



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*

Semitic incidents, up by 11% from the previous year and also reflecting a doubling of the number of reported incidents over the past five years.

Just a day, Friday, as I was boarding the flight for London, as a simple concrete example of this new

environment, one page of one of our national newspapers, two articles. One about Jewish university students at one of our major universities being attacked by a mob shouting anti-Jewish slogans at them. And another article, man sentenced for firebombing Jewish institutions.

We in Canada are beginning to experience the same. Of course we've always had the old-school anti-Semitism, and it's still present. The manifestations from the extreme right and their presence on the internet. In my assessment, it's marginal, small and a shrinking form of anti-Semitism, but one which we can never forget. We do have robust hate crimes laws to deal with those manifestations of anti-Semitism, but we do see the growth of a new anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitism predicated on the notion that the Jews alone have no right to a homeland, the anti-Zionist version of anti-Semitism.

Now, let me say... je suis totalement d'accord avec mon collègue du Maroc et avec le Rabin en chef de la Royaume-Uni : On ne doit pas être d'accord avec les politiques particulières de l'Israël sur n'importe quelle question, on peut critiquer les politiques des gouvernements de l'Israël sans être antisémite. But the argument is not about criticising the politics of the Israeli government. Lord knows there's enough of that in the Knesset. The argument is with those whose premise is that Israel itself is an abomination, and that the Jews alone have no right to a homeland. And in that sense anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. Our government clearly understands this. Last year at our national Holocaust commemoration ceremony Prime Minister Stephen Harper said, speaking of the Holocaust that, "this genocide was so premeditated and grotesque in design, so monstrous and barbaric in scale and so systematic and efficient in execution that it stands alone in the annals of human evil."

"Unfortunately in some countries," he went on, "hatred of the Jews is still preached from religious pulpits and still proclaimed from political podiums. There are still people who would perpetrate another Holocaust if they could."

"That's why we must resist the error of viewing the Holocaust as a strictly historical event. It's not good enough for politicians to stand before you and say they remember and mourn what happened over six decades ago. They must stand up to those who advocate the destruction of Israel and its people today. And they must be unequivocal in their condemnation of anti-Semitic despots, terrorists and fanatics. That is the only way to honour the memory of those who were consumed by the Holocaust."

Let me briefly tell me some of the things that Canada is doing to respond to this new and growing anti-Semitism. We have recently applied to join and expect to become full members of the international taskforce on commemoration, education and research of the Holocaust. In that respect we have conducted a national baseline study of school curricula on Holocaust education. Our parliament has declared through all-party support - and two of the sponsors are here today - a bill for claiming the National Yom Ha-Shoah Holocaust Memorial Day, which is participated in by all party leaders.

We are addressing for the first time our own history of officially sanctioned anti-Semitism, the most notorious manifestation of which was Canada's refusal to accept the hundreds of Jewish European refugees aboard the St Louis as it arrived in Halifax harbour in 1938. In fact, one of my predecessors, as that boat arrived in Canadian waters infamously declared with respect to European Jewish refugees that none is too many for Canada to receive. That is why our government has established a \$2.5 million commemorative fund to help educate future generations about the St Louis incident and the hatred which underscored it.

We've created communities at risk security fund which is providing

Quote of the Week...

Minister Jason Kenney's Speech on Anti-Semitism

On Tuesday February 17, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney addressed the international conference aimed at addressing rising anti-Semitism yesterday at London, England's Lancaster House, on behalf of the government of Canada.

Mesdames et Messieurs, merci bien pour votre collaboration et j'aimerais commencer en félicitant John et ses collègues pour avoir organisé cet colloque historique et très important.

And I'd like to also commend my Canadian colleague, Irwin Cotler for his important role in organising this conference. I'd also like to note the presence of a substantial number of my Canadian parliamentary colleagues who are here, members of parliament Carolyn Bennet, Raymonde Folco, Hedy Fry, Randy Hoback, James Lunney, Joyce Murray, Anita Neville, Bob Rae and Scott Reid. We almost have a quorum for the House of Commons here assembled. And we came from not a close distance. And I'd also like to acknowledge of course my good friend Senator Jerry Grafstein.

I hope that this forum will be the beginning of an ongoing process of educating and mobilising parliamentarians throughout the world, and through them political formations across the spectrum, and indeed national governments to combat the scourge of anti-Semitism. I also hope that this will be the beginning, not the end, of this important work. And to that end I know that my Canadian colleagues and I would be delighted to host the next conference of the inter-parliamentary commission in Canada. [Applause].

We'll have to return to Canada, John, and just formalise that, and figure out exactly how it will be done. But you've got a good number of Canadians here who would be delighted to see this important work cross the Atlantic.

Ladies and gentlemen, in November during a trip to Kiev I paid my respects at the Babi Yar Holocaust site where more than 33,000 Ukrainian Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis over a two day period in 1941.

For me this brought to mind a new dimension of the unfathomable evil of the Holocaust. Babi Yar was not about the mechanised and perversely discreet killing of the gas chambers. Here men in uniform lined up and shot 33,000 individual human beings one by one non-stop over a period of two days. Even for those who were just following orders there had to be some deep blackness in their hearts, some hatred that allowed them to dehumanise the innocent individual human beings who they shot down one by one.

A few weeks ago I was in Mumbai, India, where I went to visit Chabad's Nariman House. I was literally sickened walking through the debris, seeing the blood-splattered walls; to stand in the place where Rabbi Gavriel Holzberg and his wife Rivkah were tortured and slaughtered. As I later looked out on Mumbai from the rooftop of Chabad House I marveled to think that in this huge, teeming city of 20 million the killers had meticulously, deliberately sought out to target this one rather obscure, peaceful place, and this particular man and his family.

Why did they do so? Because and only because they were Jews, and as such because they represented all the Jews. 68 years and thousands of miles separate the ravine of Babi Yar from the debris of Nariman House, but these places are connected by the same uniquely durable and pernicious evil of anti-Semitism. Even peaceful and pluralistic Canada sees signs that this evil is newly resurgent. The 2007 audit of anti-Semitic incidents by B'nai Brith, Canada's league for human rights, recorded over 1,000 reported anti-

security, enabling grants for dozens of synagogues, Jewish schools and for other communities who have faced hatred or violence. As minister responsible for our multi-culturalism programme we have adjusted our programme to move away from celebrating our differences to focusing on social cohesion and building bridges between communities, combating radicalisation of youth.

For instance, I'm hopeful that we'll be able to support an exciting new venture launched by the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Canadian Somali Congress, which will provide young Canadians of Somalian origin, typically refugees, with an opportunity to find internships in Jewish-owned businesses and professions so they can meet and de-stigmatise people from other communities.

I follow with great interest your government's programme to sponsor British high school kids, secondary school children, to be able to go and visit the death camps in Europe and to learn firsthand and report back to their peers the reality of the Holocaust. And I'm hopeful that we can find ways to participate in similar programmes.

Also very importantly, our government takes a zero tolerance approach to expressions of anti-Semitism in the public square. There are organisations in Canada, as in Britain, that receive their share of media attention and public notoriety, but who at the same time as expressing hateful sentiments expect to be treated as respectable interlocutors in the public discourse. I think, for example, of the president of an organisation called the Canadian Islamic Congress, Mohamed Elmasry, who notoriously said three years ago on live television that all Israelis over the age of 18 can legitimately be killed. They are combatants, and therefore legitimate targets for elimination.

I think as well of the leader of the Canadian Arab Federation, who notoriously circulated an e-mail when my colleague, our shadow Foreign Minister, Bob Rae, was running for the leadership of his party, calling on people to vote against Mr. Rae because of Arlene Perly Rae's involvement in Canada's Jewish community. The same individual, the same organisation, the Canadian Arab Federation, just last week circulated - including to all parliamentarians - videos which include propaganda, including the inculcation to hatred, of children by organisations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

These and other organisations are free within the confines of our law and consistent with our traditions of freedom of expression, to speak their mind, but they should not expect to receive resources from the state, support from taxpayers or any other form of official respect from the government or the organs of our State. And I would encourage all other governments to take a similar approach to organisations that either excuse violence against Jews or express essentially anti-Semitic sentiments.

I would encourage international organisations to be vigilant in this respect as well. I was disturbed to see at the OSCE high-level conference in Bucharest a representative of one of these organisations brought in by the OSCE to be an expert panelist. Let me conclude by telling you what Canada is doing on the international stage, talking about anti-Semitism. Mentioning Bucharest, I was there to express on behalf of our government a change of policy to call for the maintenance of a personal representative and a specific process to focus on anti-Semitism, not to the exclusion of other forms of hatred, racism and xenophobia, but to recognise the uniquely durable and pernicious form of hatred that is anti-Semitism.

As you know, the government of Canada has consistently voted against resolutions singling out Israel as a scapegoat at international forums such as the Francophonie and the United Nations Human Rights Council. Just two, three weeks ago we were unfortunately typically the only country of the 40 some member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council to oppose in this instance a resolution scapegoating Israel in an unbalanced way as being responsible for the violence in Gaza.

And finally, my proudest moment as minister was a year ago this month when I announced on behalf of our government that Canada would withdraw, and has withdrawn, from the Durban 2 process. We did so deliberately. We did so after having participated in the initial preparatory meetings. We did so being fully conscious of Canada's tradition as an international champion of tolerance, pluralism and mutual respect. And that's precisely why we withdrew from the Durban process.

We withdrew from a process that sees Iran sitting on the organising committee, a country whose president has repeatedly engaged in inciting genocide against the Jewish nation, a conference in which Libya plays a

central role on the organising committee, a conference where many of the key organising meetings were set, no doubt coincidentally, on Jewish high holidays to diminish the participation of Israeli and Jewish delegates, a process which re-invited to participate all of the NGOs that turned the original Durban conference into the notorious hate-fest, including those responsible for circulating copies of the Chronicles of the Elders of Zion and organisations which outside the conference venue held up portraits of Adolf Hitler, and a conference which as well re-invited those NGOs made it difficult or impossible for Jewish NGOs to come as observers, including the Canadian Council on Israeli and Jewish Affairs.

Now, I understand and appreciate the position of some governments to continue to wait and see how this process develops. I think many of us made the wrong decision several years ago to unwittingly legitimise the process. And I understand the position of some European governments that they want to watch and wait and see what Washington does. I find that a bit surprising. I always thought Europe prided itself as having its own independent foreign policy aligned with its own values and interests. That's certainly the position of the government of Canada. We would encourage our friends elsewhere to remember that the Trans-Atlantic relationship includes Canada, and that we have taken what we believe to be a principled position on the Durban process.

In conclusion, let me close by quoting again the Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, following his visit last summer to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. He said, "I was moved beyond words by what I saw to revulsion, anger and most of all a deep, aching sadness for the millions of innocents who perished. But I also felt hope, hope because of the indomitable spirit and strength of the Jewish people, hope that left behind the horror of the Holocaust and moved forward to build the thriving, modern democratic state of Israel, and also hope because today most people in most civilised countries recognise anti-Semitism for what it is, a pernicious evil that must be exposed, confronted and repudiated whenever and where ever it appears, an evil so profound that it is ultimately a threat to us all." Thank you very much. [Applause]. (Office of the Hon. Jason Kenney, PC, MP Feb 18)

Minister Kenney, has spoken at BAYT and was the 2006 honouree at the annual OU/NCSY Canada dinner and concert.

Commentary...

An Urgent Memo to the Next Government By Caroline Glick

The outgoing Kadima-Labor government's anticipated decision to release a thousand terrorists, including several dozen mass murdering terror commanders, in the framework of a ceasefire deal with Iran's Palestinian proxy Hamas is simply the latest troubling legacy that the Olmert-Livni-Barak government is leaving its successor.

Once the deal goes through, Hamas will be able to quickly expand the threat it poses to Israel. The jihadist group is already using the political legitimacy Israel is conferring on it to reestablish its unity government with Fatah. When that government is formed, the US and Europe will move hastily to recognize the terror group.

Hamas will use its increased legitimacy as a screen behind which it will expand its offensive capabilities. This is particularly true in the field of ballistic weapons.

We know this will happen because we have already seen what happened with the last Iranian proxy that Israel signed a ceasefire agreement with. Since Israel agreed to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and brought its war with Hizbullah to an end in August 2006, Hizbullah has reasserted its political and military control over south Lebanon and has taken over the Lebanese government. Moreover, it has massively expanded its missile capabilities not only by tripling the size of its arsenal, but by tripling the range of its missiles.

In 2006, Hizbullah's most powerful missile was a Fajr rocket with a 100 km range and a 50 kilogram warhead. Today, according to Avi Schnurr, executive director of the Israel Missile Defense Association, Hizbullah has an arsenal of Fatah-110 ballistic missiles with a range of 300 kilometers and a 600 kilogram payload.

While our media elites endlessly drone on about whether or not Likud is sufficiently "pro-peace" to satisfy Meretz and Kadima, our national discourse is ignoring the greatest threat this country faces: missiles.

Schnurr warns that today there are more missiles pointing at Israel in absolute numbers than at any other country on earth. While Israelis are properly concerned with suicide terrorism and Kassam rocket attacks, the fastest escalating threat that Israel faces come from ballistic missiles.

In addition to Iran's Hamas and Hizbullah proxies, its client state Syria has a massive missile arsenal housed in hardened silos. Syria's missiles are capable of attacking every square centimeter of Israeli territory. And of course, with its rapidly growing land and sea-based ballistic missile arsenal, Iran itself is the fastest growing missile threat facing Israel.

In recent years, rather than taking any immediate action to meet the growing threat, Israel has sufficed with launching long-term development programs that promise to provide protection for current threats in four to eight years. For instance, in response to Syria's medium-range missiles, Israel is developing the David's Sling anti-missile system that should be ready in eight years.

Israel could in the meantime upgrade its PAC-2 anti-missile batteries responsible for contending with medium-range missiles, with US-made PAC-3s. But the powers that be in the Ministry of Defense have decided that the PAC-3's \$100 million price tag is too high.

Indeed far from installing upgrades, Israel is downgrading its existing anti-missile arsenals. According to Defense News, Israel is planning to end its involvement in the Arrow anti-missile program because it feels the maintenance costs of its Arrow batteries are too high. So as the number of missiles arrayed against it rises, Israel has decided not to bother increasing its anti-missile defenses.

Even more alarmingly, Israel has no medium-range or long-range conventional missile arsenals. Although Israel has the domestic capacity to produce both ballistic and cruise missiles, it has never bothered to build them. Consequently, its options for contending with rapidly escalating long-range threats from places like Iran are limited to manned aircraft and its suspected nuclear arsenal.

As Schnurr relates, Israel's decision to contend with the spiraling missile threat it faces by ignoring it extends to short-range missile threats as well. Israel has rejected relatively inexpensive existing anti-rocket and mortar systems that could provide immediate protection to Sderot among other places. It has preferred to leave Sderot and the Western Negev unprotected while awaiting the development of the Iron Dome system now being developed by the Ministry of Defense.

Israel does field advanced radar systems. The Green Pine radar is one of the best in the world and together with the X-Band radar system the US recently deployed in the Negev, Israel's ability to detect incoming missiles is significant. The problem is that all of Israel's radar systems are facing east - towards Iran. Last December Iran signed a strategic alliance with Eritrea that permits its Revolutionary Guards to set up bases in Eritrea, strategically located to Israel's south at the mouth of the Red Sea. Israel has no radars pointing to its south.

After years of denial, today even US intelligence agencies acknowledge that Iran's ballistic missile program is part and parcel of its nuclear program. While most Israeli observers have devoted their energies to assessing the destructive capacity of a direct nuclear attack against the tiny country, and to the various delivery mechanisms - from the Shihab-3 missiles to Syrian Scuds to Hizbullah or Hamas death squads - that Iran could field against it in the event of a nuclear attack, the fact of the matter is that Iran has an indirect option for using nuclear weapons to attack Israel that would likely be more destructive than a direct nuclear attack. And it is an option that Iran can wield not only against Israel, but against every country in the world.

An electromagnetic pulse or EMP attack is an indirect nuclear attack. It has the capacity to destroy a target country's electricity grids and so revert a post-industrial, technology-based country such as Israel or the US to a pre-industrial condition. If an aggressor launches a nuclear device of whatever size and detonates it above the atmosphere and in the line of site of its target country, the x-rays and gamma rays emitted by the blast will cause an electromagnetic pulse, or wave a million times stronger than the strongest radio wave. That wave, which comes in three successive stages, will destroy a country's electrical grids and through them, its ability to function.

In 2000, concern about the EMP threat in the US caused Congress to mandate the formation of a commission comprised of the leading US experts on the issue to study it. The EMP Threat Commission's 2004 report warned that the effect an EMP attack would have on the US's national infrastructures "could be sufficient to qualify as catastrophic to the nation."

As Frank Gaffney, President of the Washington-based Center for Security Policy, explained in his 2006 book *War Footing*, by destroying a country's electrical power systems, an EMP will destroy its economy since it will wipe out its banking system. All vehicles that operate with electronic systems - that is all vehicles made since the mid-1970s - would be rendered inoperable. Telecommunications would end. A country's ability to store food through refrigeration would end. Its ability to transport water and pump gasoline would also end.

Since almost no one would be killed in the immediate aftermath of an EMP attack, a threat of retaliation against the aggressor country would lack credibility because such an option would be politically unpalatable. But while an EMP attack would not kill many people directly, it would kill millions of people indirectly. As Gaffney notes, by wiping out a country's ability to support itself, an EMP attack would cause mass starvation and disease.

The threat of an EMP attack was not taken seriously by US military planners during the Cold War because they were concerned with the primary Soviet threat to annihilate the US and its allies by launching several thousand nuclear warheads against them. But as nuclear and missile technology has proliferated in the post-Cold War period, and more technologically primitive countries get their hands on missiles and limited nuclear capabilities, the threat of an EMP attack has become far more acute.

In Iran's case, the mullahs have signaled clearly through both word and deed that they find the option of attacking their enemies with an EMP attack attractive. An article published in Iran's security journal *Nashriyeh-e Siasi Nezami* in 1999 identified an EMP attack as a way to defeat the US as a military power and as a state. Then too, as William Graham, who headed the US's EMP commission explained in an interview with *World Net Daily* last year, Iran is openly building the capacity to carry out such an attack. Last year, Iran described a ship-launched test of its Shihab-3 missile in the Caspian Sea as "successful" in spite of the fact that like an EMP, the missile detonated in mid-launch.

More disturbingly, Iran's successful satellite launch earlier this month makes clear that the mullahs now have the technological capacity to effectively wipe out Western civilization. Three to five nuclear bombs of any size, launched into space on satellites and detonated above the US, Europe and Asia would send Western civilization back to the 19th century. Last week Iran announced it is building seven more satellites. Yet rather than recognize that once its nuclear arsenal is online Iran will represent a threat to all nations, the West ignored the significance of the satellite launch.

The US's EMP commission's report explained that to defend against such an attack, it is necessary to build redundant electrical systems and have difficult-to-build replacement parts like turbines on hand to replace ones destroyed by such an attack. Since the report was published, the US has made some modest progress in that direction.

This is not the case, unfortunately in Israel. Although as a small country, Israel has the capacity to replicate its systems relatively cheaply and quickly, the outgoing government has paid no attention whatsoever to the growing threat. As a consequence, were Iran to attack Israel with an EMP attack, Israel would be rendered defenseless and at the mercy of Iran and the Arab world. For their part, they would undoubtedly be tempted to invade the Jewish state to finish what the Iranians started.

Through IMDA, Schnurr is trying to raise awareness of the growing missile threat and recommend ways to contend with it in the Defense Ministry as well as in ministries that control critical infrastructures. He has had some modest success, but to date, no one has taken any action.

With coalition negotiations only now beginning, it is hard to believe that soon we will be led by leaders more interested in contending with the threats we face as a country. But such a government is apparently on its way. In light of the growing conventional and unconventional missile threats facing us, one of the Netanyahu government's first actions in office must be to review and rapidly expand Israel's offensive and defensive

missile systems, and quickly move to replicate critical national infrastructures to defend against EMP attack. (Jerusalem Post Feb. 16)

Obama's High-Risk Engagement at 'Durban II' By Gerald Steinberg

The Obama Administration's decision to jump into the preparations for the UN's Durban Review Conference, scheduled for Geneva in April 2009, is a bold but also a risky move. Beyond the specific results in this case, the results will set the tone for relations with Iran, the challenge of radical Islam, chances for progress in George Mitchell's peace efforts, and the policy based on engagement and dialogue.

Iran, Cuba, Libya, the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and other paragons of human rights have used this framework for antisemitism and to demonize Israel, advance Holocaust denial and make a mockery of human rights. They have also attempted to legislate against free speech, using allegations of "Islamophobia" to block criticism of extremism and violence. Canada and Israel have lost hope and pulled out, and some European officials have spoken about not participating, but are now waiting for the results of the US policy.

If the Americans succeed in reversing this agenda in the brief time that remains, it would mark a major success and set the stage for restoring US influence and values. Proponents of engagement argue that the Obama Administration can help steer this UN conference so that it actually focuses on discrimination against minorities around the world, and is not another platform for anti-Israel obsession.

Alternatively, if this strategy fails, and the text remains poisonous, an American-led walkout with the 27 members of the European Union and some others would delegitimize the Durban process.

However, if Washington hesitates and compromises, allowing the OIC and like-minded NGOs to control the agenda, the participation of the world's democracies will do immense damage. It will amplify the impact of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, including the NGO Forum which used terms like "apartheid" and "racism" to isolate Israel.

Using the Durban strategy, Palestinians launched terror attacks with the knowledge that the Israeli responses would be condemned as "war crimes", which, in turn, would justify boycotts on the South African model. Instead of negotiations based on acceptance of Israel, the goal of annihilation was reinforced. In parallel, Durban has advanced the radical Islamist agenda, justifying violent attacks against critics, and further narrowing free speech, including in Europe. The preparations for the April 2009 conference all point to the same agenda.

In parallel, the obstacles to hopes of reversing the course of the Review Conference were highlighted by the exploitation of human rights rhetoric, double standards, and legal processes initiated against Israeli officials in Spain and elsewhere, stemming from the IDF's Gaza operation. NGO superpowers such as Human Rights, Amnesty International, Paris-based FIDH, and Oxfam, along with Palestinian NGOs (such as PCHR, which is funded by European governments), Libyan-backed groups, and many others are central in this form of deadly warfare, and will be active in Geneva.

With such high stakes, the failure to defeat the Durban strategy will intensify hatred, and carry a major cost for the Obama Administration's policy of dialogue and engagement with opponents. In 2001, the American and Israeli delegations went to Durban expecting that reason and decency would prevail; but when this proved futile, their walkout came too late. To avoid a repetition, the US needs to show moral leadership and, if necessary, readiness to admit that dialogue has failed.

The writer chairs the Political Science department at Bar Ilan University, and is Executive Director of NGO Monitor. (Jerusalem Post Feb. 16)

A Humbled Leadership By Moshe Kempinski

True leadership of the people of Israel must always be a humble leadership. That was true of Moshe as they left Egypt, and it was true of King David after his difficult and event-filled rise to leadership. G-d did not take the Israelites on a shorter route into the land of Israel because it "was too close". Not that it was too close to Egypt, because they in fact went even closer. It was too close to their destination. The journey was to be long and arduous, so that the destination would be arrived at with the correct spirit and understanding.

The announcement regarding the projected results of the elections hit Israel like a dull thud. Those in the "Land of Israel" movements had been working long and hard, and were hoping for a clear and decisive victory. The media and the Left, on the other hand, were hoping for a miracle that would ensure the continuation of what was. When the results were announced, my son and I were sitting with the activists of the National Union party in the hotel hall. The three large television screens presented their polls with colorful graphics exactly at 10:00 p.m. - and showed the column of the Kadima party rising dramatically and towering over the column of the Likud. The resulting frivolity and joyful dancing filled the television screens. The activists in the room watched quietly, feeling great disappointment.

All the leaders of the National Union got up to speak to encourage and strengthen the activists. One after the other they were trying to lift the spirits of those who were still sitting in a quiet stupor. It took great effort to escape the hypnotic messages and subtext being offered by the media. At a certain point, a young woman walked to the podium and went right up to the microphone. She spoke forcefully and clearly.

"What is going on here? Why do you all look stunned and sad? For a month we have been using our slogan 'not to be afraid at all.' Now is the time to live out our slogan. We are beginning our journey and we will not be afraid at all."

As she shyly walked off the stage, people began to smile. After the smiles, the true assessment of what had actually transpired began to seep past the subtext and confusion presented by the three television stations.

Even if Kadima did receive one more seat than the Likud, it was far from being the dominant party. It barely received 25% of the mandated seats in the Knesset. Israeli law does not give the leadership of the country to the largest party, but rather to the party that can create the largest coalition.

It soon began to seep into our consciousness that we were not witnessing a disappointment, but rather a great victory. The 'Land of Israel faithful' now make up at least 65 seats of the Knesset mandates. Yet all that evening, Tzippy Livni tried to dance, sing and smile - and project herself as the victor. In actual fact, the only place where she was victorious was in decimating and weakening all her natural allies of the Left. The Meretz party dwindled to three seats. Labour was whittled down to 13 seats. Livni did not succeed in drawing out one mandate from the other side of the political spectrum, she simply drained her own side.

The people of Israel chose the Land of Israel. The people of Israel chose strength and courage when facing murderous enemies. The people of Israel chose to face a world that has become less and less friendly with a clear vision. The world would say that the solution to the diminishing friendliness would be for Israel to be more flexible. They demand that Israel must continue to compromise on its security issues and must bend over backwards even more than it has until now. Israel, it seems, has bent over as backwards as it can without completely breaking. The people of Israel have decided to stand straight and upright.

The only difficulty is that the leadership of Israel has not yet absorbed the passion and understanding that has permeated the people. Binyamin Netanyahu is an intelligent man with a good core understanding of the direction this people need to follow. The difficulty is that, as in the past, Netanyahu's greatest enemy is his own ego. Netanyahu becomes so filled with Netanyahu that it obscures his judgment and blinds his vision. Feeding or threatening that ego becomes the tool used by our enemies to break or compromise Netanyahu's resolve.

That is the reason these election results may turn out to be even more positive than it seems today. Had Netanyahu won a resounding success, it would have fed his own weakness, his own ego. Instead, Netanyahu is being forced to listen to the passion of the majority of the people of Israel. The numbers will do much to humble Binyamin Netanyahu, and a humbler Netanyahu is a better candidate to lead the people of Israel.

The writer, who made aliya from Toronto, is the author of "The Teacher and the Preacher", the editor of the Jerusalem Insights weekly email journal and co-owner of Shorashim, a Biblical shop and learning center in the Old City of Jerusalem. (IsraelNN.com Feb 16)
