



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*

the world and
whenever
demonstrated in human history, rather
than examples of Jewish celebrity or
topics in American-Jewish culture.
• Focus on ensuring the well-being of
Israel-and acknowledge that
Christians United for Israel may be
more important for the Jewish future

Commentary...

Why Are Jews Liberals? By William Kristol

God only knows.

Why has He chosen to allow Jews to stay mindlessly attached to a liberalism that is no longer beneficial or sympathetic to them? Why has He chosen to harden Jewish hearts against a conservatism increasingly welcoming to Jews and supportive of the Jewish state?

Perhaps there are some questions that simply can't be answered by unassisted human reason. Norman Podhoretz has made a valiant attempt to answer these questions. But at the end of the day, and at the end of his fascinating and illuminating book, one is left still shaking one's head. Indeed, Norman is left shaking his head, first at the fact that "liberalism has become the religion of American Jews" and then at the further fact that "they can remain loyal to it even though it conflicts in substance with the Torah of Judaism at so many points, and even though it is also at variance with the most basic of all Jewish interests-the survival of the Jewish people."

Norman is doubtful that this pious-not to say credulous-loyalty to liberalism will soon change. And after reading his account of the several false dawns of Jews turning toward conservatism only to fall right back into the comfortable lap of the Left, one is hard pressed to disagree. Still, I'm a bit more optimistic that the Jew will change his political spots.

Consider one datum from the 2008 election returns. It's true, of course, that this was a year in which almost 80 percent of Jews shrugged off all the information about Obama's coolness toward Israel and -McCain's strong support for the Jewish state, and voted for Obama. Nonetheless, younger Jews seem to have been a little less likely to have voted for Obama than were older Jews-the opposite pattern from the American public as a whole. Indeed, if one extrapolates from the data I've seen, Obama seems to have had among Jewish men under 30 no greater a margin than he had among non-Jewish men under 30; this may even hold for men under 40. So young Jewish men may finally be behaving politically more like other Americans. (Jewish women are another story.)

One also wonders whether the Obama administration won't present some "teachable moments" to those Jews who are willing to learn about which political party, and which political persuasion, is friendlier to Jewish interests. So I don't rule out a partial, slow-motion political realignment among American Jews.

But my own tentative personal resolution, reached after reading Why Are Jews Liberals?, is this: I'm going to stop worrying about American Jews. They're not worth the headache. Either they'll come to their senses or they won't, and there's not much I (or anyone else, I suspect) can do about it.

So instead of focusing on the mishegas of the American Jewish community, why not focus on the glories of Judaism? Instead of focusing on the attitude of American Jews toward Israel, why not focus on the attitude of all Americans toward Israel? The important things are for the practice and study of Judaism to become more vital, in America and elsewhere, and for the state of Israel to remain strong and secure.

What this implies is perhaps something like the following:

- Focus on Jewish education more than Jewish communal affairs-especially Jewish communal -navel-gazing. Fund Jewish day schools, improve Jewish supplementary schools, and teach more young Jews (and some Christians) the Hebrew language-and cancel all the conferences on "Whither American Jewry?"
- Focus on the Jewish religion more than Jewish sociology. Demography isn't destiny. Perhaps it's davening that is destiny. Strengthening Jews' practice and deepening Jews' understanding of Judaism is key to the Jewish future.
- Focus on examples of Jewish greatness, wherever demonstrated around

than the Jewish Community Relations Councils.

But first, read Why Are Jews Liberals? Norman Podhoretz has explained with great insight and elegance how it came about that, in the words of my late uncle Milton Himmelfarb, "Jews earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans." The challenge now is for Jews to live like... Jews. (Commentary Magazine Sep 2009)

The writer is the editor of the Weekly Standard. This article is one of several in a forum on the topic.

Today's White Paper By Yehudit Tayar

"It has been urged that the expression 'a National Home for the Jewish people' offered a prospect that Palestine might in due course become a Jewish State or Commonwealth. His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State". Within the Land Transfer Acts of February 1940, in order to prevent any economic expansion of the minority Hebrew community, the High Commissioner of Palestine was further empowered to prohibit the purchase of land by Jews. Making use of these powers, the Land Transfer Acts of February 1940 restricted the zone in which Jews were free to buy land to five percent of the total area of the country.....According to the terms of the international Mandate, the White Paper could only gain legal validity if endorsed by the League of Nations. The last word now rested with the League's Council. It was to meet in September 1939. It never met, and the White Paper never acquired legal validity." ("Thieves in the Night", by Arthur Koestler, written 1946)

Today we witness a blatant attempt to reinstate the infamous White Paper of those days of the past when our Nation was struggling to survive here in our Homeland, trying to flee the murderous plans of the Nazi Regime, and at the same time fighting to settle the Land. Today we are supposed to be a sovereign State and not be limited to the dictates of foreign powers.

Today we are supposed to be mature enough as a Nation to stand up and demand our rights to live, to build and to settle our Land anywhere we wish.

But alas, today as then, the demands of the world, including the United States, attempt to force us back into being a subservient colony dictated to by both our enemies and our so-called friends.

The attempt to force Israel into freezing building in the Jewish communities of Yesha is bitterly reminiscent of the bloody days of the British Mandate, when even refugees fleeing the monstrous, murderous Nazis were prevented from finding the only safe haven they had, the Land of Israel. Today the plan also extends to include the eternal capital of Israel, Jerusalem, in a plan to remove Jewish sovereignty from Jerusalem by freezing any building there.

Back in the days of the Mandate there were those who, as the "spearhead", resisted this and found themselves not only struggling against Great Britain, the Nazis, Arabs and the rest of the world, but also found themselves struggling against their brothers here in Israel who felt that the British must be supported in their struggle against the Nazis. If it would not have been for the "so-called illegal immigration of the Mossad L'Aliya Bet", as it was called, it is certain that not only the thousands of refugees who came through the heroic efforts of this organization of immigration would have been murdered in Europe, but it is also clear that these same immigrants made an enormous contribution during the War of Independence.

Today, as the pressures on Prime Minister Netanyahu grow from outside and from within, we must continue to act as the "spearhead", the Mossad L'Aliya Bet of today. We must continue to give Mr. Netanyahu the example of our forefathers who were unafraid of the British, unafraid

of the internal criticism and even hatred, and who realized that the safety and future of the Jewish people in our Land depended on their - and today - our efforts and determination to continue to build in Yesha, Jerusalem, and all over our Land. It is imperative that each hilltop that is in danger of being handed over to the enemy who wishes to destroy us be protected and that we, as then, determinedly continue to demand that our Land and the Jewish people be granted the unalienable right that we have always had no matter what any foreign or local power ruled.

Each and every hilltop, be it Gilad Farm in the Shomron or Shdema located only ten minutes from Jerusalem, demands the same determined fight to protect it and keep it for the Jewish people.

Today, before the next attempt of the United Nations to freeze Jewish purchase of Land, and to prevent building and endanger our lives and the future of the Jewish people in our Land, it depends on our tenacity and endurance to help the government of Israel do what needs to be done : protect the Jewish people and ensure that never again will we be forced by a "White Paper" to endanger our very existence as a people.

It's Not the Settlements, Stupid By Sarah Honig

Without historical context there can be no real understanding of existential issues, certainly not of essential continuities. That's why those who seek to obfuscate and skew do their utmost to erase telltale fundamental perspectives and present whatever they focus upon as cogent isolated concerns.

Case in point: US President Barack Obama's fixation on settlements, whether they be a collection of squatters' makeshift lean-tos on a stony hill in the middle of a barren nowhere or entire populous urban quarters of Jerusalem.

The real issue is a layer deep beneath surface palaver. It's a layer which Arabs implicitly understand, which Jews pretend (or prefer) not to understand, and which Obama righteously denies. To paraphrase what Bill Clinton hectorated during his first presidential campaign: "It's not the settlements, stupid." Settlements are mere transitory pretexts, alleged irritants which in fact conceal a far darker but basic truth.

Obama hints at it when he admonishes against creating "new facts on the ground" ahead of the deal he proclaims he's about to concoct. Peace is feasible providing Israelis effectively stay inanimate and refrain from altering reality beyond the non-border (1949's armistice line, a.k.a. the Green Line). Otherwise they jeopardize Obama's magic remedy to all that ails the region but which thus far eluded cure by lesser healers than himself. His unspoken apparent assumption is that whatever betokens Israeli/Jewish life and vitality perforce undermines harmony and bliss. Bottom line priority - weaken Israeli/Jewish interests.

This has been the Arab subtext since the very advent of Zionism, though at different intervals the *casus belli* assumed different facades. In all instances the pro forma grievance was that Jews were "changing facts on the ground," just as now.

On occasion, as currently, the outcry centered on settlements, or more specifically on land purchases. (Jews weren't always accused of robbing Arab land. Sometimes their crime was buying stretches of wasteland.) At times it was immigration.

Often, it was both, as in the days of the infamous White Paper, published by Britain just months before the outbreak of World War II, when the Holocaust was about to be kick-started. Germany's Jews were already shorn of citizenship and stateless. Hitler's threats were well recorded, shouted in the world's face and hardly kept a secret.

Besides its draconian curbs on Jewish land ownership, the Neville Chamberlain government's White Paper also set a limit of 10,000 Jewish immigrants annually for a five-year period. It magnanimously allowed an additional 25,000 quota for the entire five years to allow for "refugee emergencies." Any post-1944 Jewish entry would necessitate Arab permission. It must be recalled that Jews were at the time fleeing in all directions to escape Hitler's hell. The White Paper encompassed all the goodwill the international community could reluctantly muster, lest "changes on the ground" occur that would rile the Arabs in and around the Jewish homeland.

The fault wasn't Britain's alone. Obama's White House predecessor was fully complicit. Franklin Roosevelt unreservedly shared the predispositions of his European counterparts. Likewise, Obama isn't the sole pro-Arab Western leader today. He is unreservedly in line with kindred European Union pompous pontificators. The unholy Allied prewar mind-set has been revived.

In his day Hitler tauntingly invited the world's democracies to take his Jews, if they were so fretful about them. He knew that for all their high-minded rhetoric, these countries wouldn't accept his provocative challenge.

After 1938's Anschluss, their representatives met in Evian-les-Bains, on Lake Geneva's French shore, to decide what to do with Nazism's desperate victims, who were pounding on their gates in search of asylum. They never even called them Jews, lest they incur the Fuehrer's wrath.

It turned into a great Jew-rejection fest. Britain bristled at any suggestion of allowing Jews into Eretz Yisrael, mandated to it to administer as the Jewish national home. Progenitors of today's Palestinian terrorists made sure endangered Jews wouldn't be sheltered, and his majesty's government appeasingly assented. The vast empty spaces of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were likewise off bounds. American humanitarianism consisted of tossing the undesirable hot potato into the international arena, because the Jews weren't wanted in the land of the free either. Indeed, FDR toyed with the notion of shipping German Jews to Ethiopia or Central Africa. The UK favored the jungles of Venezuela or Central America. Mussolini changed direction northward. Instead of exposing Berlin's urbane Jews to the rigors of the tropics, he opined that the Siberian arctic might be a preferable hardship.

The competition was on: who'll suggest a more remote and less hospitable exile in which to dump those whom the British Foreign Office shamelessly labeled "unwanted Jews." The motivation wasn't much more beneficent than Hitler's initial choice of Madagascar.

During all that time, it needs to be stressed, immigration into British mandated Eretz Yisrael hadn't stopped. Only Jewish immigration was targeted and impeded. Arab immigration continued unhindered. Itinerant Arab laborers streamed here from the entire Arab-speaking world - from the Maghreb to Syria. The Jews created what was dubbed locally as "prosperity." Arabs drifted to partake in it. But nobody objected. They were counted as natives. The UN actually recognized as "Palestinian refugees" any Arabs who sojourned here two years prior to 1948. Much of the Arab population on Israel's Coastal Plain, for example, is originally Egyptian and arrived with British acquiescence.

Hence the Mandate-era recorded a population explosion in some Arab villages, ranging quite unnaturally between 200 percent and 1,040%, according to Prof. Moshe Prawer's research into Arab migration here from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, etc. The Brits and their allies didn't consider the Arab influx as "changing facts on the ground," possibly because enlightened Jews didn't riot.

The bete noire that once was *aliya* is today called settlement. But intrinsically the two are one and the same - antagonism toward Jewish presence. The Jews are anathema, as is any habitat for them. If both are curtailed then Jewish existence is undercut. That was and still remains the Arab endgame aim.

Today's unofficial settlement freeze won't satisfy Israel's supposed peace partners, just as the British White Paper proved insufficient for their 1939 forebears. The ultimate White Paper goal was the creation of a single binational state with power-sharing according to the proportion of Jews to Arabs as would exist in 1949. Restrictions on Jewish immigration would preclude any "changes on the ground" until then - just what Obama purports to prevent with the ban on Jewish construction in Judea and Samaria.

The Arab Higher Committee rejected said White Paper, demanding "a complete and final prohibition" on all Jewish immigration and unequivocal absolute repudiation of the Jewish national home. Translated into today's diplomatic parlance, this is equivalent to "the unconditional end to all settlement activity" and the refusal to recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist.

What was is what is. It's just not about the settlements. (Jerusalem Post Sep 4)

Beware of Serial White House Middle East Blunders!

By Yoram Ettinger

Israeli policy-makers and public opinion molders tend to accept US Administrations as top authorities on the Middle East. They have sometimes chosen to depart sharply from their own ideology/strategy - under US Administration pressure - in spite of systematic and dramatic US policy blunders, which have undermined US interests in the Middle East and have jeopardized Israel's existence.

For instance, in 1948, the US State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA were convinced that establishment of the Jewish State would trigger a war, producing a second Jewish Holocaust in less than a decade, that a Jewish State would be a strategic burden upon the US, that Arab oil producers would boycott the US and that Israel would join the Communist Bloc. In order to dissuade Ben Gurion from declaration of independence, they imposed a military embargo on the region (while Britain supplied arms to the Arabs) and threatened Ben Gurion with economic sanctions.

During the 1950s, President Eisenhower courted Egyptian dictator, Nasser, in an attempt to snatch him out of Soviet influence. However, accepting Nasser as the Arab leader and as a key Non-Aligned statesman, offering financial aid to construct the Aswan Dam and leaning on Israel to "end occupation of the Negev," evacuate the entire Sinai Peninsula and internationalize parts of Jerusalem did not moderate Nasser's subversion of pro-US Arab regimes, support of Palestinian terrorism, recognition of Communist China and moving closer to Moscow.

During the 1970s and 1980s, until the day of the invasion of Kuwait, the US Administration supported Saddam Hussein. It concluded an intelligence-sharing accord with Baghdad, authorized the transfer of sensitive dual use US technologies to Saddam and approved five billion dollars in loan guarantees to "The Butcher from Baghdad." President Bush - and his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, who is a role model for National Security Advisor Jim Jones and Defense Secretary Gates and has the ear of President Obama - assumed that "the enemy of my enemy (Iraq VS Iran) is my friend." However, the "enemy of my enemy" proved to be "my enemy."

In 1977, President Carter - who is admired by President Obama - opposed the Begin-Sadat peace initiative. He lobbied for an international conference and focused on the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem. However, the determination of Begin and Sadat forced Carter to join their peace bandwagon, which reached its destination by bypassing the Palestinian and the Jerusalem issues.

In 1979, President Carter abandoned the Shah of Iran, the bulwark of US interests in the Persian Gulf. Carter and his National Security Advisor, Brzezinski - an informal advisor to Obama - facilitated the rise of Khomeini to power, thus triggering a strategic volcano, which is still haunting vital US concerns in the Middle East.

During 1993-2000, President Clinton and his advisor, Rahm Emanuel - President Obama's Chief-of-Staff - embraced the Oslo Process and Arafat as harbingers of peace and democracy. They anointed Arafat to the Most Frequent Visitor to the White House. However, never has a peace process produced as much bloodshed, terrorism, hate-education and non-compliance as has the Oslo Process. Clinton - just like Obama - contended that terrorism should be fought, primarily, through diplomatic and legal means. Hence Clinton's meek response to a series of assaults by Islamic terrorism from 1993 (First "Twin Towers") to 2000 (USS Cole), which led to 9/11.

President Bush's "Two State Vision" - which has been adopted by President Obama - constitutes an extension of the severely-flawed White House track record in the Middle East.

The nature of the leadership of the proposed Palestinian state can be deduced from the profile of its potential leaders, who have become role models of inter-Arab treachery, subversion and terrorism. The "Good Cop," Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) - a graduate of KGB training and of Moscow University and the engineer of hate education - was expelled from Egypt (1955), Syria (1966) and Jordan (1970) for subversion. He played a key role in the PLO violent attempts to topple the government in Beirut and PLO collaboration with Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.

A Palestinian state would doom the Hashemite regime to oblivion, would constitute a tailwind to pro-Saddam terrorists in Iraq and to Islamic terrorists in Egypt, Lebanon and the Persian Gulf and would provide a foothold in the eastern flank of the Mediterranean to Iran, Russia, China and North Korea. A substantial annual net-emigration/flight, by moderate Palestinians, attests to the Palestinians' own expectations of the proposed Palestinian state.

The proposed Palestinian state on one hand, and Middle East stability and US and Israel national security on the other hand, constitute a classic oxymoron. A Palestinian state would add fuel - and not water - to the fire of terrorism and Middle East turbulence. The promotion of "The Two State Solution" proves that the US and Israeli policy-makers are determined to learn from history by repeating - rather than by avoiding - past dramatic blunders. (News1 Sep 4)

West Bank Settlements Are Good For Peace By Raphael Israeli

One of the axioms of the "peace process" is that the settlements are "an obstacle to peace," as if removing them would instantly bring peace on earth. It's well known, however, that before 1967 there were no settlements, and no peace - unless, of course, you consider the communities within Israel "settlements," since the Arabs considered them occupied territory. The greatest contribution of the settlements, then, is that they took the place of Israeli towns as occupied territory, except perhaps for Hamas and considerable parts of the Arab world. Therefore, the formula that removing settlements equals peace is laughable and baseless.

The Arabs' total-denial approach to Israel never depended on settlement on a particular parcel of land. They are bothered by Jewish settlement in Israel in general. It's enough to browse through the books of the "moderate" Palestinian Authority to see that Haifa, Jaffa and even Tel Aviv are considered Palestinian cities, while Hamas believes the Wakf land of all Palestine should be expropriated from the Jewish state, which doesn't have the right to land on either side of the Green Line.

In 2000, Yasser Arafat was offered an Israeli withdrawal from 95% of the territories in exchange for agreeing to end the conflict. He refused, because he didn't consider this a full withdrawal from Palestinian land. Although Israel made yet another step in leaving the Gaza Strip, not only freezing construction there but evicting the settlers, all it got in return was more war and destruction, a far cry from the peace that removing this "obstacle" was supposed to create. In other words, not only did the Arabs not consider Israel's older settlements different from the new ones that "endanger peace," but the eviction of the latter drove them to begin attacking the former.

We know now that one thing that motivated Anwar Sadat to come to Jerusalem was his fear that unless settlements in the Rafah area and Sinai were uprooted, they would grow into large cities that no peace agreement could remove.

The Syrians and Palestinians, on the other hand, believed they had nothing to lose if they maintained their refusal to negotiate, since their land would wait for them, frozen in time, until they could graciously take it back from Israel and then attack again from these positions. They can't comprehend that they have lost their lands because of their aggression, and that it is immoral to return to an aggressor the positions from which he might renew his aggression, since letting him escape without harm only encourages him to attack again. There can be deterrence only once the aggressor has paid a price that dissuades him from attacking at whim. This is what happened to Germany.

So until there is a permanent status agreement, only Jewish settlement activity can be enough of an incentive to make the Arabs, like Sadat, hurry up and seek peace, because their losses will multiply the longer they wait. We know from the Gaza example that the Arabs' goal was not to remove Israel from precious land, but to uproot Jews and fight them from the land they left. It is better, then, to keep with the peace-building construction in communities beyond our borders, and only when we see genuine signs of a culture of peace and good neighborliness next door to talk about evacuation - with due consideration to the new reality on the ground, which will change all the more if the Arabs don't rush toward an agreement.

The author is a professor of Islamic, Middle Eastern and Chinese history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (Haaretz Sep 6)

America's Media Miss History By Kenneth Bandler

If a tree falls in a forest, and no one is there, does it make a sound? That childhood philosophy question comes to mind when considering the lack of American media coverage of the recent Fatah congress. It was the first such gathering in 20 years, the first in a city controlled by the Palestinian Authority, and Fatah delegates from dozens of countries were among the 2,000 attendees. Ironically, several hundred Fatah members residing in Gaza were prohibited by Hamas, not Israel, from traveling to Bethlehem.

Opportunity for positive change infused preparations for this historic Fatah leadership assembly, five years after Yasser Arafat's death. There was opportunity to reform Fatah, to make it more attractive to Palestinians than Hamas, and to present a platform advancing peace.

Given the tendency of news organizations to focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, one would have expected the media to devote at least as much space and time to what's typically allotted to covering Israel's political conventions, let alone elections. Instead, an observer of the Fatah assembly was reduced to scouring the US media forest to find scant coverage that, in terms of substance and analysis, produced barely a thud of elucidation.

During the eight-day Fatah conference, extended from the originally planned three days, The New York Times ran three stories and The Los Angeles Times two. Both papers maintain full-time bureaus in Jerusalem, a short drive from both Bethlehem and Ramallah, seat of the Palestinian Authority. The Washington Post published one news article, by National Public Radio correspondent Linda Gradstein. The Washington Times Jerusalem correspondent, Joshua Mitnick, who also writes for the Christian Science Monitor, filed a single story for each. Much of the reporting was left to wire services Associated Press and Reuters. The Wall Street Journal relied exclusively on the wires, and the Times filled in its

limited coverage with Reuters pieces. On the airwaves, NPR devoted one segment.

Overall, American media focused on the fact that the meeting took place and the reelection of PA President Mahmoud Abbas as Fatah leader, even though he ran unopposed. In fact, Los Angeles Times Jerusalem bureau chief Richard Boudreaux devoted the second of his two articles exclusively to Abbas's reelection, without mentioning any of the confrontational positions Fatah adopted regarding Israel.

Three months earlier, on May 21, New York Times bureau chief Ethan Bronner wrote a long story on the ideological and structural challenges that might inhibit Fatah reform. But this kind of assessment did not materialize again in the Times's coverage of the gathering in Bethlehem.

While all media reported Abbas's opening speech to the Fatah congress on August 4, in which he reaffirmed the Palestinian right to resistance, Reuters went the furthest in clarifying this long-standing ambiguous language. "Although peace is our choice, we reserve the right to resistance, legitimate under international law," the Western-backed Abbas said in a policy speech using a term that encompasses armed confrontation as well as nonviolent protests," Reuters stated.

Missing from US media was mention of the resolutions Fatah adopted that collectively broadcast the Fatah leadership's destiny, by choice, to remain mired in the rhetoric and practices of the past. In addition to supporting armed resistance in all its forms, implying support for terrorism, Fatah declared opposition to peace talks until Israel stops settlement construction and agrees in advance to relinquish Jerusalem. Nowhere was there any action, or even indication, that the Palestinian leadership is prepared now to take concrete steps to inculcate a culture of peace.

"Fatah's sixth General Assembly has shown that the 44-year-old faction is still not ready to transform itself from a revolutionary movement into a governing body - one that cares about establishing institutions and infrastructure for the future Palestinian state," Khaled Abu Toameh, the widely-respected Palestinian correspondent for The Jerusalem Post, concluded in a piercing news analysis in which he stated that Fatah has evolved into the Palestinian Ba'ath Party.

No American paper wrote an editorial on the Fatah meeting. In contrast, The New York Times, for one, has not held back in publishing editorials criticizing Israel, asserting that settlement policy is the main obstacle to peace. What the Fatah gathering proved, unfortunately, is that the Arab refusal to recognize Israel's legitimacy actually is the main obstacle to peace.

"Despite the fact that rejecting peace will hurt their people more than those of Israel, on every issue where it had to choose between peace-oriented flexibility and intransigence, the Fatah leadership chose the latter," wrote noted Middle East scholar Barry Rubin in The Jerusalem Post. "For example, Fatah has now officially adopted the Aksa Brigades as its armed wing. The next time that group commits a terror attack, Fatah is going to have to take responsibility for it."

For American reporters based in Jerusalem, and their US-based editors, it appears judgments were made that the Fatah gathering was not worth expending resources to cover, that it would be just more of the same rhetoric and paralytic infighting that has become the accepted norm of Palestinian politics. If so, then the US press gave Abbas's Fatah a free pass by failing to fulfill its professional duty to inform and educate about the meaning and long-term implications of the discussions and outcome of the first Fatah congress in a generation.

A fuller understanding of what transpired in Bethlehem, and how that affects peacemaking, is necessary to set the context for when Palestinian and Israeli leaders resume direct talks. When they do, the media will have another opportunity to recall that Fatah's failure to confront its own inherent impediments to change obstructs efforts to achieve peace for both Palestinians and Israelis. (Jerusalem Post Sep 7)

The writer is director of communications for the American Jewish Committee.

What's Israel Got to Do With It? By Cliff May

Bill Gates famously called George Gilder "very stimulating even when I disagree with him, and most of the time I agree with him." The issues on which Gilder has staked out stimulating positions over more than 30 years as a writer and public intellectual are wide-ranging. They include the causes of poverty and the creators of wealth; the consequences of modern feminism; and the possibilities opened by the high-tech revolution. His arguments are often surprising, always provocative and generally controversial. His latest book is titled "The Israel Test." Much of what he says is dramatically different from what just about anyone else is saying. In particular: "Either the world, principally the United States, supports Israel,

or Israel, one way or another, will be destroyed. There are no other realistic choices. And if Israel is destroyed, capitalist Europe will likely die as well, and America, as the epitome of productive and creative capitalism spurred by Jews, will be in jeopardy."

At this juncture, it is probably not just useful but necessary to note that George Gilder is not Jewish. In other words, the case he makes for Israel has no basis in religious or ethnic affiliation. At the same time, not being tethered to Israel or to Jews allows him to be blunt in a way few of Israel's Jewish defenders dare.

For example, he says that people "who obsessively denounce Jews have a name; they are Nazis." He does not hesitate to apply the term to Arab and Iranian leaders who exhibit such behavior. He contends, as well, that the "most dangerous form of Holocaust denial is not rejection of the voluminous evidence of long-ago Nazi crimes but incredulity toward the voluminous evidence of the new Holocaust being planned by Israel's current enemies. Two Iranian presidents have resolved to acquire nuclear weapons for the specific purpose of 'wiping Israel off the map.'"

What can be done to prevent a second Holocaust and to beat back the jihadis at America's gates? Gilder believes, first, we need to recognize the nature and gravity of the threat; second, we need more resolve; and third we need more technology of the sort America and Israel have been most adept at producing.

It will require comprehensive missile defense and other high-tech means to prevent our sworn enemies from "infiltrating nuclear weapons into American cities, exploding them offshore near American ports, or detonating bombs above America's critical electronic infrastructure" - destroying that infrastructure with an EMP (Electro-Magnetic Pulse) attack, an offensive capability that Iran, for one, is known to be developing.

"No nation in history has succeeded in preserving its integrity and sovereignty without meeting the challenge of ever-advancing armaments," Gilder points out. "But many American intellectuals still imagine that the United States is different, that it is possible or desirable for us to negotiate an 'end to the arms race.' Our enemies will always want to end the arms race because they know only free nations can win it. ... An end to the arms race would deprive the capitalist countries of their greatest asset in combating barbarism."

Gilder is convinced that the forces targeting Israel and America also are "targeting capitalism and freedom everywhere." Capitalism, he says, requires freedom - for entrepreneurs, workers and consumers alike. All benefit, because, "under capitalism the achievements of one group provide markets and opportunities for others."

He goes on to make this unfashionable observation: Any democracy not resting on a solid capitalist foundation is doomed. "Without an expanding capitalist economy," he writes, "democracy becomes dominated by its zero-sum elements - by mobs and demagogues."

Over the centuries, such mobs and demagogues have, many times, turned against Jews. Today, Gilder adds, "they have turned against Israel." Sometimes, the root cause is simply greed and envy. But often it is the belief that "social justice" necessitates the dispossession of the "haves" and redistribution to the "have-nots" in the interest of "equality of outcome."

Over time, this can only lead to expanding poverty because it is based on a misunderstanding of what wealth is. Fundamentally, wealth inheres not in material resources but in "human minds and creations that thrive only in peace and freedom. In particular, the immiseration of the Middle East stems chiefly from the covetous and crippling idea among Arabs that Israel's wealth is not only the source of their humiliation but also the cause of their poverty."

Gilder has much more to say - more challenging arguments and perplexing questions than I can summarize in a brief column. But his underlying thesis is straightforward: The future of freedom, democracy, capitalism, America, the West and the tiny state of Israel are all tied together in a single knot. Israel is "not only a major source of Western technological supremacy and economic leadership - it is also the most vulnerable source of Western power and intelligence."

Israel is, Gilder contends, "not only the canary in the coal mine - it is also a crucial part of the mine." If Americans will not defend Israel, they will "prove unable to defend anything else. The Israel test is finally our own test of survival as a free nation." (Townhall.com Sep 3)

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