



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*

about Jewish designs
on Muslim holy places
can only harm any prospects for the
normalisation of ties between Israel
and its Arab and Muslim neighbours.

Aside from the agitation is the
disturbing notion that Jews seeking to
visit, or even pray at, their holiest

Events...

Monday, November 9, 8pm

Harvard Professor Ruth Wisse, author of *"The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews"* will speak on *"Jews and Power: Why and How We Often Get it Wrong"* at Holy Blossom.

December 13-22

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Commentary...

Writing Jews Out Of Jerusalem's History By Jeremy Sharon

The whipping up of unrest around the Temple Mount is part of an insidious campaign to cast Jewish people as modern interlopers

The Temple Mount, or al-Haram al-Sharif to Muslims, must rank as one of the most sensitive religious sites in the world. The sporadic riots of the past month at the site are therefore particularly alarming, as such incidents have the potential to ignite much wider unrest.

For that reason, it would seem to be in everyone's interest to reduce as far as possible tensions and friction at the Temple Mount to an absolute minimum. But the statements and actions of a number of Muslim clerics based in Israel, Palestinian politicians and even foreign governments have only inflamed and exacerbated an already explosive situation.

Of even greater concern is the underlying sentiment behind the recent riots, protests, declarations and denunciations. Whether or not "Jewish extremists" went up to the Temple Mount (and they did not) and irrespective of whether or not they planned to, the violent and vitriolic response to these rumours is indicative of a fundamental lack of tolerance for the religious beliefs of the Jewish people.

And the incitement has been widespread, coming from both political and religious sectors. The Islamic Movement in Israel, in particular, has made strenuous efforts to inform its flock that Jewish groups were planning to "desecrate", "storm" or otherwise "endanger" the al-Aqsa mosque and arranged buses for worshippers to come and "protect" the site.

Sheikh Raed Salah, head of the Islamic Movement's northern branch and one of the principal provocateurs, declared to a crowd, "We'll liberate al-Aqsa with blood and fire" and stated that Israel was seeking to build a synagogue on the al-Aqsa mosque. Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad told a meeting of foreign ambassadors that the riots were due to "an assault by extremist religious settlers on the Temple Mount compound". The Syrian foreign ministry decided to stir the pot too, stating "[Damascus] believes the Israeli security forces' invasion of al-Aqsa was part of Israel's scheme to Judaize Jerusalem and destroy the mosque."

Not one shred of evidence has been presented to back up any of these accusations, the reason being that there simply is none.

Such baseless incitement over one of the most sensitive places of worship in the world is incredibly irresponsible. The destabilising effect of this agitation undermines whatever small amount of trust there may be between Israeli and Palestinian interlocutors. Additionally, it further inflames wider Arab and Muslim opinion, which is similarly deleterious to the project of tolerance and coexistence in the region. Inventing wild myths

place of worship (the Temple Mount and not merely the Western Wall) should be seen as provocation, desecration or in any other way unacceptable. Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are an indelible part of the Jewish national consciousness. The very term for the movement to re-establish the Jewish national home, Zionism, derives from a synonym for Jerusalem, Zion. Every day, three times a day, Jews all over the world turn towards Jerusalem and pray for it to be restored to its former glory; they have done so for nearly 2,000 years. That Jews are actually banned by the Israeli government from praying on the Temple Mount is a quite astounding concession to the demands of the Islamic waqf that administers it.

But preventing Jews from praying at the Temple Mount is not the only goal. A far more insidious campaign is afoot, one that rewrites history by arguing that there never was any Jewish temple at the site, thereby seeking to delegitimise any connection that Israel and the Jewish people may have to it, and by extension, the land as a whole. In a region in thrall to an epidemic of conspiracy theories, the irrefutable archaeological and historical evidence attesting to the Second Temple alone is sadly deemed insufficient.

The failure to acknowledge the connection the Jewish people have to Jerusalem is symptomatic of a problem which goes to the heart of the political conflict; that the Palestinian body politic has never reconciled itself to the fact that the Jewish people have deep-rooted historical ties to the land and are not simply foreign invaders who wandered in a few decades ago.

However politically expedient, Palestinian and Muslim leaders must desist from the incitement against Israel and the delegitimation of the Jewish people's connection to the land, if there is ever to be any political accommodation between the two sides. If the Palestinian public never appreciates the depth of feeling Jews have for their holy places and their historical homeland, then the state of Israel, within any borders, will forever be illegitimate in the eyes of the Palestinians and will remain a target for eventual removal. Such an attitude poses a tremendous obstacle to the future prospects of peace between the two peoples. (Guardian (UK) Nov 1)

Why I'm Still A Proud West Bank Settler By Karni Eldad

I am a proud settler. Yes, even today, when one of us has been accused of the unimaginable, the immoral and the unbelievable; even today I am proud to be a settler.

Why? Because I am one of 300,000-plus people, most of whom are better people than anything I can find on the other side of the Green Line. Most are the salt of the earth, while Tel Aviv residents suffer from the serious illness of egocentrism in comparison.

But there is a big problem. You certainly expected me to write about the bad apples. No. Every society has those. I don't have a problem with them, as a settler. I have a problem with the police who don't catch them quickly enough and thereby besmirch me, and all of us.

"When will they understand that these extremists are not good for them?" I regularly hear such statements. Sometimes they are said antagonistically, and sometimes with a true feeling of compassion.

Such speakers are usually people to the left of center. They don't realize how stupid they sound. Would anyone imagine saying such things to someone from Rishon Letzion, where the Oshrenko family lived and was butchered?

Would anyone consider saying to someone from Herzliya, or even to

the mayor, that they need to control the people there better because Yitzhak Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, came from there?

Of course not. Just as the mayor has no control over all his citizens, I have no idea what is going on in my neighbor's head. And this goes without saying regarding the inhabitants of the neighboring hilltop.

What do you think? That the settlers are a single body with a single head, and we hold secret meetings in the middle of the night and plan the next provocation, murder, military coup, right-wing state?

To a certain extent it would be quite useful if there were a body that controlled the residents of Judea and Samaria. But even the Yesha Council of settlements has a hard time doing what only the Creator can do - to know what is going on inside our hearts and minds.

The olive-picking season has started and restraining orders are blossoming in the settlements. But restraining orders are a solution only for cowards. They are not moral or democratic. For years a number of criminals have been going out and burning trees and bothering Arab farmers; why are these criminals not behind bars already? Where are the police?

That is the question settlers are asking, not "how is it possible that such a person came from our midst?" The lack of a police presence in the settlements contributes to violations on the roads, drug abuse, illegal construction and semi-criminal elements hiding on isolated hilltops.

We don't want them; we are citizens who pay taxes like everyone else. Why then don't we deserve the same protection as everyone else?

There is no atmosphere in the settlements that nurtures murders or is proud of them. We did not shed that blood. (Haaretz Nov 2)

Our Day Of Mourning... And Hatred By Yitzhak Klein

Before the Hate had proceeded for thirty seconds, uncontrollable exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room... The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces with a sledge hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. - George Orwell, 1984

In George Orwell's dystopia, formal public ceremonies are devoted to the inculcation of hatred. The object of this hatred is the classic "enemy" that is a feature of every totalitarian society, legions of faceless and anonymous traitors who threaten society on all sides and whom it is an obligation to hate.

In totalitarian societies, the cultivation of hatred serves important political objectives. Totalitarian society requires subjects who subordinate their lives to the demands of the regime, who submerge their personalities within its logic. This is achieved by deliberately inflaming their basest passions.

The tragedy of totalitarian culture however is not that it finds the cultivation of hatred useful, but that hatred genuinely reflects the spiritual life of rulers and ruled alike. The true purpose for which hatred is cultivated is to create a society in which the human virtues of pity, compassion and decency are suppressed. This can happen only in a society in which such virtues have already been undermined. Totalitarian societies may pay lip service to the highest ideals, but in practice they dehumanize themselves by dehumanizing their enemies, who possess no rights and to whom no justice is due. Such a society can fall into a barbarism darker than that of any society of primitives.

Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were characterized by public ceremonies devoted, formally or informally, to the cultivation of hatred. By contrast, the State of Israel at its foundation set aside a day for remembering the victims of the Holocaust, and many individuals continue to cherish antipathy for Germany, but nobody ever contemplated a day devoted, formally or informally, to the hatred of Germans. That rightly would have been considered sick, a mark of Cain on the forehead of our society. No day devoted to the deliberate inculcation of hatred was established in Israel until 1996.

SINCE ITS establishment, those who arrogated to themselves the right to determine the nature of Yitzhak Rabin's memorial day have devoted it to inculcating hatred against a particular community within Israeli society. Last year, repeating a frequent theme, President Shimon Peres admonished

the national-religious community for not joining in the commemoration of Rabin. How ironic. On this day, members of that community are expected to have no voice, other than the voice that those who despise them would put into their mouths. Like Jews in medieval Europe herded into churches on Christmas, their role is to confess in public the crime of unbelief in Rabin's agenda, and to affirm that unbelief is equivalent to culpability.

This of course serves a particular political agenda. But the real tragedy of Rabin's memorial day is that it has become the occasion for legitimizing a culture of hatred. This culture invokes a community of public enemies, treats them as collectively guilty and makes it easier to rationalize the denial of their fundamental rights. The way Rabin's memorial day is celebrated admits a breath of totalitarian culture into our public life.

Politically motivated hatred has practical political consequences. The hatred which finds its expression on Rabin's memorial day had such consequences four years ago, during disengagement, which violated the fundamental rights of hapless Israeli citizens and traduced Israel's civil compact.

It matters little what "security" arguments were deployed by those who legitimated this policy, or that the arguments turned out - indeed were known at the time - to be baseless. At root, the policy was motivated by causeless hatred, as some of its advocates have since acknowledged. The victims of disengagement are the objects of sympathy today, but not yet, as they should be, of repentance.

It has become habitual for those who have appropriated Rabin's memorial day to blame the spiritual ills of Israeli society on "the occupation." That is too easy and facile an explanation. Surely these people are inured against that particular source of spiritual contamination. Those who tolerate or encourage an element of totalitarian culture in the celebration of Rabin's memorial day ought to make the day an occasion for what they are ever eager to urge upon others - heshbon nefesh, taking a critical, reflective retrospective of one's soul. (Jerusalem Post Oct 31)
The writer heads the Israel Policy Center.

Where's The Compromise Over The Temple Mount?

By David Kirshenbaum

In seeking to present a modus vivendi for the Temple Mount that "mainstream" Israelis can support, The Jerusalem Post's editorial, "The 'Third Templars'" (October 27, 2009) falls surprisingly short in fairness and substance.

The characterization of those who seek to change the status quo on the Temple Mount as "post-Zionists," "messianic followers" of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and "Third Templars" is false. A number of synagogues in my hometown of Beit Shemesh schedule regular visits to the Temple Mount. The vast majority of the members of those synagogues are immigrants from Western countries. We yearn to pray on the Temple Mount and not be muzzled and followed every step of the way by the religious bigots of the Wakf.

Far from being post-Zionists, we made aliya by choice, and as our children have grown, we watched with pride and knots in our stomachs over the years as they joined their fighting units in and around Gaza and Lebanon.

Wild-eyed messianics? Cultists? After we come down from our visits to the Temple Mount, we can be found at our day jobs as doctors in this country's hospitals, university professors, educators at prominent religious institutions, participants in the country's thriving hi-tech industry and lawyers at the most prominent law firms and financial institutions. Our rabbi, who has led many of our visits, is a former tanker in the IDF and was one of the subjects of a Jerusalem Post article last year about an interfaith legal studies program.

Similarly, even the most cursory good faith check would expose the speciousness of the "post-Zionist" and "messianic" labels the Post uses to deride the many rabbinical figures who are advocating that Jews be allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. This, for example, is how Haaretz described the Temple Mount conference in its October 26 issue. "Top religious Zionist leaders came together Sunday at a rightist conference advocating Jewish ascent to the Temple Mount. It's hard to remember when was the last time Israel saw such a unity between its religious Zionist leaders. Political rivals such as MKs Uri Orbach and Michael Ben-Ari sat side by side on the center stage. Moderate rabbis 'respectful of the government' like Rabbi Yuval Cherlow and Rabbi Ya'acov Medan came

together with 'rebellious haredi nationalists' such as Rabbi Elyakim Levanon and Rabbi Dov Lior. "

One of the most widely respected Zionist rabbis in the country, Chief Rabbi of Haifa She'ar Yashuv Cohen, has long championed a change in the status quo on the Temple Mount. Cohen, who has chief responsibility for the Chief Rabbinate's dialogue with the Vatican and has had tremendous success in working together with the large non-Jewish communities in Haifa, has for many years been trying to gain support among both his rabbinic colleagues and the political echelon for establishing a synagogue on the Temple Mount.

Indeed, "mainstream Israelis," on whose behalf the Post purports to be speaking, would find a much higher comfort level and far more common ground with the rabbis who support Jews entering and praying on the Temple Mount than with those rabbis who favor a ban on Jewish entry.

In trying to reach what the Post refers to as "the perfect compromise" on this very weighty issue, it's important to understand the respective Jewish and Arab positions. The two holiest places in Islam are Mecca and Medina, both in Saudi Arabia. Not only are non-Muslims forbidden entry into the Ka'ba in Mecca, Islam's holiest spot, Islam forbids any non-Muslim from stepping foot anywhere in Mecca or Medina.

Following Muhammad's death, Muslim religious figures began teaching that Jerusalem was also holy to Islam. Notwithstanding that Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Koran and is 1,200 kilometers from Mecca, Jerusalem was asserted to be Islam's third most holy site. By contrast, Judaism does not seek control of or ascribe holiness particular to the Jewish religion to any place outside of Israel. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the place most holy to the Jews, with Jerusalem cited in the Bible 669 times.

Judaism has no designs on Mecca or Medina and does not wish to deny religious rights to Muslims in those or any other city. Indeed, none of those attending this week's Temple Mount conference seek to deny Muslims the right to pray at their third holiest place - the Aksa Mosque. Rather, they are simply asking that Jews be allowed to pray on their holiest of sites. The Muslims vehemently deny any Jewish rights to the Temple Mount - in their eyes the First and Second Temples never existed - and militantly pursue exclusive rights of religious worship there.

IT IS surely curious then that the Post finds that Jews who wish to open their mouths in prayer on the Temple Mount are the "extremists" and that the Jews, not the Muslims who deny basic historical facts and exhibit not even a thread of tolerance, are said to be "high on a toxic potion." Even when a religious Jew simply pauses on the Temple Mount for the "silent meditation and inspiration" that the Post editorial suggests should be more than enough for the Jews, this is often too much for the Wakf thought police.

So while no non-Muslim can step foot anywhere in Islam's holy cities, Muslims can gather on the Temple Mount by the hundreds of thousands and they can play soccer and have picnics on Judaism's holiest site. And the Jews? After being thoroughly checked for any religious contraband and warned not to recite any prayers, they can silently and quickly walk through the Mount in very small groups.

Surely, this cannot honestly be deemed the Post's "perfect compromise." The confluence between a policy of appeasement and overly stringent rulings by certain influential rabbinic authorities has led to the situation where we are in danger of losing the Temple Mount. Ask an average Israeli of whatever age - religious or not - what the holiest place in Judaism is and they're likely to say the Western Wall. One will probably get the same answer from most foreign correspondents operating here. This type of ignorance has led to suicidal "peace" proposals, such as Barak's Camp David offer in 2000 and the still heavily pushed Geneva Plan, where the Jews will get the Western Wall and the Arabs the Temple Mount.

Even if one is motivated purely by realpolitik, which when you cut through the veneer of the smirches is what seems to really be at the heart of the Post's editorial, it would be fool hardy to think that Jews could live safely in any part of Jerusalem if it did not maintain exclusive control of the Temple Mount.

Is it too much to ask that the country's laws be protected and enforced and that we not become a society where Arab threats of force and violence become an easy excuse to deny Jews fundamental rights on its holiest spot on earth? (Jerusalem Post Oct 31)

The writer is an attorney in Israel and New York.

Reinstate The Death Penalty By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

The spike in violence in Israel - particularly the recent, high-profile murder of children - has once again ignited the national debate over capital punishment. This paper has taken a stand ("What child killers deserve," Editorial, November 4) against the execution of child-killers, suggesting instead that we "lock them up and throw away the key." I can concede the virtue of this position vis-a-vis civilian murderers, as there is a high probability that these criminals will rot in prisons for decades, a fate that may arguably be worse than death.

But when it comes to terrorists, I strongly advocate that we adopt the opposite response.

Desperate times call for drastic measures. The savage attacks which periodically target our civilian population bring home a terrible reality many of us already knew: The Palestinian terror machine has no red lines. Every gathering of Jews - anytime, anywhere - is a legitimate target for these sadistic haters; on a plane, at a Pessah Seder, in a school library, a kindergarten or a hospital. There is no "Geneva Convention" to restrain them, no moral boundaries in which to confine their crimes.

Like Amalek of old - the archetypal Jew-hater par excellence - these contemporary Hamans prey upon the innocent as their primary targets.

They enter hospitals with explosive-belts under their clothes; they lay in wait to shoot at passing cars; they blow up school buses as they load or unload their young passengers. And when they have perpetrated their "courageous" deeds, an ecstatic Palestine dances in the streets and hands out candies, displaying overwhelming, enthusiastic support for the outrage. Even the "moderate" Palestinians like Mahmoud Abbas mutter only the most tepid and half-hearted of condemnations, never declaring that the crime was wrong; saying only that "it hurts Palestinian interests."

In such an environment, we must take drastic action. One of the things we can and should do is activate the death penalty - used just once in our history, when the architect of the Holocaust, Adolf Eichmann, was executed by hanging on June 1, 1962 - against any terrorist who survives an attack, or against those who directly assist him in carrying out his crime.

Endorsing capital punishment is not very popular these days. The European Union bars member states from using the death penalty, and human rights activists scream bloody murder at the prospect of innocent people being wrongfully executed. Some religious leaders decry the unfairness of anyone taking a life other than the God who gave it (though they are strangely silent about euthanasia).

Jewish sources, too, tend to lean against capital punishment. The Talmud calls a Jewish court that executes one person in 70 years a "bloody court." And Maimonides writes: "It is better to acquit a thousand guilty persons than to put a single innocent one to death." Yet the Talmud, not to mention the Torah, cites numerous occasions when criminals were indeed executed, ruling specifically that capital punishment can be instituted "when the times demand it."

And in the United States - which suspended executions in 1973 but resumed them in 1977 - a recent Gallup poll found that 60 percent of the population not only supports the death penalty, but believes the sentence is not being carried out often enough.

There are three compelling reasons why terrorists should be executed and, as in the Eichmann case, their remains cremated and unceremoniously dumped at sea in an unknown location. First and foremost is justice. Simply put, these monsters who specifically target civilians have no right to live. They have forfeited the most basic human privilege by virtue of their crimes; any punishment save death is too good for them and is an obscene insult to the grieving victims of terror.

Secondly, killing a terrorist insures that he or she will not be committing any more murders. We have seen all too often how murderers are set free in this country after a relatively short time, only to kill many more innocents. As long as we have morally-misguided men in our government who, incredibly, go around calling for mass-murderers such as Marwan Barghouti to be freed in the name of "peace," we can never be sure that these criminals will stay behind bars. Unless we execute them.

Finally, there is certainly an element of deterrence created by capital punishment. In America, a clear correlation has been shown between the number of executions and the concurrent decrease in homicides. The most striking example of this is in Texas, which executes more murderers than any other state. According to the Justice for All organization, the Texas murder rate fell by 60 percent after the state began to aggressively enforce capital punishment. And while Middle East terrorists often proclaim their willingness - even zeal - to be martyred, their accomplices in terror, and even they themselves may certainly be influenced by the knowledge that their lives will be forfeited for their crimes.

Critics may say that executing terrorists will only inflame the situation, and endanger Israeli lives even more. But anyone who has an inkling of what Hamas is all about knows the absurdity of that argument.

Judaism, more than any other religion, cherishes the sanctity of life and will go to great lengths to protect it. But that is precisely the point: Anything less than the death penalty for terrorism is an insult to the victim, to society and to life itself. (Jerusalem Post Nov. 4)

The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

Book Review

Israel and the Family of Nations: *The Jewish Nation-State and Human Rights* By Alexander Jakobson and Amnon Rubinstein (London and New York: Routledge, 2008. 256 pp. \$140)

Reviewed by Seth J. Frantzman

It is one of the great shames of the modern world that there is still a question as to whether Israel has a right to exist in its present form or any form at all. Despite the relative insecurity of the country militarily, this problem was absent during the first twenty years of Israel's existence. The actual threat to Israel's survival by the Arab armies meant that on an intellectual and international level there were fewer calls for its destruction, at least outside of the Arab and Muslim world. With the exception of some radical voices in the West, such as historian Arnold Toynbee's 1961 comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany, there were relatively few intellectuals in the West that called for the destruction of Israel or attempted to undermine its foundations as a Jewish, democratic state.

Recent years have seen a rise in academic circles and student movements throughout the Western world of a general cultural shift against the existence of Israel. From the ivory tower, a constant stream of relatively unscholarly and angry works have been issued by such academics and writers as Noam Chomsky, Tony Judt, and Edward Said, some calling for a bi-national state, a code word for the abolition of Israel. But the fringe, consisting of such works as Jonathan Cook's *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*[1] and Alan Hart's *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*,[2] is bolstered by a constant assault by some within international organizations, such as the U.N.'s special envoy Robert Serry and the U.N. Human Rights Council's Richard Falk, who have openly denounced Israel.

In response, recent years have seen the publication of several popular works such as Alan Dershowitz's *Case for Israel*[3] and Yaacov Lazowick's *Right to Exist*. [4] These follow in the footsteps of Chaim Herzog's *Who Stands Accused: Israel Answers Its Critic*. [5] But there has been a gap in robust academic refutations of the accusations against Israel. Jakobson and Rubinstein's *Israel and the Family of Nations* is a brilliant effort to fill that gap.

Jakobson, a lecturer in the humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has lectured and written on such diverse themes as elections in the Roman republic, European academic boycotts of Israel, and Israeli democracy. Rubinstein, a much better known figure in Israel, has a doctorate from the London School of Economics and was the dean of faculty and professor of law at Tel Aviv University. Currently he is the provost and dean of the Radzyner School of Law at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya. In addition he has served in a variety of capacities in the Israeli government, including that of minister of education from 1993-96. Most importantly, for any book that defends Israel, Rubinstein is a respected man of the Left. Given his credentials as a leading member of the

dovish and leftist political party, Meretz, he is in an excellent position to defend the country on moral and intellectual grounds.

The methodology of *Israel and the Family of Nations* is not dramatically different from Dershowitz's attempt to defend Israel by providing a case by case examination of the accusations against it. This is, at one and the same time, a strength and weakness of the book. While it is absolutely necessary to defend Israel based on the accusations against the country, it also gives the accusations greater substance and means that the authors must present the entire research as a refutation. But none of this would be necessary in a world that accorded Israel the same rights and responsibilities that other nations are accorded, and this is the central point the authors are trying to make.

Jakobson and Rubinstein provide readers with six chapters devoted to answering five questions or responding to five accusations: Can Israel be both Jewish and truly democratic? Is the Israeli law of return unique? Is the nexus between Israel and the Jewish diaspora an exceptional one? How can a nation-state be a state of all its citizens? Along the way the authors discuss more extreme libels against the Jewish people and Israel such as the idea that the Jews are not a people at all or that Israel is a "colonialist" state.

Israel and the Family of Nations begins by addressing the U.N. partition plan passed on November 29, 1947. The authors have chosen to begin here not only because this is the plan that led to the creation of Israel but also to show that "the debate that has gained momentum in recent years over the legitimacy of Israel's definition as a Jewish state usually ignores a basic fact: The 'Jewish State' is what the international community decided to establish in 1947." Here the reader is introduced to intrigues behind the U.N. vote and the way in which it established the legal basis for the existence of Israel.

In recent years, it has become common for mainstream commentators and professors to accuse Israel of being a "colonialist European" state whose origins are in the "bad old days" of colonialism and which must thus be destroyed the way other colonial "settler" regimes were destroyed, such as in Algeria. Jakobson and Rubinstein note that "to label something 'colonialist' is to imply that it lacks all legitimacy." Here the authors correctly note that the Zionist movement as a national movement was unique and that its relationship with the British government, rather than being an arm of that government, distinguishes it from other European colonial attempts. Unlike other colonies where Europeans from the mother country sent settlers to the colony, the Zionist settlers were not from the mother country and represented an independent, national movement sometimes allied with and sometimes at odds with the colonizing power.

The second theme of the book, and probably the most important and original section of it, deals with the question of whether Israel can be both a Jewish and a democratic state. It also deals with the question of the rights of the Arab minority and whether the definition of the country as a Jewish nation-state with a Star of David on the flag and a national anthem that speaks of a "Jewish soul" can truly represent them. Here Jakobson and Rubinstein are at their finest, reaching a crescendo by providing nineteen pages of examples from constitutions throughout the world that not only speak of nation-states with a state religion and ethnicity but also speak of special rights for diasporas. The reader is faced with the weight of facts showing that numerous countries throughout the world, in totality probably the majority, share many things in common with Israel. Whether it is Armenia's relations with its diaspora or the position of the Catholic church in Latin America, one sees clearly that Israel is not unique and that attempts by scholars, activists, and international organizations to label Israel as ipso facto an anachronism, a "racist" state that is based on ethnicity and religion and therefore undemocratic and out of step with history, are simply based on ignorance.

Israel and the Family of Nations is a timely and necessary book. It is scholarly but accessible and should provide a basis for intelligent debate about Israel and for defending its institutions and foundations.

The reviewer is a doctoral candidate in historical geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He writes a column for The Jerusalem Post. (Middle East Quarterly Fall 2009)