



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*

And certainly not least important: U.S.-Israel technological cooperation, which reached an unprecedented peak before the unfortunate Israeli decision two decades ago to cancel the Lavi fighter project, has regrettably fallen to the lowest level ever in recent years. The export of Israeli defense products now requires American approval, and the procurement in the U.S. of parts for Israeli weapons-system development

has been made intolerably difficult. This situation has been deteriorating seriously in recent years, to the severe detriment of the Israeli defense industry, which is an essential element of Israel's ability to defend itself.

We should hope that the next American administration will address some of these Israeli concerns, and we have a right to expect that the next Israeli government will make it its business to pursue these objectives, which have been utterly neglected by Olmert's government. If he thinks that we have nothing to look forward to with the next U.S. administration, he is dead wrong. (Haaretz Jun 18)

Events...

Tuesday June 24, 7:00 PM

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

Commentary...

Apres Moi Le Deluge By Moshe Arens

One might have expected that in the twilight days of his premiership Ehud Olmert would be making an effort to try to improve somewhat the miserable record he leaves behind him. A record of more than two years of incompetence and political manipulations, at the expense of the people of Israel. But we should have known that this would be too much to expect of this man. Instead, he seems to have adopted the saying attributed to Louis XV: *Apres moi le deluge* - Who cares what happens after I leave office?

Olmert has thrown all caution to the wind. He is hell-bent on arriving at an agreement with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas - an agreement that would not be implementable and end up on the shelf, while the concessions he has agreed to continue to constitute a minefield for any future negotiations with the Palestinians. It matters little to Olmert that, in his present position, and as his coalition is collapsing, he lacks the legitimacy to make these concessions on behalf of the people of Israel. After all, who cares what happens after he's gone?

As if this were not enough, the prime minister has begun negotiations with Damascus, based on his readiness to turn the Golan Heights over to the Syrians. Obviously, nothing will come of these negotiations, other than the certain damage they will cause to Israel's long-term interests. Does he care?

Olmert's incessant talk of the danger posed to Israel by Iran's project of nuclear armament does no one any good, and his public appeals to the U.S. president, and advertised consultations with him on the subject, can only do Israel harm. By now, he should have known what everybody should know: that in this case, silence is the best tactic. But if Olmert can create the image among the Israeli public that he has left no stone unturned in his efforts to forestall this danger, who cares? It is difficult to determine which of Olmert's utterances have been the most senseless or the most harmful, but his recent statement that Israel must rush to complete negotiations with the Palestinians' Abbas, because we are not likely to see in the future as friendly an administration in Washington as the present one, certainly must figure close to the top of the list.

The U.S.-Israeli relationship is based on firm foundations of common values, ideals and strategic interests that do not depend on whether the administration in Washington is Republican or Democratic. The relationship is a major part of Israel's strategic posture and should not be impaired by Israeli politicians under any circumstances. Although some Israeli prime ministers have in the past made the unfortunate mistake of indicating their preference for one of the candidates in the American presidential elections, until now, no one until has been as blatant as Olmert when he declared that the next administration would not be as friendly to Israel as the present one. That statement is certainly not likely to advance our country's relationship with the next administration. If at all, the contrary should have been said: We expect the relationship with the next administration, regardless of who is elected president of the United States, to be even better.

Good as relations between the two countries are, there is room for improvement. For years we have been waiting for America to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a matter of paramount interest to Israel. For years we have been waiting for Jonathan Pollard to be pardoned.

Bush's Rhetoric, Bush's Policies By Caroline Glick

In an interview Sunday with Britain's Observer, US President George W. Bush made an important observation. The president argued that the common wisdom about the Middle East, which argues that Palestinian statelessness is the root of regional instability and jihadism, is incorrect. It is Iranian aggression rather than the lack of Palestinian sovereignty that lies at the root of the war.

As Bush put it, "When you go to the Middle East and you sit in my seat and listen, yes, there's concern about the Palestinian state. But the dialogue has shifted dramatically from 'solve the Palestinian state and you've solved the problems in the Middle East,' to, now, 'solve the Iranian issue and you solve the problems in the Middle East.'"

In acknowledging this basic reality, the president finally accepted the self-evident truth that people like US scholar Michael Ledeen, the author of *The Iranian Time Bomb: The Mullah Zealots' Quest for Destruction*, have been pointing out for years. It is Iran which is fueling the war in Iraq. It is Iran that has used its proxy in Lebanon to attack Israel and assert control over the country. It is Iran that stands behind the resurgence of the Palestinian jihad against Israel. And it is Iran that is developing nuclear weapons both to destroy Israel and to assert its control over global petroleum markets.

Given the continuously escalating nature of the Iranian threat to global security, Bush's remark was significant. And since Britain has led the campaign to convince the US that it is the absence of Palestinian sovereignty that stands at the root of the war, the fact that Bush made this statement of strategic lucidity to a British newspaper on the eve of his trip to Britain made it doubly significant.

So it is especially troubling and disappointing that in spite of the president's clear recognition of the nature of the Iranian challenge, he is refusing to confront Iran in any practical way.

As he moved through European capitals, Bush asserted repeatedly that he is completely committed to Europe's policy of diplomatically engaging Iran on its nuclear weapons program. He never once brought up the option of forcibly preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Rather, he sufficed with calling for the three, toothless UN Security Council sanctions resolutions against Iran to be enforced.

Bush's statements came against the backdrop of Iran's latest rejection of the West's latest offer to buy it off in exchange for a mere "suspension" of its uranium enrichment activities. That is, he embraced "negotiations" after Iran essentially said, again, that its nuclear weapons program is non-negotiable.

Bush tried to place a wedge between the Iranian regime and the Iranian people by arguing - correctly - that the Iranian people are suffering under the mullahocracy's jackboot. But he has also taken toppling the Iranian regime off the table. So the oppressed Iranian people have no reason to believe that were they to risk their lives in an attempt to free themselves of their leaders, the US would support them.

According to the US media, there was some talk a while back about a US

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strike against terror training camps in Iran that are used to train insurgents who are killing coalition forces and Iraqi citizens in Iraq. According to international law, such an attack would be permissible. But the Pentagon reportedly nixed the idea, arguing that while the US may start such a confrontation, it would have no control over how events would unfold.

This unfortunately, is a wild distortion of reality. The reality is that Iran has been actively engaged in confronting the US and its allies since 1979. And in every theater of action, it is Iran that has been calling all of the shots. A US strike against the terror training facilities in Iran would mark the first time that the US has ever seized the initiative in Iran's war against it and against the rest of the free world. So opposing such a strike is not an argument against confrontation, but an argument against acknowledging the existence of Iran's ongoing war against the US.

Lebanon is one of Iran's key battlegrounds for regional dominance. Through its Hizbullah proxy, last month Iran consolidated its control over Lebanon. Hizbullah's bloody takeover of the country was capped off with the signing of the Doha agreement. In Qatar, Lebanon's defeated pro-democracy forces from the March 14 movement officially accepted Hizbullah control of the country by acquiescing to Hizbullah's demand for control over the Lebanese government.

Rather than accept that at Doha the Lebanese government became an open tool of Hizbullah, the Bush administration has decided to pretend - along with Europe - that nothing has happened. As far as the Bush administration and Europe are concerned, a pro-Western, democratically elected government still runs Lebanon's government.

Sadly, there is nothing new about this policy of denial. After the March 14 democracy movement successfully forced Syrian forces to withdraw from Lebanon in 2005, Hizbullah stepped in to protect Syrian and Iranian interests in the country by joining Fuad Siniora's supposedly pro-Western government. Like Europe, the US refused to acknowledge the fact that Hizbullah's partnership with Siniora rendered the Lebanese government - and with it the March 14 movement - proxies of Hizbullah and Iran. And so, prodded by France, throughout the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war, the US ignored the fact that the Siniora government was nothing more than Hizbullah's diplomatic cover.

In 2006 the US and Europe justified their studied denial of Lebanon's political realities by arguing that Hizbullah was only a minority member of Siniora's coalition. This argument was never persuasive given that Hizbullah's Iranian-trained, financed and armed military force is more powerful than the Lebanese army. But it was a convenient excuse for inaction for leaders unwilling to acknowledge that Iran is the source of regional instability. Today, with Hizbullah in control over the Siniora government, this dubious argument has been wholly discredited. And yet the West's policy of denial has only escalated.

Immediately after the Doha agreement was concluded, the US announced its desire to expand its support for the Hizbullah-controlled Lebanese military. And Monday, Al Hayat reported that during his visit with French President Nicholas Sarkozy, Bush agreed to reward Hizbullah for its aggression directly.

Al Hayat reported that during his visit with Sarkozy, Bush agreed to accept Hizbullah's demand that Israel surrender its control over Mt. Dov - or what it refers to as the Shebaa Farms - to Lebanon. Israel's control over Mt. Dov has served as Iran's justification for its proxy's continued aggression against Israel since Israel withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000.

Israel seized control over Mt. Dov from Syria during the 1967 Six Day War. It was never considered Lebanese territory. In 2006, Lebanese Druse leader Walid Jumblatt stated outright that Hizbullah's claim to the vast, strategically critical area which separates the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights from the Upper Galilee was a complete fabrication. Yet, acting as Hizbullah's mouthpiece, in 2006 the Siniora government demanded that Israel surrender the area to Lebanon. Refusing to acknowledge that Siniora was controlled by Hizbullah, in August 2006 the US placed this groundless demand before the UN for consideration in the UN Security Council's Resolution 1701 which set the terms of the ceasefire.

And now, with Hizbullah - that is Iran - the undisputed ruler of Lebanon, Bush has reportedly accepted Hizbullah's unjustifiable demand for control over the area.

Then of course there is the Palestinian war against Israel, which Bush himself acknowledges is a consequence of Iranian aggression rather than its source. And yet, rather than embrace the policy which logically stems from this correct assessment - namely that the Palestinians' role as an Iranian proxy means that it makes no sense to support them - the Bush administration has made pressuring Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians the core of its Middle East policy. And in so doing, the administration has contributed to the solidification of Iran's rule in Gaza through Hamas and the expansion of Hamas's Iranian-controlled power in Judea and Samaria.

As is the case with the Hizbullah-controlled Siniora government, so with the Palestinians, the US refuses to acknowledge that the Fatah terror group is indistinguishable from and acts as diplomatic cover for the Hamas terror

group. And so it forces Israel to make concessions to Fatah that directly endanger Israel and strengthen Hamas and Iran. As IDF commanders warned during Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest trip here this week, the thousands of US-trained security forces that Rice forced Israel to permit to deploy in Jenin and Nablus last month have overseen the expansion of terror attacks against Israel and enabled Hamas to expand its influence. The same is the case in Ramallah.

Then too, IDF commanders warn that if Rice succeeds in forcing the weak and incompetent Israeli government to take down yet more roadblocks in Judea and Samaria, Israelis can expect for the Palestinians to begin shooting rockets and mortars at Jerusalem and central Israel from Judea and Samaria. That is, by purposely undermining Israel's military control over Judea and Samaria in favor of Fatah - which is Hamas's proxy - the Bush administration is actively promoting the expansion of Iran's control over Judea and Samaria.

Sunday it was reported that Pakistan may have sold designs for advanced nuclear warheads capable of being launched from Iran's Shihab-3 ballistic missiles to Iran. These reports came as Pakistan's new "democratic" government has signed agreements transferring control over border areas with Afghanistan to the Taliban and al-Qaida. That is, the report of Pakistan's nuclear proliferation activities came to light as Pakistan openly supports the war against NATO and Afghan national forces in Afghanistan.

For years, the US has been very careful not to attack Pakistani territory in spite of the fact that it is used as a sanctuary for the Taliban and al-Qaida because Pakistan has nuclear weapons. That is, the US's inability to contest the actions of a nuclear proliferating, terror supporting state is the consequence of its refusal to take action to prevent Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons in 1998. And of course, compared with Iran, Pakistan is "moderate."

Throughout much of his presidency, and especially since 2006, what has been most notable about Bush's rhetoric is that it has been completely disconnected from his policies. As he considers the legacy he is about to leave behind, it will hopefully occur to the president that the only way to leave the world more secure is to match his policies towards Iran to his rhetoric. (Jerusalem Post Jun 16)

Shackled Warriorz: Israel in bondage.

A National Review Interview with Caroline Glick.

Kathryn Jean Lopez: Who is the shackled warrior?

Caroline Glick: The shackled warrior is Israel. Between the Israeli peace movement, the local and international media, the U.N., Europe and the U.S., Israel is both forced to fight the war being waged against it with both hands tied behind its back and to believe that it bears responsibility for the genocidal anti-Semitism that has taken over the Islamic world.

Lopez: You recently wrote, "Today the Gaza strip is a terror state run by an Iranian proxy." What can be done?

Glick: Iran's proxy — Hamas — must be defeated militarily. Israel must overthrow its regime in Gaza by force of arms. And Israel mustn't agree to simply replace Hamas with Fatah.

Fatah is an unacceptable alternative to Hamas for two main reasons. First of all, Fatah refuses to fight Hamas and is far less popular than Hamas among Gazans, so transferring control over Gaza to Fatah would simply permit Hamas to regenerate and reassert control. Second, Fatah itself is a terrorist organization. Even today with Hamas in power in Gaza, Fatah terrorists continue to attack Israel with missiles from Gaza. Indeed, it bears recalling that until its government was overthrown by Hamas in June 2007, Fatah smuggled more Iranian weapons into Gaza from Egypt than Hamas did.

Lopez: How did Washington resistance to an Israeli victory come to be?

Glick: Since 1956, the U.S. has prevented Israel from achieving political victory over its enemies, even as Israel has repeatedly defeated its enemies militarily. This happened most recently in 2003. After Israel defeated the Palestinian terror networks in the West Bank in 2002 and 2003, and despite the fact that in the course of its operations Israel proved conclusively that the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority was commanding and coordinating the Palestinian jihad against Israel, the U.S. forced Israel to accept the Road Map peace plan in 2003, and so forced it to continue to accept Fatah and the Palestinian Authority as legitimate interlocutors that should be given statehood, land, arms, money, and international legitimacy.

Lopez: But why won't Washington let Israel win?

Glick: For the U.S. to support an Israeli victory over its foes, Washington would have to acknowledge that the war against Israel and the war against the U.S. are one and the same. Such a U.S. move would also necessitate an acknowledgement of the nature of the war that is being waged against the U.S. Yet as the experience of the past seven years has made clear, the U.S. prefers to ignore the identity of its enemy. It is due to this stubborn denial of the nature of the war that the U.S. has preferred to refer to the war as a "war

on terror" instead of a war on jihad. And it is due to this refusal to accept the nature of the enemy that jihadist leaders and jihadist states are referred to as "extremists" or "thugs." Since embracing Israel as a crucial ally and not only letting Israel win but encouraging it to do so would prevent the U.S. from continuing its policy of denying the nature of the war, the U.S. has insisted on pretending that the war against Israel is completely unrelated to the war being waged against it. In short, ignoring the nature of the war against Israel is a central component of the strategy of denying the nature of the war and so avoiding the need to fight it in a coherent fashion.

Lopez: Is it counterproductive to criticize Washington? Isn't the White House right now about the best friend Israel has?

Glick: The U.S. is certainly the best friend that Israel has, but that doesn't mean that Israel should place the interests of the U.S. State Department — which has been hostile to Israel since 1948 — above its own interests. Neither Israel nor the U.S. benefits from such a policy. I think that what is most counterproductive is embracing delusion. If the U.S. got angry at Israel for pointing out a reality, would that make Israel worse or better off than it is when it collaborates with the U.S. by basing its policies on fantasy? I think that everyone is better off when we base our strategic decisions on reality.

Lopez: Is there any hope for Israel in any of the presidential candidates?

Glick: Israel is at war. Its enemies seek to destroy it. The U.S. is at war; its enemies — which are also Israel's enemies — seek to bring America to its knees with the intention of eventually destroying it also. If an antiwar candidate wins the presidential elections, and if anti-war politicians are able to win filibuster-proof control over one or both houses of Congress, it will be bad for Israel. Israel is the frontline state in the global jihad and so it will be the first to pay a price for a U.S. capitulation. If the counterjihad that Israel and the U.S. are fighting is the contemporary equivalent of Vietnam for instance, then Israel is Cambodia.

But then, unlike the North Vietnamese, our common enemies have already attacked on U.S. soil. And so in the event that the U.S. simply stopped fighting, while Israel would be the first to suffer, the U.S. would also suffer.

Moreover, unlike the South Vietnamese and the Cambodians, Israel is not dependent on direct U.S. military assistance to defend itself. It only needs spare parts. So if the U.S. cut and ran under an anti-war administration, if Israel had good leaders, it would probably do just fine.

Lopez: Having been to Iraq and knowing jihad all too well, what's the message you'd like to see U.S. politicians get?

Glick: I think that the work that U.S. forces are doing in Iraq is a stunning achievement. The U.S. is beating back jihad in Iraq in a thousand different ways every day. But U.S. success in Iraq is contingent upon the Iraqis trusting America to stay the course. Everywhere U.S. forces are approached by Iraqis who beg them not to leave. The message to U.S. politicians is loud and clear — the U.S. has to stay engaged in Iraq and throughout the region if freedom has any chance of taking root and beating back the forces of slavery and jihad. The war is not about the suicide bomber. It is about the mentality that produces suicide bombers and replacing that mentality with the habits of liberty. And that takes time.

Lopez: Are you surprised we're not seeing the kind of suicide-bombing violence in the U.S. that Israelis are used to? (I think about this question every time I'm at Grand Central, Union Station, or Macy's or a Sbarro's.)

Glick: In Israel we have managed to curb suicide bombers by, among other things, placing armed guards at the entrances to our shopping malls and cafes and parking garages. Actually it is worth noting that Palestinians aren't the only ones who have to wait at roadblocks. Israelis have to be inspected every single time we want to get on a bus or go into a mall or grocery store.

What Israeli generals like former IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon always say is that the drop in bombings in Israel is 100 percent attributable to Israel's military success in fighting and penetrating terror cells and preventing them from infiltrating into our cities and towns and highways. It has nothing to do with the Palestinians' desire to attack us, which has only increased over time. I think the same can be said of the U.S. The U.S. has succeeded in foiling terror plots against it since 9/11. And it is essential that those counterterror efforts continue because just assessing the statements made and the actions taken by the likes of al-Qaeda and Iran, it is clear that there has been no decrease in the enemy's motivation to attack America.

Lopez: Has Europe betrayed Israel?

Glick: I think that the root of Europe's refusal to support Israel is Europe's refusal to accept the true lessons of the Holocaust. The lesson that Europe took from the Holocaust is that nationalism is bad. This of course, is absurd. Nationalism is neutral. Its relative badness or goodness is a direct function of how any specific nation behaves. The true lesson of the Holocaust is that nations and individuals have a responsibility to distinguish between good and evil and to support good and fight evil. Israel's struggle against its neighbors, who refuse to accept it as a sovereign state just as Europeans refused to accept Jews as individuals in the 20th century, constitutes a moral challenge to

Europe. And since Europe has refused to discard its moral relativism for moral choice, Europeans project their own moral blindness and weakness on Israel.

Lopez: Has it betrayed itself even more?

Glick: Pope Benedict XVI seems to think that Europe is betraying itself. And I daresay that he is correct. When Europe attacks Israel in diplomatic forums and in its media for defending itself against jihadist aggression, Europe is really saying that it is capitulating to Islamic pressure. In other words, the upshot of European attacks on Israel for targeting would-be murderers of innocents is an acceptance of the justness of aggression in the name of jihad. When Europe attacks Israel, it is saying that it prefers the same aggressors who are burning cars every night in Paris suburbs to their victims — whether they are Israeli or French. It is notable that what we are seeing in European countries like Italy and France is that there is a direct correlation between a state's willingness to defend itself against jihadists and its willingness to support Israel, (and the U.S.). In Italy for instance Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced that his first trip abroad will be to Israel. At the same time, he is changing the rules of engagement for Italian forces in Afghanistan to allow them to actually fight.

Lopez: How did a gal from the Midwest wind up in Jerusalem fighting jihad with her laptop?

Glick: I was inspired by Zionism when I was a young girl and decided to make aliyah — or move to Israel — when I was 12 and never changed my mind or regretted my decision. As to fighting jihad, well, this is a war about defending everything that I believe in and care about. It seems to me that everyone who values freedom has a duty to fight it in any way he or she can.

Lopez: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hit Israel hard this weekend. Was it fair? What would you have preferred to hear?

Glick: I have been so discouraged by Secretary Rice's policies that I cannot say I am the least bit surprised by her obnoxious statements ordering the Israeli government not to build homes for Jews in Jerusalem, our capital city. I am similarly not surprised by her insistence that Israel give the Fatah terror organization control over the West Bank. It has long been clear that Rice thinks that making things "convenient" for Palestinians by curtailing IDF counter-terror operations in the West Bank is more important than safeguarding the lives of Israel's citizenry. It is also clear that Rice finds it perfectly acceptable for the Palestinians — who she wants to give a state — to base their nationalism on the negation of Israel's right to exist. Hence she accepts their racist lies about Jerusalem not belonging to the Jews and embraces the notion that a Palestinian state must be ethnically cleansed of all Jews before it will be acceptable to the Palestinians.

It doesn't matter to Rice that IDF military commanders are warning that taking down roadblocks in the West Bank will just enable the Palestinians to begin attacking Jerusalem and Israel's coastal plane with mortars and rockets. It doesn't matter to Rice that Fatah — which through her good offices the U.S. is training, arming and funding — has taken no action against Hamas since she forced Israel to transfer security control over the towns of Jenin and Nablus to Fatah control last month. Indeed, since she last pressed Israel for dangerous and unreciprocated "confidence building measures" towards the Palestinians, Fatah has begun to negotiate uniting its terror forces with Hamas. And she has nothing to say about this.

I would have preferred that Rice stop advancing the establishment of a jihadist state in the West Bank to add to the jihadist state in Gaza which was established under her good offices in 2006. I would have preferred that Rice — and President Bush — stop placing the establishment of yet another Palestinian jihadist state at the top of their "To do before leaving office" list. But then, given her policies toward North Korea and Iran, I am not the least surprised that she is acting as obnoxiously as she is.

Lopez: How bad would a President Obama be for Israel? Why should that question matter to Americans?

Glick: Senator Barack Obama would be bad for Israel most of all because he refuses to acknowledge that there is a jihad being waged against the free world. Indeed, he refuses to acknowledge that there is such a thing as an "enemy" in international affairs. And as a consequence, he is unable to understand what an ally is. As the U.S.'s most stalwart ally in the Middle East, and as the frontline state in the global jihad, Israel will likely suffer greatly if Senator Obama is elected to the White House.

There are several reasons that Americans should care about the fact that an Obama White House will be hostile towards Israel. First, when Islamists perceive Israel as weak they become emboldened. And when they become emboldened, they tend to attack not only Israel but the U.S. as well. Indeed, some of the largest attacks against the U.S. — like the Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon in 1983 — came when the U.S. was most hostile towards Israel.

Second, when the U.S. places pressure on Israel, Israel is perceived as weak by the Muslim world. And when this happens, the tendency for wars

to break out is increased. So when the U.S. has in the past blamed Israel for regional instability — the Arabs and Iran — which are the actual sources of that instability — exploit the situation by attacking Israel and sending the region into a tailspin. One can for instance attribute Yassir Arafat's decision to attack Israel in 1996 — an attack which left 15 Israelis dead — to the Clinton administration's massive pressure on the new Netanyahu government to accept the PLO as its "peace partner."

Finally, U.S. pressure on Israel tends to weaken Israel and as I have argued, Israel is perceived by the jihadists as the frontline state in their war, the ultimate aim of which is global domination and the destruction of the U.S. So when the U.S. weakens Israel, the U.S. appears weak. Jihadists are then emboldened to attack not only Israel, but also the U.S. This is why, for instance, Shiite violence in Iraq rose steeply after Israel was perceived as having lost the war in Lebanon with Hezbollah in 2006. And Israel ended the war when it was under tremendous pressure from Secretary Rice to accept a ceasefire that left Hezbollah fully intact and free to rebuild its forces with Iranian and Syrian assistance.

All of this happened under U.S. administrations which in their day were considered friendly towards Israel. If Sen. Obama, who is perceived as sympathetic to the jihadists, is elected, the consequences of U.S. appeasement of Iran and others at Israel's expense will likely be more profound — both for Israel and for the U.S. (National Review Jun 17)

Twelve Special Things About Living in Israel By Darrell Sherman

As the Torah portion recalling the sin of the 12 spies is being read this week, I'm writing to share with you 12 things that are special about living in Israel. A little positivity and light can go a long way...

1. Being part of and contributing to the Jewish nation and Jewish history.
2. The feeling of Home and belonging
3. Being a 20 minute drive from both the Kotel and Maarat Hamachpela each and every day
4. One day of Yom Tov
5. No expensive school tuition
6. 273 KM of beaches
7. All Jewish holidays are national holidays
8. Malls with all-kosher food courts
9. Davening shacharit every morning on the train to Tel Aviv.
10. Every location and vista is connected to Jewish history
11. Many Faces, One Country: www.nbn.org.il/vidcontest
12. Five charters, eight group flights... in One Summer!

www.nbn.org.il/ceremony

The writer, a former BAYT member, made aliyah with his family through Nefesh B'Nefesh almost 3 years ago.

Pushtak to Shove: Adam Sandler attacks the Middle East. By John Podhoretz

Movie Review: You Don't Mess with the Zohan; Directed by Dennis Dugan
Adam Sandler's lunatic new comedy, *You Don't Mess with the Zohan*, is a landmark of sorts: Aside from Steven Spielberg's Munich, it is the first major Hollywood studio release in nearly half-a-century featuring an Israeli protagonist. You have to go back all the way to 1960 to find Sandler's predecessor—a glowing Paul Newman laboring heroically to help bring the Jewish state into being in Otto Preminger's epic Exodus (a movie so excruciatingly long that, during a screening, Mort Sahl stood up three hours in and called out, "Otto, let my people go!").

There have been on-screen Israelis, but interestingly for an industry supposedly controlled by Jews, they've mostly been villains. In Last Embrace, a little-known early movie by the Oscar-winning Jonathan Demme, Roy Scheider runs afoul of hit men from the Jewish state. In 1990's Internal Affairs, the lascivious Israeli wife of an American arms dealer (her name is Tova, no less) is thrilled to be violated under the table in a restaurant by a corrupt L.A. cop played by Richard Gere. 1980's Eyewitness and 1991's Homicide feature naïfs (William Macy and Joe Mantegna respectively) running afoul of murderous Zionist conspiracies. (Homicide was written and directed by David Mamet, who has become a scourge of anti-Semites the world over, which is nice, but he seems not to have noticed his own movie is based on a classic anti-Semitic plot point.)

What makes *You Don't Mess with the Zohan* a breakthrough, therefore, is that Sandler's character is nothing less than a superhero. Since this is a Sandler movie, Zohan's talents—he's a counterterrorism secret agent—are mostly played for laughs. He can literally twist people into pretzels, and at one point he wills a hand lopped off by a terrorist interrogator to rise from the floor, grab his enemy's dagger, and stab the guy in the back. But in an odd sort of way, the humor only reinforces the idea.

The joke here is that Zohan is not only Israel's finest terror combatant; he's

also what Israelis call a *pushtak*, a greaser, a bridge-and-tunnel guy from the land of milk and honey, a Jewish Guido. The classic *pushtak* saunters down a Tel Aviv street with a pack of cigarettes rolled up inside his T-shirt sleeve. He believes he is God's gift to the world, especially to the ladies, and he takes himself with the utmost seriousness even as others laugh at him. Inside Israel, the *pushtak* is a dated stereotype, a figure of sport from the 1970s and '80s.

Sandler and his collaborators, the brilliant comic writers Robert Smigel and Judd Apatow, seem completely aware of this, since their Zohan is obsessed with "going disco disco" and sports a hairdo copied from a 1983 Paul Mitchell styling catalogue. Zohan worships at the altar of Paul Mitchell because, even though he can scamper through a Beirut neighborhood like Spider-Man, he wants to chuck it all and become a hairdresser. (There were a lot of Israeli hairstylists in New York in the early 1980s; maybe one of them coiffed Sandler or Smigel and this film was born.)

Dated the type may be, but since the *pushtak* is unknown to all but a few million people on earth, Sandler's use of it to craft a new comic character is inspired. (Would that his Israeli accent were similarly inspired; half the time he sounds French.) In fact, everything in this movie that has to do with Israel and Israelis is hilarious, if wildly over the top. The dazzling opening scene, set to a catchy number by an Israeli hip-hop band, shows Zohan walking the length of the beach in Tel Aviv playing hacky sack, dancing, fighting, and hosting a barbecue until an army helicopter comes to fetch him for yet another dangerous mission.

His parents won't hear of him taking up another line of work. "You're Rembrandt with a grenade!" his mother declares. His father, played by the great old stand-up Shelley Berman, delivers a gasp-inducingly funny monologue about his son's homosexual leanings when he hears about the hair ambitions.

There is a running gag involving hummus that should grow old quickly but only gets funnier as the movie goes along—and another, more obscure running gag about an orange soda called "Fizzy Bubblech" that may be even funnier to anyone who has ever tried to imbibe a soft drink in the Middle East. (This may be the only time in history that the Tribe brand of kosher chick pea-based foodstuffs has found itself in a position to secure product placement in a major motion picture.)

Zohan finds himself seeking employment at an Israeli-run electronics store in New York with a sign out front that says "Going Out of Business"—only to learn that the actual name of the store is "Going Out of Business." Cowriter Smigel, who is the brains and voice of the genius foul-mouthed puppet called Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, plays the irascible manager of the store, and with a perfect Israeli accent.

"He wanted to be a hand model," a colleague says sadly, "but then the electronics business got a hold of him, and he was never the same. Don't give up on your dream, Zohan."

The movie is a terrible mess, with about six different plotlines going at once that seem to have been stitched together out of a hodgepodge of drafts of a screenplay that's been in the works for a decade. For no reason whatsoever, and with no laughs garnered whatsoever, the villain of the piece is a Trump-like real-estate developer played by Michael Buffer, the man who shouts "Let's get ready to rumble." He is threatening a small strip of downtown Manhattan where there are Arab businesses on one side of the street and Israeli businesses on the other side of the street. Out of nowhere, in the last 10 minutes, the bad guy summons a redneck (played by, of all people, the rock singer Dave Matthews) to take out the block. The Arabs and Jews must work together to defeat the evil White Man.

Zohan keeps saying he wants an end to the bloodshed. He keeps capturing the foremost Palestinian terrorist, the Phantom (John Turturro), only to hear that the Phantom has been traded back to the Palestinians for an Israeli captive to be named later. This is one of several good and unexpectedly sophisticated jokes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that pop up every now and then. As Zohan and a bad guy fight, they have an argument about whose people were there first, with the bad guy screaming "It's not so cut-and-dried!" as Zohan hurls him off a ledge.

Later, a would-be terrorist calls the Hezbollah help line; he is informed by a recorded voice that no help can be offered because there are negotiations going on, but to call back as soon as negotiations break down. (Perhaps the best joke on the subject is the most inside joke of all: The woman playing Zohan's Palestinian love interest is Emmanuelle Chriqui, who was born and raised an Orthodox Jew.) There is, as usual for Sandler, plenty of dumb humor of the sort that gives dumb humor a bad name, but that delights his 14-year-old-boy fan base. *You Don't Mess with the Zohan* is unusual because there are all sorts of tantalizing comic ideas floating around in that shallow pool. And every 10 minutes or so, it makes you explode with laughter.

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