



**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*

"That the world should be viewed as a world without Israel is a very prominent message even today continuing on Palestinian TV, which is under the direct control of Mahmoud Abbas."

In the space of a month, Hamas and Fatah ran identical items on TV. Each program showed young children dancing on television with big keys around their necks, each of which bore the name of an Israeli city. The Hamas keys were marked Beit She'an, Jerusalem, Haifa, Ramle and Acre and the Fatah ones read Haifa, Ramle, Acre, Jaffa and Beersheba. They keys carried the same message of symbolizing ownership of Israeli cities.

But it was Farfur, the Mickey Mouse character, who really made headlines. A featured performer on the popular Friday afternoon Al-Aksa TV (Hamas) program Tomorrow's Pioneers. In 2007, Farfur appeared for a few months before being killed on TV by an "Israeli interrogator". He was replaced by Nahul, a bee, who also died on TV when Israel refused him medical treatment. "As he died in bed, Saraa, the hostess, says: 'Congratulations to you. Today we don't mourn you as if you died, we say congratulations because it's your wedding. Congratulations. You are a shahid,'" notes Marcus.

The bee was replaced by a bunny named Assud, which means "lion," "because he was a bunny on the outside but a lion inside," explains Marcus. "Among other things he says that because he is a lion, he is going to kill the Jews and eat them. Another time he said that if the Danes ever did another cartoon of Muhammad, he would kill the Danes and eat them, as well."

In his final video, Assud explains how he went to the headquarters of Al-Aksa TV because he heard Israeli forces might bomb it during Operation Cast Lead. "Saraa sits with him as he's dying, and he says: 'Tell the children that Assud has died, died as a hero, died as a shahid....' She tries unsuccessfully to revive him, and then the children all say: 'We will sacrifice ourselves for you, O Palestine.' The message is that if Assud can be a shahid, all the children can be.

"Assud was replaced by a bear named Nassur, who declares war on the Zionists. He says to Saraa: 'You are ready, Saraa, we are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for the homeland.'"

"Children are very attracted to these characters," notes Marcus, "Kids fall in love with them, and then right in front of their eyes, these characters... become shahid, one after another, killed on television by Israel. It creates intense hatred. In fact, we've had children call in to the program and say: 'We hate the Jews because they killed Farfur.' The life-size dolls have been turned into the perfect tools to imprint hatred on young minds.

"They realize that if they can indoctrinate their children at a very young age that Israel and the Jews are the enemy, they won't have much trouble getting them to join the violence and terror against Israel as they grow older."

Marcus, who has traveled the world lecturing on Palestinian society and education, recently told a group of Swedish MPs, who supply funding to the PA: "When you fund the Palestinian Authority directly you are responsible for the continuation of of hate education, and for the wars we will fight in the next generation."

"Once Palestinian society has decided to teach children that death is better than life, a message we find in Palestinian schoolbooks, as well, they don't see any problem in brainwashing young children because they're convinced that they are brainwashing them to higher values," Marcus explains. "They feel they are instilling what they see as the greatest Islamic value, and will use any tool to do it, including Mickey Mouse."

Exploiting the children of suicide bombers for propaganda purposes is not beyond the pale for Al-Aksa TV. Only recently, the two young children of woman suicide bomber Reem Riyashi, who killed four Israelis

## From the PA Media...

### Tube of Hatred By Aryeh Dean Cohen

While Israeli youngsters spend summer days crowded around TV screens watching a variety of cartoons and other entertainment programs, in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority, children will be getting quite a different message from some of their TV programming: a message of hatred.

"For many years both Fatah and Hamas have been actively using television for propaganda," says Itamar Marcus, director of the Palestinian Media Watch. From music videos to the dramatic death of cartoon-like characters, including a Mickey Mouse look-alike named Farfur, the message of martyrdom is being drummed into young minds.

From the first months of the intifada, music videos were being turned out to get young Palestinians into the streets, he says. Starting in January 2001, says Marcus, "there was one where a boy wrote a farewell letter and then went off hoping to be killed. You see the boy throwing stones, a singer sings his farewell letter, and when he falls dead on the ground, the words in the music video are sung: 'How sweet is shahada [martyrdom] - ahla shahada - when I am embraced by you, my land.' And you see him falling down in slow motion. Death as a martyr was presented as sweet, as calm, and there were periods when this was being broadcast three times a day."

Another music video featured Muhammad al-Dura, who Palestinians claimed was shot by the IDF but which was later disproved. "It opens with al-Dura calling to children: I'm waving to you not to say goodbye, but to say: Follow me," says Marcus, whose group monitors the PA, Hamas and other Arab stations that offer such propaganda. "Then you see a reenactment of the event in which he was killed, after which he is shown in child's paradise where he's playing with a kite in a grassy field, on the beach, and he's even walking towards a Ferris wheel. He's having a wonderful time in child's paradise, where there are amusement parks, and he's calling others to follow him. Both these clips ran almost daily on PA TV for years, sometimes many times a day."

Many videos, all of which can be viewed on the PMW Website ([www.Palwatch.org](http://www.Palwatch.org)) feature very young children. "The farewell video starts as the boy is riding his bike; he's portrayed as just a little kid riding off on his bike, leaving his father. But he's also a hero, secretly going to join the popular struggle," says Marcus. One program that appeared on PA TV last year featured a child in a Palestinian school getting up and reading; "I love the way of shahada, the land will drip my blood."

Calling these current programs "booster shots" to "get the kids out there," when needed for rock-throwing or other violence, he says there are "many music videos with continuous violence that depict throwing stones and firebombs as glorious. There was one that ran for a few years in which one child, maybe 10 years old, tells another who appears to be about six that: 'The stone in their hand will turn into a Kalashnikov.'"

Hatred is also promoted in the videos, like one of a young woman "sitting in the rubble of her house, and the boy says: 'I will avenge the humiliation of my mother'. Then he goes out with other boys to throw stones, and one of the stones goes through a window with a Magen David on it."

Another key message on both PA and Hamas children's TV is that there is no State of Israel, "that there is a world without Israel," says Marcus. "A special Ramadan program last year featured a geography quiz posing questions like: Name Palestinian ports. The answer? Haifa Port, Ashkelon, Jaffa, Eilat, Ashdod and Gaza."

at the Erez crossing in 2004, were brought into the studio, where a reenactment video clip of their mother's suicide terror was shown in their presence.

"In the music video the girl playing Riyashi's daughter sees the actress playing her mother hiding the bomb she's preparing, and asks 'What are you holding in your hand? Is it a toy or a present for me?' Later on the girl finds out her mother committed a suicide attack and says in the video: 'You held a bomb in your hands, now I know what is more precious than us.' This program ended with Saraa telling her young audience: 'We will continue in the footsteps of the shahida fighter Reem Riyashi until we liberate our homeland from your oppressive hands,'" explains Marcus.

Yigal Carmon, president and founder of MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute), recalled a recent video which depicted a Palestinian boy who came to the White House to stab president George W. Bush, in which he turns the White House into a mosque. Viewed recently by me, it features two puppets, the Palestinian boy and Bush, the latter dressed in what look like battle fatigues.

Broadcast on Al-Aksa TV on March 30, 2008, it features the boy saying, "I place my trust in Allah. I need to kill you," after explaining how Bush and his minions have "killed daddy in the Iraq war," how his mother was killed "by you and the criminal Zionists in Lebanon" and his younger and older siblings in "the Gaza holocaust. I'm an orphan, you criminal... You took everything from me, Bush." After the White House is miraculously turned into a mosque, the boy takes the "sword of Islam" and stabs Bush several times, making stabbing sounds as he does so.

"The most serious thing is that they are recruiting children at a very young age - four, five, 10 - totally recruited to war which is against international law, which forbids this," says Carmon. "When they recruit children for killing, for war, for jihad, show them using swords - that's illegitimate. They are recruiting young minds to war. They are inculcating violence in their little souls.

"They are stealing their childhood and are turning little children into weapons, not letting them have a childhood, not exposing them to any culture except the culture of violence," says Carmon, whose Web site ([www.memritv.org](http://www.memritv.org)) contains dozens of such videos, which can be viewed by the public and include translations. "When you show a young kid stabbing Bush to death with several stab wounds, that's inculcating violence into their souls." (Jerusalem Post Aug 10)

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## Commentary...

### Crime And Punishment By Moshe Arens

It is doubtful that anyone who watched the television coverage of the desolation and ruin that remained of the once-flourishing settlements in Gush Katif, and heard the tragic stories of the settlers and their families - who four years after being thrown out of their houses were still adrift with no permanent homes or gainful employment - did not feel a surge of anguish and rage at the injustice of it all. The settlers, encouraged by successive Israeli governments to settle the area, had made the desert bloom in the best Zionist tradition, and this was their recompense. Who could not feel anger at the politicians who inflicted this tragedy on these loyal law-abiding Israeli citizens?

The Sharon government, ordering the IDF to use force against Israeli citizens, had declared nothing less than a civil war. If it did not turn out to be a bloody civil war, this was only due to the high moral standards of the settlers, standards that were far superior to the cynical standards of the politicians who waged that war, even prepared to shed blood should it become necessary. It was a criminal act, pure and simple, by a government against its own citizens in blatant violation of their basic civil rights, unprecedented in the annals of any democratic country.

Just what went wrong? In this case, just as in the case of the disastrous Second Lebanon War, the possible alternate outcomes of the planned action were never examined. A deterministic approach was taken to what was essentially a situation clouded by uncertainty. Whereas the damage inflicted on thousands of Israeli citizens was certain, the outcome of the disengagement was in the best of cases highly problematic. Sharon led a march of folly and was followed by many politicians and the majority of

Israel's citizens. It did not take very long before the dimensions of the mistake became apparent to all.

Guilty were the politicians. Some, leading the way insisting that what they were doing was for the good of the country, others too cowardly to follow their own conscience, and others still, willingly accepting offers of positions and political benefits for their support of a policy that in their hearts they opposed. Guilty was the defense minister who authorized the use of the IDF to fight Israeli civilians. Guilty was the Chief of Staff who did not tell the government that sending the armed forces of Israel against Israeli citizens was an order he could not carry out. And guilty was the Supreme Court - supposedly the last resort when the civil rights of Israel's citizens needed protection - whose judges, with one exception, gave their assent to the government's decision to uproot the settlers from their homes.

Is there a punishment to fit this crime? It is generally argued that politicians are eventually punished for mistakes they make by the voters at the polls. In this case it took time, while the Kadima government hung on to power tooth and nail for many months, but the voters finally had their say. In the last election the swing to the right, an expression of support for the parties that had opposed the disengagement, was unambiguous, and Kadima has been relegated to the opposition.

As for the Supreme Court, the decrease in the public's confidence in that body can be traced in no small measure to their mistaken judgment when they failed to protect the civil rights of the settlers whom the government sought to uproot from their homes.

As for remorse, there seems to be very little from those who were responsible for the disengagement. The polls show not only that most of the public today considers the disengagement to have been a mistake, but also among those who supported it at the time, the majority today regret their support. From the politicians responsible for the tragedy there is silence. None have had the courage to declare that they made a mistake. (Haaretz Aug 11)

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### The Benefits of Anti-Americanism By Barry Rubin

Bad ideas or myths about the Middle East never die, they just get recycled. Here's one that's back in the news: The claim that if the United States abandoned Israel, or downgraded the alliance, or just bashed Israel a bit, that would solve its problems in the Middle East.

The answer is: No. Here's why.

Begin with a simple experiment you can do in the privacy of your own home without buying special equipment or using any scarce natural resources.

Imagine that the US completely abandons Israel - not that the Obama administration is going to do that, but imagine. No aid, no diplomatic support, or let's just say a hugely reduced relationship.

What effect would it have on US relations with the Arabic-speaking world and Iran? Your immediate answer might be: They would improve to a huge extent. But that's not true. Sure, the popularity rating of President Barack Obama and of the US would probably climb a dozen points or so, maybe more, but it would still be relatively low.

But popularity is of little importance in international relations, even in democracies. Governments, not public opinion, make foreign policy.

Such a development would still be largely insignificant due to years of anti-American propaganda unleashed by Mideast regimes on their populations, past history of US interference, differences in ideological views, religion and culture and so on.

Now let's take a closer look. Consider a list of Arabic-speaking regimes generally considered friendly to the US, by the low local standards at least: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates. You can add Yemen if you want. What more would they do for a US that was not considered by them to be pro-Israel? Would they drastically lower the price of oil? Be more helpful to America in countering Iran? How precisely would the regimes act in a way beneficial to US policy or interests?

Remember that they would still be very constrained in their relations with the US for many reasons: America would still be a powerful Western, non-Muslim, non-Arab country and as such mistrusted and not widely liked. These are societies which are not afraid, even in this "enlightened" age, to make clear their distaste for the "other." Remaining anti-American

would still be very beneficial for them, as they would still need a scapegoat - would need one even more without Israel - for their own failures and shortcomings.

At the same time, the opposite would also hold true: The regimes know that being more pro-American (Western, non-Muslim, non-Arab superpower that it is) would bring cries of "Traitor!" from their Islamist opponents and from much of their own public, conditioned as it has been by decades of anti-Americanism.

Oh, and what about all that history. They would still demand - even more loudly, having sensed American weakness - reparations and concessions for past years of US support for Israel and all sorts of other American regional policies.

As noted above, there would be a strengthening of a number of factors which would maintain high levels of anti-Americanism and reluctance to move closer to the US.

For example, radical Islamist forces, strengthened by their victory over Israel, or at least US support for Israel, would press the regimes harder. If they did succeed in wiping Israel off the map, the territory and ample assets of that former Jewish state would be turned into a base of operations and resources for those trying to overthrow the remaining regimes still friendly to America.

The existing regimes would then have to face the prospect of being brought down and replaced by still more energetically anti-American governments or, in trying to avoid that, must seek to appease Islamist opposition and its supporters by proving their own militant, nationalist credentials. Among other things, this would mean not cooperating with the US.

Ironically, by abandoning one ally, Israel, the US would seem to be a less reliable protector to Arabic-speaking states. If Washington could throw Israel under the bus, how long will it take for the US to sell them out also?

AS FOR the enemies, well, they would remain enemies. That list includes Iran, Libya, Sudan and Syria. They would not say, "Those Americans are really great! They finally dumped Israel!" They'd say: "America is in decline. It is only a matter of time until it falls. The US is weak and fears us. Let's redouble our efforts to overthrow the traitorous puppet regimes and expel US influence from the Middle East!"

Oh, wait! They already say that. But they'll say it even more loudly. The fact that America is seen by them as the main barrier preventing them from taking power in every Muslim-majority state - and possibly moving on from there to world conquest - is still enough to keep their enmity red-hot. Denied having Israel as a scapegoat and focus of hostility, the existing regimes would have a harder time countering their even more radical enemies.

On top of everything else, a nuclear-armed Iran would preen as the leader of these forces which, while exaggerated, is enough of a reality to propel Iran into being the most powerful regional power. Teheran and Damascus, Hamas and Hizbullah would claim that their resistance and pressure intimidated the US from supporting Israel. They'd add: 'Having defeated both the USSR (in Afghanistan) and America, imagine what we can do next!'

So while it looks good at first glance, dumping Israel is not going to solve even a reasonable portion of America's problems in the region. Such a move would generate a lot more instability. As for Arab-Israeli peace, well that wouldn't be on the agenda anymore. Why bother making peace with a country you believe is about to be exterminated.

Now, if America's dumping Israel isn't going to greatly solve US problems or bring greater regional stability, do you think stopping construction on settlements will do so? Making speeches about how much one respects Islam? Renaming the "war on terrorism" as the "war on al-Qaida and its allies?"

Let's face it - even if Western policymakers won't - there are no easy ways out of the Middle East's problems and conflicts, especially not at Israel's expense. (Jerusalem Post Aug. 9)

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## **Modern Orthodoxy Offers Alternatives to Reactionary Judaism**

By Shmuley Boteach

This past Shabbat a Jerusalem parking lot just across the road from where I was staying, and which was open on the holy day, drew approximately 500 haredi demonstrators. One of the people caught in the

demonstration was a secular Israeli friend who drove to see me with his wife and children. The demonstrators called his wife a shikseh.

Little did they realize that this former student of mine from Oxford gave up lucrative opportunities to make aliya, and contributes mightily to the Jewish state. I was not surprised, therefore, when some of the eight Israeli soldiers embedded in the Mayanot-Birthright group I am leading voiced distaste for Judaism and hostility to Orthodox Jews. Haredi Jews who call a Jewish mother a shikseh in the presence of her two tender children are religious frauds, and an abomination to Judaism.

Which is why I am increasingly turning to Modern Orthodoxy. This year I will have three children studying at Yeshiva University in New York. The institution is a miracle, a place of academic learning committed to Jewish life, observance, and influence. So why do so many Orthodox Jewish students not even consider YU?

TO BE sure, I have always been a Jewish universalist. We Jews ought to be immersed in the world, spreading our values and influencing its cultures. But that can't happen if we don't first internalize an impregnable Jewish identity, and this in turn only comes with total immersion in a Jewish environment in our formative years. In essence, to be a universalist you must begin as a provincial. No man or woman who plans to impact the world as a Jew can do so quite as effectively as when obtaining a top education in a holistic Jewish environment.

I am blessed to serve as a rabbi to both Jews and non-Jews, spreading Jewish values to a world at twilight. But I could never do what I do had I not first spent many years immersed in Jewish academies of higher education, in my case Chabad Yeshiva.

My children will choose their own paths, but I wish for them to remain observant and committed ambassadors of their people. And that's why I send them to Yeshiva University, to obtain a Jewish education that is uncompromisingly Torah-based, yet forward-looking.

So why do so many bright, committed, even Orthodox Jews reject places like YU and pursue Harvard, Yale or Princeton instead? The majority would argue that the Ivy League is second to none. But a university is only as good as the students who attend. If the top Jewish students did not immediately dismiss a Jewish institution, it too would be in the very highest ranks. And Yeshiva University is already widely respected.

I suspect there is something else at work - one of our foremost failings - the unending search for non-Jewish legitimacy.

Whatever issues we have with our own identity are curiously compounded when it comes to academic life. Sigmund Freud famously told his Jewish disciples in Vienna that he had to make Carl Jung his successor or psychoanalysis would be dismissed as "a Jewish science." Einstein may have helped establish the Hebrew University in Palestine, but he resisted all entreaties to leave Princeton and teach in Jerusalem instead.

I remember a strange conversation that took place between me and Yitzchak Rabin, of blessed memory, a year before his assassination. I had travelled to Israel to book him as a speaker for our Oxford L'Chaim Society. He asked me who was inviting him, the mainstream Oxford students or the Jewish students? It was a question I had not been asked by the countless non-Jewish luminaries honored to be my speakers, from Mikhail Gorbachev to Professor Stephen Hawking to Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

THE JEWISH community subdivides, in general, to three camps. There is the assimilated-secular, the insular-observant, and the modern-committed. The vast majority of those halachic Jews who comprise the third camp call themselves Modern-Orthodox - Jews who thrive in secular society. But the only way the model can work is if it is grounded not only in Jewish commitment, but in Jewish self-respect.

When I was the rabbi at Oxford there were many passionately observant Modern Orthodox American students. Yet a great many took off their yarmulkes after just a few weeks. They felt marked, different. So what was the big deal about removing an identifying symbol as long as they kept kosher, came to shul, and studied Torah? But they were wrong. The removal of the symbol was invariably followed by a weakening of observance. What they discovered is that while their Jewish heart beat passionately, their Jewish spine was still rickety. A considerable number went on to become world famous, but are no longer involved in Jewish life. Had these students simply been given a few more years in a Jewish

environment, they would have been ready to go into the world without being compromised by it. (Jerusalem Post Aug 10)

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### **Yes, The Good Ones Are Going Into Combat** By Moshe Tur-Paz

"Richard Cohen, a columnist for The Washington Post, recently wrote about how proud his graduating class from a school in Queens, New York was of three of its students who went on to win Nobel Prizes, another who became a renowned psychologist and yet another who was a trailblazing women's basketball player." That is how Gideon Levy describes his vision for school achievement in Israel ("Kfir wants you?" - August 10). He contrasts his vision with the fact that Yedioth Aharonoth actually paid tribute to the schools that came in first in the "combat unit and draft evasion index."

The school at which I am principal, Shaked-Sde Eliyahu, is a regional religious school in the Emek Hama'ayanot area near Beit She'an. The school came in first in the "combat unit competition," with 87 percent of its graduates serving in combat units, commando units and volunteer units for soldiers lacking combat qualifications.

I am not ashamed of this achievement. On the contrary, I am proud of it. My school has a success rate of more than 70 percent on the matriculation exams. It has a rich curriculum, varied and creative course offerings, and a broad range of Jewish studies. Most of its graduates, especially students from the religious kibbutz movement, complete a year of community service before serving their full army service or alternative national service.

Richard Cohen is a good Jew who has chosen not to live in Israel. He can write his column in his safe haven. Meanwhile, the graduates of the Shaked School, the Hispin yeshiva and the Sulam Tzur comprehensive school from my area will lay in wait on ambush duty, serve at roadblocks and endanger their lives in all those activities that Gideon Levy so abhors. Service in the Israel Defense Forces is a necessity very much connected to education.

Service in a combat unit isn't just an existential need of the State of Israel. It is also an expression of friendship, love of the land, ambition, leadership, physical and mental stamina and an awareness of collective duty. The Education Ministry should develop, encourage and reward the teaching of values in schools. Values education includes volunteerism, compassion, tolerance of the other, development of humanitarian values and creativity as well as contributing to the state even if it means risking one's life.

Israelis are entitled to know the matriculation rates at their children's schools, but that's not enough. They are also entitled to know about the values taught at these schools. I, too, am very concerned about the results of the army survey. I am concerned that the top 10 schools with graduates in combat units (five religious and five secular) all belong to the rural education school network. I am concerned that the large cities (especially those between Hadera and Gedera) are underrepresented on the list. I am concerned that the things that have been said about the contribution of the "State of Tel Aviv" to the defense of the state could turn out to be correct.

Last Shabbat, soldiers from the army's Nativ course, most of whom are about to be converted to Judaism, were hosted by families on my kibbutz, Tirat Zvi. This week a new group of immigrants whose parents had left Israel joined the kibbutz. And two weeks ago, my kibbutz hosted children from Ilan, the organization for disabled children, for an enrichment summer camp. For many years now, the religious kibbutz movement has taken a leading role in volunteering and community service.

The Education Ministry would do well to continue to encourage and develop values education. Parents and schools would do well to examine educational outcomes from a value and societal standpoint, including enlistment in the IDF. The graduates of "Kochav Nolad" (the Israeli version of "American Idol"), will apparently fight for their right to the recognition and success Cohen has achieved. To our regret, we will have to lean on our sword for many more years and rely on our graduates, who are fighting for the state's existence. (Haaretz Aug 12)

*The writer is the principal of the Shaked School at Sde Eliyahu, whose graduates were ranked first by the IDF and Education Ministry according to participation in combat units.*

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### **The Forgotten Story** By Nachom Pachnik

It's the middle of summer and it's hot. We're in the midst of our vacation. About 30 settler children leave the community of Beit-El aboard a municipal bus and travel to the nearby town, Ramallah. The minibus enters town, crosses it, and climbs up a narrow and steep road until it reaches a Palestinian hotel. The children go into the lobby screaming with joy, and from there they head directly to the swimming pool, where they'll enjoy themselves alongside Palestinian children.

This story is not taken from the distant future, but rather, from the not-so-distant past. It was the end of the 1970s and beginning of the cheerful 1980s: Back then, war was about playfully "fighting" Palestinian children at the pool. We did not understand their language, but we were able to communicate without words.

This pre-Intifada and early coexistence chapter is the forgotten story of my childhood.

And here is yet another story about those days: A woman who today is happily married to one of the settler leaders in Judea and Samaria took driving lessons with a Palestinian instructor in one of the West Bank towns. Try to imagine the small details: How she leaves the house in the morning with her well-known husband, gets into the Arab instructor's vehicle, and drives off. Just him and her, as she gently hold the wheel while entrusting her life in his hands. And she wasn't the only woman to do it. Back then, many men and women learned how to drive in Arab towns.

I think back, with a sense of longing, to the buds of mutual respect that were growing between us, the Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria and the Palestinians, and my heart aches.

On many occasions, my mother took me shopping in Ramallah, where we drove through the streets en route to choosing tiles for our house. There was no fear in the air. I stayed alone in the car, yet nobody thought of initiating a pogrom against the little kid. I recall how we used to stop for fuel at the gas stations of al-Bireh, Ramallah. How we traveled in their cabs and purchased goats from Palestinian shepherds. Thousands of Palestinian laborers worked in Jewish community and made an honorable living after the economic nadir they suffered under Jordanian rule.

This was reality until the stone throwing started, followed by the Molotov cocktails, and finally the gunshots and shells and our military operations.

But what was happening on our end before the Intifada? What sort of sensations accompanied the woman en route to her driving lesson? What did we feel and think while we were having fun in the pool with the Palestinians? What enabled all of this to happen? It was an atmosphere of familiarity and an initial sense of accepting the other that were prevalent in Judea and Samaria back then. It was a healthy nationalism, devoid of the darkness of extreme nationalism; it was a moment of goodwill that faded away.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov said: "If you believe that things can be broken, believe they can be fixed". I completely believe that if we invest our energies and talents in becoming mutually familiar with our Palestinian cousins, if we learn to respect them and they learn to respect us, if we accept their presence here and they accept our presence – we'll be able to spare the settlement enterprise another round of destruction and another expulsion. With mutual respect we will not have to raze any Jewish communities or expel any Palestinians.

It is precisely us, the settlers, who meet the Palestinians on the ground every day, who can serve as the gateway to peace. We need to laud economic cooperation, resume our shopping trips in Palestinian towns, and hold meetings with them. The rabbis of communities located near Palestinian villages can certainly meet with Arab dignitaries. Ecological cooperation already materialized, only a few months ago. Sewage problems in Ein Yabrud and Ofra prompted the joint construction of a sewage treatment plant.

Quite a few settlers, many of them young ones, are interested in embarking on the path of peace. However, the process has to be parallel. The Palestinians also have to get to know us, recognize us, and educate their children to know that we are no monsters. Once that happens, we'll be able to live in peace here, just like it (almost) used to be in the early 1980s.

*The writer, a resident of Gush Etzion, is a poet and holds yoga and laughter workshops. (Ynet Aug 10)*

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