



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...

Sunday, June 15, 8:00 PM

*Concert featuring the North American Debut of Israeli Roots/Soul/ Reggae Superstar **Mosh Ben Ari**, at The Mod Club, 722 College St., to benefit Sderot. Tickets available at Israel's.*

Tuesday, June 17, 8:00 PM

Aish Hatorah presents Aaron Klein of WorldNetDaily.com speaking on "Shmoozing with Terrorists" at Shaarei Shomayim.

Tuesday June 24, 7:00 PM

Tehilla program on Buying Property in Israel, at the Sephardic Kehila Centre.

Commentary...

The Government's Plan for Gaza By Caroline Glick

The Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government is marching the country into another military confrontation with an Iranian proxy army. As was the case in the last confrontation with an Iranian proxy army two years ago, the country's leaders are fully committed to Israel's strategic defeat in the current one.

Tuesday, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Ehud Barak will meet ahead of Wednesday's security cabinet meeting to determine their preferred course of action in Gaza. As media reports and statements by the three's surrogates over the past several days make clear, Israel's political leaders oppose launching a military campaign aimed at defeating Hamas's Iranian directed, financed, trained and armed army and dislodging Hamas's jihadist regime from power.

Indeed, as their actions and statements over the past several months make clear, what Israel's political leaders really aspire to is a cease-fire agreement with Iran's Palestinian proxy regime. Under the proposed cease-fire, Hamas will suspend or scale back its illegal missile war against Israeli civilians in the South. In return, Israel will effectively accept Hamas rule of Gaza. Israel will allow Hamas to continue to build up its military forces in Gaza and have open access to the Sinai.

In light of Hamas's negotiations with Fatah towards the reestablishment of a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority unity government, such a cease-fire will also entail an end to the economic isolation of Gaza. Since they would be formally governed by Fatah - Israel's "peace partner," Gazans will be allowed to use Israeli ports and even build their own seaport and perhaps reopen their airport in Rafah. The debate in the West over whether or not to negotiate with Hamas will effectively end - with an international embrace of Hamas as Fatah's partner.

For the Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government, a cease-fire is attractive politically. By providing a temporary respite from the jihadist missile attacks against southern Israel, the cease-fire will suspend the local media's coverage of the grave and gathering threat to Israel's security in the South. And the lull in media coverage of the Iranian threat in Gaza will provide breathing room for the scandal-ridden and deeply unpopular Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government as it seeks desperately to avoid new general elections.

Gifted politicians that they are, Olmert, Livni and Barak know that if they decide Tuesday to reject the IDF's pleas to conduct a military campaign to dislodge Hamas again and opt instead to sign the Egyptian-mediated cease-fire deal with Iran's Palestinian army, they will be properly accused of political opportunism and cowardice by the media and their political opponents. So to

sign on to a deal with Hamas, they need military cover.

As The Jerusalem Post reported last week, that smokescreen will likely be what Olmert, Livni, Barak and their surrogates refer to as a "medium-sized military option" against Hamas. The aim of their preferred military approach is not to defeat Hamas. They just want to "send it a message." In plain English, what their preferred military option involves is committing IDF forces to

battle in numbers insufficient to defeat Hamas. IDF forces will be killed in battle and in the end, Hamas will still control Gaza. But in their public speeches, Olmert, Livni and Barak will claim victory arguing that now that they have "sent Hamas a message" they can sign the cease-fire agreement.

For their part, the local media will justify the government's decisions and agree to present them to the public as a strategic achievement. The media can be expected to do so for two reasons. First, they will not wish to upset the families of the soldiers who will die in the campaign by noting that their lives were sacrificed for nothing. And second, the leftist media is uninterested in general elections which will bring Likud to power and so they will work to block them by collaborating with the government in its attempts to pretend that the "medium-sized military operation" was a good idea.

As for the political opposition, as was the case in the Second Lebanon War, they will be unwilling to criticize the government while Israeli forces are risking their lives in battle. Afterwards, they will fear being castigated by the government and its media flacks as "unpatriotic" or "warmongering" if they criticize the outcome of the "medium-sized military operation" that will leave Hamas and Iran strengthened and free to expand their control to Judea and Samaria.

In short, Olmert, Livni and Barak are about to decide to sacrifice the lives of IDF soldiers in order to delude the public into believing that signing a cease-fire agreement that leaves Hamas in charge of Gaza and in a position to take over Judea and Samaria is a strategically sound policy.

This drastic assertion could be easily attacked as delusional and even paranoid if we hadn't been here before. But we have.

Two years ago, Israel was the victim of naked aggression when Hizbullah forces launched an unprovoked attack on an IDF patrol, killed three soldiers and abducted Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser while pummeling northern Israel with Katyusha rockets and short-range missiles. Although Olmert at the time declared war against Hizbullah, he, Livni and then defense minister Amir Peretz refused to order the IDF to defeat Hizbullah.

They refused for weeks to launch a ground campaign. They refused for weeks to call up reserve units. Interested in "sending a signal" to Hizbullah rather than defeating its forces, for four weeks they ordered the IDF to conduct operations with no operational logic in which IDF forces were killed in battles that had no strategic purpose.

Then, after squandering some 30 days of fruitless fighting, reacting to the public outcry against his incompetence, Olmert belatedly ordered a ground assault of South Lebanon. He ordered IDF forces to move in helter-skelter and attempt to complete an operation that was planned to take more than 96 hours in 48 hours. Most egregiously, the entire operation was launched after the UN Security Council had passed resolution 1701 defining the terms of Israel's cease-fire with Iran's Lebanese proxy army.

That is, even if the campaign had been successful, it would have had no impact on the outcome of the war which had already been determined - with Israeli support - in New York. And yet, to assuage the public demand for victory, the Olmert-Livni-Peretz-Yishai government launched the last minute "medium-sized" 48-hour attack in which 33 IDF forces were killed in a battle for nothing.

Resolution 1701 left Hizbullah intact and provided the illegal army of jihad with unprecedented political legitimacy. Under the cover of 1701, Iran and Syria have rebuilt Hizbullah's forces, which in turn have reasserted their military control over South Lebanon.

Just last week Barak warned that Hizbullah is setting up fortified positions along the border. He also said, "The Syrians are working in intimate cooperation with Hizbullah, and they are in large part responsible for the

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transfer of weapons and supplies to Hezbollah. The ultimate responsibility, as far as we're concerned, lies with Hezbollah on the one hand, and with the Iranians and the Syrians on the other." Barak's statements came two weeks after Hezbollah effectively overthrew the pro-Western Saniora government and through the good offices of the Qataris, forced the March 14 democracy movement to sign the Doha agreement, which transfers control of the country to Hezbollah. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was then quick to announce his army's subservience to Teheran.

The Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government responded to Hezbollah's violent takeover of the Lebanese government by rewarding it. As Michael Young of Beirut's Daily Star wrote recently, Hezbollah is presenting its swap of dead IDF soldiers' body parts for Hezbollah spy Nissim Nasser as a first step towards a massive Israeli release of Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorists from its prisons in exchange for Regev and Goldwasser.

Such a prisoner release will play directly into Hezbollah's hands. It will effectively justify Hezbollah's decision to go to war with Israel two years ago to the Lebanese public. Such justification is essential as Hezbollah moves forward towards gaining internal Lebanese acceptance of its role as ruler of Lebanon.

Beyond its effective support of Hezbollah, the Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government is strengthening the Iranian-controlled axis by conducting negotiations toward the surrender of the Golan Heights with Syrian President and Iranian proxy Bashar Assad. Here too, Israel is signaling to Assad that his decision to cast his lot with Teheran was a wise one.

The international consequences of Israel's behavior have already been unmistakable. This week both French President Nicholas Sarkozy and British Foreign Minister David Miliband visited Lebanon and accepted Hezbollah's demand for control over Mt. Dov on the Golan Heights. Israel seized the strategically vital area which controls the approaches to the Galilee in the 1967 Six Day War from Syria. Hezbollah claimed that it is continued Israeli control of the area that justified its war of aggression two years ago.

This all brings us back to the situation in Gaza. In his post-Doha address, Nasrallah urged Hamas to follow his successful model of war against Israel both in order to hasten Israel's destruction and to facilitate the extension of the terror group's control to Judea and Samaria. And of course, that is precisely what Hamas has been doing for the past two years.

The Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government's political opponents have claimed that with the ongoing corruption probes against the prime minister, the government lacks the political legitimacy to conduct a military campaign in Gaza. This is a false assertion. As Israel's elected leaders, the Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government has a duty to defend the country and the only way to do so is to launch a military campaign in Gaza.

The problem is that the Olmert-Livni-Barak-Yishai government is incompetent to successfully carry out such an essential campaign. As in Lebanon two years ago, so in Gaza today, the type of campaign that this government will launch will only endanger Israel still further. (Jerusalem Post Jun 9)

We Are All Jews! By R. James Woolsey

With anti-Semitism growing in Europe and a hideous variety thereof already metastasized in the Middle East - not to speak of the Left's (and a small part of the Right's) hostility to Israel which sometimes veers off into anti-Semitism - it seems to me Israel could use a bit of solidarity these days. The sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel seems as good a time as any to explain why.

I sometimes get asked these days if I'm Jewish - it's my neo-conish views on defense and foreign affairs, I suppose. For a while I would just say, "No, Presbyterian," but I've started saying instead, "Well, I anchor the Presbyterian wing of JINSA (the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs)."

It's not only the other two great Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Islam, that owe a substantial debt to Judaism, it's the world as a whole. The reason is that between three and four millennia ago something happened in the Sinai among a tribe of refugees from Egyptian oppression that introduced the world to the concept of the rule of law - the idea that the law is not the whim of, but rather has its source above, those who rule.

This concept is at the heart of what makes decently-governed societies possible, whether you sign on to Jefferson's formulation that we are "endowed by our Creator" with basic rights or prefer the more secular notion of natural law.

In the absence of one or the other of these bases for the notion that the rule of law somehow derives from a source above the rulers, electoral democracy can degenerate into mob rule and capitalism into theft. This supremacy of the law is what most Americans mean when they say that we have a "government of laws, not men."

Some aspects of this have gotten a bit muddled recently in the largely

academic debate about whether the United States is or is not an "empire." If the US is an empire it's a very odd one: Countries where it has troops such as Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Germany suggest they are unhappy about that and the response is, "OK," and offer to leave.

Nero and Napoleon would have been appalled. They would also have had a hard time understanding the travails of Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. One was driven from office by the people's elected representatives for permitting a cover-up of a clumsy political burglary. The other was impeached by the House, then acquitted in a Senate trial, for lying under oath in a deposition taken in what was essentially a sexual harassment case brought by a private citizen.

What, you may well ask, are the most powerful individuals in the world doing, if they are emperors, getting held to account by members of Congress for burglary cover-ups and by private citizens, no less, for sexual behavior?

The answer is, of course, that neither Nixon nor Clinton, indeed no American president, is even close to being an emperor. People (and smaller nations wherein an empire maintains troops) obey emperors, if they know what's good for them, without much discussion. These two recent presidents were, instead, held to account in a distinctly non-imperial way - in pretty much the same way Elijah humbled Ahab for allowing his queen, Jezebel, to frame and execute Naboth and steal his vineyard, and in the way the prophet Nathan confronted David over his taking Bathsheba and ordering her husband, Uriah, to the front lines and certain death.

The US does not look back to Rome or France at the height of their power in determining the way to deal with those who today govern the most powerful nation in history. Thankfully, in regard to the powerful being subjected to the rule of law we are, instead, all Jews. Perhaps nothing more distinguishes the free world, with Israel as its frontline family member, from the Islamist fundamentalism that challenges it as its greatest existential threat.

I've mainly been in synagogues for the bar mitzvas and bat mitzvas of friends' children. The next time you are, notice what the object of veneration is - it is the Torah, the law itself. At a point in the service it is carried, lovingly, around the congregation, greeted as an old friend. I am convinced that it is this veneration of the law - with its status above the ruler - that is at the heart of anti-Semitism.

Jews have almost always been the first target of tyrants, because their beliefs and religious practices, honed by nearly two millennia in Diaspora, clearly declare that in their view the law is above the ruler: dietary laws, the dress of the Orthodox, a propensity to contend about what is a fair interpretation of rules, all stamp Jews with this belief being the heart of their history and religion. As a consequence they are often the first group that tyrants, secular or theocratic, feel they must suppress or destroy.

We should all reflect upon the historic reality that when anti-Semitism raises its head, the rest of us, unless we are willing to live with a foot on our neck, will be the next targets.

Jewish humor, a distinctive barrier against any propensity to self-righteousness, permeates American culture. A number of times during the Cold War, I was involved in arms control negotiations with the Soviets. No matter how bad the tension across the negotiating table during the day, Russian and American negotiators would often end up going out for dinner together. Somehow, even in the most difficult periods, the conversation frequently turned to trading jokes.

I always thought it remarkable how much Russian humor was suffused with a wry, self-deprecating, ironic tone both quite funny and somehow quite familiar to Americans. Later, finding versions of a number of these jokes and stories in Leo Rosten's wonderful *The Joys of Yiddish*, I realized the source of the familiarity.

Six years ago the Immigration and Naturalization Service imprisoned eight Muslims, Iraqi freedom fighters who were refugees from Saddam, for allegedly being security threats to the US. The government's case was worse than flimsy but it was protected by rules regarding secret evidence. After a long struggle all eight were freed, and several are now working to establish democracy in Iraq.

I was one of their lawyers. The majority of my co-counsel, all acting pro bono, were Jewish. The law is, after all, above the ruler. At the same time that fidelity to this concept is the greatest irritant to Israel's enemies, it is precisely that fidelity that will not only sustain the Jewish state but will guarantee that it will survive and thrive as a valued ally in the family of free nations. (Quebec Suburban Jun 6)

The writer was the United States Director of Central Intelligence. He is currently vice-president of Booz, Allen, Hamilton and co-chair of the Committee on the Present Danger.

Superfluous and Harmful Talk By Moshe Arens

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is providing unlimited material for speeches and declarations by Israeli politicians. Some are useless, some are senseless and some are downright harmful.

Not that nuclear weapons in the hands of the regime in Tehran would not present a danger to Israel. Ahmedinijad is not Hitler, and Iran is not Nazi Germany, but the destructive power of nuclear weapons is such that even in the hands of a Third World country, they have the potential of causing immense damage. Talk is not going to avert this danger. Whatever needs to be done is best done without publicity. But the subject is irresistible to Israeli politicians. It is grist for their mills and serves internal political purposes.

First, the specter of a major war with Iran has been held up by our politicians as an imminent danger for the past two years, and has been used as an excuse not to do anything about the daily rocket attacks on Israeli civilians in the South. Why get bogged down in Gaza, they hint, when we are likely to be engaged in a major war in the North at any moment?

Second, the Iranian threat is presented as a good excuse for offering the Golan Heights to Syria. What is more important at this time than disrupting the alliance between Iran and Syria, and the Syrians might be tempted to move away from Iran in return for the Golan Heights, some of our politicians declare. Moving 30,000 Israelis from their homes seems to them a small price to pay for such an achievement. Even in the unlikely event of a severance of the present close ties between Iran and Syria were to occur, how it would avert the nuclear danger from Iran is left to speculation.

Third, it is claimed, this is no time for an election. Even though the Olmert government failed miserably in leading the nation in the Second Lebanon War and has done next to nothing to protect the civilians in the South, still, it is argued, it should be allowed to hang on because of the Iranian war clouds on the horizon. We can't endure an election, Olmert's supporters argue, while the danger from Iran is staring us in the face.

This kind of talk, superfluous and useless, may be no more than the usual scare-mongering the Israeli public has become used to. But the declarations from our leadership about the urgent need for the United States to act to avert the Iranian nuclear threat are downright harmful, especially when they are made in the U.S.

They are harmful to the crucial U.S.-Israeli relationship, because they create the impression that Israeli leaders are trying to drag the U.S. into a military adventure in Iran. Attempts have already been made in the U.S. to portray Israel as having been responsible for America's involvement in Iraq. No need to add to that charge.

What is more, the public calls from Israeli leaders that it is high time for the U.S. to do something about the Iranian nuclear project are less than useless. The American leadership is well informed about what the Iranians are doing, and while there may be some differences between Israeli and U.S. intelligence on that subject, the comparisons are best made secretly.

It is true that nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran constitutes a danger not only to Israel, and the Middle East, but also to the rest of the world, and therefore to America's interests. But the Americans will do whatever they consider to be in the best interest of the U.S. You can depend on that. No amount of urging by Israeli politicians is going to change their decision. Publicity about our prime minister's visit to Washington to discuss the Iranian threat with the president of the U.S. can only do harm to both countries' interests. Nothing is served by this, except the domestic political interests of Israeli politicians, and that is not sufficient excuse for harming the long-term interests of Israel.

The threat to Israel from nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran is well understood. The preparations that need to be made and the consultations that need to be held to contend with this eventuality should be conducted in secret. Nothing more needs to be said.

There is probably no way of stopping our politicians from exploiting this subject, especially any time that Ahmadinejad gives them an opening by uttering another one of his threats against Israel. But keep America out of it. (Haaretz Jun 10)

Olmert's Holiday Gifts to Assad By Evelyn Gordon

I hope Bashar Assad had the courtesy to send Ehud Olmert holiday greetings for Shavuot this week. After all, Shavuot is a harvest festival, and it is largely thanks to Olmert that Assad is now reaping success on every front.

His first major victory was, of course, his reestablishment of de facto control over Lebanon, just three years after losing it to the Cedar Revolution. Under Lebanese law, major governmental decisions require a two-thirds majority, so last month's agreement awarding Hizbullah one-third of Lebanon's cabinet seats gives the organization, and hence its Syrian patron, veto power over government decisions. This victory stemmed directly from the Second

Lebanon War in 2006: The IDF's failure to defeat a much smaller and more poorly equipped terrorist organization greatly boosted Hizbullah's prestige, and consequently its political power, while the loophole-ridden cease-fire that ended the war enabled Hizbullah to rearm so thoroughly that it could successfully mount the military putsch that produced May's agreement.

This achievement, however, was swiftly followed by another no less significant: Syria's sudden emergence from the economic isolation that has been strangling its economy. This not only bolsters Assad's rule, but also deprives the West of its main lever over Damascus.

Syria has recently reported a surge in investment and trade from the Gulf states, and European diplomats report that these states intend to boost their investments still further in an effort to woo Damascus from its alliance with Teheran. As evidence of these growing ties, Assad visited Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates last week, just days after hosting Qatar's emir in Damascus.

Moreover, Syria's relations with Europe are also thawing, meaning aid and trade might soon flow from that direction as well. Last month, for instance, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos paid his first visit to Damascus in a year. A few days later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy telephoned Assad, after months in which Paris had frozen high-level contacts with Damascus due to Syria's interference in Lebanon. Significantly, this occurred just a week after Hizbullah's putsch secured it veto power - which should have increased French outrage at Hizbullah's patron rather than prompting reconciliation.

Clearly, these developments bode well for Syria's economy. But equally important is what they portend for efforts to modify Syria's behavior. After all, the West had long promised to reward Syria with trade and investment if it stopped interfering in Lebanon and supporting terror. But now, not only is Syria securing these benefits without modifying its behavior, it is doing so precisely because of its refusal to modify its behavior: Assad's alliance with the region's biggest rogue state, Iran, is precisely what persuaded the Gulf States to offer their gifts unconditionally, in an effort to compete with Teheran. And Europe now seems poised to follow suit.

One might wonder what Olmert had to do with all this. The answer is twofold.

HIS FIRST contribution is reflected in a claim made to Haaretz by a Moratinos aide: that the Gulf states are linking their investment to progress in the recently announced Israeli-Syrian talks. That seems far-fetched, since Gulf officials themselves cite Iran as the impetus for their aid-and-trade initiative. Nevertheless, the Israeli-Syrian talks provided a useful fig leaf: They enabled the Gulf states to pretend that they are rewarding good behavior - efforts to resolve a major regional conflict - rather than appeasing bad behavior.

This fig leaf is also what enabled Europe's rapprochement with Syria: Sarkozy, for instance, officially called Assad to express support for the talks with Israel. It seems clear that Europe wanted to mend its relationship with Syria anyway. Otherwise, it would not be rushing ahead so fast that, according to media reports, the Foreign Ministry has been reduced to begging European states to slow down until Assad proves he is serious about peace. But Olmert's initiative provided the necessary excuse.

Olmert's second contribution, however, was even more significant: His bungling produced a string of Iranian victories around the region, and it was these victories that turned Iran into such a regional threat that Syria, its junior partner, is now being courted in the hope of reducing Teheran's power by splitting the alliance.

First and foremost, of course, was his performance during the Second Lebanon War, since Hizbullah's victory was naturally perceived as a victory for its chief financiers, arms suppliers and trainers: Syria and Iran.

The same goes for Olmert's performance in the south, where an even smaller and more poorly equipped terrorist organization has rained rockets on Israel with impunity for years. Just as with Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas's "victory" stems entirely from Olmert's decision to confine the IDF to aerial strikes and small-scale maneuvers rather than ordering a major ground operation of the type that virtually eradicated terror from the West Bank in recent years. But the Arab world's perception is that a small terrorist group has intimidated the mighty IDF. And that redounds to the credit of Hamas's chief backer, Iran.

FINALLY, OLMERT has facilitated Iran's unimpeded drive to acquire nuclear weapons, which has also greatly bolstered its prestige. Clearly, the chief culprits here are those countries, like Russia, that have fecklessly prevented truly painful sanctions on Iran. Yet Olmert has encouraged this fecklessness by praising rather than decrying it. While in Moscow last fall, for instance, he publicly praised Russia's stance on Iran - whereupon Russia promptly resumed nuclear fuel shipments to Iran's Bushehr reactor and gutted yet another round of sanctions on Teheran. After all, Israel is the country

Iran's president keeps threatening to destroy. So if even Israel publicly deems the current pathetic efforts sufficient, who are other countries to disagree?

Olmert has thus made major contributions to all of Assad's recent successes: His bungled Lebanon war helped Syria reassert control over Lebanon; his peace initiative provided both Europe and the Gulf states with a fig leaf for ending Syria's economic isolation; and his multiple failures in dealing with Iran greatly bolstered the clout of its Syrian protégé. Altogether, it is an impressive record of prime ministerial achievement. It is just too bad the beneficiary was an enemy country rather than his own. (Jerusalem Post Jun 11)

Exposing Allied Perfidy By Rafael Medoff

Israeli political activist and author Shmuel Katz, who died in Tel Aviv on May 9 at age 93, will be remembered for his role in the fight to create Israel, and his pioneering efforts to counter anti-Israel propaganda.

What is not well known is that Katz also authored the first book to expose the Allies' failure to bomb the Auschwitz death camp - thereby launching a public debate that still has not subsided, more than 40 years later. Today, Katz's shloshim (end of the 30-day mourning period), is a good occasion to recall his groundbreaking work.

Katz, who was born in South Africa, immigrated to British Mandatory Palestine in 1936. He became active in the Irgun, the underground militia fighting for Jewish statehood, eventually rising to become a member of the Irgun High Command and its primary spokesman to the world media. Katz was a founder of Menachem Begin's Herut Party, was elected to the first Knesset as one of its representatives, and served as an adviser to Begin when the latter became prime minister in 1977.

Katz's best-known book was *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*. First published in 1973, *Battleground* underwent numerous reprintings as it became a staple for pro-Israel activists, especially on college campuses. More recently, Katz authored a critically-acclaimed two-volume biography of Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and a history of Nili, the Zionist espionage group that helped the British capture Palestine from the Turks in World War One.

Katz's first book, *Days of Fire*, was noteworthy as well. Published in Hebrew in 1966 and in English shortly afterwards, *Days of Fire* was the first English-language history of the Irgun. It was also the first book to expose the Allies' failure to bomb Auschwitz.

USING DOCUMENTS from British and Zionist archives, Katz recounted how Jewish Agency leaders approached British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden in July 1944, requesting an Allied air attack on Auschwitz and the railroad lines over which hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews were being transported to their doom. "It was 57 days, September 1, before the British Foreign Office sent its reply, a period during which the majority of the Jews of Hungary were exterminated," Katz wrote. "The bombing," stated the Foreign Office, "was impossible because of the very great technical difficulties involved."

Katz proceeded to expose the disingenuousness of the British excuse. He pointed out that during that same summer of 1944, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the Royal Air Force (RAF) to airlift supplies to the Polish Home Army forces fighting the Germans in Warsaw. Despite the likelihood of the supplies being intercepted by the Nazis, Churchill did not allow "technical difficulties" to prevent the mission. A total of 181 air drops were undertaken by British planes, flying from the Foggia air base in Allied-occupied Italy.

"The appeal of the Jewish Agency leaders [to bomb Auschwitz] was far less exacting," Katz pointed out. "The death camp at Auschwitz was 200 miles nearer than Warsaw to the base at Foggia. The railway line from Budapest and Budapest itself were within easy range." Katz also noted that in a postwar interview, the wartime Chief of RAF Bomber Command, Air Marshal Arthur Harris, denied that such an operation would have been impossible. Harris said he did not recall ever being asked to do it.

Days of Fire also featured a full-page map showing the precise distance from the Foggia air base to Budapest, Auschwitz, and Warsaw. The map vividly demonstrated that the "technical difficulties" excuse British officials gave in 1944 for not striking Auschwitz was simply untenable.

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Katz about his pioneering role in bringing the bombing issue to public attention.

"Back in the mid-1960s, not much was known about the ability of the Allies to attack Auschwitz," Katz recalled. "Later, of course, historians such as David Wyman revealed the full story of the American and British raids on oil targets next to Auschwitz, and the private discussions among the officials who rejected the appeals to bomb the death camp. But fortunately I was able to locate a few documents about the British government's rejection and bring it

up in my book, so people would start thinking about it."

Although *Days of Fire* was primarily an account of the Jewish revolt against the British in Palestine, Katz noted, the bombing issue was very relevant.

"What was happening to the Jews in Europe in 1944 was an important factor in the Irgun's decision to launch its war for independence," Katz told me. "It helped shape [Irgun commander] Menachem Begin's thinking. It intensified our sense of urgency. Nobody knew how long World War Two and the slaughter of the Jews would continue. We were fighting to create a Jewish homeland that would be a haven for the Jews who could escape from the Nazis. We felt as if we were engaged in a life-and-death struggle for the entire Jewish people." (Jerusalem Post Jun 10)

The writer is director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

A Jerusalem Shavuot By Judy Lash Balint

As observed by hundreds of thousands of Israelis.

It's 5:00 am on Shavuot morning and I'm having trouble finding an empty seat at any shul (synagogue) in Jerusalem's Old City. Every synagogue is already packed as I make the mistake of lingering a few minutes too long at the Kotel (Western Wall) amongst the tens of thousands who have made their way there after a night of learning.

After dropping in at three shuls, I finally find a spot on a bench under an outer archway of the women's section of the tiny synagogue inside the Old Yishuv Court Museum on Or Hahayim Street. After Hallel and the reading of the Ten Commandments, a swift Haftarah reading brings us to the Yizkor memorial prayer. Only a few women are left inside as the young girls who filled the place and have not yet lost parents file out. It's about the same proportion down at the Kotel - it seems that at least two thirds of the masses thronging the Kotel plaza are under 30.

Coming barely a week after Jerusalem Day, when similar numbers of mostly young people filled the area to celebrate the reunification of the city, the Shavuot early morning spectacle is another affirmation of the strength of the connection of the people to its roots.

In the still air of the pre-dawn, it's as if the Old City is a giant magnet pulling the multitudes in from every direction. Flooding down Agron Street in front of the US Consulate building and its sleepy guards, the crowd gathers force and takes over the Mamilla area. The Tower of David and Jaffa Gate rise in front of us, outlined by spotlights.

It's 4:45 am as we surge forward and down the steps of the David Street shuk only to encounter a human traffic jam as we make the turn from the Street of the Chain into the approach to the Kotel. A few groups of Arabs heading to work are walking up in the opposite direction. No one bothers them as they make their way out of the Old City through Jaffa Gate.

There are only four entryways into the Kotel plaza and they're all completely overwhelmed by the numbers of people pressing to get in. With a few friends, I veer off to the left to double around and join the crowd coming in from the direction of Damascus Gate via the tunnel. We manage to squeeze our way into the back of the plaza and start to move toward the women's section, passing a group of nuns from Holland earnestly reading from their Bibles by flashlight. There's barely room to move as more and more people surge in from each of the four entry points.

The bright green lights adorning the two mosques behind the Temple Mount shine in the semi-darkness. As the sky begins to change color and turn slowly from a steely grey to light blue, the garish lights vanish. Exactly at sunrise, chattering starlings swoop down and the voices of the throng rise in prayer.

On this holiday of Shavuot that commemorates the giving of the Torah, the symbolic wedding between God and the Jewish people, most of the women are wearing white. And the centuries-old Kabbalistic custom of Tikkun Leil Shavuot, a night dedicated to Torah study, is observed by hundreds of thousands of Israelis. On the eve of the holiday, commentators on Israel Radio remarked on the phenomenon of secular Jews eager to take part in some kind of Torah learning on Shavuot. One daily paper has a tightly packed full page of venues where learning of all kinds is taking place all over the city. Many places are forced to turn people away for lack of space at their study sessions.

Last year, a May 18 editorial in the American Jewish weekly newspaper *The Forward* noted that "the proportion of Jews that turns out for the festival (Shavuot) will not be great.... Shavuot simply hasn't caught on with recent generations of Jews." Perhaps things have changed this year; otherwise, Shavuot could be another sign of the widening gap between Israel and the Diaspora. (IsraelNationalNews.com Jun 11)