



Commentary...

Inequality Before the Law By Caroline Glick

People who are concerned about maintaining the rule of law in Israel have great reason for worry these days. The sine qua non of a society ruled by law is the principle of equality under the law. In a society governed by the rule of law, individual citizens can trust that the state's law enforcement arms will treat them in the same manner as their fellow citizens.

When instead, a society's law enforcement arms determine how a citizen will be treated on the basis of his or her political convictions, religious orientation or any other extraneous factor, then the rule of law is trampled. The principle of equality before the law is replaced by the tyranny of law enforcement arms.

Disturbingly, both recent events and empirical data indicate strongly that today Israel is not ruled by law. Instead, and to an alarming degree, Israel has become a society ruled by politicized law enforcement bodies that selectively enforce the law based on an individual's political affiliation and ethnic origin.

Last week, a government-appointed committee charged with assessing the phenomenon of massive illegal seizures of state lands in the Negev by Israeli Beduin submitted its recommendations to Housing Minister Zev Boim. The committee, chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Eliezer Goldberg, recommended "legalizing" 50,000 illegal buildings constructed on state-owned lands and giving legal recognition and state funding to 42 illegal settlements constructed over the past several years by Beduin on state-owned land.

Boim enthusiastically accepted the Goldberg Committee's recommendations and pledged to bring them before the government for a vote before the February 10 elections.

Both the Goldberg Committee's report and Boim's embrace of its findings are stunning. They represent a complete capitulation of state authorities to criminality of unprecedented dimensions. This lawless behavior, in which vast tracts of the Negev have been stolen from the state, has been actively abetted by the state itself - and particularly by its legal bodies.

The Supreme Court, in response to petitions on behalf of the Beduin lawbreakers submitted by far-Left organizations, has repeatedly prohibited the government from taking any action against the land thieves. And the state prosecution has refused consistently to open criminal investigations or file indictments against the Beduin, not only for their illegal seizure of land, but for their massive criminal activity which spans the spectrum from polygamy, to agricultural theft, extortion, racketeering, drug trafficking and treason.

Responding to the Goldberg Committee's report, right-wing members of Knesset called for the government to legalize all the Jewish Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria that were built without proper authorization over the past decade. Their reasoning is clear and sensible: If the state has decided to ignore the law with relation to the Beduin, then it must also ignore the law as it relates to Jews.

But that's the thing of it. The non-enforcement of law towards Israeli Arabs and indeed towards Palestinian Arabs is one side of the coin of the politicization of law enforcement by Israeli legal officials. The other side of the coin is over-enforcement of the law against right-wing Israelis who reside in Judea and Samaria and their political supporters throughout the country.

At Sunday's cabinet meeting, Defense Minister Ehud Barak excoriated the lower courts for what he claimed is unjustified leniency in their treatment of Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria. "We must be more severe in punishments meted out to lawbreakers in Judea and Samaria," he said to his colleagues. He then mapped out how the Defense Ministry, the IDF and the police are working together to clamp down on Jewish residents of the areas.

What apparently got Barak's goat was the decision by Jerusalem Magistrate Court Judge Malka Aviv last week to release Zeev Baroudah from jail. Baroudah was arrested in the wake of the legally questionable and violent

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From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
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expulsion of some 200 בס"ד
Israeli Jews from the Jewish-owned Peace House building in Hebron on December 4.

The police claimed that Baroudah shot two Palestinians without provocation. The police based their contention on a video of his purported crime that was filmed by the pro-Palestinian far-left B'tselem organization. The video, which was shown repeatedly by the local media in

prime time news broadcasts, portrayed Baroudah as a cold-blooded, would-be killer. And on the basis of this interpretation of the video, he was remanded to custody for a week. Yet Aviv noted that the video itself did not show what either the police or B'tselem claimed it showed. Rather, it showed that Baroudah was the victim of an attempted lynch by Palestinians. As she put it in her decision, "From the film I saw, it is clear that the attempt to lynch the suspect [Baroudah] took place while he was lying down helpless on the ground while in the film we see Palestinian residents coming and joining in the attack against him without provocation or justification, simply with the goal of kicking and hitting the suspect."

Aviv accused the police of negligence for not arresting any of the Palestinians filmed attacking Baroudah. Arguing that he shot off his gun in an attempt at self-defense, she released him to his home in Kiryat Arba.

Both the police and the state prosecution immediately tried to force Aviv to cancel her decision. According to a statement she released later that day, both representatives of the State Attorney's office and police commanders paid unsolicited visits to her chambers and demanded that she revise her decision. They argued that her decision contradicted media reports alleging Baroudah's guilt that were published in both Israel and abroad and that as a consequence, she was likely to cause grave damage to Israel's international image if she did not send Baroudah back to jail. In explaining her refusal to back down, Aviv noted that her job is to adjudicate on the basis of facts and not on the basis of media reports.

Later that day, the District Court bowed to massive pressure by the police and the State Attorney office. While agreeing with the Magistrates Court's assertion that Baroudah was the victim of an attempted Palestinian lynch, Judge Orit Eyal-Gabbai allowed that he might be a danger to Arabs and so remanded Baroudah to house arrest. Supreme Court Justice Elyakim Rubinstein upheld the District Court's decision, after the State Attorney again appealed the decision not to send him to prison on Sunday.

On the face of it, it seems strange that the police and the State Attorney's office would go to such lengths to remand a suspect to custody in the face of documentary evidence, pointed out by Aviv, showing that there is significant doubt as to both his guilt and the danger he manifests to society. But unfortunately, this is routine practice.

Last week the right-leaning Organization for Human Rights in Judea and Samaria published a report which demonstrated that Israeli Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria are discriminated against by law enforcement agencies including the police and the state prosecution as a matter of general policy. This is true in comparison to the general population of the country and even more blatant in comparison to the state's treatment of both Palestinian and leftist Israeli lawbreakers in Judea and Samaria.

The report was based entirely on data published by the police and the state prosecution, court records, official state prosecution regulations, and official statements by police commanders and representatives of the State Attorney's office. Among other things, it shows that the number of policemen per Israeli citizen is four times larger in Judea and Samaria than in crime-infested Acre, and five times larger than in equally crime-infested Netanya.

The tendency of police to open criminal investigations against right-wing Israeli Jewish suspects in Judea and Samaria when no complaint has been filed against them is 80 percent greater than the tendency of police to open such investigations in the rest of the country.

In Judea and Samaria, 38 percent of criminal investigations against right-wing Israeli Jews end in indictments. The national average is 14 percent. On the other hand, the conviction rate for indictments against right-wing Israeli Jews in Judea and Samaria is a mere 54 percent, while the national conviction rate is 97 percent. As the report's authors point out, this finding is

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particularly devastating as it shows that the first instance where Israeli Jewish suspects are considered innocent until proven guilty is in the courts themselves.

Every Friday, leftist activists descend on Judea and Samaria where they conduct violent riots against IDF forces and border guards involved in the construction of the security fence. Yet, of the 400 criminal investigations opened for disturbance of the peace in 2008, only 38, or nine percent, were opened against leftists. And none have led to indictments.

Even more disturbingly, the State Attorney's office operates a special forum, the "Follow-up and Coordination Team," chaired by Deputy State Attorney Shai Nitzan. Team members include representatives of other departments in the state prosecution, the IDF, the Shin Bet and the Civil Administration. Its purpose is to oversee the collection of intelligence against Israeli Jewish residents of the areas, to prepare investigations, open investigations following media reports critical of Israeli residents of the areas, and reopen investigations that were closed.

The team convenes every month in spite of the fact that it was officially disbanded by then attorney general Elyakim Rubinstein in 1998. Rubinstein disbanded the forum following Knesset and government orders declaring the forum, whose existence had been kept secret, a serious abrogation of the principle of equality under the law.

According to the left-leaning Israel Democracy Institute's annual Democracy Index, between 2004 and 2008 the public's trust in the state prosecution has nearly halved descending from 66 percent in 2004 to a mere 35 percent in 2008. Public trust in the Supreme Court has similarly plunged from 79 percent in 2004 to 49 percent in 2008.

In light of all of this, it is disturbing that whenever politicians speak of the necessity of upholding the rule of law in Israel, they state in the same breath that it is vital to uphold the extraordinary powers of the Supreme Court and the state prosecution. Whether these statements - by politicians across the political spectrum - stem from agreement with the legal fraternity's radical political agenda, or fear of its unbridled power and its willingness to undertake politically motivated prosecutions, the fact of the matter is that these statements exacerbate the current, unacceptable situation.

If Israel is to become again an open democracy ruled by law, ahead of the elections, it behooves all citizens to demand that our political leadership rein in our law enforcement arms and require them treat all citizens equally before the law. (Jerusalem Post Dec 15)

Bush's December Surprise By Michael Freund

With just a month left to go before he leaves office, George W. Bush has decided to pull the trigger and drop a bomb on the Middle East.

Only instead of targeting Iran's illicit nuclear program, or Syria's nefarious regime, the outgoing US president has inexplicably chosen to detonate a diplomatic device over the heads of all Israelis.

In a move that was said to have been "personally led" by Bush, diplomats from the 15 member nations of the UN Security Council convened for an emergency session on Saturday to discuss the text of a proposed resolution aimed at tying the hands of Israel's next government.

The draft resolution, which was slated to be passed Tuesday, calls on Israel and the Palestinians to continue to negotiate "core issues" such as dividing Jerusalem, even after the present Israeli and Palestinian governments leave office in 2009.

"The initiative," as Haaretz reported on Sunday, "is seen as a bid to cement the Annapolis process with the approval of the highest authority," with Bush hoping that Security Council backing will make it "irreversible." This, he believes, will result in "shielding it from the administration changes in both Israel and the US."

"Bush," the paper noted, "believes that a UN resolution will sum up his efforts toward Middle East peace and underscore his vision of two states for two peoples." And so, for the sake of putting a positive spin on his presidential past, Bush is prepared to mortgage Israel and its future by getting the UN to tighten the screws on the Jewish state.

Knowing full well that a new Israeli government, most likely headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, will take power in February, Bush prefers not to let the people of Israel decide their own fate. Instead, he is attempting to impose a diplomatic straitjacket on Israel's democracy by trying to compel the next government to continue with the largely futile process of negotiating with the Palestinian leadership.

This is Bush's December surprise, a last ditch and pitifully transparent effort on the president's part to salvage what little remains of his once grandiose plans to establish a Palestinian state.

After all, it was just six years ago, back on June 24, 2002, that Bush gave a major speech at the White House articulating his firm support for the creation of "Palestine." After calling for a new Palestinian leadership to

replace Yasser Arafat, Bush declared that "when the Palestinian people have new leaders, new institutions and new security arrangements with their neighbors, the United States of America will support the creation of a Palestinian state."

The Palestinians, of course, eventually did get a new leader in the form of Mahmoud Abbas, but they have still proven both unwilling and incapable of reaching a deal with Israel. If anything, with Hamas now in power in Gaza, and Abbas' authority barely extending to his own secretarial staff, Bush's much-ballyhooed vision for Middle East peace, in which he invested so much time and energy over the years, clearly lies in tatters.

It is therefore all the more appalling that in trying to establish a legacy, Bush has chosen to expend some of his last remaining political and diplomatic capital in order to generate future pressure on Israel. Just think what he could still accomplish on issues of major foreign policy significance if he put his mind to it. He could be turning up the heat on Iran to forestall its nuclear progress, or taking concrete steps to block the flow of foreign jihadists from Syria into Iraq.

Bush could take action to hit the terrorist lairs in northwestern Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden and the Taliban are believed to be based, or he could lead an international effort to oust Zimbabwe's disastrous dictator Robert Mugabe. Instead, he has chosen the easy way out, grasping at the far simpler straw of trying to lock Israel in place in a process almost certain to fail. How sad and how pitiful that the man once considered Israel's best friend in the White House has chosen to send the Jewish state to the doghouse, all in the vain hope that future historians might view him in a more positive light.

Bush's desperation brings to mind another lame-duck US president who, more than 30 years ago, tried to leave his own mark on history before heading out the door, only to see it rebound against him.

In the waning days of his brief term of office, Gerald Ford put forward a last-minute proposal to grant full statehood to Puerto Rico, which has been a US commonwealth since 1952. The haste and timing of the move, which ultimately went nowhere, evoked a great deal of scorn and even ridicule, for it was patently clear to all concerned that it was little more than an outgoing president's feeble effort to insist that he still mattered.

Commenting on Ford's proposal, Time magazine declared in its January 17, 1977 issue that it "surely reflected the familiar predicament of a lame-duck chief executive whose desire to deepen his mark in history is matched only by his loss of real power."

Three decades may have passed, and the personalities and issues involved may have changed - but that sentiment remains as accurate now as it was back then. (Jerusalem Post Dec 17)

What They Say Isn't What You Hear By Barry Rubin

The full horror of contemporary Middle East politics and debate is comprehended by few in the West, largely because people aren't informed by their political leaders, intellectuals and media. Occasionally, the truth emerges, as on September 11, 2001, but soon is reburied under mountains of obfuscation. After all, Iran's president called for Israel to be wiped off the map, according to the official Iranian translation, and The New York Times publishes an article analyzing whether this ever happened.

I imagine exchanges like this: Middle Easterner (in Arabic): "We'll wipe you out, kill your children and trample your cities into dust!" Translator (in English): "He says that justified grievances about American aggression are creating hurt feelings which can only be resolved by Western policy changes."

These thoughts are inspired by at least four examples this week.

First, an Arabic-speaker writes me, "Right now I'm watching Hiam Sa'id, leader of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, on al-Aksa TV giving a speech (or rather a rant). He's screaming about how the Islamic armies will turn Palestine into a graveyard for the Jews." This is followed by threatening the Jordan government as traitorous for making peace with Israel and "the usual clichés." But then my friend concludes: "As we all know, this isn't the sort of language the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood uses when speaking English." For good measure, he inserts some links to Western newspaper articles that claim the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is really a moderate organization with which Western governments should dialogue.

Then there are two recent interviews given by Palestinian Authority Ambassador to Lebanon Abbas Zaki, who explains that the PA considers the US an enemy. Of course, the Americans have been paying Zaki's salary for 14 years through direct aid and by persuading allies to donate money, backed a Palestinian state and pressed Israel into many concession for the PA. But none of this matters to Zaki and other senior Fatah leaders. In Arabic, they are still hard-liners and anti-Americans.

In early November, Zaki gave a lecture explaining that moderation was just a pretense and the goal was still Israel's destruction. In his words, given the Arab nation's weakness and US power, "the PLO proceeds through

phases, without changing its strategy." Soon it would be in a position to bring about Israel's collapse and drive "them out of all of Palestine."

ONE OF the main examples of nonsense substituting for serious analysis is the fantasy of splitting Syria away from Iran. This notion is encouraged by Syria's effective propaganda network and lots of Western helpers. A Lebanese friend sends me a boatload of citations from Syrian officials promising eternal loyalty to Iran. I believe them.

For example, Syria's ambassador to the United States explained on al-Jazeera television in May, "Syria will not distance itself from Iran because our ties with Iran are... [linked] to deep historic, cultural, social and religious ties, common interests." An article by regime fan Rime Allaf in the Novosti press agency on November 25 notes: "For three decades, the Syrian-Iranian relationship has survived a sustained Western effort to break the alliance... and to shift the politics of both regimes." But nothing will weaken this partnership unless the regime in one of these countries falls. Agreed.

The Washington Post's David Ottoway writes of how Syria needs and benefits from the alliance with Iran. But he continues, "Western and Arab sources... feel, nonetheless, that the Syrian-Iranian friendship is unnatural [and] short-term." Syria's regime is thought too secular to stick with Teheran very long. He also, however, provides extensive quotes from Syrian officials who insist - with detailed arguments - that the alliance is here to stay.

Oh, by the way, the article is dated September 29, 1983.

Finally, if you want to understand the current spectrum of public debate in the Arab world, consider a television debate between Kamal al-Hilbawi, director of the London Center for the Study of Terrorism, and political analyst Nabil Yassin. The former is supposed to be the radical, the latter the moderate.

Hilbawi endorses killing Israeli civilians, including children, because, he says they're all potential soldiers. He claims, "In elementary school, they pose the following math problem: 'In your village, there are 100 Arabs. If you killed 40, how many Arabs would be left for you to kill?' This is taught in the Israeli curriculum." Yassin responds by saying he is against murdering civilians: "I condemn the Israeli governments for teaching children such things, but I do not condemn the child, who still doesn't know how he will kill the Arabs in 20 years' time, when he becomes a soldier."

I read that just after helping my two kids with their math homework and I guess I must have missed those equations. Actually, in my daughter's school they're now studying Islam and Christianity, learning a fair, factual picture of both religions.

There are, however, schools that teach that way. What Hilbawi described is an almost precise rendition of Syrian second-grade textbooks, for example, which contain math problems about killing Israelis.

At any rate, their debate shows us the permissible margin of discussion: The Arab radical lies that Israel is a nation of genocidal killers; the moderate retorts that of course it's true but the children aren't responsible for being brainwashed by those evil monsters.

Certainly, the best Western strategy in today's Middle East is to cooperate with relatively moderate states and groups opposed to the spread of radical Islamism and Iranian-Syrian influence.

The first problem is that many in the West are more interested in courting the extremists in the mistaken belief they'll change.

The second problem is that even those whose objective interests are relatively moderate and parallel those of the West and Israel - even those acknowledging this fact in private - aren't willing to speak and act along these lines.

The third problem is that there are few moderates and that the spectrum of debate is dominated by extremists and those who pretend to be radical for safety's sake or to exploit militancy for their own advantage.

Oh, by the way, the program in which Arab viewers were told that Israeli schools teach children to murder Arabs wasn't aired on the Hizbullah channel but on the BBC's Arabic service. That's quite a service. Incitement to terrorism thanks to British taxpayer money. Political insanity denied can be contagious. (Jerusalem Post Dec 14)

Another Look at the Hebron Peace House By Sunny Sassoon

I was saddened to hear that many used their pulpits to criticize the brave Jewish heroes whom the government forcefully expelled from The Peace House in Hebron and the hundreds of other Jews who stood with them in support of their right to stay there.

Peace House (Beit Hashalom) was bought for them by Morris Abraham, a Syrian Jew living in New York. Mr. Abraham spent close to a million dollars purchasing this building from a local Arab, and the deal was legally consummated some 24 months ago. It was his wish that these families live there, and this wish was legally carried out.

Those of us who have had the privilege to visit these folks at the now

famous house in Hebron know that it is a stone's throw away from the Tomb of our forefathers and foremothers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. The Tomb of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs is Judaism's second holiest site after the Temple Mount itself.

Under King David, Hebron became the first capital of the Jewish people. There has been a Jewish community in the area for thousands of years. Today, about 8,000 Jews live in Kiryat Arba (City of Four), a ten-minute walk away from Hebron's old city, where 800 Jewish men, women and children live in an enclave protected by the Israel Defense Force. Hebron itself sits about a 30-minute drive from The King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

Three weeks from now, the Torah reading portion will be Vayehi.

One cannot read this beautiful narrative about Jacob imploring his son to bury him in the Land of Israel and not be moved. More importantly, this is probably the single act in the Bible responsible for planting the seed that has so stubbornly grown into the tree we refer to as the Jewish people. It is my belief that it is this act that has brought back the Jewish people to their homeland after 2,000 years of exile, pogroms and the Holocaust. Because of Jacob's insistence to be brought back to Israel, the Jewish generations after him always felt an inexplicable yearning to come back home; if for nothing else, just to pay their respects to him and their forefathers and mothers.

I came to learn this through my own personal story. My own father, on his deathbed, made me and my family promise that we would bury him in Israel. Throughout his horrific, 18-month battle with cancer, he would insist that we make him this promise, and it was the last few words he uttered as we were weeping by his bedside that early evening in February, 1988.

For years after we buried him in Israel, I kept coming back every year for his memorial, though I had no real prior connection to my Jewish roots or tradition, or for that matter, the state of Israel. There were times when frankly I had no idea what I was doing there, or why he made this request. I asked myself whether all the trouble was even necessary - getting there, arranging for a memorial lunch or dinner, finding people to say Kaddish by his gravesite. Was I being a little nutty? After all, I had never been there with him while he was alive. Nevertheless, I kept coming back year after year, first as a bachelor, and then later as a husband, and now as a father.

One Shabbat, many years after the very first trip, I was sitting in our little synagogue in Beverly Hills, and my rabbi gave a most beautiful lesson on the chapter Vayehi. He brought my attention to this beautiful narrative, and all of a sudden, everything became clear to me. Tears rolled down my cheeks. For the first time, I understood my late father's request. For the first time, I realized how much of an impact those trips to Israel had not only over my life, but over that of all my family.

I cannot tell you enough about all the profound experiences I had during these yearly trips. I cannot even begin to think of my life today without these visits. My whole family has found a purpose bigger than ourselves because of the experiences that we were blessed to have in Israel. We have grown to love the people and the land.

ON ONE such visit last year, an old friend took me and a few of my friends from Los Angeles to Beit Hashalom. We met the families who lived there and spoke to their leader, a lady who had moved to Israel from England. She had been living in Israel for many years and when the house was bought, decided to move in with her husband and many children. My friends and I asked her many questions to try and understand how she could be as brave as she was to live there. She was a sensible, well-educated, and articulate woman in her thirties. She explained that if it was not safe for her to live in her home in Hebron because of the dangers facing her, then it was just as unsafe for anyone to live in Israel because of the dangers facing it.

She made a compelling argument that Jews should have a moral and ethical right to live anywhere in Israel, and for that matter anywhere in the world without being persecuted.

The idea that Hebron or any other area must be devoid of Jews should be antithetical to modern-day Jewish thinking, she said. After all, this is what Hitler tried to achieve with his Judenrein concept - cleansing Europe and the world of all its Jews.

Two weeks ago, this woman and the other families living with her in The Peace House were dragged out of their homes by the Israeli government. Ironically, contrary to conventional knowledge, the courts did NOT order the evacuation of The Peace House. They left it in the hands of the government to decide what to do until the legalities of the case were fully determined. Sadly, the corrupt Olmert/Livni/Barrak government chose the most divisive and provocative option.

While these Jews were being expelled, Israel continues to have its southern cities bombed with rockets since the expulsion of the Jews of Gush Katif, Iran persists on its nuclear agenda, and Hizbullah and Hamas continue to arm themselves to the teeth. Episodes like The Peace House expulsion are a deliberate distraction from the real issues and threats which Israel faces.

It is true that some of the actions of a few hot-headed Jews have crossed the line, and while I might understand their frustrations and pain, I do not

condone those actions. But the acts of a handful of hotheads should not poison attitudes towards the folks of Hebron Peace House and all of the 300,000 Jews living in Judea and Samaria, who stand on the frontlines with great sacrifice. Neither should their actions obscure this fact: Just like Arabs have the right to live in Israel among a Jewish majority, Jews should have the right to live in any area they please, even if those areas have an Arab majority.

It is not my intention to offend anyone who does not share this perspective. We all know how diverse Jewish opinion can be, and this diversity is one of our strengths. My intention here is to implore all of us to show a little sensitivity and balance before making loud and sweeping condemnations of our fellow Jews.

Ultimately, if we can succeed in being sensitive toward each other, we can find our commonalities on our own, rather than have them forced on us by other peoples with evil agendas. This was our fate for 2,000 years before the creation of the state of Israel. It must not be allowed to remain our fate moving forward. (Jerusalem Post Dec. 15)

The writer is chairman of Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.

Taking the Exile Out of the Jews By Moshe Kempinski

The latest media frenzy around the list of candidates chosen in the Likud primaries was at first infuriating to listen to; it soon became simply embarrassing. It seems that the "guard dogs" of democracy, our media, were foaming at the bit, waiting with articles dripping with sarcasm and hatred even days before the Likud primaries. They were probably disappointed when Moshe Feiglin only achieved reaching the number 20 slot, but that would not stop their yelping and barking.

They pointed to the list of people who were elected, describing it as a "Feiglin list" even though Feiglin was not connected to the list and is held in disdain by many of those voted in at the primaries. The list of people chosen by the electorate were the people suggested by many groups, like Matot Arim, the residents of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and by the expellees of Gush Katif, and all those who love this land and are inspired by its past and its future.

I am not a supporter of Moshe Feiglin, and yet I am happy that he got in. And I am incensed at Binyamin Netanyahu's childish attempts at rebuffing him. I am not a supporter, even though some of the main points of his Manhigut Yehudit faction mirror some of my own beliefs. This country does need a more faith-based leadership. This people does need to regain courage and stamina to shake off the effects of the disease called Political Correctness. Yet, I am not a supporter, because regrettably Moshe Feiglin has adopted the tact that got us into the mess we are in.

All of us in the Land of Israel camp are guilty, because we have been so sure of our views and so self-assured in our vision that we have slipped into self-righteous rage at times. Instead of trying to co-opt and engage our opponents, we have belittled them or ignored them. The B'Ahava Nenatzeach - "With Love We Will Win" - campaign prior to the expulsion of Gush Katif failed not because it was inherently false, but because it was too little and too late. We cannot assume that leadership will be ours simply because our cause is right. We cannot assume that everyone will agree with us simply because our vision is so clear. If great effort is not made to win the hearts and minds of the Israeli people, then we will continue to be maligned and ignored.

It is true that the hate spewed against the Land of Israel faithful will happen in any event, but our obligation is not to calm the haters, rather it is to reach out to the people of Israel who are still yearning for courage and vision. They remain the silent majority and they are not our enemy. If we forget that, then we lose our right to be part of the miracle of rebuilding.

To understand the venom being spewed by the media one must simply read the noted pundit Ari Shavit in his article called "An Israeli Tragedy" published in Haaretz: "Last month the world entered the Obama era, but Likud members paid no attention. The result is intolerable. Even though most Israelis are sane and moderate citizens capable of dialogue with a sane and moderate world, Likud's extremist majority seeks to drag them back to a dark and dangerous extremism."

There it is. The classic Jewish response of the Jew in exile. We cannot believe what we are meant to believe. We cannot feel what we are being made to feel. Why is that? It is because the rest of the "sane" world doesn't see it that way. The same "sane" world that has lost its direction and purpose and has lost the courage to battle evil. The Ari Shavits want so much to be loved by the Obamas of the world, in much the same way the Jews in exile wanted to be loved by their landlords and bishops.

After Jacob our forefather fights the angel of Esau and prevails, he is blessed by the angel of G-d and receives the name "Israel". Shortly after Shimon and Levi avenge the kidnapping and rape of their sister Dina, Jacob is very concerned and he says to them, "You have troubled me, to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land, even unto the Canaanites and the

Perizzites; and I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." (Breishit 34:30)

What happened to Jacob? Where was "Israel"? The answer seems to be centered in the words "being few in number." According to Rabbi Hillel of Shklov, the Gaon of Vilna explains the importance in the numbers of Jewish population: "I asked rabbeinu what to do if it would be physically possible to bring all the Jews to Eretz Yisroel at one time. So many questions and difficulties would arise regarding the arrangement of the settlement. After much thought, rabbeinu answered, 'If it becomes possible to bring 600,000 to Eretz Yisroel at one time, then it should be done immediately, because there is a great and total power in the number 600,000, and that could defeat Samael in the gates of Jerusalem.'"

The Zohar explains that Jacob was concerned that without the number of 600,000 the newly forming people of Israel were in danger. They were to live temporarily in a type of exile mentality, even in the land of Israel. It was with the mighty number of 600,000 that the people of Israel were finally redeemed from Egypt.

Rabbi Menachem Kasher, in his introduction to Kol HaTor in HaTekufah HaGedolah, mentions two statistical records in this regard: "The year 5708 (1948) was the first year in centuries that there were 600,000 Jews living in Eretz Yisrael and the State of Israel was born.... The year of 5727 (1967) was the first year in centuries that there were 600,000 Jewish males of army age above the age of 20 living in Eretz Yisrael. In 1967 the city of Jerusalem was reunited and the process of redemption was hurled forward."

If one is sensitive to those numbers, then one knows how to act like a Jacob in exile and knows that it is time to stand up like an Israel in the land of promise. It is harder to take the exile out of the Jew than it is to take the Jew out of exile, but that is what needs to be done. The people of Israel must be given back the power to be who they are meant to be. (IsraelINN.com Dec 15)

What's Wrong with Rightist Likud? By Uri Orbach

We never saw such joyful shock as the one that emerged this week from Kadima's branches. It was a fake shock. The relatively rightist Likud Knesset list brought great happiness to Tzipi Livni and her comrades, as if they just won the lottery.

We can assume that Moshe Feiglin's showing in the primaries would indeed stop some Kadima voters from returning to Likud. However, what is worthy of attention is the ease with which former Likud members now spew forth the word "rightist," as if we are talking about a disease.

Few tears were shed by Likud chairman and his associates for hardliner rival after trouncing his ascent in crafty political maneuver. 'Now Bibi can sleep soundly, the Likud has a much better roster now,' say aides

Mofaz and Hirschson, Bar-On and Boim, and even Tzachi Hanegbi and the entire former Likud group did not move to Kadima because they discovered the leftist light of peace. They simply followed Ariel Sharon's dark magic, were stuck with Ehud Olmert's failed leadership, and will freeze to political death with the pale Livni. Now, everything that the Left ever said about them in the past is being hurled back by them at their former party. This is the party that some of them will rush to return to after Kadima evaporates.

So if those are the new leftists, I prefer the old-time leftists from Labor and Meretz.

We already forgot that Likud is not supposed to carry out the policies of the Left, as there is some kind of deal: The Left and Kadima will win 30-40 Knesset seats, and the victorious Likud will then start to realize their plans. In the morning, it will withdraw from the Golan Heights, by noon it will renounce Judea and Samaria, and in the evening, to finish it off, it will divide Jerusalem.

The relatively rightist Likud Knesset roster may spoil these plans. The leftists woke up in the morning after the Likud primaries and discovered that Likud is not Meretz. How disappointing it is that these Likudniks cannot be trusted.

We already forgot that the real rebels are not the so-called Likud "rebels." The "rebels" is a derogatory term that was repeatedly attributed to the Knesset members who refused to capitulate in the face of former PM Sharon's threats and temptations ahead of the Gaza disengagement plan. The rebels were in fact the ones who remained loyal to the Likud platform, while Sharon was the one who rebelled, broke his promises, disregarded the Likud platform, failed to accept the majority's decision in the Likud vote, and ultimately destroyed a whole region.

The rebels' return to the Likud Knesset list is a case of poetic justice. The boys are back where they belong. If the residents of Gush Katif cannot go back to their houses, at least the ones who supported them have returned. (YNet Dec 14)