



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*

Jerusalem?

In fact, the nuclear arms race in Iran is a major problem for the United States, probably more important than all other serious problems on the president's agenda at this time. It needs to be dealt with regardless of whether Israel is talking

about it. Obama is being briefed regularly about the intelligence community's appraisal of the situation, and his advisers are presenting him with all the alternate courses of action open to him. He needs no wake-up call from Israel. The phrase "all options are on the table" is overused, and Israel is not likely to influence the president's ultimate decision, which will be taken with America's best interests in mind, nothing else. We certainly do not need to create the impression that Israel is trying to drag the United States into a military adventure.

If somebody is looking for an excuse to stop building in the settlements in Judea and Samaria, the Iranian bomb is not a legitimate excuse. The settlements do not appear as a variable in the Iranian nuclear equation. (Haaretz Sep 2)

Events...

Tuesday, September 8, 8:00pm

Professor Efraim Inbar, Professor in Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University will speak on "The Rise and Demise of the Two-State Paradigm for Mideast Peace" at Shaarei Shomayim.

Commentary...

Hobson's Choice By Moshe Arens

Given the choice between continuing building in the settlements in Judea and Samaria or being threatened by an Iranian nuclear bomb, what would you choose? Well, that's really a no-brainer. If these are the only choices open to us, stop building in Judea and Samaria, by all means. And maybe for good measure stop building in Tel Aviv as well, just to be on the safe side. What matter if people are left homeless, anything is better than total destruction.

Who is offering us this Hobson's choice? Is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proposing to turn off the centrifuges in Natanz if Israel were to stop building in Judea and Samaria? Or has Ayatollah Khamenei issued a fatwa in this regard? Actually, no such thing.

Did U.S. President Barack Obama whisper to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at their meeting in Washington that if he wants the United States to take care of the Iranian nuclear threat he better stop the construction in the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria? And if the construction continues, Obama will wash his hands of the whole matter and Netanyahu will only have himself to blame for the consequences. Well, that's not very likely either. A nuclear-armed Iran is a nightmare for the United States, and the president of the United States cannot very well ignore this challenge regardless of whether Israel builds in Judea and Samaria.

So now we come to a more convoluted argument, which goes something like this: In order to impose economic sanctions on Iran, the United States needs the support of a regional Arab coalition - Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia - and these countries will not lend their support for such sanctions unless Israel ceases to build in Judea and Samaria. But that seems almost preposterous. These countries really do not weigh very heavily in the scales when it comes to the imposition of sanctions against Iran, but even if that were to turn out to be a major consideration in the American decision-making process when it comes to arresting Iran's race for nuclear armaments, would any of these countries really opt for a nuclear Armageddon in the region if Israel does not cease building in Judea and Samaria?

So what is the origin of this hypothetical non-dilemma that must be keeping Israelis awake at night these past few months? Is it the result of the feverish imagination of some of our news media? Regardless of just who has been promoting this ludicrous idea, its origin surely lies in the fact that for the past few years Israeli leaders have been first in line to sound the alarm bells and push the panic button regarding the Iranian effort to attain nuclear armaments. They have hardly talked about anything else.

At every public appearance and at each meeting with a world leader, this issue is first on the agenda. We are concerned, we are worried, another Holocaust may be on the way, and we insist that something be done about this before it is too late, they keep saying. Well, needless to say, they are leaving themselves open for the counterpunch - if you are in such a panic about this, how about doing a little something for the Palestinians and stopping to build in the settlements in Judea and Samaria and East

Don't Make Me Laugh By Evelyn Gordon

There must have been something in the air last month: Two prominent Israeli leftists publicly acknowledged fundamental problems in the "peace process" that will make a deal unachievable if not resolved.

Aluf Benn, Haaretz's diplomatic correspondent, articulated one problem in an August 7 column describing a conversation with a "senior European diplomat." Benn posed one simple question: How would a deal benefit ordinary Israelis? The diplomat was stunned. Wasn't it obvious? It would create a Palestinian state! After Benn pointed out that most Israelis care very little about the Palestinians; they want to know how peace would benefit them, the diplomat tried again: "There would be an end to terror." "Don't make me laugh," Benn replied.

When the IDF withdrew from parts of the West Bank and Gaza under the Oslo Accords, Israelis got suicide bombings in their cities. When it quit Gaza entirely, they got rockets on the Negev. But the bombings stopped after the IDF reoccupied the West Bank, and the rockets stopped after January's Gaza operation. In short, the IDF has done a far better job of securing "peace" as Israelis understand it - i.e., not being killed - than the "peace process" ever has.

Normalization with the Arab world is also scant attraction, Benn noted; most Israelis "have no inherent desire to fly El Al through Saudi Arabian airspace or visit Morocco's 'interests section.'" And the downsides of a deal - financing the evacuation of tens of thousands of settlers and "the frightening prospect of violent internal schisms" - are substantial.

Benn's conclusion from the conversation was shocking: Thus far, the international community has never thought about how a deal might benefit Israelis; that was considered unimportant. But to persuade Israelis to back an agreement, he noted, the world is going to have to start thinking. For Israelis already have what they want most, "peace and quiet," and they will not willingly risk it for "another diplomatic adventure whose prospects are slim and whose dangers are formidable."

A week later, Prof. Carlo Stenger - a veteran leftist who, as he wrote, thinks "the occupation must end as quickly as possible" - addressed a second problem in his semi-regular Haaretz column. Seeking to explain why Israel's Left has virtually disappeared, he concluded that this happened because leftists "failed to provide a realistic picture of the conflict with the Palestinians." For years, he noted, leftists claimed a deal with the Palestinians would produce "peace now." Instead, the Palestinian Authority "educated its children with violently anti-Israel and often straightforwardly anti-Semitic textbooks," failed to prevent (or perhaps even abetted) repeated suicide bombings in 1996, torpedoed the final-status negotiations of 2000-2001 and finally produced the second intifada.

But instead of admitting it had erred in expecting territorial withdrawals to bring peace, Stenger wrote, the Left blamed Israel: The 1996 bombings happened "because the Oslo process was too slow"; the

talks failed because Israel's offers were insufficient; the second intifada began because Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount.

In short, the Left adopted two faulty premises: First, "anything aggressive or destructive a non-Western group says or does must be explained by Western dominance or oppression," hence "they are not responsible for their deeds." Second, "if you are nice to people, all conflicts will disappear"; other basic human motivations, like the desire for "dominance, power and... self-respect," are irrelevant.

Strenger concluded that if the Left "wants to regain some credibility and convince voters that it has a role to play, it needs to give the public a reasonable picture of reality." But the same could be said of the international community, which has also blamed every failure of the peace process on Israeli actions: settlement construction, "excessive force" against Palestinian terror, insufficient concessions, etc.

Though Benn and Strenger were ostensibly addressing different issues, they are closely related. Leftists reinforced the West's habit of blaming Israel for every failure, because they are the only Israelis that Western politicians and journalists take seriously. And this habit contributed greatly to mainstream Israelis' view of the peace process as all pain, no gain.

First, because the world placed the onus on Israel, Palestinians never felt any pressure to amend their behavior, whether by stopping terror or by making concessions on final-status issues vital to Israelis. Israel has repeatedly upped its offers over the past 16 years, but the Palestinians have yet to budge an inch: Not only will they not concede the right of return, they refuse to even acknowledge the Jews' historic connection to this land.

Second, while Israelis care very little about relations with the Arab world, they care greatly about relations with the West. Thus a major attraction of the peace process was the prospect of enhancing this relationship.

Instead, Israel's standing, especially in Europe, has plummeted since 1993. Europeans now deem Israel the greatest threat to world peace. Anti-Semitic violence in Europe has surged. European and American leftists routinely deny Israel's very right to exist, and calls for sanctions and divestment are gaining momentum. All this would have been unthinkable 16 years ago. And this nosedive in status is directly connected to the fact that every time something goes wrong with the peace process, most of the West blames Israel. Indeed, the fact that Washington (pre-Barack Obama) was the one exception to this rule goes far toward explaining why Israel's standing remains strong in America. Because this knee-jerk response has remained unchanged for 16 years, Israelis are now convinced it will continue even after a final-status agreement is signed: The moment Palestinians voice a new demand post-agreement or engage in anti-Israel terror, the West will insist that Israel accede to the demand or refrain from responding to the terror, and vituperate it for not doing so. In short, Israel is liable to make all the concessions entailed by an agreement and still see its relationship with the West deteriorate.

The bottom line that emerges from both Benn and Strenger is that no peace deal is likely unless both the West and Israel's Left radically alter their behavior. The million-dollar question is whether anyone in either camp is listening. (Jerusalem Post Sep 2)

Appeasing Syria By Elliott Abrams

The Obama approach to the Arab world and to dictatorships is failing.

The Obama administration has been trying out a new policy toward Syria since the day it came to office. The Bush cold shoulder was viewed as a primitive reaction, now to be replaced by sophisticated diplomacy. Outreach would substitute for isolation. Thus there have been six visits to Damascus by high-level administration officials, including two by George Mitchell. Moreover, the administration has signaled that its handling of export license applications for Syria will be more "flexible" than that of the Bush administration, which tried to deny every shipment it could.

Well, the returns are in. Within the past week, Iraq has withdrawn its ambassador from Damascus and accused Syria of involvement in terrorist incidents in Baghdad. Iraqi TV has also aired a confession by an accused al Qaeda terrorist, a Saudi who claimed he had been trained in Syria--by the Asad regime's intelligence services. Nor is this all. Syria continues to support Hezbollah's blocking of the formation of a government in Lebanon, backing Hezbollah in its demand for a "blocking third" that would prevent any decisions Hezbollah opposes in any new Cabinet. The Palestinian terrorist groups remain headquartered in Damascus, and under no visible restraints. And on August 19, President Bashar Asad paid a visit to

President Ahmadinejad in Tehran, to showcase his support of the latter during the current Iranian political crisis.

None of this is new. Throughout the Iraq war, jihadis who wanted to go to Iraq to kill Americans and Iraqis would not cross the Saudi/Iraqi, Jordanian/Iraqi, or Kuwaiti/Iraqi borders--all of which were carefully patrolled. No, they would fly to Damascus International Airport, where young Arab men with no papers, no destination, and no visible means of support were welcomed and guided onward to the Iraqi border. It is obvious that in a police state like Syria it would have been simple to police the airport; even the mere requirement that young men have valid visas would have slowed or stopped the flow of jihadis through Syria. But that, of course, was not what the regime had in mind, and as the Iraqi government has now publicly stated, Syria remains a haven for jihadis and terrorist organizations killing people in Iraq.

Watching the smiling Mitchell shaking hands with Asad, Syrians knew that any hope of American pressure for human rights progress was in vain as well. Neither Mitchell nor Obama has ever mentioned the subject publicly, and if Mitchell has asked Asad to release any particular political prisoners that fact has been kept secret. In fact the president of the Syrian Human Rights Organization, Muhanad Al-Hasani, was imprisoned on July 28, four weeks after Mitchell's last visit.

Syria is an excellent test case of the new Obama approach to the Arab world and to dictatorships that the Bush administration tried to isolate. The new policy is failing.

The Obama staff can argue that Bush's isolation policies did not produce the desired results--they did not change Syrian policy toward Lebanon, the Palestinian terrorist groups, terrorism in Iraq, or human rights in Syria. True enough, but there are two responses. First, Bush's policy was far too soft. While the Bush administration used some trade and financial pressure against the Asad regime, it did not take the direct action against terrorists and terrorist facilities there that might have made the regime back away. Jihadis flowed into the Damascus airport, through training camps, and across the border into Iraq, to murder Coalition forces and civilians--but the United States never threatened or imposed the kind of punishment our military, across the border in Iraq in full strength, might have wielded. Second, whatever the weaknesses in Bush's policy, he knew and he stated repeatedly that the Asad regime was a vicious dictatorship that was an enemy of peace in the region. The new Obama policy has produced no change in Syrian conduct, but it has produced a change in American behavior: Now we have even lost the moral clarity with which America used to speak about the nature and actions of the Asad regime.

The writer, senior fellow for the Middle East at the Council on Foreign Relations, was a deputy national security adviser in the Bush administration. (Weekly Standard Sep 1)

East Jerusalem's Lost Years By Seth Frantzman

The recent protests in Sheikh Jarrah against the eviction of two Palestinian families from a house have once again focused international attention on east Jerusalem. International condemnation of Israel has come from a variety of sources. Robert Serry, a special coordinator with the UN, has argued that he "deplores today's unacceptable actions by Israel." The EU Presidency has condemned what it calls "unacceptable evictions" and secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that the events are "not in keeping with Israeli obligations."

A member of one of Jerusalem's former leading families, Hasib Nashashibi claimed: "The recent evictions are part of a plan to surround the Arab neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah with Jewish settlements, in order to separate the approximately 500 Arabs from the rest of the city and take control of the major roads in the area." But the events in Sheikh Jarrah are, like so many things in the conflict, part of a larger history that the international community and Jerusalemites sometimes seem to forget.

What is today called Sheikh Jarrah in the 19th century included two Jewish neighborhoods known as Nahalat Shimon and Shimon HaTzadiq. The latter commemorated Simon the Just, a Jewish high priest from the 4th century AD and was purchased by Jews in 1876. Nahalat Shimon was built by Sephardic and Yemenite Jews in 1891. Sheikh Jarrah was primarily a Jewish neighborhood in the late 19th century and remained so up until 1948.

According to research carried out by Prof. Ruth Kark of the Hebrew University the Jewish housing developments were bordered by villas constructed by Jerusalem's leading Arab families. East of Salah a Din (Saladin) street was the 'Husseini Quarter' which included six houses of

the Husseini family which were constructed beginning in the 1890s. Other leading Muslims began building in Sheikh Jarrah in the 1870s. By 1918 the total number of Muslim houses in the neighborhood had grown to thirty.

It was a cosmopolitan neighborhood that included the American Colony compound, St. George's Anglican Cathedral, an ancient Muslim mosque commemorating a soldier of Saladin and the 'Graves of the Kings', a site with graves of various Jewish figures, which had been acquired by a Jewish family and given to the French government in the 19th century.

In December of 1947 fighting broke out between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem. Initially the leading Muslim families asked Arab fighters from outside the city to leave their neighborhood, and the Jews there, in peace. By March 1948, however, Arabs from a unit called "al Shabab" [The Youth] invaded the neighborhood and set the Jewish synagogues and houses on fire, causing the residents to flee. In April, the Hadassah Convoy massacre, where 79 Jews were murdered, took place in the neighborhood.

Sheikh Jarrah was not the only Jewish neighborhood in east Jerusalem destroyed in the war. Silwan, where Yemenite Jews had settled in 1882 was also taken over along with the Old city's Jewish quarter which was razed.

After 1948 East Jerusalem passed into Jordanian control. The city's Christian population declined from around 30,000 before 1948 to some 11,000 in 1967.

In every history of Jerusalem these seem to be the lost years of the city where nothing seems to happen. But in fact much happened in East Jerusalem. Beit Hanina, an Arab neighborhood north of the city, became a thriving center for wealthy Jerusalemite Arab families. In addition the emigration of wealthy Jerusalemite Arabs led to an influx of Hebronite Muslims who arrived in great numbers looking for work. Although initially poor they soon came, due to high birth rates and religious devotion, to dominate many neighborhoods in the city.

The UN was involved in settling Palestinian refugees in East Jerusalem as well. The disputed houses in Sheikh Jarrah were actually handed over to the Hannoun and Gawi families in 1956 under the auspices of UNWRA. The Jewish community which actually owned the properties was not consulted. Neither was the Jewish community consulted when graves on the Mount of Olives were destroyed beginning in 1956.

According to a 2009 report by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs some 38,000 grave stones were destroyed by the Jordanian authorities, partly to pave a road through the cemetery. A large hotel was constructed on the summit of the hill.

Many of the disputes about East Jerusalem have their origins in what happened between 1948 and 1967, a period often ignored by historians, governments and activists. The UN was never given authority to resettle Palestinians in Jewish property, yet this was a task it undertook. Before condemning Israel, Robert Serry should first apologize for his own organization's theft of Jewish property without compensation. The Jewish properties in question might well have been left in ruins, like part of Nahalat Shimon and the grave of Simon the Just was. In fact none of the rampant destruction of Jewish sites in Jerusalem was condemned by the UN during the period of Jordanian rule.

Had the international community cared then as much as it does now perhaps the disputes would not have come about. If people understood more about the period of Jordanian rule and the dynamic Arab changes of Jerusalem one might better understand the actual history of the city, rather than focusing merely on Israeli actions and Palestinian victimization.

The writer is a PhD student in geography at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and runs the Terra Incognita Journal blog. (Jer. Post Aug. 31)

Obama's Political Blackmail By Michael Fenenbock

As reported last week, President Obama has now linked forcing Israeli concessions on a two-state solution to American help with Iran and its nuclear ambitions. The Obama administration is prepared to offer Israel tougher action against Iran's nuclear program if the Netanyahu government agrees to stop building in east Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

In essence, political blackmail.

This "linkage" underscores Israel's relative powerlessness in its dialogue with the US. Simply put, Netanyahu has no cards to play. Bibi has nothing of value to trade. He has zero leverage. He has nothing to threaten as retaliation.

President Obama's Chicago-style political hardball has serious implications for Israel. Forcing Israel to "go it alone" with Iran by withholding targeting information, satellite images, over-flight permissions,

technical help jamming air defenses - and a whole host of other behind-the-scenes assistance - reduces the chance of Israeli military success.

But President Obama's mafia-style offer "that Israel cannot refuse" also has serious implications for America. And if American voters knew, it is a policy they would reject.

Let me repeat that. American voters would reject a policy of forcing Israel to "go it alone."

In a May 2009 Rasmussen poll, 49% of Americans agreed that, if Israel launches an attack against Iran, the United States should help Israel. Thirty-seven percent (37%) believed the United States should do nothing while just 2% believe the US should help Iran.

Sixty-six percent (66%) of all voters said that preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons is more important than preventing war between Iran and Israel. That was up 14 percentage points from 52% in July 2008.

Americans understand better than the Obama administration, it seems, that it is in the US' vital interest that should Israel decide it has no option except a military strike on Iran, that the Israeli mission must succeed.

Netanyahu surely understands that as well. But...Bibi has no cards to play. In the face of political blackmail on a vital issue such as Iran, he can only retreat inch by inch and hope for better ground to defend. Without leverage, Netanyahu is forced to bargain away the Jewish claim to Judea and Samaria while hoping to keep a tenuous hold on an undivided Jerusalem.

Caroline Glick is right when she says of the Israeli negotiating position, "The game is rigged against us."

But here in America we can apply the ultimate political leverage - the American voter - to put some cards in Bibi's hand.

We can use those poll numbers of American support and common sense as a platform to launch a national campaign designed to break the linkage between the two-state solution and American help on Iran.

We can remind American voters why, absent of the world preventing a nuclear Iran, Israel might be forced to make the difficult choice of a military strike as a means of self-defense.

And we can send a message through the American voter to President Obama - it is in the US' vital national interest that any Israeli military strike succeed. Don't deny Israel the help it needs as part of your diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East. Should it come down to a military strike, help Israel succeed. The world - and the US - will be better for it. Without a concerted, national campaign in America, without a campaign that makes President Obama pay a political price for his linkage policy, a campaign that causes the Obama administration pain, I fear Judea and Samaria, and probably a united Jerusalem, may be lost.

I close with another quote from Caroline Glick, "As we have been all too often in our history, today Israel stands alone against our enemies. We can either defeat them, or we can be defeated. The choice is ours."

The writer is President of MAX Films, a long-time American political consultant and a founder of www.DeNukeIran.com. (Ynet Sep 1)

Neve Gordon Is Not The Problem By Daniel Gordis

Intentionally or not, Neve Gordon, senior lecturer and head of the Political Science Department at Ben-Gurion University, has unleashed a firestorm in Israeli academe. His recent op-ed in The Los Angeles Times declared that Israel is an apartheid state, and that it ought to be boycotted to "save Israel from itself."

Sensing a public relations debacle among their American supporters, the president and leadership of BGU distanced themselves from his comments and hinted that he ought to resign. Predictably, other Israeli academics leaped to Gordon's defense. Most interesting, however, was the outrage Gordon's column has evoked among many American Jews. Some are so beside themselves that they are now threatening to withhold their financial support from the university.

To be sure, Gordon's argument is deeply flawed. He writes as if Israel sought or enjoys controlling the Palestinians, making no mention of the fact that it captured the West Bank in a defensive war that it did not seek, or that more than once (most recently with Ehud Olmert's election in 2006) Israelis have chosen leaders whose campaigns called for relinquishing those territories. Add to that his failure to admit that the Palestinians still refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist and continue to call for its destruction, and one can appreciate the fury of Ben-Gurion University's American supporters.

The fury these American Jews are suddenly expressing illustrates how little these very supporters know about the system of higher education in

Israel to which they are so deeply committed. Is this really their first glimpse into the widespread and long-standing hostility of Israeli academe to Jewish statehood? Gordon has been espousing this viewpoint for years. He regularly writes for anti-Israel publications, holed up with Yasser Arafat during the siege of Ramallah, and has on more than one occasion likened Israel to Nazi Germany. But he's always enjoyed the steadfast support of the university, to its very highest echelons. His views are widely held among his colleagues.

Nor is BGU unique here. Coming to Gordon's defense, Tel Aviv University professor Shlomo Sand stated outright that Israeli universities are not Zionist institutions and should not be. They are about scholarship, he insisted, not about the Jews or their state.

There are non-Jews and non-Zionists at these universities, he claimed, and the universities must serve them no less than anyone else. And at Hebrew University, the crown jewel of Israeli academe, the long-term influence of the binationalists involved in the university's founding has also been well documented.

Indeed, the only thing that is surprising about this latest turn of events is that American donors are surprised. For, to those who know even a bit about Israeli academe, the anti-Israel posture of many departments is really yesterday's news.

The important question in all this is what American philanthropists who are committed to Zionism and to Israel's higher education ought to do. Surely they can't really believe that universities will suddenly silence their professors or terminate tenure. What, then, are the options?

These philanthropists ought to look close to home for their answers. For many of America's great universities developed from an entirely different tradition. Woodrow Wilson, as president of Princeton, spoke unabashedly of "Princeton in the nation's service." Columbia College instituted its now-classic core curriculum as an explicit defense of Western civilization. Neither Princeton nor Columbia, like many other great American liberal arts colleges, saw any conflict between superb scholarship and inclusiveness on the one hand, and devotion to country and one's own civilization on the other.

Is it at all surprising that these colleges have produced an abundance of America's great leaders?

Israeli education needs more support from American Jews, not less. Rather than withholding their funds, a much more useful response would be to channel their support and their knowledge to create an Israeli version of the "college in the service of the nation."

How?

Those American philanthropists currently wringing their hands probably have no idea that Israel has not a single liberal arts college to its name. Typical Israeli undergraduates get none of the curricular breadth that an American education usually requires, and as a result, they know almost nothing about Western civilization, the majesty of Jewish intellectual history or even the competing philosophic currents inside Zionism.

In today's Israel, the People of the Book do not even read their own books. When they read or hear someone like Neve Gordon, nothing in their education has given them the tools to evaluate what he says, or to take him on. They are helpless.

Today's narrow model of education, in which students essentially study only one discipline, produces excellence, but excellence as technocrats. It does not produce the broadly read, intellectually nuanced people that the Jewish state so desperately needs.

Without dramatic change, Israeli universities will produce only more Neve Gordon's - scholars of varying quality, who feel no love for the very country that has saved their people. If it learned from American education, Israel might actually begin to cultivate a new wave of leadership, and with it, a generation of Israelis who actually love their nation.

Dr. Gordon is correct - Israel needs to be saved from itself. What Israel needs now is a reconceived notion of the educated Israeli.

It needs a liberal arts college, and the young people prepared to speak constructively about Jewish sovereignty, its challenges, its failures and its future that only that kind of college can produce.

A century ago, who could have imagined that the Jewish state would one day have a world-class army but a failing, collapsing educational system? Whether or not American Jews have the foresight to use their philanthropy to promote genuine change in Israeli academe still remains to be seen. But if they do, Neve Gordon's op-ed may ironically have goaded both Israel and the American Jewish community into taking the first steps needed to begin to save the Jewish state. (Jerusalem Post Sep 2)

The writer is senior vice president of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem and the author of Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End (Wiley, 2009).

Pressuring Netanyahu By Elyakim Haetzni

I dreamt that I returned home after a long absence and a hostile neighbor started to embitter my life: He threatened, cursed, and broke windows. The neighbors said that because of me there was no peace in the neighborhood and sent a delegation to my house. The thing is, they explained, that the neighbor wants my wife, and therefore in the interest of peace they are offering territorial and functional compromises. During the time of negotiations, they also ask that I put my relationship with my wife on hold.

Netanyahu marks new school year with tour of several schools across country; 'we advocate education that stresses values, Zionism and a love of the land,' he tells religious students in Sdeh Eliyahu

Are you crazy? I yelled at them, and kicked them out of my home. Subsequently, they informed the journalists waiting outside for a "breakthrough" that I "hate peace." I woke up frightened. I hate peace? After all, I merely love my wife.

In his meeting with Obama, Netanyahu still refused to hand over the Jewish homeland to the neighbor, even theoretically, and also did not agree to temporary put it on hold ("settlement freeze") as preparation for divorce. Ever since then, Netanyahu had been rushing down the slippery slope: He declared his endorsement of the "two-state vision," froze Jewish construction in Jerusalem as well, razed Jews home in Judea and Samaria with the help of the defense minister and State Prosecutor's Office - which regularly endorses Peace Now positions at the High Court - stepped back from the "natural growth" formula, and already reached agreement on a "temporary" freeze - curbing the flow of blood and oxygen to the limb about to be cut off.

A majority among the people objects to Netanyahu's way and identifies with the contradictory position of his deputy, Yaalon. A recent poll undertaken recently by Maagar Mochot revealed the following:

- 52% of respondents object to the freezing of construction in exchange for Arab gestures - 33% are in favor (within Likud, 70% resist.)
- 51% endorse Minister Yaalon's call to complete the permit process for Judea and Samaria outposts - 24% object (within Likud, 73% support)
- 41% believe that Peace Now "caused great damage to the State of Israel" - only 19% object to this statement.
- 55% said they think Netanyahu is currently going down a slippery slope vis-à-vis President Obama - only 26% disagreed. (Meanwhile, 47% of respondents said a temporary construction "freeze" will become permanent, while only 15% disagreed.)

Netanyahu is addicted to polls and is likely aware of the public opinion objection to his concessions. What then prompts him to again go down the slippery American slope, which in the past already prompted his government's collapse? The Americans, who are experts on preparing psychological profiles for foreign leaders, discovered the man's weakness, which neutralizes all his good qualities - inability to withstand pressure - and they are exerting brutal and insulting pressure on him. On the other hand, Netanyahu does not fear similar domestic pressure, knowing that the "National Camp" will refrain from again toppling a "rightist" government in favor of a party such as Kadima.

However, Netanyahu is wrong here. First, because there is a limit to how much one can abuse the will of the people and the will of one's own party. On one occasion they elected Sharon as leader of the Right and discovered him on the Left, and now it's happening to them again. Secondly, there is no need to hand over power. When the Brits became fed up with Chamberlain they did not elect Labor. Rather, they replaced him with another leader from the same party: Churchill.

And most importantly: Some issues cannot be controlled by cold calculations, including a nation and party whose reaction comes from the heart or "gut," even in contradiction to logic and a cost-benefit analysis. For example, values considered to be outdated, such as the notion of the land of our forefathers and our attachment to our homeland.

For this reason, we may yet hear the battle cry: "Are you crazy? We do not hate peace; we merely love our land." And then, the American stick may break, and Netanyahu may pay the price by losing his job. (Ynet Sep 3)