



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*

demonstrated that
through their
consistent rejection of Israel's right to
exist as the Jewish state, the
Palestinians - not us - are the side
responsible for the absence of Middle
East peace.

Commentary...

Obama's Losing Streak And Us By Caroline Glick

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's speech Sunday evening at Bar-Ilan University had one goal: To get US President Barack Obama off of Israel's back.

Netanyahu's speech was an eloquent, rational and at times impassioned defense of Israel. For Israeli ears, after years of former prime minister Ehud Olmert's and former foreign minister Tzipi Livni's continuous assaults on Israeli rights, and their strident defenses of capitulation to the Palestinians and the Syrians, Netanyahu's address was a breath of fresh air. But it is hard to see how it could have possibly had any lasting impact on Obama or his advisers.

To be moved by rational argument, a person has to be open to rational discourse. And what we have witnessed over the past week with the Obama administration's reactions to both North Korea's nuclear brinksmanship and Iran's sham elections is that its foreign policy is not informed by rationality but by the president's morally relative, post-modern ideology. In this anti-intellectual and anti-rational climate, Netanyahu's speech has little chance of making a lasting impact on the White House.

If rational thought was the basis for the administration's policymaking on foreign affairs, North Korea's decisions to test long range ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, send two US citizens to long prison terms and then threaten nuclear war should have made the administration reconsider its current policy of seeking the approval and assistance of North Korea's primary enabler - China - for any action it takes against Pyongyang. As Nicholas Eberstadt suggested in Friday's Wall Street Journal, rather than spending its time passing UN Security Council resolutions with no enforcement mechanisms against North Korea, the administration would be working with a coalition of the willing to adopt measures aimed at lowering the threat North Korea constitutes to regional, US and global security through its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and its proliferation activities.

But the administration has done no such thing. Instead of working with and strengthening its allies, it has opted to work with North Korea's allies China and Russia to forge a Security Council resolution harsh enough to convince North Korean leader Kim Jung Il to threaten nuclear war, but too weak to degrade his capacity to wage one.

Similar to Obama's refusal to reassess his failed policy regarding North Korea, his non-reaction to the fraudulent Iranian election shows that he will not allow facts to interfere with his slavish devotion to his ideological canon that claims that no enemy is unappeasable and no ally deserves automatic support. Far from standing with the democratic dissidents now risking their lives to oppose Iran's sham democracy, the administration has reportedly expressed concern that the current postelection protests will destabilize the regime. Obama has also refused to reconsider his decision to reach a grand bargain with the ayatollahs on Iran's nuclear weapons program that would serve to legitimize their continued grip on power.

His refusal to make a moral distinction between the mullahs and their democratic opponents - like his refusal in Cairo to make a moral distinction between a nuclear-armed Iran and a nuclear-armed America - makes clear that he is not interested in forging a factually accurate or morally clear-sighted foreign policy.

ALL OF THIS brings us back to Israel - and Netanyahu's speech about the nature and causes of the Palestinian conflict and the conditions that must be met if peace is ever to be achieved. His address aimed in two ways to lower US pressure while averting an open confrontation with a president whose approval ratings remain above 60 percent. First, Netanyahu

Second, Netanyahu tried to decrease US pressure on his government by conditionally accepting the idea of a Palestinian state. Clearly, it was Netanyahu's acceptance of the idea of a Palestinian state - albeit a demilitarized one - that was supposed to do the most to fend off US pressure. After all, Obama and his advisers have made the swift establishment of a Palestinian state their primary foreign policy aim.

Irrespective of its impact on the Obama administration, Netanyahu's speech was a positive contribution to the general discourse on the Middle East and Israel's place in it. He made good use of his opportunity to address the nation above the heads of the uniformly leftist media to forge a new definition of the national consensus. Whereas his defeatist predecessors consistently spoke of the people's willingness to make painful concessions for peace, and treated the establishment of a Jew-free Palestinian state as their primary duty as Zionists, Netanyahu recast the national consensus along patriotic lines.

He echoed the sentiments of the vast majority of Israelis when he refused to end building inside of Jewish communities located beyond the 1949 armistice lines; when he asserted that he would make no concessions on sovereignty over Jerusalem; would insist that we retain defensible borders; would refuse entrance of so-called Palestinian refugees to our territory; and demanded Palestinian recognition of our right to exist as the Jewish state.

He stridently and eloquently corrected Obama's false characterization of this country as the product of the Holocaust during his speeches at Cairo and Buchenwald by recalling the 3,500 year old Jewish ties to the Land of Israel. And he made clear that the association Obama made between the Holocaust and this country's founding was a precise inversion of the historical record. It is not Israel that owes its existence to the Holocaust. Rather, the Holocaust was only able to happen because there was no Israel.

NETANYAHU'S SPEECH was a much-needed strong defense. But it was not a perfect defense. It suffered from two flaws that may come back to haunt the premier in the years to come. First, his demand that the US lead the international community in guaranteeing that the Palestinian state is demilitarized provided the Obama administration with a new means to trick Israel into making suicidal concessions.

The only way to ensure that a Palestinian state is demilitarized is to send in forces to demilitarize it. Obviously the Americans won't take such a step. In Gaza, a militarized Palestinian state already exists and the Americans have no intention of demilitarizing it for us. As for Judea and Samaria, today, the only thing the emerging Palestinian state has to show for itself is its US-built army.

The only force that would ensure a Palestinian state (or states) stays demilitarized is the IDF. But by appointing the US the guarantor of its demilitarized status, Netanyahu is inviting the US to lie and so make it impossible for us to take the steps necessary to ensure that the Palestinians lack the means to threaten the country.

In requesting that the US guarantee disarmament, Netanyahu repeated a mistake he made in his first term in office. In 1996 he conditioned his willingness to move forward with peace talks with the PLO on the terror group's amendment of its charter calling for the destruction of Israel in line with its commitment under the initial Oslo agreement. Netanyahu empowered Bill Clinton to judge Palestinian compliance with this demand. In due course, Clinton travelled to Gaza and mendaciously announced that the PLO had in fact amended the charter. No such action had been taken, but Netanyahu was in no position to accuse Clinton of lying.

While his decision to appoint Obama arbiter of Palestinian demilitarization was ill-conceived, things could have been much worse.

Netanyahu ignored the so-called road map peace plan. That plan is one long list of Palestinian commitments that the US is empowered to judge compliance on. From terror fighting to ending incitement, the road map places Israel in the position of being forced to take America's word on issues paramount to its national security. By ignoring the road map, Netanyahu managed to avert the need to call Obama a liar directly.

The other problem with Netanyahu's speech is that by accepting the idea of a Palestinian state, and embracing Obama's fantasy that it is possible to reach a deal with the Palestinian Authority, Netanyahu blocked the possibility that Israel will be able to forge a new policy that will move it to a more advantageous status quo in the coming years. That is, Netanyahu's conditional acceptance of Obama's false and ideologically motivated two-state paradigm damns Israel to the position of foot dragger in relation to someone else's policy rather than trailblazer for its own policy.

In fairness to Netanyahu, in light of Obama's ideological commitment to the two-state paradigm which blames Israel for the absence of peace, it is far from clear that he has any choice other than to go along with the president and just play for time. Were Netanyahu to apply Israeli law to the large settlement blocs and the Jordan Valley or establish security zones along Gaza's borders with Israel and Egypt, he would likely instigate a full breach of relations with Washington.

At this point, it is up to the public and our representatives in the Knesset to pave the way for a better policy in the future. This we can do by rejecting the two-state paradigm and conducting a public discourse relevant to our national interests. For Netanyahu, however, buying time with a hostile administration may be the best he can aspire to during his current term in office.

Of course, buying time in and of itself is no great accomplishment. The voters did not elect Netanyahu to lead us simply to buy time. We elected him to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. If his speech succeeded in blunting US pressure on Israel - even temporarily - on the Palestinian front, and in light of the results of the Iranian presidential race, Netanyahu has gained the opportunity to act on the Iranian front. If during his current term he prevents Iran from becoming a nuclear power and makes no concessions in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem or the Golan Heights, he will be remembered as one of our greatest leaders and his speech will be remembered for posterity as a pivotal event.

On the other hand, if Netanyahu sits on his laurels, he will be surprised to see how quickly Obama - desperate for a foreign policy achievement after being laughed out of Teheran and Pyongyang - forgets his happiness at Netanyahu's address. In no time flat, Obama will try to force Israel make him look like he knows what he is doing. At that point, an open confrontation with the White House will become unavoidable.

(Jerusalem Post Jun 15)

Critical Obstacle To Peace? By Yoram Ettinger

President Obama wrong to consider 'settlements' an obstacle to peace

In September 2005, Israel uprooted 25 Jewish communities from Gaza and Samaria. Gaza became Judenrein, in order to, ostensibly, advance peaceful coexistence. However, expectations were frustrated. The dismantling of the Jewish communities was perceived by Arabs as a further erosion of Ariel Sharon, the role model of Jewish tenacity. It induced escalation of smuggling, manufacturing and launching of missiles at Jewish communities in southern Israel. It paved the way to the meteoric rise of Hamas. But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace....

President Obama defines "settlements" as the root cause of Arab hostility toward the Jewish State. However, the Arab-Palestinian offensive against the Jewish State was not ignited by "settlements." In fact, "settlements" were established in Judea and Samaria after the wars of 1967, 1956 and 1948, after the sustained 1949-1967 campaign of Arab terrorism, after the 1964 establishment of the PLO, after the 1929 slaughter of the Hebron Jewish community and the 1929 expulsion of the Gaza Jewish community, after the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s slaughter of the Jewish community of Gush Etzion, etc. But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace....

President Obama considers the 300,000 Jews (17%), who reside among Judea and Samaria's 1.5 million Arabs, an obstacle to peace. Why would he, then, view the 1.4 million Arabs (20%), who reside among pre-1967 Israel's six million Jews, as an example of peaceful coexistence?

Obama urges the uprooting of Jewish communities from Judea and Samaria, in order to supposedly advance peace and human rights. Would

he, therefore, urge the uprooting of Arab communities from pre-1967 Israel?

Since Obama tolerates Arab opposition to any Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria - even under Arab rule - would he tolerate Jewish opposition to any Arab presence in pre-1967 Israel? While any attempt by Jews to reside in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas would trigger a lynching attempt, Arabs have peacefully resided within Israeli-controlled areas in Judea and Samaria and in pre-1967 Israel. Does such a reality alert President Obama to the nature of Arab intentions and the real obstacle to peace? But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace....

Obama pressures Israel, vociferously, to freeze Jewish construction in Judea and Samaria, in order to avoid unilateral creation of facts on the ground. Shouldn't Obama demand a similar freeze of Palestinian construction in Judea and Samaria, which is 30 times larger than Jewish construction? Does the absence of a balanced approach, by Obama, prejudice the outcome, thus severely violating the spirit of negotiation? Does it reward Arab terrorism, undermining Israel's posture of deterrence, and therefore radicalizing Arab expectations, demands and violence? But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace....

The 1950-67 Jordanian occupation of Judea and Samaria was recognized only by Britain and Pakistan. The most recent internationally-recognized sovereign over Judea and Samaria was the League of Nations-authorized 1922 British Mandate, which defined Judea and Samaria as part of the Jewish National Home, the cradle of Jewish history. Article 6 of the Mandate indicates the right of Jews to settle in Judea and Samaria.

Judge Stephen M. Schwebel, former President of the International Court of Justice, determined that Israel's presence in Judea and Samaria was rooted in self-defense and therefore did not constitute "occupation." Eugene Rostow, former Dean of Yale Law School and former Undersecretary of State and co-author of UN Security Council Resolution 242, asserted that 242 entitles Jews to settle in Judea and Samaria. The Oslo Accord and its derivatives do not prohibit "settlements." Moreover, Israel has constrained construction to state-owned - and not private - land, avoiding expulsion of Arabs landowners. But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace....

President Obama is facing unprecedented challenges of a melting economy, healthcare reforms, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a potential post-evacuation volcano in Iraq, North Korean and Iranian nuclear threats, a possible nuclearization of al-Qaeda, Islamic terrorist threats to pro-US Arab regimes, imperialist Russia and China, an increasingly violent border with Mexico, Hugo Chavez' "mischief," etc. But, Obama claims that he is preoccupied with "settlements" because they are, seemingly, a critical obstacle to peace....

Obama's pressure to freeze Jewish construction in Judea and Samaria diverts attention and resources from the crucial threat to peace: Arab rejection of the existence - and not just the size - of a Jewish State in the supposedly abode-of-Islam. Inadvertently, Obama is adding fuel, and not water, to the fire of Middle East turbulence and violence. But, Obama regards "settlements" as a critical obstacle to peace.... (Ynet Jul 16)

The Coming Storm: Obama And American Jewry

By Shmuley Boteach

There's a storm coming. It will pit a well-organized community of substantial resources but also substantial insecurity - particularly when it comes to charges of dual loyalty - against a popular president of considerable eloquence but misguided policies that identify Israeli settlements as the main obstacle to Middle East peace. The inevitable clash will separate sunshine Jewish patriots who back Israel when convenient against those who stand with Israel even when it means losing their invitation to the White House Hanukka party.

The bogus issue of settlements is already being swallowed whole by many well-meaning Jews. Last week Dan Flesher, a leader of Americans for Peace Now, wrote in the New Jersey Jewish Standard that Obama has no choice but to pressure Israel because "it is fruitless for a well-armed, occupying power to negotiate the terms of a viable settlement with an almost defenseless occupied people unless a third party mediates and presses both sides."

In reading Flesher one wonders whether he has been himself occupied with building a settlement on the moon with no knowledge of events on Earth. Is he seriously suggesting that the thousands of Katyusha rockets and nonstop suicide bombers that have killed more than a thousand

Israelis (the equivalent of 30,000 dead Americans) have come from a "defenseless" foe? Would Fleshler likewise argue that the US ought to have pressure from, say, Russia or China to make peace with the terrorists in Afghanistan, seeing that America now represents a "well-armed, occupying power" against the comparatively defenseless Taliban? Or is it only Israel that is forbidden from defending itself.

Sorry Mr. Fleshler, but Jewish values do not dictate that the only moral Jew is a dead one who refuses to fight in the face of a 60-year terror onslaught.

Any return to the 1967 borders, which is what Obama's attack on the settlements represents, is simply suicide for Israel. The borders are utterly indefensible. The Arabs know it, which is why they press for it. Had Israel not dismantled its settlements in Gush Katif, Gaza would not have become a terrorist state ruled by Hamas, an organization that kills even more Palestinians than it does Israelis.

But misguided Jewish apologists aside, are the rest of us prepared to speak up against the policies of the administration? By this I do not mean the drunken racist rants of the American Jewish hooligans who got attention disgracing themselves on YouTube last week; their bigoted drivel against our democratically elected president represents an abomination to Judaism. I have already written several columns lamenting how a small minority of the large and praiseworthy contingent of Jewish youth who go to Israel from the US after high school ostensibly to study in yeshivot end up instead hanging out on Rehov Ben Yehuda making asses of themselves. That they have no proper supervision and that they are allowed to go through their year in a drunken stupor is an outrage that must be finally addressed by the institutions which host them.

Rather, I mean courageous and intelligent criticism that accepts the president's praiseworthy efforts in making peace but decries his soft posture on tyranny when he bows to an Arab potentate who oppresses women and warmly embraces the dictator of Venezuela.

Asher Lopatin was one of the first students I met at Oxford and the university's first Orthodox Rhodes scholar. Today he is the successful rabbi of one of Chicago's most youthful congregations. He is also Rahm Emanuel's rabbi. But that did not stop him from criticizing the White House chief of staff in Newsweek for his unfair pressure on Israel. Lopatin could easily have basked in the aura of being rabbi to one of the most influential men in the world. Instead, he spoke truth to power.

In promoting the new translation of his Hebrew prayer book, British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks constantly reminds us that he studies Bible with the prime minister of the United Kingdom. That's nice. But a few years ago Sacks spoke out publicly against Israel, telling London's Guardian newspaper, "There are things that happen on a daily basis which make me feel very uncomfortable as a Jew."

Sacks is a brilliant man but with a long history of pandering to whatever audience he happens to be addressing. He would do well to remember the admonishment of Mordechai to Esther on the responsibility of being close to political power: "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place."

But while Europe and the UK are significant, the main battle lines will be here in the US and now is the time for American Jewry to organize. From schools to universities to synagogues and JCCs, we must make it clear that when 78 percent of Jews voted for Obama and filled his campaign coffers with cash it was not in the expectation of biased policies against Israel. We're upset, disappointed and we won't take it. We'll march in the streets, write op-eds and blogs, and publish ads making it clear that America should be standing with the Middle East's only democracy and America's most reliable ally.

As Charles Krauthammer pointed out, our president undermines his moral authority when he pledges that henceforth America will "forge partnerships as opposed to simply dictating solutions," but then only applies that pledge to Iran, Syria, Cuba and Venezuela, but not to Israel.

Last year, right after Obama captured the democratic nomination, I received a phone call from his campaign asking if I would serve as one of the national chairs of "Rabbis for Obama." It was a tempting offer. I was moved by the candidate's remarkable personal story, his iron discipline, his soaring oratory and, most of all, the fact that his victory would be the culmination of my hero Martin Luther King's dream of a man being judged by the content of his character rather than the color of his skin. In the end I declined because I feared that Obama would draw a moral equivalence between Israel and the Palestinians and pressure the former to appease the latter. But even I never suspected that it would happen so quickly and so lopsidedly. (Jerusalem Post Jun 15)

Q&A: Caroline Glick on Netanyahu & the World

Kathryn Jean Lopez of the National Review interviewed Caroline Glick about PM Netanyahu's speech and the Iranian election.

LOPEZ: Is it shocking Netanyahu would come out for a Palestinian state?

GLICK: It is not shocking that Netanyahu would set out the conditions under which he would agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Obama administration's obsession with creating one in Israel's heartland as quickly as possible regardless of the character of Palestinian society, Palestinian support for the destruction of Israel, and the close ties the U.S.-sponsored Palestinian Authority shares with global terror groups and state sponsors of terror like Hezbollah and Iran made it necessary for Israel's premier to make it very clear what must happen before Israel will agree to proceed on this path.

LOPEZ: Is this anything remotely like a breakthrough?

GLICK: There are only two ways that Netanyahu's speech can constitute a breakthrough. First, in the unlikely circumstance that the Obama administration actually cares about Israel's concerns, Netanyahu's speech should give the president and his advisors pause before they renew their massive pressure on Israel to make dangerous concessions to the Palestinians.

Second, Netanyahu's speech could empower Israel's supporters in Congress to begin questioning the administration's harsh treatment of the U.S.'s closest ally in the Middle East and so perhaps act as a break on the administration's moves to steamroll Israel. Aside from that, what his speech served to do was expose just how radical the Palestinian and Arab position on Israel is. The Palestinians reacted to Netanyahu's speech with calls to war in retaliation for his demand that they recognize Israel's right to exist. This is not the sort of behavior one might expect from supposedly "moderate" Palestinian political leaders.

LOPEZ: Will the U.S. and Israel agree on settlements? Have we entered a chill in our relationship?

GLICK: Obama and his advisors have made clear that their view on the settlements is not based on facts. It is based on their acceptance of the false Arab narrative of the Middle East conflict. They accept Arab historical revisionism that places the cart before the horse by claiming that Israel's presence in the disputed territories is the cause of the conflict when in fact Israel's presence in the disputed territories is a consequence of their continuous attempts to invade and destroy Israel. Since the Obama administration's view is based on a false assertion, it is impermeable to fact and rational argument and therefore it is unlikely to change.

LOPEZ: Is it significant that Netanyahu responded to Obama's Cairo speech?

GLICK: It is very significant for Israel and world Jewry and perhaps for Israel's supporters that Netanyahu responded to Obama's Cairo speech. That speech was full of distortions of Jewish history and deeply dismissive of the Jewish claims to our homeland. It was absolutely necessary for Netanyahu to respond to Obama's false and hideous assertion that Israel owes its creation to the Holocaust. And in explaining that the Holocaust could only happen because Israel didn't exist at the time and by setting out the true 3,500-year-old Jewish connection to the land Netanyahu provided a necessary corrective to Obama's move to write the Jewish people out of the history of the Middle East. Here too, Obama's position is based on an Arab myth — most enthusiastically propounded today by the likes of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — that the Jews are interlopers in the region.

LOPEZ: How bad might that be if a new intifada begins? Or a war between Israel and a neighbor?

GLICK: If the Palestinians follow through with their threat to renew their terror war against Israel it will be quite bad. This is so not because Israel will be unable to defend itself. Israel has the means to defend itself. It will be quite bad because, in light of the hostile treatment Israel is suffering at the hands of the Obama administration, and given the central role the U.S. under Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton is playing in arming and training the Palestinian army that will likely be attacking Israeli targets in Judea and Samaria, the U.S. may well side with the Arabs against Israel. The administration is already placing limitations on arms sales to Israel. In this event, Israel will have to move quickly to find other suppliers.

It is unlikely today that Arab states will go to war with Israel, although that could change quickly if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. In that event, the Iranians will be in a position to blackmail Arab states like Egypt and Jordan into abrogating their peace treaties with Israel and opening hostilities against it. Iran would accomplish this task by threatening to overthrow the Mubarak regime and the Hashemite Kingdom. It is this

specter — along with the specter of nuclear attack and chronic terror violence conducted under Iran's nuclear umbrella — that makes it essential for Israel to move quickly to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

LOPEZ: How nervous is Israel about Ahmadinejad's "reelection"?

GLICK: In a round-about sort of way, Ahmadinejad's "reelection" empowers Israel to take the necessary action. By stealing the election, Ahmadinejad now stands in open opposition to the Iranian people. This decreases the likelihood that the public will rally around the regime in the event of an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear installations.

Ahmadinejad's open hatred of the U.S. and his humiliation of the Obama administration will similarly make it more difficult politically for the administration to prevent Israel from striking Iran. If before the Iranian elections it was easy to see the administration signing on to U.N. Security Council sanctions against Israel in the event of an Israeli strike against Iran, or even shooting down Israeli aircraft en route to Iran, in their aftermath, such prospects seem more unlikely. (National Review Jun 15)

Jerusalem is Ours By Nadav Shragai

At the end of the day and after all the speeches, the Palestinian state - and with it the State of Israel - will rise or fall on Jerusalem, the most legitimate and greatest Israeli settlement ever. This is the field where the battle should be conducted. This is where our chances are good of explaining our right and its implementation, from King David's time to 1948 and the Six-Day War, without stammering and without apologizing.

When it comes to Jerusalem, there is no need to mention either natural growth or natural development; what is at stake is nature itself, the nature of our connection to this city and the realization of the right that is rooted in our religion, our history, and 2,000 years of memory and longing, during which the Jewish presence in Jerusalem never ceased to exist.

Half the work has been done for us in recent months by the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian media, which no longer have any sense of the absurd extent to which they have magnified their false claims about Jerusalem. It is possible, Palestinian television reported not long ago, that there will be an artificial earthquake that will cause the Al-Aqsa Mosque to collapse because the Israelis were considering carrying out a nuclear test in the Dead Sea. The mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, is sticking with conventional theories concerning "the destruction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque," - whether by "explosives, dropping bombs from the air or from a distance," or "by means of the tunnels." Sheikh Jamal Mohammed Bawatneh, the Palestinian minister of Waqf, is also convinced that the occupation regime is seeking excuses to invade the mosque.

But it isn't only the "Al-Aqsa is in danger" scare campaign that is underway. The Jewish presence in Jerusalem is perceived these days as a desecration of the Muslim character of the city, so the Palestinian narrative is presented in response, with Dr. Marwan Abu Khalaf, the director of the Institute of Islamic Archeology at Al-Quds University, saying that "under every stone and in every corner, on every street and at every bend in Jerusalem there are remains that say: 'We are Arab, we are Muslim.'"

Mahmoud Habbash, the Palestinian Authority minister of agriculture and social affairs, has made it clear for the umpteenth time that the Temple was not located in the Holy City at all, while researcher Dr. Hasan Sanallah has gone back to the days of the 1929 riots, related to disputes over access to the Western Wall, and expresses criticism of the use of the term "Wailing Wall." According to him, "The occupation is falsifying the facts, and it has no right to the Walls of Al-Aqsa."

With such a narrative, it is no wonder that the Palestinian Authority - and not just Hamas - is defining Jerusalem as ribat land, meaning that Muslims are religiously mandated to fight for it and hold on to it, liberating the land for the sake of Islam. This, of course, comes on top of the Palestinians' denial of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and their revision of the city's history.

It is not difficult to undermine these lies. Indeed, according to many interpretations, the Al-Aqsa Mosque mentioned in the Koran - which many say appeared to Mohammed in a dream - was originally in the seventh heaven of Mecca and Medina, and not terrestrial. Suffice it to say that Al-Aqsa is not mentioned at all in the verses from the Koran that adorn the interior walls of the Dome of the Rock, that Muslims' journey to Jerusalem is always considered a visit rather than a pilgrimage, and that Jerusalem was never the capital of this land in the days of Muslim rule.

But while all this is correct, it is ultimately of negligible importance. The main thing is to tell the Jewish story of Jerusalem again and again - a story that is unequalled, and without which the Jewish people would not

have undergone a revival here, in the Land of Israel - to tell it without tiring, without blinking and without getting confused, either by those among us who are mistaken or who mislead others, or by those who pose an external threat. (Haaretz Jun 17)

Bibi Speaks By Elliott Abrams

Netanyahu endorses a demilitarized Palestinian state--rejects Obama's call for a settlement freeze.

In Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech today he took one major step toward the Obama administration, by endorsing a Palestinian state. In every other way, he resisted President Obama's pressure.

First, he refused a "settlement freeze" and President Obama's insistence that Israel "stop settlements" (whatever that means) and instead stuck with the Bush-Sharon bargain on settlements. He referred to two aspects of that bargain (no new settlements and no confiscation of land in the West Bank for settlements), but it can be assumed that he'll stick as well to the other two parts of the deal (no financial incentives for settlers, and construction only in already built-up areas). He specifically referred to the need for settlers to lead normal lives in their communities, which can only mean that some construction will be permitted.

Second, he rejected the Obama narrative in Cairo, which held that Israel was established as a reaction to the Holocaust. Netanyahu carefully noted that land of Israel (including the West Bank) was the homeland of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that Zionists had dreamed of and worked for a state there long before the Second World War.

Third, in another rejection of the Obama narrative, he asserted that Israel had always longed for peace but had been attacked--before, during and after its independence struggle--by the Arabs. There is no peace, he said, because the Arab states and the Palestinians refuse to this day to accept Israel as a Jewish state.

Netanyahu did not embrace the Roadmap, for reasons that remain obscure. The Roadmap leads to a Palestinian state, but through stages (including an interim stage, a Palestinian state with provisional borders and "aspects" of "sovereignty") that require an end to terrorism and dismantling the terrorist groups. Given Hamas's current strength, it would seem that the Roadmap fits well with Netanyahu's insistence on a demilitarized Palestinian entity and on "security first." Moreover, had he embraced the Roadmap it might be easier for him to demand the benefits of the Sharon/Bush bargain on settlement activity, which was made in the context of the Roadmap.

Netanyahu's speech makes one wonder how his private conversations with George Mitchell went last week, and where Mitchell goes next. Obama and Mitchell have wanted Israelis, Palestinians, and Arab states all to make some gestures, but recent comments by Palestinian Authority President Abbas and the long history of Arab refusal to accept Israel had already made that a very long shot. On the other hand, Netanyahu's speech will not allow Israel to shift the blame for the Arab failure to act back onto the Arab states--at least not in the eyes of those (Obama, Clinton, Mitchell, and Jones, to take four random examples) who have already accepted the Palestinian version of events in the Middle East, where Israeli concessions are the road to peace.

So Mitchell can certainly convene Israeli-Palestinian talks, but they will go nowhere.

The Obama administration seems determined to repeat all the mistakes the Bush administration made, especially that of concentrating on fancy negotiations on final status issues while slighting the chances for real-world progress on the ground in the West Bank. So determined is our government to produce nirvana for Palestinians, it seems willing to ignore chances to bring them better lives now--something Netanyahu pledged to work with the U.S. on immediately. If the administration chooses to keep fighting almost entirely on the settlement "freeze" issue, it will be showing that a confrontation with Netanyahu is not a problem it seeks to avoid but a tactic it seeks to embrace. And once again, any chance of helping Palestinian moderates to deliver real improvements in Palestinian life will be lost. . (Weekly Standard Jun 14)

The writer, senior fellow for the Middle East at the Council on Foreign Relations, was a deputy national security adviser in the Bush administration
