



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Events...

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Commentary...

The Left Marked Them By Nadav Shragai

Hatred is difficult to measure, and even more difficult to measure on the eve of Yom Kippur. But even without a ruler or compass, it's hard not to get the impression that the extended process of delegitimizing the settlers - which leads to genuine hatred of them - is hitting a peak. The left wing and the media have now labeled the settlers, as a group, as the abhorred Other that people are allowed to smack around.

It is particularly convenient to do this when one of the prime components of this campaign is the law. The law is a crucial instrument of a functional society, and every person, regardless of race, religion or political opinion, is obligated to respect it. There are settlers who break the law, just as there are lawbreakers who are Palestinian, ultra-Orthodox, politicians, Druze, Israeli Arabs, left-wing anarchists, the non-observant and factory workers fighting over their wages. The problem arises when the law becomes a way of marking an entire population as illegitimate, even as violations of the law by others are accepted with understanding and sensitivity.

Much has been written about an Israeli prime minister who was suspected of criminal activity but shielded from criticism so he could advance the "correct policy." And none other than President Shimon Peres recently extolled the virtues of Abie Nathan, founder of the offshore pirate radio station The Voice of Peace, who violated the law and said what a good thing it was to do so. Barely anyone reminded the president of the ideologues running a pirate radio station on the "other" side, who violated the law so their voices could be heard from aboard the Arutz Sheva ship. Unlike Nathan, they did not merit immunity from the law and were punished for breaking it.

One must beware of those who talk about the greatness of the rule of law even as their hearts are full of hatred when it comes to the Other. Someone who beats up Palestinians and damages their property should sit in jail. But are the settlers as a whole - all 300,000 of them - responsible for that?

Are the Druze, as a group, responsible for the few who attacked their Jewish neighbors in Peki'in? Are all Israeli Arabs responsible for the events of October 2000?

What does Talia Sasson, the champion of the rule of law when it comes to illegal outpost construction, have to say about the tens of thousands of illegal buildings constructed by Bedouin and Arabs in the Galilee, Negev and East Jerusalem? And when was the last time the left wing or the media criticized the anarchists who attack Israel Defense Forces soldiers near the West Bank separation fence the same way they criticize the settlers? Why is the press

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בס"ד interested in how much money Israeli taxpayers have to pay for security at right-wing rallies, while the cost of left-wing rallies is irrelevant?

Why is there extensive media coverage when police refrain from raiding an outpost due to fear of clashes with settlers, but not when police refrain from chasing Arabs who steal cars, cattle and agricultural equipment along the seam line between Jewish and

Arab neighborhoods and in Judea and Samaria? Take, for instance, the many articles about the body of the Palestinian shepherd whom the Palestinians accused the settlers of murdering - and the silence that greeted the news from the police laboratory that there had been no murder at all, that a dud shell caused the shepherd's death. Are the facts relevant only when they hew to the line?

In a few weeks the country will commemorate the 13th anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. In the eyes of his supporters, those who object to the legacy attributed to Rabin are just as terrible and out of bounds as the assassination itself. In this matter too, the accusatory finger the left points at the right is generalized and inflammatory, to the point where half the country finds itself alienated from the memorial day.

From the perspective of the left and the media, settlers have become the ultimate Other, mainly because of the ideological threat that they, religious Zionists and anyone who identifies with them poses to those who pride themselves on an absence of ideology. The Kadima party, with its blurred identity and limited values, is just one example of this. The settlers - in the path they have chosen, in their faith and even in their appearance - represent the exact opposite. That is their sin, and that is their reward. (Haaretz Oct 8)

Can Israel Approach Peace from the Bottom Up?

By Natan Sharansky

Last month, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gave an explosive farewell interview to Yediot Aharonot. In it, Olmert, not known for his reticence to criticize political and ideological opponents, chose to mention only one by name: Moshe (Bogie) Ya'alon, the former chief of General Staff and my colleague at the Adelson

Institute for Strategic Studies, whose much anticipated book, *The Long-Short Road*, was published last month. It was fitting that Ya'alon should be singled out for criticism because the policy approach of these two men could not be more different.

For Olmert, peace is decidedly a top-down affair. The entire Annapolis process, like the Oslo process it mimics, is based on strengthening a "moderate" Palestinian leader in the hope that he will be "strong enough" to make peace. How to strengthen the Palestinian leader? Among other things, by releasing prisoners, transferring money and making concessions in negotiations. For him, the health of the peace process is a function of the dynamics of negotiations. Are people meeting and talking? Are there summits of world leaders supporting the process? Are Arab leaders making the right statements?

For Ya'alon, however, peace is a bottom-up affair. He believes that it must focus on transforming Palestinian society and on bringing Israeli and Palestinian society closer together. To him, the health of the peace process is a function of what is happening within Palestinian society. Are Palestinian security forces fighting terror? Are Palestinian leaders working to improve the economic and social conditions of Palestinian life? Are Palestinian media outlets inciting against Israel? Are Palestinian schoolchildren being educated to accept the legitimacy of Israel?

Israelis can choose to support either of these two approaches. But one thing is certain: The top-down approach has been tried unsuccessfully by six different Israeli prime ministers and two different American presidents,

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working with two different Palestinian leaders. There is little evidence to suggest that it will succeed if tried by a seventh prime minister or third president.

A SMARTER idea would be to try Ya'alon's alternative approach, and to link the peace process - Israeli concessions, transfers of money and authority, etc. - to a transformation of Palestinian society. This would indeed be a long-short road, and would no doubt take a number of years to implement. But given the disasters that have befallen Israelis and Palestinians over the last 15 years, it would be infinitely better than the alternative.

Would a new US administration accept such an approach? After meeting with both of the candidates, I have no doubt that regardless of who wins this November, an Israeli government that would embrace this new approach would win the support of the White House.

Barack Obama began his public career as a community organizer and argues persuasively in his books that true change comes from the bottom-up. For his part, John McCain has repeatedly expressed his view that a reformed Palestinian society is critical to any successful peace process. Moreover, either candidate would welcome an approach that would be different than the previous unsuccessful efforts.

Indeed, the real question is not whether this new approach will be supported in Washington, but whether it will be supported in Jerusalem. In the past, initiatives that might have moved the peace process in a constructive new direction were left stillborn by passive governments.

The most famous instance was after President George W. Bush's historic June 2002 speech in which he argued for a bottom-up approach that called for a Palestinian state to emerge only after comprehensive reforms would make that state democratic and peaceful. Rather than seize the opportunity, the Ariel Sharon-led government of which I was then a part dithered. Within a few months, the State Department crafted a road map which paid lip service to this new approach but which was essentially based on the same old tired formulas. In particular, its call for elections to be held "as soon as possible" in an unreformed Palestinian society would snuff out any chance for ever reforming that society.

A year later, Sharon embarked on a misguided unilateral disengagement plan, which initially caught the Americans by surprise and which further undermined any prospect for Palestinian reform. That mistake was compounded after the disengagement, when snap elections were foolishly held in Gaza, which not only killed the prospects for reform but, by bringing Hamas to power, also soured Israelis on the idea that Palestinian society was capable of being reformed.

I believe that reform is possible and that such a reform will bring us closer to peace. But it will require the end of illusions of the type offered by those who argue that peace is only one meeting, one summit, or one concession away. It will demand policies based on the type of hard-headed pragmatism that Moshe Ya'alon offers in his book. It will demand that we let the evidence guide our judgment rather than our judgment guide the evidence.

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Just Another Bit of Fish Wrapping By Evelyn Gordon

Does anyone still remember George W. Bush's April 2004 letter to Ariel Sharon? At the time, it was touted as Israel's main quid pro quo for uprooting 25 settlements, expelling some 10,000 Israelis from their homes and withdrawing the army from Gaza. Yet today, it is never mentioned - and for good reason: In the ensuing four years, the Bush and Olmert administrations between them have systematically eviscerated every "achievement" it allegedly granted Israel.

Take, for instance, its pledge that "the United States will lead efforts, working together with Jordan, Egypt and others in the international community, to... prevent the areas from which Israel has withdrawn from posing a threat that would have to be addressed by any other means."

In reality, Palestinians have fired more than 6,000 rockets and mortar shells from Gaza since the August 2005 disengagement, more than triple the pre-pullout volume. The Palestinian Authority, which controlled Gaza until Hamas's June 2007 coup, made no effort to prevent this. Yet far from "leading the effort" against this threat, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice preferred to press Israel for more concessions, claiming that absent these, the PA could not be expected to fight terror.

Specifically, she demanded a "safe passage" between Gaza and the West

Bank - which would have enabled rocket technology to spread to the latter - and the reopening of the Israel-Gaza border, which would have eased terrorist procurement and infiltration. In November 2005, she bullied Sharon into signing an agreement that included both provisions, but Olmert, to his credit, froze it because of the ongoing rocket fire. Nevertheless, she continued pressing these demands, most recently in her May 2007 "benchmarks" plan.

THE LETTER also pledged that "Israel will retain its right to defend itself against terrorism, including to take actions against terrorist organizations," if Gaza did prove "a threat that would have to be addressed by any other means" than diplomatic pressure. In reality, Washington pressed Olmert to avoid anything beyond ineffective, small-scale military operations. But there, it was pushing against an open door: Olmert wanted a major operation as little as Bush did.

Thus in theory, Bush's letter offered a multilayered security guarantee: Either the PA would provide security voluntarily, or the U.S. would "lead the effort" to force it to do so, or if all else failed, Israel would protect itself militarily. Instead, Palestinians launched daily attacks from Gaza without suffering any serious diplomatic or military consequences. And the world will now expect Israel to accept this as the model for future withdrawals as well.

Equally grave, however, is the evisceration of two key diplomatic achievements. One was the letter's pledge that the refugee issue must be resolved "through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel." The US has not reiterated this with the consistency and clarity necessary to convince the Palestinians that it is serious. But at least it never officially backtracked.

Olmert, however, single-handedly gutted this achievement by offering to absorb some 20,000 Palestinian refugees under any deal. And as everyone knows, the minute you concede the principle, the price is negotiable.

Predictably, therefore, the world is already pressuring Israel to raise the figure. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, for instance, declared earlier this month that not only must Tzipi Livni honor Olmert's offer, she might even have to increase it: "I don't know how many [refugees Israel must accept] - 10,000 or 100,000, I don't know," he said.

The second achievement was the letter's promise that "in light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949."

THE BUSH administration began gutting this promise almost immediately, by objecting vociferously to Israeli construction in these "major population centers." Clearly, if the settlement blocs were to remain Israeli, there was no reason to oppose construction within them. Thus by declaring construction within the blocs no more legitimate than construction elsewhere in the West Bank, Washington signaled that in fact, it did not believe Israel should retain them.

Last month, however, it made its retraction explicit: Speaking to the Palestinian daily Al-Ayyam, US Consul in Jerusalem Jacob Walles said Rice had told both sides that negotiations must be based on withdrawal to the 1949 lines. The State Department subsequently issued a denial, but its denial said merely that "the US government has not taken a position on borders." In other words, Washington no longer considers a return to the 1949 lines "unrealistic"; at best, it has "no position" on borders.

Olmert, however, has gutted this provision no less thoroughly: Last month, he told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the territorial price of an agreement would be "very close to a formula of one for one." That means the border will basically be the 1949 lines: If the Palestinians must receive equivalent territory inside Israel for any West Bank territory Israel keeps, any adjustments to these lines will necessarily be minor. Olmert then repeated this in a Rosh Hashana interview with Yediot Aharonot, saying Israel "should withdraw from almost all of the territories, including in east Jerusalem," and compensate the Palestinians by "close to a 1:1 ratio" for any land it does retain.

Clearly, the world will expect any future government to abide by this, since offers made during one round of negotiations are always the starting point for the next. Thus not only has Washington abrogated its 2004 promise, but Olmert has buried any possibility of resuscitating it.

Sharon claimed to have secured three American pledges in exchange for the disengagement: a free hand in fighting Palestinian terror post-withdrawal, opposition to resettling Palestinian refugees in Israel and support for retention of the settlement blocs. And most Israelis considered this trade-off worthwhile.

Four years later, however, all three have evaporated - just as disengagement opponents warned that they would. And Bush's letter has become just another bit of fish wrapping. (Jerusalem Post Oct 15)

Why the Middle East Is Sick By Barry Rubin

We now have the perfect metaphor for the Middle East's political situation. In Egypt, a little boy with cystic fibrosis badly needs a certain medicine. Unfortunately for him, that drug is only produced in Israel, and Egypt's health ministry won't let it be imported.

Unless one understands how this story typifies the region, it's impossible to understand the Middle East.

Let's remember that Egypt has been at peace with Israel for over 30 years, and that, nevertheless, its government still does much to boycott, not to mention demonize, the Jewish state. By constantly pursuing a hate-Israel campaign, it stokes an atmosphere of hatred and extremism which also gives ammunition to the Muslim Brotherhood that seeks to turn Egypt into a war-oriented, totalitarian Islamist state.

So tightly controlled is the Egyptian media, so extraordinary the Israelphobia, that the English-language Cairo paper *Al-Ahram* was considered courageous even to mention the sick boy's family's effort to obtain the Israeli-invented medicine.

Meanwhile, an Egyptian wrote recently: "Admission into [a] state-run hospital is likely to cost one his life." This came shortly after a scandal involving a top ruling-party politician who was discovered selling tainted transfusion blood.

Arab countries cannot develop medicines and hi-tech advances precisely because they are too busy using up the resources for battles against various fantasy enemies of Allah.

SOME YEARS ago, a US official told me about funds that had been offered Egyptian officials to implement a program dealing with Red Sea pollution. But the project involved cooperation with Israel. The official was told that anything helping Israel was unacceptable, no matter how much good it might do Egypt.

In pursuit of its vendetta against Israel and the West, the Arab world is committing suicide - not only the individual suicide of the terrorist, but the suicide of entire societies. On a daily basis, this means rejecting the reforms those societies need. In the long run, it means risking takeover by radical Islamists.

The rest of the world, finding such talk incomprehensible, either thinks it's meaningless jabber, or ignores it altogether. Surely the problem must stem from addressable grievances, fixable misunderstandings and emotional exaggeration? Unfortunately, this is all nonsense.

What's the effective voice in the region? Not the "peace process" concept used in talking with the West, but the "resistance" concept, used in talking among themselves.

Even in countries with genuinely moderate governments, no official or state-controlled newspaper (and very few intellectuals) dare say: Israel is not an enemy; America is a friend; the true struggle is to raise living standards and promote freedom. This is as true at 2008's end as it was in 1998, 1988, 1978, 1968 and 1958.

When asked in a recent poll about their feelings toward al-Qaida, 60% of Egyptians answered "positive" or "mixed." The "positives" no doubt think al-Qaida is right and international terrorism is the best - probably only - way to deal with Israel and the West, no matter what the consequences. The "mixed" have reservations about methods, but believe al-Qaida's fundamental world view is accurate.

Analyzing the poll, analyst Doug Miller said such results were "yet another indicator that the US 'war on terror' is not winning hearts and minds."

Yet the fault lies not with America but with the rulers, journalists, clerics, educators and intellectuals in the Arabic-speaking world. The poll's results are yet another indicator that the war on democracy and moderation is what's winning hearts and minds.

Those defending the status quo mobilize the masses on its behalf, diverting them against foreign devils rather than domestic dissatisfactions. Those seeking revolution stir the masses into bloody upheaval against the status quo. The former ride the tiger; the latter want to set the tiger on its historic masters.

How can the United States possibly tame a tiger trained and owned by others who both whip and feed it daily?

WHAT DOES it matter if Arab notables speak soothingly at diplomatic parties or in Western media interviews while millions at home are inundated

by a very different message? Even if the tie-and-suit, polished-manners crowd are sincere, they dare not say the same thing to their people that they whisper into the ears of gullible foreigners.

Here's a more typical rhetoric - coming from Hamas member of parliament Fathi Hammad on al-Aksa television, September 7:

"The approaching victory... is not limited to Palestine. You are creating the ethos of victory for all Arabs and Muslims, and Allah willing, even on the global level. Why? Because Allah has chosen you to fight the people he hates most - the Jews." (MEMRI translation)

Nowadays one can even say this kind of thing in front of the UN General Assembly, as Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad did recently, to tumultuous applause. The clapping drowned out his regime's appalling internal repression and economic failures.

It works. This is how Syrian President Bashar Assad speaks to his subjects. And while Egypt's president and Jordan's king personally detest such ravings, they pay the ravers' salaries.

Is Arab victory approaching? Well, no. But this kind of talk has kept the suckers in line for 60 years now. It's just so useful for rulers and revolutionaries.

The younger generation has already been thoroughly indoctrinated. Yet its victory will be as great as that of the little boy (involuntarily) doing his patriotic and religious "duty" by going without the medicine he needs. (Jerusalem Post Oct 12)

The writer is director of Global Research in International Affairs Center and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal.

What Mr. King Never Asked By Amil Imani

Many Iranians felt completely betrayed.

CNN's king of talk-show hosts and an icon of one of the major television networks, Larry King, hosted an interview on Wednesday, September 24, 2008, with the devil himself.

Many Iranians felt completely betrayed by Mr. King's line of questioning. They felt that Mr. King was missing key issues. I am not advocating a hostile interview here, but how could Mr. King allow Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to easily dance away? It seemed he was deliberately making Ahmadinejad look and act like a human being.

It is hard to digest how the liberal media singlehandedly, in a matter of three short days, managed to make Ahmadinejad look statesmanlike. Mr. Ahmadinejad was given a forum to reiterate his deception, repeatedly. Larry King looked very mesmerized by the presence of this evil man who is responsible for the death and misery that exists in Iran. He did not contradict Ahmadinejad, did not show him up. Mr. King allowed him to make points to undermine the friendship between Israel and the United States.

Ahmadinejad's utterances on Tuesday echoed past remarks he has made, including calls to annihilate Israel and threats to the US and other countries that support Israel. On September 18, 2008, he said, "the Zionist regime is a regime that will disappear."

But I have news for him, most Iranians believe that the Islamic Republic is an illegitimate regime that will soon disappear. On February 28, 2007, he said, "Zionists are the true incarnation of Satan." Ironically, most Iranians believe that Ahmadinejad is the Satan and does not represent the Iranian people any more than his turbaned colleagues presently ruling Iran. What needs to be understood is that, in fact, Ahmadinejad and the mullahs, above all else, are true Muslims and despise anything Iranian, including Iran's ancient pre-Islamic heritage.

When Mr. King asked Ahmadinejad about his statement last year that there are no homosexuals in Iran, Ahmadinejad replied that it is not the way it is there. It is disliked in Iran. Then he asked Mr. King if he were concerned for 70 million Iranian people or for a few homosexuals. Mr. King should have asked how many homosexuals Ahmadinejad has hanged this year.

Instead of asking Ahmadinejad how many children he has, Mr. King should have asked him how many children he has hanged in the four years the Iranian president has been in office.

Mr. King missed an opportunity to ask Ahmadinejad why he is so interested in securing Palestinian rights, while he is denying such rights to the Iranians. Why does he want a referendum for the Palestinian people to decide their own destiny, while he refuses the same to 70 million desperate and unhappy Iranians?

Over the years, much of the world has been preoccupied with its own

problems and shown little concern for the plight of the Iranian people, until the mullahs installed a firebrand Islamist, Ahmadinejad, as the president of the country. This man, called "the Monkey" by many Iranians, is now alarming the world by being at the control of the Islamofascist train and throttling it full speed ahead for a cataclysmic collision. Ahmadinejad and his gang are loading their guns and doing all they can to obtain the bomb, to bring about the biggest and most dreadful death that would usher in the Mahdi, their savior-ruler of the world.

In dealing with the mullahs ruling Iran, what you see is not what you get, and what you hear is not what they mean. Transparency and honesty are not their strong suit. So, we need a first-rate understanding of the mullahs to see through their

Mr. King never asked why the Islamic Republic has been denying and violating a long-suffering people of all its human rights. They are guilty of beating, imprisoning and torturing hundreds of women who braved participating in a peaceful demonstration pleading for equal family rights on the recent International Day of Women. This regime has systematically beaten, imprisoned and tortured all manner of citizens, from school teachers to students to union workers, for daring to raise their voices against the plight to which they have been subjected.

Mr. King never asked about the Islamic regime savagely beating and hauling to its dungeons of torture and death over a thousand of the tens of thousands of teachers who last year gathered in front of the parliament requesting nothing more than their back pay and living wages.

He never asked why they have directed systematic genocidal measures against all non-Shi'a religious minorities, with Baha'is as their prime target. They arrest some Christians - whom even their Koran calls "People of the Book" - for observing Christmas.

He never asked why they have implemented barbaric practices of stoning, hanging and amputations for those who are convicted of crimes in their kangaroo courts without any due process. They even imprison those few lawyers who rise in the defense of the innocent.

He never asked why they have plundered, mismanaged and doled out Iran's national wealth, with the result being that the great majority of the people are living in poverty. They have forced Iranian women into prostitution to survive, or they are simply sold as sex slaves in Persian Gulf states.

Mr. King never asked why the Iranian regime spends a fortune on the nuclear program that they claim is only for peaceful purposes, while turning Iran into little more than a gas-station-nation, with its precious oil wealth squandered and its facilities on the verge of collapse through neglect.

They have created a suffocating social atmosphere that has driven masses of the people to the use of hard drugs as a way of numbing their pain.

Mr. King never asked why they look far and wide to support any and all terrorists. The Islamic Republic's delusional theology mandates the creation of horrific conditions in the world so that the Hidden Imam is compelled to appear and establish his rule.

He never asked why they spared no efforts at sabotaging any settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis. They arm and train all Palestinian factions, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and any and all that come.

He never asked why they direct similar criminal schemes on their eastern flank, in Afghanistan. They consider any democratic system as the enemy of Islamofascism, and rightfully so. They have worked ceaselessly to expand Iran's stolen funds, and do all they can in support of Shi'a co-fascists Hizbullah in Lebanon.

The Islamic Republic's hands are dripping with the blood of thousands of Iraqis, victims of its bloodthirsty kin mercenaries aiming to kill a budding democracy next door. They have supplied and continue to supply their mercenaries with armor-piercing projectiles for killing and maiming the coalition forces in Iraq. They are cowardly, killing by proxy, using roadside bombs that have taken the lives of hundreds of Americans.

A final quote from the Ayatollah Khomeini, the founding father of the Islamic Revolution, should suffice, since his words are still considered authoritative in Iran. Ahmadinejad has been following his mentor's words and deeds since Khomeini hijacked a peaceful and civilized nation:

"We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah. For patriotism is another name for paganism. I say let this land [Iran] burn. I say let this land go up in smoke, provided Islam emerges triumphant in the rest of the world."

Couldn't Mr. King have asked a more probing question than how many children Ahmadinejad has and what his stand on homosexuality is? What a colossal parody! (IsraelNationalNews.com Oct 15)

The writer, an Iranian-born American citizen, is a columnist, literary translator and novelist who advocates for democracy for Iran.

Who's Good For The Jews? By Michael B. Oren

As an Israeli who lives part-time in the U.S., I am always surprised when Americans ask me who the Israelis want to win the U.S. elections. My response is that, though Israel is intensely close to the U.S., many Israelis cannot even identify the Democratic and Republican candidates.

As an item on the Israeli news, the U.S. elections usually rank fourth or fifth, well behind the latest political scandals, multi-car accidents and soccer scores. And yet, the outcome of November's balloting could have profound ramifications for Israelis. The contestants' positions on the peace process, their policies toward Iraq and Iran and their strategies for pursuing the war on terror--all will impact the Jewish State. Depending on who wins, the Middle East--and Israel's place in it--may look substantially different.

That is the conclusion of a study I published in the current edition of *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, the first comprehensive analysis of the candidates' platforms affecting Israel. My findings were astonishing. Apart from their common commitment to Israel and to the search for peace between it and the Arabs, Barack Obama and John McCain differ significantly on virtually every issue.

McCain, for example, favors transferring the U.S. embassy, situated in Tel Aviv, to Jerusalem--an action certain to antagonize the Arabs--while Obama has not supported the move. Obama, on the other hand, has expressed reservations about Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank, while McCain has overlooked the matter.

McCain has called on the Palestinian Authority to live up to its obligations to clamp down on terror, but Obama has stopped short of making such a demand. Obama has supported Israel's ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza and its peace talks with Syria; McCain opposes both.

McCain insists that the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be solved without first confronting Islamic radicalism. Obama believes that the Arab-Israeli dispute, though not the root of all Middle Eastern conflicts, is nevertheless a "constant sore" that "infect(s) all of our foreign policy."

The differences between the candidates on a continued American military presence in Iraq and proposed talks with Iran are well-documented. McCain favors the first and opposes the second, and Obama's positions are exactly reversed. Regarding the war on terror, Obama advocates a return to the Clinton-era treatment of terrorists as criminals who should be tried by the justice system. McCain, by contrast, upholds the Bush Doctrine of preemption and the defeat of terror by extra-Constitutional means.

Which of these policies are best for Israel depends on one's definition of best. Some might prefer an America that is even-handed in peace talks, dedicated to achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli agreement and open to dialogue with its enemies. Others favor an America that is more sympathetic to Israel in negotiations, committed to fighting Islamic radicalism and ready to act preemptively--unilaterally if necessary--against terror. An America led by McCain or Obama will pursue substantially different courses in the Middle East, impelling Israel down widely divergent paths.

Israelis may not have a say in choosing that direction, though many of their supporters might. In spite of the Republicans' claim to commanding an unprecedented 35% of the Jewish vote, the sizable majority of American Jews will still vote Democratic. Still, a difference of only several percentage points could tip the scales in such key states as Florida and New York with their large Jewish populations.

Paradoxically, the race in those states may be decided by the former Floridians and New Yorkers who now live in Israel but who retain their U.S. citizenship. Mostly religious and politically conservative, these Israeli-Americans are expected to side overwhelmingly with McCain.

Perhaps the question of whom the Israelis want for president should not be so surprising, then, especially when posed to a dual-citizen. Israel may yet exert a small but pivotal influence on the presidential elections. American Jews and Israeli-Americans may, together but indirectly, determine Israel's future. (Forbes Oct 14)

The writer, a visiting professor at the Program for Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, is the author of Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present.