateral moves endangering Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and further limiting the possibility of a two-state solution,’ Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said in a statement. ‘Such serious pronouncements don’t belong in the final week of a heated campaign.’” Again, Reform Rabbi Jacobs, criticizing Netanyahu, escapes the treatment the Times visits upon Orthodox Rabbi Mirvis, criticizing Labour and Jeremy Corbyn. Again, the Times doesn’t say how many American Jews Rabbi Jacobs does or doesn’t represent, and it doesn’t report about how not all American Jews recognize his authority.

The Times’ heavy-handed, inconsistent treatment of Rabbi Mirvis attracted plenty of negative attention on Twitter. The executive editor of the Washington Examiner Magazine, Seth Mandel, asked, “Is it just me or does this @nytimes story on Chief Rabbi Mirvis’ denunciation

of Labour’s anti-Semitism include zero British Jews supporting it, only Jews opposing it?”

Said Mandel, “The NYT is just printing bald anti-Semitic propaganda, of the sort you’d see on Iranian state tv in response to

Mirvis.” He went on, “it shows how misinformed you are if you read the NYT. The paper takes token dissenting voices in the Jewish community and presents them as representative of the larger community. You have to go out of your way to be this inaccurate. This shows how bias often manifests. Take a hot-button subject and portray an exact balance of opinion on it among a community that is \*not\* evenly divided. The only way NYT could present this as even is if they talked to \*literally\* no one on the majority side.”

Mandel went on, “this kind of reporting is just completely ethically irredeemable and indefensible.” The Times reporter, Benjamin Mueller, replied to an email from the *Algemeiner* seeking a response to Mandel’s criticism by referring the *Algemeiner* to an earlier article of his that quoted a wider array of British Jews.

A former editor at the Times, Mark Horowitz, responded to Mandel by writing, “I didn’t believe this could be true, but then read the article and he’s right. Very odd given that I just read in the *Guardian* that 84% of British Jews believe Labour is anti-Semitic, 87% that Corbyn is anti-Semitic, and 93% won’t vote Labour.”

Another Washington-based journalist, Melissa Braunstein, tweeted, “In the midst of reporting on British Labour’s raging #antisemitism problem, @nytimes tries to discredit Rabbi Mirvis as a #Jewish spokesman and find the super-minority of Jews who don’t think Labour’s a problem. This is offensively bad.”

In earlier recent coverage of the same topic, the Times pathetically tried to explain away Labour’s anti-Semitism by claiming, “Some of Mr. Corbyn’s supporters also stridently oppose Israel, occasionally resorting to anti-Semitic tropes to make their points.” (*Algemeiner Dec 1*)

*The writer was managing editor of The Forward and North American editor of The Jerusalem Post.*

### Transcendence in Hebron By David M. Weinberg

Despite the intense focus on Israel’s ongoing political stalemate, the Israeli media has found plenty of room in recent days to run lengthy features on food, music, sports, shopping, and social gossip.

This includes the victories of Tottenham, Manchester and Liverpool in the British Premier League, another visit to Israel by Quentin Tarantino and the pregnant Daniela Pick, a comedy show in Tel Aviv by Louis CK, Sacha Baron Cohen’s attack on Facebook, oodles of advice about where and whether to buy cellphones on Black Friday, instructions how to baste your Thanksgiving turkey, Miri Mesika’s tell-all magazine cover story, and much excitement about the upcoming seventh annual Solidarity film and Jacob’s Ladder music festivals.

But Israeli media found little reason to cover the biggest festival of the month – the largest-ever gathering in at least 2,000 years of Jews in Hebron, last Shabbat, to mark the anniversary of Abraham’s purchase of the Jewish people’s first piece of land in Israel, the field and Cave of the Patriarchs.

Perhaps 50,000 (!) Israelis and Jews from around the world camped out in downtown Hebron adjacent to the Cave of the Patriarchs, to celebrate the “Chayei Sarah” Torah reading, which tells the story of Abraham’s negotiations over a burial plot in that city for his wife, the matriarch, Sarah.

Of course, the importance of Hebron in Jewish tradition and nationalism is broader than the spiritual legacies of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah – all of whom are buried in Hebron according to the Biblical record. King David’s throne was established in Hebron, and he ruled there for seven years before moving his capital to Jerusalem.

Moreover, the Jewish community of Hebron – which had been in place for centuries – was massacred and expelled by Arab rioters in 1929, making the return of Jews to Hebron over the past 40 years a matter of principle and pride.

With Hamas the predominant political force in Hebron today, the presence of a small Jewish community in the city (100 family-strong) is especially dicey; thus, doubly important for Jews with strong Zionist-nationalist leanings.

Jewish “resettlement” in Hebron is a way of pledging allegiance to the Providential powers behind the Jewish return to Zion, and a way of defying Israel’s enemies who deny any deep Jewish rights in the Land of Israel.

Indeed, then-Israeli ambassador to the UN Chaim Herzog formally entered the Biblical passages of Abraham’s purchase of the Cave of the Patriarchs into the UN record and circulated the Jewish People’s Abrahamic “deed” to the Land of Israel as an official document of the General Assembly. That followed passage in 1975 of the UN’s infamous “Zionism is Racism” resolution, and the Islamic Conference’s 1976 “outright denial of all Jewish associations with the city of Hebron, both religious and historical.”

My family and I were privileged to participate for the third time in the uplifting celebration in Hebron this past Shabbat. It was a hoot: A cross between Uman and Woodstock, Rosh Hashanah and Purim, a solemn prayer gathering and a community street party.

Tens of thousands of people camped out in tents and trailers adjacent to the Cave of the Patriarchs and on every sidewalk and in every parklet, and tens of thousands of other revelers were hosted in nearby Kiryat Arba. The crowds were so thick that at times it was hard to walk down the main street that connects the scattered Israeli-held properties in Hebron.

Even at the early hour of 8 a.m. on Shabbat, I couldn’t get into the Cave of the Patriarchs for morning services; it was already filled to capacity. So I joined one of at least 100 different prayer quorums on the outdoor plaza under old olive trees, in glorious sunshine and festive atmosphere, reading the Torah portion about Abraham and Sarah, while meeting friends from around the world.

Chabad hosted 6,000 paying guests for each of the three Shabbat meals in gigantic tents outfitted with chandeliers; which is said to set a record for the largest-ever Shabbat meals.

The pilgrimage encompassed many types of Jews: religious and secular, Haredi and national-religious, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Israeli and Diaspora, city dwellers and settlers, many large families, the elderly and the young, (mostly) mainstream and (some) fringe types. A potpourri of the Jewish people.

It was a transcendent experience.

My delight in the proceedings is amplified by a profound family connection to Hebron. My late father-in-law, Rabbi Yitzhak Pechman, founded The Hebron Fund in America and raised the funds behind many projects built in Jewish Hebron since then. Residents and leaders of the Jewish community of Hebron still speak in reverence of him.

In fact, the entire concept of designating Shabbat Parashat Chayei Sarah as a special weekend focused on Hebron was his idea; first marked in 1980 in American synagogues alongside a “Chai to Chevron” fundraising campaign, with “shares” in rebuilding Hebron sold for \$18 per brick.

Rabbi Pechman would have been amazed and overwhelmed with joy to see how his fledgling “Shabbat Chevron” initiative in America has today become a powerhouse display of belonging and loyalty to Hebron in Israel.

But as mentioned, Israeli media almost completely ignored the mass gathering in Hebron this past weekend. It just wasn’t “deserving” of coverage; especially not when compared to news of rock concerts or Black Friday sales. Even this newspaper devoted a mere paragraph along with two tiny, stamp-sized, photos to the gathering in Hebron.

Only Haaretz gave more prominent coverage to “Shabbat Chevron,” but this was to disparage and denounce the event. As it does every year on the Sunday or Monday after Parashat Chayei Sarah, Haaretz charged “the radical settlers” in Hebron with violence against Palestinians, from rock-throwing to pepper spray attacks. And the paper spewed-out its usual scolding about the “masses of settlers” forcing Palestinians into a near-curfew in their homes for two days.

I didn’t witness any Jewish violence in Hebron this weekend (except for some drunk youngsters mildly harassing other Jewish visitors), and my reading of the crowd puts 99% of the Jewish pilgrims into the normative category of law-abiding and respectful people. The only violence I heard about, witnessed by one of my sons, were two Arab men throwing chairs and bottles off a rooftop at Jews on the street below, which caused the police to close off an alleyway for one hour.

But of course, Haaretz has a narrative of “settler violence and dispossession of Palestinians” to uphold – a stale and generally false narrative – so the paper always seeks to highlight the “evils” of Jewish celebration in Hebron.

Instead, Haaretz might have reported on the unique and successful space-sharing and time-sharing prayer arrangement between Jews and Muslims that pertains to the Cave of the Patriarchs. (For ten days a

year, including Shabbat Chayei Sarah, Jews have use of the entire complex; for ten holy days a year, Muslims pray exclusively in the complex; and for most of the year, Jews and Muslims share/partition the complex). How right and appropriate it would be for such a respectful arrangement to be introduced on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount too! (Israel Hayom Dec 2)

### Chabad Must Vocally Stand with Israel By Shmuley Boteach

Last Sunday I attended the annual gathering of Chabad’s far-flung, global corps of emissaries, the Kinus Hashluchim.

Over the last three decades, I’ve witnessed its growth from a few dozen shluchim in the late ‘80s – when I served as the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s emissary to Oxford – to the approximately 6,000 who attended this year. Together, these emissaries, activists and philanthropists are realizing the Rebbe’s dream to reach and inspire every Jew on Earth — easily the most ambitious Jewish educational project in history. To see everyone dancing in their thousands is moving beyond words.

In the past I’ve called the kinus “the greatest show on Earth,” an evening to celebrate the miracles of Chabad and the passionate inspiration of the Rebbe’s message. But there is one theme that could make it better. It’s one which was noticeably absent most years: the State of Israel.

To be sure, this year’s kinus featured a moving and unprecedented address by the American Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who received rapturous applause when he spoke of President Donald Trump’s moving the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a decision where David’s influence was key. But with the exception of the ambassador’s stirring words about the eternal Jewish homeland, there was no follow-up from any of the speakers about what Chabad must do to fight for, and protect the Jewish state, assailed as it is from all sides.

No mention was made of the need for Chabad’s global campus network to fight BDS, the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. No mention was made of Chabad’s amazing European emissaries inspiring local communities to speak up in favor of Israel in a continent where the Jewish state is under ferocious attack. In fact, the shaliach (emissary) chosen to follow Ambassador Friedman’s speech was a rabbi from London who did not even mention that in three weeks Britain would be going to elections where Jeremy Corbyn – an avowed Israel hater and antisemite – is one of two candidates to be prime minister.

The shaliach, in a drab and platitudinous address, could not even muster the courage to condemn Corbyn’s antisemitism. It fell to British Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, writing courageously two days later in The Times, to decry the Labor Party’s anti-Israel platform and Jew-hatred, a message that received plaudits from the entire Jewish world.

Now, I understand that Chabad does not sing “Hatikvah” or wave Israeli flags. That’s not what I’m referring to. These central symbols of Zionist connection are vital. Yet they don’t necessarily figure in the rubric of what actually makes one “pro-Israel,” a fact made clear by J Street’s willingness to do both while constantly defaming the Jewish state.

On the contrary, regardless of its theological disputes with classical Zionism, Chabad is pro-Israel where it counts most. Chabad embraces Jewish sovereignty over Israel – especially its most disputed areas – and supports the brave soldiers of the IDF. An increasing number of Chabad youths now serve in the IDF, my own son and daughter included. Within the Jewish community and among the higher echelons of American politics, it is these positions that determine one’s stance on Israel – and not just Zionist tokenism like eating a falafel on Yom Ha’atzma’ut, Israel Independence Day.

Indeed, the Rebbe spoke in the highest terms of Israel’s heroic soldiers, and was an inflexible supporter of Jewish sovereignty over every single inch of Israel – especially Judea and Samaria, which much of the world would see torn out of the Jewish state. Moreover, when discussing the integrity of the Jewish claim to all of Israel, the Rebbe didn’t just speak, he thundered. His body language would surge and his voice would rise. Often, he’d directly challenge Israeli leaders he felt were compromising Jewish security in so called “peace talks.”

The Rebbe openly called for Israel to “implement facts on the ground” in disputed territories in the form of settlements. (On a few occasions, the Rebbe called on “a million settlers” to go inhabit these lands). He heatedly opposed any land concessions, which he accurately predicted would only create an insatiable appetite for

Jewish land, a rise in terrorism, and a plunge in Israel's global standing.

Israel, the Rebbe predicted, would be called "occupiers." Considering the results of Oslo and the Gaza withdrawal, it's clear the Rebbe's predictions here were perfectly prescient. Israel's rightward political shift over the past decade depicts just how much the Rebbe's message has caught on. And yet, at the Rebbe's keynote event of the year, Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel barely makes the cut. I take no issue with Chabad's position on Israel. On the contrary, the Rebbe's ardent and unquestioning support for Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria is exactly the stance global Jewry needs. Chabad has simply not been loud enough in expressing the Rebbe's views.

On the topic of Israel and settlements, after all, the Rebbe was never silent. At what point then did Chabad go mum?

Chabad's silence on the question of Jewish sovereignty is especially confusing considering the timing: If there was ever a time to address Jewish ownership over the land of Israel, in general, and over Judea and Samaria in particular, the time is now.

Just two weeks ago, the European Court of Justice, the highest judicial body in the European Union, passed an undeniably antisemitic law requiring the labeling of all Jewish-made products emanating from Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The decision reaffirmed that the EU "does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967... and does not consider them to be part of Israel's territory," adding, "the fact that a foodstuff comes from a settlement established in breach of the rules of international humanitarian law may be the subject of ethical assessments capable of influencing consumers' purchasing decisions."

Some European consumers, Europe's top judges ruled, might be too ethically refined to buy products made by Jews.

The ruling echoed another passed in Canada in August, which ruled that wines made in Judea and Samaria in the West Bank could not be labeled "products of Israel." In the words of the judge, claiming Israeli origin for products made over the Green Line would be "false, misleading, and deceptive." She insisted, moreover, that labels were not only there to safeguard the safety of the consumer, but also to ensure they are able to "buy conscientiously."

For the first time since the '30s, Jews face a discriminatory international labeling scheme predicated on the fact that the Jews have no right to the Land of Israel. How could Chabad have so little to say?

Even as these attacks on Jewish sovereignty occur, there is also much progress being made. In Europe, the Netherlands and Hungary announced they would not go along with the shameful decision of the European Court of Justice, and for that their governments deserve credit.

In the United States, too, there is a growing bipartisan consensus that Jews have a right to live anywhere in biblical Israel. Courageous Democrats like Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey and Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz condemned the European court's Decision.

Most importantly, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced last week that Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria would no longer be seen as contravening international law. This landmark moment followed the Trump administration's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights this past March, which followed the moving of the American Embassy to Jerusalem the previous May. These moves and others like them have given the Jewish people the greatest support they've ever had to enact their God-given sovereignty over the Land of Israel.

This year, clearly, has been a big year for Israel; the upcoming one may be even bigger. As we cross between the two and encounter unprecedented opportunities for Jewish sovereignty over Israel, Chabad must find its voice and make the Rebbe's dreams for Israel a reality. (Jerusalem Post Dec 3)

## "Intifada, Intifada, Go Back to the Ovens!"

Jewish Voice Editorial

The Toronto Sun newspaper reported in its Nov. 22 issue that anti-Israel extremists on the York University campus shouted "Intifada, Intifada, go back to the ovens!" Photo Credit: Twitter

The Toronto Sun newspaper reported in its Nov. 22 issue that anti-Israel extremists on the York University campus shouted "Intifada, Intifada, go back to the ovens!" Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau denounced the violence stating: "What happened that night was shocking and absolutely unacceptable. Anti-Semitism has no place in Canada. We will always denounce it." Trudeau clearly saw that there is no difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. He

is correct.

These sickening calls to kill Jews happened while Herut Canada was sponsoring a Nov. 20 evening program with "Reservists On Duty" which describes itself as "a non-profit organization established in 2015 by IDF veterans who felt a duty to expose and counter the BDS movement and new forms of anti-Semitism erupting on US college campuses."

Herut Canada's student leader, Lauren Isaacs has stated: "These were, in fact, riots. Not peaceful protests." She goes further and says "the explosiveness of the event at York University is very telling about the culture of Antisemitism and intolerance towards Israel that exists on most university campuses nowadays."

Lauren Isaacs is right and the U.S. Jewish establishment and its leaders must be forced to stop responding to this challenge in the same business-as-usual way that they have been for the last 10 years. The hatred of Israel on campus is growing unabated and pro-Israel students need better support.

Marc Newburgh the CEO of Hillel Ontario stated on the Hillel website that "Hillel York declined to sponsor or host last night's program because we believed the event did not align with our campus programming strategy and we were concerned about the risk of violence." So Herut Canada went it alone. What's more the Canadian Jewish News (CJN) reported that Isaacs claimed that Hillel tried to have the event cancelled.

This act of cowardice on the part of Hillel surely emboldened the Israel-haters. A real commitment to Jewish unity is just part of the answer here. Hillel should have supported this Herut event from the start and we demand for Hillel's policies to be reviewed and corrected and ask that others support this call.

Lastly, the physical confrontations that night in Toronto should make plain that young Jews must be prepared to protect themselves. The BlogTO news website described the protest in its headline as a "Brawl." CJN called it a "Clash." Whatever it's called, this physically violent anti-Semitism is a real thing on campus that young Jews are facing and must be prepared for. Just as there was a sea change in the way Jews saw the necessity for synagogue security after Pittsburgh and Poway we hope for a transformation here. The event went on because Jews did not back down when physically challenged. They stood their ground.

Isaacs told a reporter: "even with all the disruptions, including three interruptions inside the room once the event started, she considers the night a success. For one thing, it was very well attended and the audience was engaged." Let's wish Isaacs and all of the other campus Zionist activists like her many more successful nights for Israel and demand real support from Hillel for Zionism on campus. (Jewish Voice Nov 27)

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## Liberal Jews and their Anti-Democratic, Anti-Liberal Critique of Israel By Daniel Gordis

Could the relationship between American Jews and Israel be healed, at least partially, if we stopped expecting the other to act as we would and instead learned to appreciate how different are our instincts, values and priorities?

My recent book, *We Stand Divided: The Rift Between American Jews and Israel*, argues that the answer is "yes." Israelis need to learn a great deal more about American Jewish life and its admirable successes, while American Jews ought to stop expecting Israel to behave as a Hebrew-speaking, falafel-eating miniature version of the United States. Both communities are too rich and accomplished for the other to expect them to mimic something that is, essentially, entirely different.

In writing the book, I did not believe I was saying anything particularly controversial. But it turns out that I was wrong. Reviewers on the Left have assailed the book, in large measure because they believe I failed to focus sufficiently on the occupation. They're right. Since I think that even if the occupation ended tomorrow, matters would not improve much, I focused on what seem to me the more bedrock reasons for our divide – the ways in which we are radically different.

The most recent rejection of my argument came in the form of a review in Haaretz by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, formerly the head of the Reform movement in North America. In fine American style, Yoffie opens his take-down of my book with some nice comments. He is kind enough to call me a "serious and thoughtful scholar," and says *We Stand Divided* is "an important, valuable book" and "should be studied by anyone who cares about Israel's well-being."

Since I wouldn't want my credentials as an upstanding American

impugned, I will therefore begin in similar fashion. Yoffie's call for greater tradition in the Reform movement was and remains vitally important, as was his urging the Reform movement to embrace joy-filled worship in its synagogues. Whether or not one agrees with him on all matters political or religious, for a lifetime of devoted service to American Jewish life, he deserves our collective admiration and gratitude.

It does not take long for Yoffie to take off the gloves, however, as he calls parts of the book's argument "wrong" (perfectly legitimate), "absurd" (a bit less kind), "bizarre" and "disconcerting" ("Patronizing" and "ungrounded," which appear in the headline and which, I assume, Yoffie did not write, were apparently added by zealous Haaretz editors, evidently swept away by their enthusiasm for Yoffie's worldview.)

I will therefore permit myself a bit of bluntness, as well, because Yoffie's review is so scattershot, responding is a challenge. To see what I mean, do that old exercise we all did when we were in college: Write in the margin the thesis statement of each paragraph, and then see how the argument progresses. What emerges, frustratingly, is not an argument, but something much more reminiscent of the contrails of Space Shuttle Challenger, twisting and turning in all directions, but headed mostly nowhere.

What is clear, however, is that one of Yoffie's chief frustrations with my book is that I do not share his level of frustration about Israel's Orthodox establishment. Yoffie argues that though I don't dwell on it enough, Israel "must take into account the urgent pleas of half of that people, living in the Diaspora, to recognize the Jewish streams they're identified with, and to offer support to Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel."

It sounds reasonable, and Yoffie is right; in an ideal world, Israelis (like Americans) would be more open-minded and more embracing of ideas that are not consonant with their own. (For the record, I'm a Conservative rabbi, and regularly perform weddings in Israel in blatant violation of Israeli law.) But what does Yoffie mean when he says that Israel "must" do this? He knows, of course, that Israel's haredi (ultra-Orthodox) parties can, and will, bring down any government that moves in his proposed direction.

What, then, should Israeli prime ministers do? Lose their governments over this issue, when what would follow would simply be another government equally beholden to the haredim? What does Yoffie actually expect Israeli leaders to do? Change Israel's entire system of government? Violate its democratic principles? He offers us no hint.

In his anger about Israel's failure to embrace Reform Judaism, Yoffie also reveals how little he knows about religious trends in Israeli society. "It shouldn't matter whether there are many or few liberal Jews in Israel is large or small," [sic] he writes "or whether you think non-Orthodox Judaism has a real future in Israel or not (Gordis, in my view incorrectly, thinks not.)"

Aside from the fact that that is simply not an English sentence, Yoffie gets three things completely wrong. First, I never said (because I do not believe) that non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel does not have a real future, because I believe that it (thankfully) does. Second, Yoffie assumes that for those seeking something other than Orthodoxy, the alternative is Reform or Conservative. That may be (decreasingly) true in the United States, but it is certainly not the case in Israel. Israel is exploding with religious options and creativity – they just have nothing at all to do with Reform or Conservative Judaism, which are profoundly American phenomena, shaped to meet the needs of an American Jewish population.

But it is Yoffie's third and final mistake on this front of which American Jews should most take note. As many liberal Jews are keenly aware, Israel's treatment of Mizrahi Jews (descendants of Jews from Middle Eastern and North African communities) in the early years of the state was reprehensible.

Upon their arrival from multiple places in the Levant, David Ben-Gurion (the liberal, socialist prime minister American Jews still hold up as their ideal of Israel's values), had this to say about their way of life: "The dispersions that are being terminated... and which are gathering in Israel still do not constitute a people, but a motley crowd, human dust lacking language, education, roots, tradition or national dreams.... Turning this human dust into a civilized, independent nation with a vision... is no easy task."

While Mizrahim in Israel have not yet achieved economic parity with Ashkenazim, they have made tremendous progress. The entry of Mizrahim into the nuclei of Israeli society – politically, economically, culturally and religiously – is one of Israel's great accomplishments. Despite all the work that remains, the story of the Mizrahim is a civil

rights success that should be the envy of any democracy, and American Jews, living as they do in a country mired in racial hatred with no apparent way out, ought to note what Israel has achieved.

Yet here is the rub. Civil rights progress means not only giving people their economic due, but also taking their ideas and their culture seriously. And Mizrahi Jews, who now constitute a majority of Israel's Jews, are in no hurry to make peace with the Palestinians or to embrace liberal forms of Judaism. On the Palestinian front, what Mizrahi Jews essentially have to say is this: "We are actually the children and grandchildren of Jews who were forced out of their countries by that culture. Forgive us if we don't share your instinctive benevolence, but we are the ones who actually know that culture, and we believe that their hatred for us is far more powerful than any instinct for peace might be. We are the protective buffer between Israel's security and your liberal naivete."

Each of us can agree or disagree with that worldview. But what we have to acknowledge is that we cannot both insist that Israel make concessions for peace now and respect the intellectual independence of Mizrahi Jews. American Jews who want to impose their views on Israelis must at least acknowledge that they would do so at the expense of Israel's democracy and even more tellingly, at the expense of taking seriously those Jews who are finally, after decades of struggle, beginning to be heard. Is that really what Yoffie wants?

Mizrahi Jews are also making a profound contribution to Israeli religious life. They have brought to Israel a deep and abiding reverence for Jewish tradition, even if they are not punctiliously observant. What they are teaching Israeli society is that the relentlessly theological project called modern Western Judaism is far from the only way to embrace Jewish life. Thousands of young Ashkenazi Israelis are engaging tradition without adopting Orthodoxy, precisely because Mizrahi Jews have modeled for them how that is possible.

That, American Jews are likely to celebrate. But, and here's the rub again, Mizrahi Jews are in no hurry to change gender roles in Judaism. Women in Mizrahi communities are making huge progress, but ritual egalitarianism is for the most part nowhere on their agenda. Is it for us to tell them that our way of Jewish life is more enlightened? When they look at the reverence that pervades their own communities and the utter lack of reverence that is the standard in American liberal Jewish life, Mizrahim are not inclined in the least to emulate the little that they know about what is happening across the ocean. But where do they, their views, their rights to opinions get reflected in Yoffie's assertion that "Israel" (whatever that is) "must" recognize Reform and Conservative Judaism? What if "Israel" – meaning large numbers of Israeli citizens – just doesn't want to? Where is this massive Mizrahi influence reflected in Yoffie's prescription for Israel? Nowhere, actually. Which, ironically, is precisely where David Ben-Gurion wanted them.

All of this ultimately proves the central thesis of my book. What separates American Jews and Israel is, well, everything. The majority of Israeli Jews and the majority of American Jews are demographically different, have different instincts when it comes to concessions for peace, and differ when it comes to visions for Jewish life. It was inevitable that Jews who constitute 2% of the population of the country in which they live and those who constitute some 80% would see the world differently and create radically different visions of what Jewish life can and should be.

Israel was not created in order to enable American Jews to feel virtuous – it was created to be a sanctuary of Jewish survival. Israelis have fashioned different instincts than American Jews on the ideal balance between risk and the quest for peace and have made their own unique determinations about what Jewish cultural survival looks like.

We ought to celebrate those differences, not bemoan them, for it is our disagreements that give us what to learn from each other. The first step toward that mutual learning, however, is not preaching, but listening, seeing each other through the most generous lens we possibly can. Sadly, condescending and paternalistic attitudes to each other (in Rabbi Yoffie's concluding words, "It may be that Israelis themselves don't see as clearly what US Jews see from there") take us in precisely the wrong direction. (Jerusalem Post Nov 28)

*The writer is senior vice president and Koret Distinguished Fellow at Shalem College in Jerusalem. His latest book is *We Stand Divided: The Rift Between American Jews and Israel*.*