



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*

But then the prayer takes on a very different, almost frightening tone: "Who shall live and who shall die? Who shall enjoy long life and who will die an untimely death?" And, if we are indeed to perish, "will it be by fire, or water? By sword or plague?"

Will we meet our end in an earthquake, a drought, a famine? Will we be at rest, in the bosom of our loved ones, or wander aimlessly, filled with anxiety? Will we be safe and left alone, or be assaulted? Will we lead lives of comfort, or of torment? Will we see our fortunes made, or lost? Will we rise in stature, or be brought low?"

It seems to me that there are two separate voices emanating from this page. The one is telling us that life is ordered; it is logical, reasonable, mapped out and structured. Every creature has its special and unique role to play, and each of us is judged by our actions, the Eternal Shepherd carefully, lovingly giving us the "once over" as we cross the bar from this year to next. It all runs according to plan.

But the other voice is not so sure; it is filled with doubt, almost hysteria: Will we indeed be judged in a fair and equitable system? Will our good deeds be rewarded, our forgiveness accepted, our lot in life administered by a God of compassion? Or will we be subject to the various vicissitudes of life, vulnerable to all the cruel and callous crimes lurking out there in search of a victim? Can we rely on the published parameters of reward and punishment, or will disaster strike us without warning, from just around the next corner?

All of humanity, I suggest, shares these twin voices; all of us vacillate between hope and fear. Hope that God is everything we desperately want Him to be, believe Him to be. And fear that maybe not everything operates along the rational, cause-and-effect line that we were taught about in cheder. Sometimes, as when our small, largely-citizen Israeli army vanquishes much larger and more intimidating foes, our hopes are realized. But at other times, when suffering abounds, when brave soldiers and pilots suddenly fall out of the sky, our gravest fears are realized.

The answers to our deepest questions are complex, not simple; nor are they meant to be spoon-fed to us. We are not babies; we are the most sophisticated of the Creator's creations. It is we who have to grapple mightily to find an answer; God will not make it easy for us. The final words of the Un'tane Tokef form, perhaps, the "bottom line" in our search for meaning: "Repentance, prayer and charity circumvent the harsh decree." In striving to get closer to God - through repentance and humble self-effacement; and in striving to get closer to our fellow man - through acts of charity and kindness; and in trying to get closer to ourselves - through prayer and introspection - we may enter the place where answers can be found.

It is there that we will keep our faith alive and somehow come to grips with tragedies like that of the Ramons. And it is there where we will find the strength to live, to face another day in which, G-d willing, hope will overcome fear. (IsraelNationalNews.com Sep 25)

The writer is the father of fallen soldier Sgt. Ari Weiss.

Goldstone's Recipe For Never-Ending Conflict By Evelyn Gordon

It is a pity that amid the 10,000 documents he perused while seeking war crimes in Gaza, Judge Richard Goldstone did not make time for one book - or even one review. The book is *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe*, by historian William Hitchcock, and reading it would undoubtedly have given Goldstone insight into the reality of warfare. But even Richard Bernstein's thoughtful review in *The New York Times* last May would have sufficed.

The book details the sheer scope of civilian casualties, including Allied ones, that Europe's liberation from the Nazis entailed. For instance, 1,300 civilians died in a single Normandy department, Calvados, on D-

Events...

Monday, October 5, 8pm

Lt. Col. Jonathan D. Halevi of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, will speak on "Confronting Terror in Human Rights Organizations: A Study of the Goldstone Report" at Bnai Torah.

Commentary...

Between Hope and Fear By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

The recent, tragic death of IAF pilot Assaf Ramon dramatically provokes the central question that annually preoccupies us during the High Holidays: Is there an intelligent, guiding hand to the Universe, or is life ruled by randomness, coincidence and caprice?

The deaths of this celebrated father and son, their lives cut short and their brilliant careers sent literally crashing into oblivion, ought to give us all pause. Ilan Ramon was an icon of Jewish pride and Israeli valor, the youngest member of the team that destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor, and the representative of the entire Jewish People when he was selected by NASA to join the Columbia space mission team. Singing Jewish songs, reciting Kiddush and carrying a Holocaust Torah scroll high above the Earth aboard his space ship, one could accurately say that Ilan reached spiritual heights virtually unsurpassed in history. And yet he vanished six years ago in a fiery instant, when the Columbia disintegrated on reentry.

Assaf, his son, displayed stoic heroism by following in his father's footsteps and pursuing an exemplary career in the Israeli Air Force. This past June, he graduated at the top of his class and was named an outstanding pilot. Tall, handsome and friendly, he seemed the archetypal picture of the new Israeli who dares to go where few would venture. When he helped bring his crippled jet in for an emergency landing some months ago, that image was only reinforced.

Yet now both these great men - who reached astronomical heights in Heaven, both literally and figuratively - are gone. What does their death say to us about God and the human condition? For if God is just and merciful - as our prayers so often tell us - if He rewards the righteous and protects the innocent, then why did the Ramons have to perish so abruptly, so painfully? Why could they not have lived out long lives, savoring their many accomplishments and basking, with their family, in the glow of their gifts to Israel and their fellow Jews?

And if we conclude, somehow, that God did not have a hand in their deaths, that things "just happen" out there, beyond anyone's control, then how can we relate this to a faith that identifies the Almighty as a personal God who is intimately involved in the world and all its citizens, a God who reviews each of our "files" at the New Year and ultimately decides our fate? Why would I possibly pray to a powerless deity?

This classic dilemma, I believe, is encapsulated in one of the most potent, yet perplexing, prayers of the High Holidays. The Un'tane Tokef, recited on both Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, seems to form the centerpiece of each service. It begins by reminding us of "how awesome this day is." It then speaks of the "Great Shofar sounding," the angels quaking with fear, and all of humanity being brought to pass, like sheep, under the shepherd's rod. There they are counted, one by one, "their lifetimes fixed and their destinies inscribed, for on Rosh HaShanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed."

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Day alone; another 1,200 died the next day. Some 900 French civilians were killed in a single town, Rouen, on another single day, April 19, when Britain bombed it to soften German resistance. Altogether, about 19,890 civilians died in the five worst-hit French departments over just 11 weeks: June 6 to August 25, 1944.

Hitchcock's point, Bernstein noted, is not that the Allies committed war crimes, but that "even in a morally clear, entirely just and necessary conflict like World War II, civilian suffering was tremendous."

Indeed, Hitchcock goes even further: World War II succeeded "in large part because it was so brutal," Bernstein quotes him saying. The Allies won, "but this victory required massive force."

And that is the truth Goldstone's commission signally ignored: It is not possible to wage any kind of war without civilian casualties. The Allies did not slaughter French civilians intentionally. But if civilians are present in a war zone, many will inevitably die.

Partly, this is because mistakes are inevitable. Information in wartime is always imperfect; it is often impossible to know whether the people in your sights are civilians, enemy fighters or your own soldiers. Soldiers must make split-second judgments using this imperfect information, and sometimes they are wrong.

Moreover, even with correct information, nobody is infallible. And misaiming by even a hair can mean hitting an innocent person or building instead of the target.

That is why all battles produce friendly-fire casualties. Indeed, four of the 10 IDF soldiers killed in the Gaza fighting - fully 40 percent - were friendly-fire deaths. Does Goldstone believe Israeli troops shot their own comrades deliberately? Presumably not. Yet he insists that numerous Palestinian civilians were killed deliberately. That Israelis err when killing their comrades but never when killing Palestinians is a conclusion so illogical as to defy comprehension.

And indeed, simple error can easily explain many of Goldstone's "Israeli war crimes." But Hitchcock also offers a lesson relevant to the rest: Not only is it impossible to wage war without civilian casualties, but the harder you try, the less effective your fighting becomes.

IN IRAQ and Afghanistan, for instance, America used far less force than in World War II; consequently, both conflicts have lasted far longer. Or as Bernstein quotes Hitchcock saying, reduced force "is a more humane approach than in World War II, but so far it has been less effective." Goldstone's rules, however, would make war less effective still. His list of "Israeli war crimes" includes many "disproportionate attacks" on legitimate targets, attacks that achieved a military purpose "at the cost of too many civilian lives." While acknowledging that avoiding civilian casualties is difficult in "heavily populated" areas where combatants "mixed and mingled with civilians," he nevertheless accuses Israel of not taking "all feasible measures" to avoid these casualties.

What "feasible measures" could Israel have taken besides those it did, like dropping leaflets and telephoning private houses to tell civilians to leave? Goldstone never says, but the implication is clear: When soldiers could not be certain an attack would not kill civilians, they should have held their fire.

The problem, of course, is that holding fire whenever civilians are present means rarely getting a chance to fire at all, thus precluding effective military action. Indeed, prior to the war, Israel repeatedly tried pinpoint attacks on Hamas operatives, for which the rule was "don't fire if civilians are present"; yet these never dented the Palestinian rocket attacks.

The Gaza operation, precisely because it was larger-scale, secured a lull that has thus far lasted nine months.

Perhaps Goldstone truly believes that since effective military action inevitably involves civilian casualties, it should be outlawed: that since multiple attempts to stop Palestinian rocket fire without war - two truces, pinpoint attacks, international pressure and blockade - failed, Israel should just have let Hamas continue firing thousands of rockets a year at its citizens. Yet few people would accept that solution were their own countrymen under fire.

Speaking in Jerusalem nine years ago, Goldstone attributed his views on war and war crimes to the Holocaust. But he clearly failed to learn the obvious lesson: What ended the Holocaust was overwhelming force. Had the Allies adopted his impossible standards, World War II would never have ended, and Hitler would have continued slaughtering Jews with impunity.

BUT GOLDSTONE also ignores one final lesson from Hitchcock: Despite far higher casualties, Europe's liberation aroused less antagonism among civilian victims than Afghanistan's has, in part because "the Normandy invasion lasted just one summer, and the people whose homes were destroyed knew that it was all over and they could start rebuilding," Bernstein quotes him saying. Afghanis have no such comfort.

But neither do Gazans - because Israel used just enough force to secure a lull, not enough to destroy Hamas. Hence both sides know another round is coming. Hamas is rebuilding its arsenal, and will eventually resume the barrages; Israel will ultimately respond, and everything Gazans have rebuilt will be destroyed.

Indeed, the true tragedy of Israel's Gaza war was not excessive force, but insufficient force: insufficient to actually end the conflict and let both sides rebuild.

And that is also the tragedy of Goldstone's report: Out of genuine concern for civilian casualties, it creates norms of warfare that would preclude victory from ever being achieved - thus condemning civilians on both sides to never-ending conflict. (Jerusalem Post Sep 30)

Netanyahu's Quiet Success By Daniel Pipes

Almost unnoticed, Binyamin Netanyahu won a major victory last week when Barack Obama backed down on a signature policy initiative. This about-face suggests that U.S.-Israel relations are no longer headed for the disaster I have been fearing.

Barack Obama officiates between Binyamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel (left) and Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the Palestinian Authority.

Four months ago, the new U.S. administration unveiled a policy that suddenly placed great emphasis on stopping the growth in Israeli "settlements." (A term I dislike but use here for brevity's sake.) Surprisingly, American officials wanted to stop not just residential building for Israelis in the West Bank but also in eastern Jerusalem, a territory legally part of Israel for nearly thirty years.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched the initiative on May 27, announcing that the president of the United States "wants to see a stop to settlements - not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions," adding for good measure, "And we intend to press that point." On June 4, Obama weighed in: "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. ... It is time for these settlements to stop." A day later, he reiterated that "settlements are an impediment to peace." On June 17, Clinton repeated: "We want to see a stop to the settlements." And so on, in a relentless beat.

Focusing on settlements had the inadvertent but predictable effect of instantly impeding diplomatic progress. A delighted Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority responded to U.S. demands on Israel by sitting back and declaring that "The Americans are the leaders of the world. ... I will wait for Israel to freeze settlements." Never mind that Abbas personally had negotiated with six Israeli prime ministers since 1992, each time without an offer to stop building settlements: why should he now demand less than Obama?

In Israel, Obama's diktat prompted a massive popular swing away from him and toward Netanyahu. Further, Netanyahu's offer of even temporary limitations on settlement growth in the West Bank prompted a rebellion within his Likud Party, led by the up-and-coming Danny Danon.

The geniuses of the Obama administration eventually discerned that this double hardening of positions was dooming their naïve, hubristic plan to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict within two years. The One's reconciliation with reality became public on Sept. 22 at a "summit" he sponsored with Abbas and Netanyahu (really, a glorified photo opportunity). Obama threw in the towel there, boasting that "we have made progress" toward settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and offering as one indication that Israelis "have discussed important steps to restrain settlement activity."

Those eight words of muted praise for Netanyahu's minimal concessions have major implications:

Settlements no longer dominate U.S.-Israel relations but have reverted back to their usual irritating but secondary role. Abbas, who keeps insisting on a settlement freeze as though nothing has changed, suddenly finds himself the odd man out in the triangle. The center-left faction of the Obama administration (which argues for working with Jerusalem), as my

colleague Steven J. Rosen notes, has defeated the far-left faction (which wants to squeeze the Jewish state). Ironically, Obama supporters have generally recognized his failure while critics have tended to miss it. A Washington Post editorial referred to the Obama administration's "miscalculations" and Jonathan Freedland, a Guardian columnist, noted that "Obama's friends worry that he has lost face in a region where face matters."

In contrast, Obama critics focused on his announcing, just one day after the mock summit, that "America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" - a formulaic reiteration of long-established policy that in no way undoes the concession on settlements. Some of those I admire most missed the good news: John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, stated that Obama "put Israel on the chopping block," while critics within the Likud Party accused Netanyahu of having "prematurely celebrated" an American policy shift. Not so. Policy winds can always change, but last week's capitulation to reality has the hallmarks of a lasting course correction.

I have repeatedly expressed deep worries about Obama's policy versus Israel, so when good news does occur (and this is the second time of late), it deserves recognition and celebration. Hats off to Bibi - may he have further successes in nudging U.S. policy onto the right track.

Next on the agenda: the Middle East's central issue, namely, Iran's nuclear buildup. (Jerusalem Post Sep 30)

Israel Has To Stop Apologizing And Take The Offensive

By Isi Leibler

The non-Jewish seer Balaam is quoted in the Torah describing Jews as the "the people that dwells apart and is not reckoned amongst the nations." Recent events, climaxing with the UN Goldstone report, have certainly borne this out.

The maliciously biased report alleged that the Israelis deliberately targeted civilians and accused them of crimes against humanity. We should not have been surprised. It was a logical extension from the anti-Israeli NGO reports which have been publishing similar "findings" over the past year.

Besides, what could one expect from a committee created by the ineptly titled UN Human Rights Council, which is dominated by rogue regimes like Iran, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Cuba and Liberia? Some of the leaders of the member-states would qualify as candidates for prosecution as war criminals. The council's principal common denominator remains an obsessive hatred of Israel, which they condemn more frequently than all the other 191 member-states combined.

In fact, since its inception in 2006, 26 of the 32 resolutions condemning human rights violations passed by the council were directed against Israel. It should also be noted that this UN "human rights" body declined to investigate the monstrous brutalities inflicted on civilian populations in Chechnya, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Indeed it went so far as to bizarrely thank the Sudanese government, the perpetrators of the Darfur massacres, for its "cooperation."

Likewise, the far more numerous civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan never appeared on the council's agenda. When the commission was being created, even Mary Robinson, the former head of the UN Durban hate fest, declined an invitation to head the inquiry because it was too "one-sided."

The UN Human Rights Council machers then recruited Richard Goldstone, a vain South African Jewish judge, who despite being aware from the outset of the biased composition of the panel, permitted himself to be used as a fig leaf to provide credibility to the Israel-bashers. He did not even have second thoughts after one of his panelists, Christine Chinkin, refused to disqualify herself after having previously denied that Hamas rockets provided Israel justification for invading Gaza and condemned Israel for "prima facie war crimes."

The depths to which Goldstone, who purports to be a long-standing "Zionist," totally identified himself with this crude anti-Israeli exercise, was exemplified in his recent New York Times op-ed, in which he had the gall to compare Israel's defense against Hamas to the atrocities committed in Darfur, where millions were displaced and over 200,000 civilians were raped and butchered.

The report could have been drafted by Hamas operatives. It represents a lengthy compendium of lies primarily appropriated from Hamas-

orchestrated Arab testimony and anti-Israeli NGOs. On the basis of "evidence" from these rabidly hostile sources, the tribunal defamed as war criminals the nation which undoubtedly displays greater concern over civilian casualties than any other country in the world.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is now urging the United States and other democratic countries to speak up and condemn the abominable report, which effectively challenges the right of nations to defend their civilian population centers from global terrorist onslaughts.

The response will be a litmus test for the Obama administration, which so far has been disappointingly tepid in its reaction. We should certainly not be holding our breath over the European response. Their track record of appeasing Arab extremists is appalling. One can also predict an escalation in anti-Israeli libels at forthcoming sessions of the UN General Assembly, which will now be presided over by a new president, Ali Treki, the former foreign minister of that bastion of human rights, Libya.

It is thus essential that we now get our act together. We must pay more attention to the threat from within. Today, self-loathing Jews (including Israelis) are at the forefront of almost every campaign to denigrate and defame Israel and the Jewish people. Such "Jews" are not a new phenomenon. They maintain the tradition of their predecessors during the Middle Ages who allowed themselves to be used as instruments of the most venomous Christian anti-Semitic campaigns, and more recently of the Jewish communists who applauded the murderous policies of Stalin and justified Soviet state-sponsored anti-Semitism.

There is no doubt that the vile rumors concerning supposed IDF atrocities initiated some months ago by Israelis which were subsequently proven to be utterly false, published by the daily Ha'aretz and emblazoned on the front pages of the world media, added fuel to the climate of hostility against Israel that gave birth to the Goldstone report.

That was followed by blood libels and the greatest global manifestations of anti-Semitism seen since the Nazi era, with Israel assuming the traditional role of Jews, once again accused of representing the source of all the woes and plagues of mankind.

It is thus surely time to stop ignoring the self-loathing Jews and Israelis who now occupy key roles in the campaigns to delegitimize and demonize our people. Freedom of expression enables them to continue articulating their vile attacks on their own people, but it is high time that they be exposed and marginalized from mainstream Jewish life. It is an absolute scandal that some of the worst culprits, including those calling for boycotts of their own country, retain tenure in Israeli universities funded by Israeli taxpayers and Diaspora Zionist philanthropists.

We must also provide our children, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, with greater awareness of the hypocrisy, double standards and extreme bias which are being applied against their people. We must ensure that despite the global campaign to defame and demonize Israel and the Jewish people, our youth retain pride and dignity and are conscious that when it comes to respecting the sanctity of life and upholding human rights, the Jewish state, despite all its faults and weaknesses, remains a role model in this area.

They must understand that the tiny State of Israel is being demonized because it will not stand by with folded arms and enable the barbarians at their gates to spill innocent Jewish blood. We must stop continuously explaining or apologizing, and take the offensive.

These past few months we should have been concentrating on exposing the evil nature and crude bias of the Human Rights Council before it released its "findings." We should have more vigorously exposed the prejudice and double standards of the despicable NGO human rights bodies that have adopted Israel-bashing as a vocation. At the cost of being unkind, I would also strongly recommend our government replace our current UN ambassador with a more charismatic personality along the lines of our previous envoy, Dan Gillerman.

The government should also immediately create an international task force of the best Israeli and Diaspora jurists to confront this new effort to undermine our legitimacy. (Jerusalem Post Sep 27)

It Takes Much More Than Talk To Stop Iran's Stonewalling

By Michael Rubin

Tomorrow, U.S. diplomats and their Russian, Chinese and European counterparts will join Iranian officials to discuss the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. The meeting follows new Iranian missile tests and

exposure of a second covert Iranian nuclear enrichment facility. Iran enters the negotiations defiant. "The announcement of the enrichment facilities will be Iran's winning card," Kayhan newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Supreme Leader, editorialized last Sunday.

The meeting will be a nail in the coffin of the Obama doctrine. Throughout his campaign, President Obama preached unconditional diplomacy. "We need a President who'll have the strength and courage to go toe-to-toe with the leaders of rogue nations, because that's what it takes to protect our security," Obama declared during his campaign.

Within a week of his inauguration, Obama offered Tehran an olive branch, promising that should Iran unclench its fist, it would find a willing partner in him.

The President sought a fresh start. In order to neutralize historical baggage, he apologized for real and perceived American wrongs, such as the 1953 CIA-sponsored coup that overthrew Iran's populist prime minister. He reached out with letters, interviews and intermediaries.

The President's aides - Secretary of State Clinton, for example - described Obama's strategy as nuanced. Negotiating without precondition would not only force the Islamic Republic to show its true face, but it would give Washington time to construct a united international front. Diplomats scurried the globe, courting Moscow and Beijing, whose UN Security Council veto threat has watered down sanctions for years.

The administration also imposed a time line: If Iran did not respond constructively to negotiation offers by last week's G-20 meeting, then the administration would impose, in Clinton's words, "crippling" sanctions.

Two mistakes, however, will condemn Obama's diplomacy to failure: First, the President assumed that other leaders share his goodwill. If Iranian leaders did not respond to diplomacy offered without preconditions, what reasonable state would not support the U.S. position? Governments, however, are not neutral arbiters; they act in their own interests. Russia's refusal to compromise its position after Obama this month rescinded a U.S. pledge to build an anti-ballistic missile base in Poland is a case in point.

As devastating to diplomacy's success has been the administration's insistence on sequencing talks, sanctions and military preparation. The Obama administration has delayed consideration of sanctions let alone anything more robust during this grace period. Some - Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) for one - suggest the White House should extend the deadline for diplomacy because summer unrest distracted Iran.

Any delay in sanctions is dangerous. Failure to abide by deadlines and red lines heightens the chance of miscalculation as Tehran will only conclude that it can act with impunity.

Proponents of diplomacy may chafe at labeling Obama's rush to engage as naive. After all, President Richard Nixon flew to China and, at the height of the Cold War, President Ronald Reagan talked to the Soviet Union. The comparison, however, underlines Obama's weakness. Even as they talked, neither Nixon nor Reagan suspended military preparations. Indeed, it was Reagan's willingness to build and use both the U.S. military and covert capacity that catalyzed Soviet defeat.

If the world is to avoid war or a nuclear Iran, talk is not enough. Engagement is a tactic, not a strategy. If Obama waits to prepare militarily until talks run their course, then the United States will fail. Military preparations take months.

The Iranian leadership will not engage sincerely until faced with a credible threat, nor will European allies - let alone Russia and China - make concessions if they see the commander in chief twiddling his thumbs. The military option should be the last resort. The irony is that without a finger on the trigger, diplomacy will fail. (New York Daily News Sep 30)

The writer, a senior editor of the Middle East Quarterly, is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a senior lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Time For A New Departure By Yitzhak Klein

Far from advancing his policy regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, President Obama's hastily cobbled-together summit in New York last week simply exposed that policy's weakness. Obama expressed impatience with "talking about talks," but that's exactly what Israelis and Palestinians will start doing this week.

In his address to the UN General Assembly, Obama reiterated his view that Israel and the Palestinians should wrap up their century-old conflict in

the next two years, but his words merely served to underscore the increasingly evident gap between Obama's rhetoric and reality.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu can be justly proud of his management of Israeli-American relations since he entered office six months ago. At that time, Obama tried to position himself as, at best, equidistant between Israel and the Arab world. Since then Netanyahu has demonstrated that the Jewish democracy is far and away America's closest ally in the region, the most attuned to the values shaping American policy and the most willing to accommodate that policy within the constraints of Israel's own interests.

Nevertheless the time has come to put more distance between Israel's policy and an administration policy that clearly isn't working.

Obama's summit will likely lead to endless talks, but not to genuine negotiations. The two sides are simply too far apart, starting with the fact that Israel recognizes the Palestinians' right to govern themselves but the Palestinians aren't prepared to concede an equal right to the Jewish people. Obama almost certainly cannot spare the time and political resources needed to initiate meaningful negotiations and nurse them along.

Given the slim prospects of the president's policy working, the most likely scenario is that the administration will quietly let Israeli-Palestinian relations slip into stalemate. The Palestinians will continue to avoid the necessary hard choices. George Mitchell will continue to discuss a settlement freeze, content that the freeze continues as long as discussions continue. This may serve Obama's and Mahmoud Abbas' short-term interests but it doesn't serve Israel's interests.

Israel has rights and interests in Judea and Samaria. The Oslo process, which began 16 years ago, was predicated on bracketing those rights and not insisting on them, in hopes that this would facilitate peace. This turned out to be a strategic mistake, as most compromises of principle are. It encouraged the Palestinians to believe they could get by without acknowledging Israel's rights, and could try to convince the world that Israel has no legitimate rights.

Israelis have an interest in bringing their conflict with the Palestinians to an end, but this interest isn't served by allowing the Palestinians to pretend that Israeli rights don't exist. Israel should be working to realize its rights and interests on a day-to-day basis. Its policy should be directed to achieving a settlement that accommodates them, which means making the Palestinians acknowledge them.

The first step is to note that there is a world of difference between claiming one has security interests in Judea and Samaria and asserting that Israelis are there by right. A good summary of Israel's rights can be found in Supreme Court Judge Edmond Levy's dissent in *Gaza Coast Regional Council vs. Knesset* (2005). Judge Levy's opinion is a fundamental Zionist document.

Several Israeli cabinet ministers are going on a coast-to-coast hasbara tour of the United States this fall, and they should emphasize Israel's rights, and not just its security concerns. They should prepare American public opinion to accept that Israeli policies based purely on diplomatic expediency have proved disastrous, and that henceforth its policies will be focused on asserting its rights.

The second step is to make clear to the Palestinians that they are going to have to acknowledge the Jewish people's legitimate rights - starting with their right to a sovereign state in Eretz Yisrael. Continued Palestinian intransigence should cost them dear in terms of assets and interests. Israel should make clear that Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria exist by right, that they are not about to disappear, and that they will continue to expand, on vacant public land and on privately owned Jewish land, until a treaty demarcating Israeli and Palestinian rights in Judea and Samaria is negotiated and signed.

Israel has promised the United States a "temporary settlement freeze" as a means of kickstarting genuine negotiations, and it should not go back on its word. But neither should it allow endless negotiations to turn a "temporary" freeze into a permanent one, freezing any real prospect of a resolution of the conflict.

Prime Minister Netanyahu should immediately declare the start of a six-month "freeze," excepting essential public buildings, in the settlements. At the end of that time, if the Palestinians have yet to come around, Israel should adopt a policy that asserts its rights while penalizing the Palestinians for not acknowledging them. (Jerusalem Post Sep 29)

The writer heads the Israel Policy Center, whose mission includes reinforcing Israel's character as a Jewish, democratic state.