

ISRAEL

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& Christians Today



Clueless in Washington

By Caroline Glick

Does the US fail to understand what will happen to its strategic interests in the region if the Muslim Brotherhood is the power behind the throne of the next regime?

The Egyptian multitudes on the streets of Cairo are a stunning sight. With their banners calling for freedom and an end to the reign of President Hosni Mubarak the story these images tell is a simple one as old as time.

On the one hand we have the young, dispossessed and weak protesters. And on the other we have the old, corrupt and tyrannical Mubarak. Hans Christian Andersen taught us who to support when we were wee tots.

But does his wisdom apply in this case?

Certainly it is true that the regime is populated by old men. Mubarak is 82 years old. It is also true that his regime is corrupt and tyrannical. Since the Muslim Brotherhood spinoff Islamic Jihad terror group murdered Mubarak's predecessor president Anwar Sadat in 1981, Egypt has been governed by emergency laws that ban democratic freedoms. Mubarak has consistently rejected US pressure to ease regime repression and enact liberal reforms in governance.

This reality has led many American commentators across the political spectrum to side enthusiastically with the rioters. A prestigious working group on Egypt formed in recent months by Middle East experts from Left and Right issued a statement over the weekend calling for the Obama administration to dump Mubarak and withdraw its support for the Egyptian regime. It recommended further that the administration force Mubarak to abdicate and his regime to fall by suspending all economic and military assistance to Egypt for the duration.

The blue ribbon panel's recommendations were applauded by its members' many friends across the political spectrum. For instance, the conservative *Weekly Standard's* editor William Kristol praised the panel on Sunday and wrote, "It's time for the US government to take an active role... to bring about a South Korea/Philippines/Chile-like transition in Egypt, from an American-supported dictatorship to an American-supported and popularly legitimate liberal democracy."

The problem with this recommendation is that it is based entirely on the nature of Mubarak's regime. If the regime was the biggest problem, then certainly removing US support for it would make sense. However, the character of the protesters is not liberal.

Indeed, their character is a bigger problem than the character of the regime they seek to overthrow.

According to a Pew opinion survey of Egyptians from June 2010, 59 percent said they back Islamists. Only 27% said they back modernizers. Half of Egyptians support Hamas. Thirty percent support Hizbullah and 20% support al Qaida. Moreover, 95% of them would welcome Islamic influence over their politics. When this preference is translated into actual government policy, it is clear that the Islam they support is the al Qaida Salafist version.

Eighty two percent of Egyptians support executing adulterers by stoning, 77% support whipping and cutting the hands off thieves. 84% support executing any Muslim who changes his religion.

When given the opportunity, the crowds on the street are not shy about showing what motivates them. They attack Mubarak and



People's uprising in Egypt result of "the Islamic awakening"

his new Vice President Omar Suleiman as American puppets and Zionist agents. The US, protesters told CNN's Nick Robertson, is controlled by Israel. They hate and want to destroy Israel. That is why they hate Mubarak and Suleiman.

What all of this makes clear is that if the regime falls, the successor regime will not be a liberal democracy. Mubarak's military authoritarianism will be replaced by Islamic totalitarianism. The US's greatest Arab ally will become its greatest enemy. Israel's peace partner will again become its gravest foe.

Understanding this, Israeli officials and commentators have been nearly unanimous in their negative responses to what is happening in Egypt. The IDF, the national security council, all intelligence agencies and the government as well as the media have all agreed that Israel's entire regional approach will have to change dramatically in the event that Egypt's regime is overthrown.

None of the scenarios under discussion are positive.

What has most confounded Israeli officials and commentators alike has not been the strength of the anti-regime protests, but the American response to them. Outside the far Left, commentators from all major newspapers, radio and television stations have variously characterized the US response to events in Egypt as irrational, irresponsible, catastrophic, stupid, blind, treacherous, and terrifying.

They have pointed out that the Obama administration's behavior – as well as that of many of its prominent conservative critics – is liable to have disastrous consequences for the US's other authoritarian Arab allies, for Israel and for the US itself.

The question most Israelis are asking is why are the Americans behaving so destructively? Why are President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton charting a course that will necessarily lead to the transformation of Egypt into the first Salafist Islamic theocracy? And why are conservative commentators and Republican politicians urging them to be even more outspoken in their support for the rioters in the streets?

Does the US not understand what will happen in the region as a result of its actions? Does the US really fail to understand what will happen to its strategic interests in the Middle East if the Muslim Brotherhood either forms the next regime or is the power behind the throne of the next regime in Cairo?

Distressingly, the answer is that indeed, the US has no idea what it is doing. The

reason the world's only (quickly declining) superpower is riding blind is because its leaders are trapped between two irrational, narcissistic policy paradigms and they can't see their way past them.

The first paradigm is former president George W. Bush's democracy agenda and its concomitant support for open elections.

Bush supporters and former administration officials have spent the last month since the riots began in Tunisia crowing that events prove Bush's push for democratization in the Arab world is the correct approach.

The problem is that while Bush's diagnosis of the dangers of the democracy deficit in the Arab world was correct, his antidote for solving this problem was completely wrong.

Bush was right that tyranny breeds radicalism and instability and is therefore dangerous for the US.

But his belief that free elections would solve the problem of Arab radicalism and instability was completely wrong. At base, Bush's belief was based on a narcissistic view of Western values as universal.

When, due to US pressure, the Palestinians were given the opportunity to vote in open and free elections in 2006, they voted for Hamas and its totalitarian agenda. When due to US pressure, the Egyptians were given limited freedom to choose their legislators in 2005, where they could they elected the totalitarian Muslim Brotherhood to lead them.

The failure of his elections policy convinced Bush to end his support for elections in his last two years in office.

Frustratingly, Bush's push for elections was rarely criticized on its merits. Under the spell of the other policy paradigm captivating American foreign policy elites – anti-colonialism – Bush's leftist opponents never argued that the problem with his policy is that it falsely assumes that Western values are universal values. Blinded by their anti-Western dogma, they claimed that his bid for freedom was nothing more than a modern-day version of Christian missionary imperialism.

It is this anti-colonialist paradigm, with its foundational assumption that that the US has no right to criticize non-Westerners that has informed the Obama administration's foreign policy. It was the anti-colonialist paradigm that caused Obama not to support the pro-Western protesters seeking the overthrow of the Iranian regime in the wake of the stolen 2009 presidential elections.

As Obama put it at the time, "It's not productive, given the history of US-Iranian

relations, to be seen as meddling, the US president meddling in the Iranian elections."

And it is this anti-colonialist paradigm that has guided Obama's courtship of the Syrian, Turkish and Iranian regimes and his unwillingness to lift a hand to help the March 14 movement in Lebanon.

Moreover, since the paradigm claims that the non-Western world's grievances towards the West are legitimate, Obama's Middle East policy is based on the view that the best way to impact the Arab world is by joining its campaign against Israel. This was the central theme of Obama's speech before an audience dominated by Muslim Brotherhood members in Cairo in June 2009.

Like the pro-democracy paradigm, the anti-colonialist paradigm is narcissistic. Whereas Western democracy champions believe that all people are born with the same Western liberal democratic values, post-colonialists believe that non-Westerners are nothing more than victims of the West. They are not responsible for any of their own pathologies because they are not actors. Only Westerners (and Israelis) are actors. Non-Westerners are objects. And like all objects, they cannot be held responsible for anything they do because they are wholly controlled by forces beyond their control.

Anti-colonialists by definition must always support the most anti-Western forces as "authentic." In light of Mubarak's 30-year alliance with the US, it makes sense that Obama's instincts would place the US president on the side of the protesters.

So there we have it. The US policy towards Egypt is dictated by the irrational narcissism of two opposing sides to a policy debate that has nothing to do with reality.

Add to that Obama's electoral concern about looking like he is on the right side of justice and we have a US policy that is wholly antithetical to US interests.

This presents a daunting, perhaps insurmountable challenge for the US's remaining authoritarian Arab allies. In Jordan and Saudi Arabia, until now restive publics have been fearful of opposing their leaders because the US supports them. Now that the US is abandoning its most important ally and siding with its worst enemies, the Hashemites and the Saudis don't look so powerful to their Arab streets. The same can be said for the Kuwaiti leadership and the pro-American political forces in Iraq.

As for Israel, America's behavior towards Egypt should put to rest the notion that Israel can make further territorial sacrifices in places like the Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley in exchange for US security guarantees. US behavior today – and the across-the-board nature of American rejection of Mubarak – is as clear a sign as one can find that US guarantees are not credible.

As Prof. Barry Rubin wrote this week, "There is no good policy for the United States regarding the uprising in Egypt but the Obama administration may be adopting something close to the worst option."

Unfortunately, given the cluelessness of the US foreign policy debate, this situation is only likely to grow worse.

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(Source: The Jerusalem Post)

Peace in the Middle East

By Rev. Willem J.J. Glashouwer

When one looks at the heartbreaking conflict in the Middle East, one cannot help but think about the biblical background. Can one find some solutions and understanding there? What has the Bible to say about the conflict between these two brothers with the same father Abraham, but with different mothers?

Ishmael, who is considered to be the forefather of the Arab nations, was born from his Egyptian mother Hagar who was a maidservant to Abraham's wife Sarah, and Isaac was born from Abraham's wife Sarah and is the forefather of the Jewish people, of Israel.

What are the positions and the rights of these two half-brothers, when you look at it from a biblical perspective?

When Abraham is 99 years of age – and Sarah was past the age of childbearing – the Lord God visited Abraham, and told him that his wife Sarah would have a baby of her own. Then we read in Genesis 17:17-22: *“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘If only Ishmael might live under Your blessing!’ Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.’ When He had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.”*

So Ishmael and his descendants, the Arab nations, have the promise of the blessing of God. He promised them that they would be fruitful and would be great nations. Today there are between 200 and 300 million Arabs, living in over 20 different and independent nations in the Middle East, in a vast area of very oil-rich land. They can choke the economy of the world, if they like! They are very powerful. So God has kept His promise and He has blessed Ishmael tremendously.

After all the slaughters throughout the centuries there are only about 15 million Jews left in the world. In Israel – which is smaller than tiny Holland and you can hardly find Holland on a world map! – are living about 5-6 million Jews, in a tiny land with no oil. Another 4-5 million still live in the USA and about 1-2 million in the former Soviet Union. The rest is still scattered around the globe.

By the way, the prophet Zechariah prophecies that ‘In the whole earth’ (because that is the correct translation, instead of ‘in the whole land’, compare with Zechariah 14:9) two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it.’ (Zechariah 13:8) And when one adds up all the numbers of Jews that were massacred throughout the ages, the numbers show that in history 2/3 of the Jewish people have been wiped out, and only 1/3 is left. Even if ones likes to translate ‘in the whole land’ - meaning ‘Eretz Israel’, the ‘land of Israel’, this prophecy has been fulfilled as well, when by the Romans in 70 AD and 135 AD over 2 million Jews were slaughtered and the rest, almost totally – although there have always been Jews living in Israel, also during the last 2000 years! – was led into captivity. When we add the numbers of the killing of the Jews over the centuries – with the final slaughter of 6 million under the nazi-regime in Germany – the conclusion can be drawn that over the ages 2/3 of the Jews have been wiped out, and only 1/3 is left. So to think that in the near future Israel will become ‘one big Auschwitz’ during the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’, the ‘tribulation’, is not necessarily according to Scripture, although difficult times for Israel are still to come.

Blessings for Ishmael, but God’s everlasting Covenant He made with Abraham, and confirmed it to Isaac, and later to Jacob. The problem in the Middle East is not that one is an Arab or a Palestinian, because there are great blessings for them, being descendants of Ishmael. The problem is that Arabs and Palestinians almost totally nowadays are under Islam and serve Allah – as so many other people and nations, like Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the former USSR-republics, the half of Africa. The conflict in the Middle East is a spiritual conflict, between the God



Willem Glashouwer

of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel, and all the other gods of this world, including Allah and Islam. Christian Arabs and Christian Palestinians are therefore in a very difficult situation as well. Not that much because of the Jews and Israel, but because of their fellow Islamic Arab and Palestinian brothers.

What about the future?

Will Islam finally conquer the world, as promised by Muhammad? Will there be a ‘jihad’ of the whole Islamic world against Israel? Because Israel and Jerusalem are number one on the agenda of many Islamic leaders. They do not forget about the Christian world (remember 11th of September 2001 and the destruction of the twin-towers in New York), but Israel is first. It cannot be in Islamic thought and Islamic theology that this tiny piece of land Israel and this third holy city of Islam, Jerusalem, who were under Islam for over a thousand years, would remain forever under religions like Judaism or Christianity that are considered by Islam as stations passed by.

In the Bible we find some remarkable prophecies.

Isaiah 17:1-2 says: *“See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins. The cities of Aroer (about 14 miles east of the Dead Sea on the Arnon River) will be deserted and left to flocks, which will lie down, with no one to make them afraid.”* This has never been fulfilled in history, but one day it will. By Israeli armies? By Israeli bombs? By an Israeli atomic bomb, used in defence because of a Syrian attack? By other (natural) causes? We can only answer those questions for sure after the event has happened.

Isaiah 19:16-17 says: *“In that day the Egyptians will be like women. They will shudder with fear at the uplifted hand that the Lord Almighty raises against them. And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the Lord Almighty is planning against them.”* This has never been fulfilled in history, but one day it will. Although we have seen how the LORD fought at the side of His people Israel when they were attacked several times since 1948, and how the Egyptian fled in panic, still this is only a foretaste of what is going to happen one day. And the end-result then will be that Egypt no longer will serve Allah, but the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with the 4 letters of the unspeakable Name YHWH. Hard to imagine that mighty Egypt will tremble because what the Lord through tiny Israel will do to them. But the result will be that Egypt will recognise who the true God is, see Isaiah 19:18-25.

Psalm 83:1-8 says: *“O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still. See how Your enemies are astir, how Your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against Your people; the plot against those You cherish. ‘Come’, they say, ‘let us destroy them as a nation, that the*

name of Israel be remembered no more.’ With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against You - the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot.” When one looks at today’s map, these old names all refer to a ‘first ring’ closely around Israel. Like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian territories with Iraq (Assyria) in the background. A combined war against Israel, to wipe it off the face of the earth. These are all predominantly Muslim countries and peoples. Has this already happened or is this also referring to some future event?

Ezekiel 38 and 39 say that nations under the leadership of Gog (from the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal) will suddenly invade the land of Israel. It talks about Persia, Cush and Put joining him, as well as Gomer with all his troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops - the many nations with him, nations that are like a ‘second ring’ around Israel. When one reads Flavius Josephus to identify these old names, they refer to nations like Saudi-Arabia, Libya, Turkey, Iran, and even the former southern Soviet Republics, who today are all Islamic. This has never happened in history so far. Some say that even Russia itself is involved in the background. Syria, Egypt and Iraq are not mentioned, by the way! Are they no longer a threat when the ‘first ring’ was dealt with? But the Lord will fight for His people Israel, and they will need 7 months to bury all the corpses.

Zechariah 12:2-4 says: *“I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations.”* The plague mentioned in Zechariah 14:12-15 by which the Lord will smite these ‘United Nations’ makes one think about A(tomic) B(acteriological) C(hemical) weapons. But the victory will be for the Lord and for Israel. The wars and plagues of the end-times will be terrible, Revelation 8 and 9.

Although one could be tempted to put all these prophecies into one big end-time scenario (one thing leads to another, a kind of domino-effect, starting with Syria, then Egypt, then the ‘first ring’, then the ‘second ring’ and finally the whole world), one should be careful with speculations like these. The Bible is not a jigsaw puzzle book. But that the outcome of these ‘battles of the Lord’ will be that His Name and the Name of His Anointed One will be recognised by the whole world - also by the Islamic world - seems to be obvious.

Isaiah 19:23-25 says: *“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance.’”*

So could the outcome of these battles be that by the terrible defeat these predominantly Islamic armies will face, the Islamic world will realise that not Allah is all-powerful, but that YHWH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of heaven and earth all-powerful is? That He is the one and only God? Will the shattering of all the dreams and hopes of the Islamic world lead to an openness and willingness to hear the words of the Gospel? Will they finally realise that there is only one real Prophet, Jesus Christ? And that Muhammad was a false prophet? Will that finally bring peace to the hearts of numerous followers of Islam? Will that change their hatred into love and compassion for their Jewish brothers and sisters? Will they then start blessing Abraham instead of cursing him? As we all have to learn that? These prophecies show us that one day Egypt and Iraq no longer will worship Allah, but YHWH.

And Paul concludes that one day *“every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:10-11)

(Rev. Willem J. J. Glashouwer is the President of Christians for Israel International)

Civilisation owes Jewish people so much

By Andrew Roberts

I would like to speak to you today as an historian, because it seems to me that the State of Israel has packed more history into her 62 years on the planet than many other nations have in six hundred.

There are many surprising things about this tiny, feisty, brave nation the size of Wales, but the most astonishing is that she has survived at all. The very day after the new state was established, she was invaded by the armies of no fewer than five Arab countries, and she has been struggling for her right to life ever since. And that is what we are here for today, to reiterate Israel's right to self-defence, inherent in all legitimate countries.

From Morocco to Afghanistan, from the Caspian Sea to Aden, the 5.25 million square miles of territory belonging to members of the Arab League is home to over 330 million people, whereas Israel covers only eight thousand square miles, and is home to seven million citizens, one-fifth of whom are Arabs.

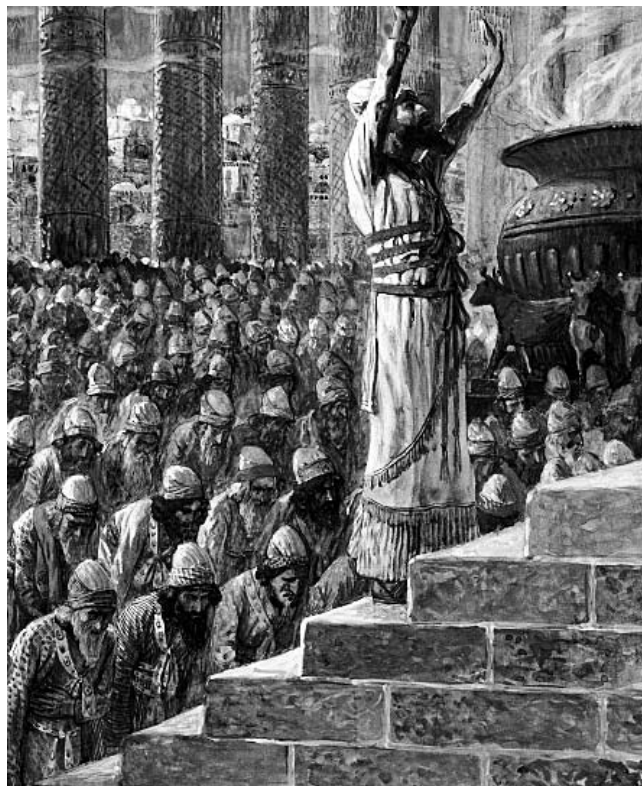
The Jews of the Holy Land are thus surrounded by hostile states 650 times their size in territory and sixty times their population, yet their last, best hope of ending two millennia of international persecution – the State of Israel – has somehow survived.

When during the Second World War, the island of Malta came through three terrible years of bombardment and destruction, it was rightly awarded the George Medal for bravery: today Israel should be awarded a similar decoration for defending democracy, tolerance and Western values against a murderous onslaught that has lasted twenty times as long.

Jerusalem is the site of the Temple of Solomon and Herod. The stones of a palace erected by King David himself are even now being unearthed just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Everything that makes a nation state legitimate – blood shed, soil tilled, two millennia of continuous residence, international agreements – argues for Israel's right to exist, yet that is still denied by the Arab League. For many of their governments, which are rich enough to have economically solved the Palestinian refugee problem decades ago, it is useful to have Israel as a scapegoat to divert attention from the tyranny, failure and corruption of their own regimes.

The tragic truth is that it suits Arab states very well to have the Palestinians endure permanent refugee status, and whenever Israel puts forward workable solutions they have been stymied by those whose interests put the destruction of Israel before the genuine well-being of the Palestinians. Both King Abdullah I of Jordan and Anwar Sadat of Egypt were assassinated when they attempted to come to some kind of accommodation with a country that most sane people now accept is not going away.

'We owe to the Jews,' wrote Winston Churchill in 1920, 'a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most



King Solomon dedicates the Temple at Jerusalem

precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all wisdom and learning put together.'

The Jewish contribution to finance, science, the arts, academia, commerce and industry, literature, philanthropy and politics has been astonishing relative to their tiny numbers. Although they make up less than half of one per-cent of the world's population, between 1901 and 1950 Jews won 14% of all the Nobel Prizes awarded for Literature and Science, and between 1951 and 2000 Jews won 32% of the Nobel Prizes for Medicine, 32% for Physics, 39% for Economics and 29% for Science.

This, despite so many of their greatest intellects dying in the gas chambers. Civilization owes Judaism a debt it can never repay, and support for the right of a Jewish homeland to exist is the bare minimum we can provide. Yet we tend to treat Israel like a leper on the international scene, merely for defending herself, and threatening her with academic boycotts if she builds a separation wall that has so far reduced suicide bombings by 95% over three years.

It is a disgrace that no senior member of the Royal Family has ever undertaken an official visit to Israel, as though the country is still in quarantine after more than six decades. Her Majesty the Queen has been on the throne for 57 years and in that time has undertaken 250 official visits to 129 countries, yet has not yet set foot in Israel. She has visited 14 Arab countries, so it cannot have been that she wasn't in the region. Although Prince Philip's mother Princess Alice is buried on the Mount of Olives because of her status as

Righteous Among Gentiles, the Foreign Office ordained that his visit to his mother's grave in 1994 had to be in a private capacity only. Royal visits are one of the ways legitimacy is conferred on nations, and the Coalition Government should end the Foreign Office's de facto boycott.

After the Holocaust, the Jewish people recognised that they must have their own state, a homeland where they could forever be safe from a repetition of such horrors. Putting their trust in Western Civilisation was never again going to be enough. Since then, Israel has had to fight no fewer than five major wars for her very existence. She has been on the front line in the War against Terror and has been fighting the West's battles for it, decades before 9/11 or 7/7 ever happened. Radical Islam is never going to accept the concept of an Israeli State, so the struggle is likely to continue for another sixty years, but the Jews know that that is less dangerous than entrusting their security to anyone else.

Very often in Britain, especially when faced with the overwhelmingly anti-Israeli bias that is endemic in our liberal media and the BBC, we fail to ask ourselves what we would have done placed in their position? The population of the United Kingdom of 63 million is nine times that of Israel.

In July 2006, to take one example at random, Hezbollah crossed the border of Lebanon into Israel and killed eight patrolmen and kidnapped two others, and that summer fired four thousand Katyusha rockets into Israel which killed a further forty-three civilians.

Now, if we multiply those numbers by nine to get the British equivalent, just imagine what we would do if a terrorist organization based as close as Calais were to fire thirty-six thousand rockets into Sussex and Kent, killing 387 British civilians, after killing seventy-two British servicemen in an ambush and capturing eighteen. There is absolutely no lengths to which our Government would not go to protect British subjects under those circumstances, and quite right too. Why should Israel be expected to behave any differently?

In the course of researching my latest book on the Second World War, I recently visited Auschwitz-Birkenau. Walking along a line of huts and the railway siding where their forebears had been worked and starved and beaten and frozen and gassed to death, were a group of Jewish schoolchildren, one of whom was carrying over his shoulder the Israeli flag, a blue star of David on white background. It was a profoundly moving sight, for it was the sovereign independence represented by that flag which guarantees that the obscenity of genocide – which killed six million people in Auschwitz and camps like it – will never again befall the Jewish people, to whom the rest of Civilisation owes so much.

I said at the start that I was speaking to you as an historian, and so I say: No people in History have needed the right to self-defence and legitimacy more than the Jews of Israel, and that is what we demand here today.

(Speech by historian Andrew Roberts, House of Commons, UK, July 19, 2010)

Jerusalem is above politics.

By Elie Wiesel

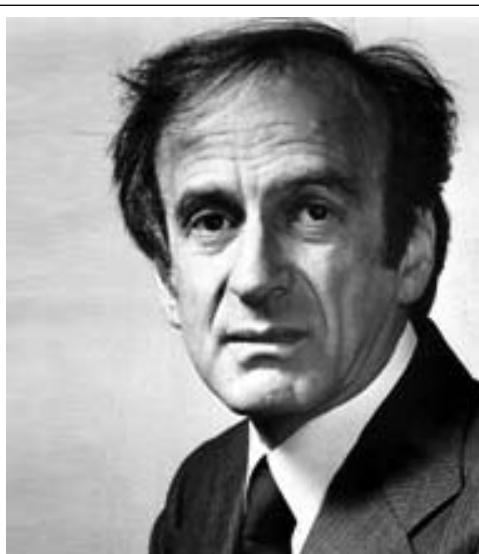
Nobel Prize-winning author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel took out a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal, in the form of an open letter to President Obama, with whom Wiesel visited the Buchenwald death camp last year. Here is the text of the letter.

Jerusalem

It was inevitable: Jerusalem once again is at the center of political debates and international storms. New and old tensions surface at a disturbing pace. Seventeen times destroyed and seventeen times rebuilt, it is still in the middle of diplomatic confrontations that could lead to armed conflict. Neither Athens nor Rome has aroused that many passions.

For me, the Jew that I am, Jerusalem is above politics. It is mentioned more than six hundred times in Scripture – and not a single time in the Koran. Its presence in Jewish history is overwhelming.

There is no more moving prayer in Jewish



Elie Wiesel

history than the one expressing our yearning to return to Jerusalem. To many theologians, it IS Jewish history, to many poets, a source of inspiration. It belongs to the Jewish people and is much more than a city; it is what binds one Jew to another in a way that

remains hard to explain. When a Jew visits Jerusalem for the first time, it is not the first time; it is a homecoming. The first song I heard was my mother's lullaby about and for Jerusalem. Its sadness and its joy are part of our collective memory.

When a Jew visits Jerusalem for the first time, it is a homecoming.

Since King David took Jerusalem as his capital, Jews have dwelled inside its walls with only two interruptions; when Roman invaders forbade them access to the city and again, when under Jordanian occupation.

Jews, regardless of nationality, were refused entry into the old Jewish quarter to meditate and pray at the Wall, the last vestige of Solomon's temple. It is important to remember: had Jordan not joined Egypt and Syria in the 1967 war against Israel, the old city of Jerusalem would still be Arab. Clearly, while Jews were ready to die for Jerusalem they would not kill for Jerusalem.

Today, for the first time in history, Jews, Christians and Muslims all may freely

worship at their shrines. And, contrary to certain media reports, Jews, Christians and Muslims ARE allowed to build their homes anywhere in the city. The anguish over Jerusalem is not about real estate but about memory.

What is the solution? Pressure will not produce a solution. Is there a solution? There must be, there will be. Why tackle the most complex and sensitive problem prematurely? Why not first take steps which will allow the Israeli and Palestinian communities to find ways to live together in an atmosphere of security. Why not leave the most difficult, the most sensitive issue, for such a time?

Jerusalem must remain the world's Jewish spiritual capital, not a symbol of anguish and bitterness, but a symbol of trust and hope. As the Hasidic master Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav said, "Everything in this world has a heart; the heart itself has its own heart."

Jerusalem is the heart of our heart, the soul of our soul.

Airbrushing Jewish History

By Yvette Alt Miller

Wouldn't it be convenient if the Jews never existed? If they had no claims whatsoever to the Land of Israel? If every piece of their history was exposed as a lie? If they silently, painlessly, just disappeared?

Baron Carl von Clausewitz famously called diplomacy "war by other means." In today's hostility to Israel, scholarship – archeology, sociology and history – is the new means in an old, old war. Jewish history – particularly those aspects establishing links with the land of Israel – are being quietly airbrushed away.

Attacking the Foundations

The first concrete Jewish link to the land of Israel is nearly 4,000 years old. When Sarah, the Jewish matriarch, died, her husband Abraham looked for a plot in which to bury her. A local landowner offered Abraham a field as a free gift. But Abraham demurred, insisting on paying full price for it. The Bible even records the amount Abraham paid: 400 silver shekels (Genesis 23:16).

Why was Abraham so insistent on paying full market value for this field? Because, Jewish tradition explains, he wanted to ensure that his connection with the land would never be questioned, never expire, never be denied. How ironic.

The name of the field that Abraham purchased was Machpela, and over the years, almost all of the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs were buried there. Abraham and Sarah. Isaac, Rebecca, Leah. Jacob died in Egypt, but his sons carried his body back to Israel to bury him in Machpela, too.

[Rachel is the only one of the Jewish founders not buried in Machpela. She is buried about 20 miles away – at Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem – where she died in childbirth.]

For thousands of years, Machpela, also known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs, has been – after the Temple Mount – the second-holiest site of prayer and pilgrimage in Judaism. There is a synagogue at the site, and hundreds of thousands of Jews visit each year to pray. Christians and Muslims also enjoy free access to worship at this site. Under the Oslo Accords (which still technically govern relations between the Palestinians and Israel), the Israeli government and Muslim authorities share control over Machpela.



A look at the Temple Mount

This arrangement has worked well for many years. But recently, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas started using the Tomb of the Patriarchs as a tool in the ongoing war against a Jewish presence in Israel, stating saying that Israeli control over any part of the Tomb was grounds for a "holy war". Rachel's Tomb, they claim, is actually an old mosque, Bilal al-Rabah.

And now, Palestinian efforts – and years of lobbying the UN – finally paid off. Unesco, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, officially reclassified both the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb as Palestinian. Not Jewish. Not shared. Exclusively Palestinian, exclusively Muslim. Further, Unesco declared, that any actions taken at these sites by the Israeli government is a "violation of international law."

Unesco has no police or army to enforce its edicts, but it is a prestigious (though obviously highly politicized organization), and its pronouncements carry moral weight. That it would "classify" the graves of the founders of Judaism as exclusively Muslim sites is absurd. But in 2010, that is the case.

Trashing the Temple Mount

Which brings us to Judaism's number-one holy site: *Har Habayit*, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This is where the first and second Jewish Temples stood for 800 years, from 833 BCE until the destruction by Roman forces in 70 AD.

The Holy Temple was a huge complex where the entire Jewish nation gathered and offered sacrifices to God year-round. The first Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Jewish tradition teaches that God's presence rested in the Holy of Holies, the most sacred spot on earth.

Today, the Western Wall – the retaining wall of the Temple Mount – is revered the world over.

After Israel's capture of the Temple Mount in June 1967, in what can only be described as an unprecedented show of religious tolerance, Israel handed the Muslim Waqf (religious trust) autonomy over the site.

For years the Waqf has been carrying out illegal excavations and renovations on the Temple Mount. In doing so, they surely must have found the most amazing archeological treasures known to man – utensils from the Temple period, stone tablets and ancient records. Perhaps even the Ark of the Covenant or a portion of the Ten Commandments themselves? Surely the world's most eminent archeologists are working on this site, unearthing it piece by piece with tweezers.

No. The Waqf is carting it away in garbage trucks. For years the Waqf has excavated millennia of Jewish history from the Temple Mount using huge bulldozers, piling the priceless, crushed treasures into garbage trucks, then dumping it all into the

valley below. Thousands of tons of it. It has become a cottage industry to visit the garbage dumps favored by the Waqf and sift through the filth, in order to uncover priceless fragments of our heritage.

But we needn't bother, according to the Palestinian Authority. What is the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, the focal point of continual Jewish prayers for over 3,000 years? Nothing. According to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, the Jews "claim that 2,000 years ago they had a Temple. I challenge the claim that this is so" (*Kul Al-Arab*, August 25, 2000).

Le Monde, the French newspaper of record, gave credence to this lie, quoting PA cabinet minister Yasser Abed Rabbo: "Looking at the situation from an archaeological standpoint, I am sure there is no temple."

Indeed. Given a few more years, the majority of evidence may be sitting in a garbage heap.

Jews Don't Exist

After denying Judaism's connection with its most holy sites, it's a short step to rejecting the history of the Jewish people outright. That is the argument put forth in the international bestseller, *The Invention of the Jewish People* by Shlomo Sand. He claims that Jewish roots in Israel are not from 4,000 years ago, but were largely invented in 19th century Germany, when a group of colorful folklorists decided to appropriate a national identity for themselves.

This thesis is almost too baseless to debunk, and reams of scholarship have been written refuting Sand's bizarre claims. (See *Newsweek's* article, "The DNA of Abraham's Children") But this didn't stop Sand's book from being awarded the prestigious Aujour'hui literary award.

The Bible warns us to "keep away from falsehood" (Exodus 23:7). Only regarding lying are we instructed to "keep away" entirely. Lies have a habit of creeping and growing, of building on each other.

It is up to each of us to educate ourselves and refute the lies whenever and wherever we find them. For if we fail to be vigilant, it opens the door to those who not only seek to distort Jewish history, but to erase it entirely.

(Yvette Alt Miller has taught as an adjunct professor at Northwestern and other universities, and was Director of Public Affairs for the Washington DC office of the United Jewish Communities)

A German's View on Islam

A man, whose family was German aristocracy prior to World War II, owned a number of large industries and estates. When asked how many German people were true Nazis, the answer he gave can guide our attitude toward fanaticism. 'Very few people were true Nazis,' he said, 'but many enjoyed the return of German pride, and many more were too busy to care. I was one of those who just thought the Nazis were a bunch of fools. So, the majority just sat back and let it all happen. Then, before we knew it, they owned us, and we had lost control, and the end of the world had come. My family lost everything. I ended up in a concentration camp and the Allies destroyed my factories.'

We are told again and again by 'experts' and 'talking heads' that Islam is the religion of peace and that the vast majority of Muslims just want to live in peace. Although this unqualified assertion may be true, it is entirely irrelevant. It is meaningless fluff,

meant to make us feel better, and meant to somehow diminish the spectre of fanatics rampaging across the globe in the name of Islam.

The fact is that the fanatics rule Islam at this moment in history. It is the fanatics who march. It is the fanatics who wage any one of 50 shooting wars worldwide. It is the fanatics who systematically slaughter Christian or tribal groups throughout Africa and are gradually taking over the entire continent in an Islamic wave. It is the fanatics who bomb, behead, murder, or honour-kill. It is the fanatics who take over mosque after mosque. It is the fanatics who zealously spread the stoning and hanging of rape victims and homosexuals. It is the fanatics who teach their young to kill and to become suicide bombers.

The hard, quantifiable fact is that the peaceful majority, the 'silent majority,' is cowed and extraneous.

Communist Russia was comprised of

Russians who just wanted to live in peace, yet the Russian Communists were responsible for the murder of about 20 million people. The peaceful majority were irrelevant. China's huge population was peaceful as well, but Chinese Communists managed to kill a staggering 70 million people.

The average Japanese individual prior to World War II was not a warmongering sadist. Yet, Japan murdered and slaughtered its way across South East Asia in an orgy of killing that included the systematic murder of 12 million Chinese civilians; most killed by sword, shovel, and bayonet.

And who can forget Rwanda, which collapsed into butchery. Could it not be said that the majority of Rwandans were 'peace loving'?

History lessons are often incredibly simple and blunt, yet for all our powers of reason, we often miss the most basic and uncomplicated of points: Peace-loving Muslims have been made irrelevant by their

silence. Peace-loving Muslims will become our enemy if they don't speak up, because like my friend from Germany, they will awaken one day and find that the fanatics own them, and the end of their world will have begun.

Peace-loving Germans, Japanese, Chinese, Russians, Rwandans, Serbs, Afghans, Iraqis, Palestinians, Somalis, Nigerians, Algerians, and many others have died because the peaceful majority did not speak up until it was too late. As for us who watch it all unfold, we must pay attention to the only group that counts--the fanatics who threaten our way of life..

Lastly, anyone who doubts that the issue is serious and just deletes this email without sending it on, is contributing to the passiveness that allows the problems to expand. So, extend yourself a bit and send this on and on and on! Let us hope that thousands, world-wide, read this and think about it, and send it on - before it's too late.

Jewish Insights on the Lord's Prayer

By Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg

Realizing how Jesus would have practiced the customs of his own religious culture can yield many insights into his teachings on prayer. Think for a moment about the Lord's Prayer. As beloved as it is, many of us scratch our heads about phrases like "hallowed be your name" or "your kingdom come." These lines are at the same time familiar but strange. We struggle to understand them not because any thick headedness on our part but because Jesus' words are so Jewish. His teaching on prayer relies on classic themes that still resonate with Jews today.

The Adimah

It has been suggested that the Lord's Prayer is a summary of the *Amidah* because it encompasses several of its themes. *Amidah*, which literally means, "standing," refers to a series of blessings recited while standing and is the core of every Jewish worship service.

Using the image of master and servant, the Rabbis declared that a worshipper should come before his or her master first with words of praise, then should ask one's petitions, and finally should withdraw with words of thanks. Thus, every *Amidah* is divided into three central sections: praise, petitions, and thanks. Whether or not Jesus had the *Amidah* in mind when He taught the Lord's Prayer, the fact that it shares similar themes shows that Jesus' prayers exemplified the wisdom of Jewish prayer.

Our Father

Even the first two words of the Lord's Prayer – "Our Father" – can teach us a lot. The Lord's Prayer reflects the Jewish tradition by using the phrase "our Father" rather than "my Father." Unlike our tendency to focus on our own individual needs, Jewish prayers tend to involve community prayer for the needs of the whole people. Even today, some prayers cannot be offered unless a *minyan* (ten adult male Jews) are present to represent the people as a whole.

Notice, however, that while Jesus taught his disciples to address God as "our Father," He himself spoke to God as "my Father," in the singular. In Jewish prayer, God was sometimes called "our Father," but "my Father" was daring, almost unheard of. Many would have marked this as evidence that He was the Messiah because several prophecies describe the Messiah as someone who would be in a especially close relationship with God. Every time Jesus referred to God as "my" Father, His listeners would have heard it as a bold claim.

Remarkably, Jesus spoke of God as "my Father" when He was only twelve years old. Remember His response to His parents when they discovered Him conversing with scholars at the temple: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). It seems that the boy Jesus was well aware of His identity and mission.

Give us today our daily bread

What about the phrase "give us today our daily bread"? Why does Jesus tell us to pray for "bread"? Why not tell us to pray for roast beef or bananas? In Hebrew, the word for bread, *lechem*, can also mean food in general. When Jesus held up bread, broke it, and thanked His Father in heaven, He was giving thanks for the entire meal, just as a Jewish father would have done. *Lechem* represents not only all the food but God's sustenance as a whole. When we pray this way, we are asking God to provide for all our needs. Grasping this can broaden our understanding of what Jesus was saying when He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Jesus himself is the deepest sustenance of all.

Deliver us from evil

What about the line "deliver us from evil"? What kind of evil is Jesus talking about? We can find clues both in the Scriptures and in Jewish prayer. Several places in the Old Testament speak of God "delivering [someone] from evil. But the Hebrew word for evil, *ra*, is broad, meaning danger or misfortune as well as sin (for instance Psalm 121:7 or Job 5:19). The rabbis realized that the word *ra* can encompass many things, so one prayer from around A.D. 200 asks specifically: "Deliver me...from a bad person, a bad companion, a bad injury, an evil inclination, and from Satan, the Destroyer." Four times the Hebrew word *ra* is used, first as a way of asking for physical protection, but then to ask for protection from being tempted to do evil by



Sermon on the Mount

others, as well as by one's own desires, and even by Satan. This prayer asks God's help both physically and spiritually to avoid those things that will ultimately destroy our lives.

Perhaps this ancient rabbinic prayer can help us better understand our own Rabbi's teaching. It parallels Jesus' words "lead us not into temptation," which is a Jewish way of saying, "Don't let us succumb to our own evil inclinations. Help us to avoid temptation and sin." We certainly won't go wrong if we hear Jesus' words as a plea for God to protect us from the evil that is both within and without.

Thy Kingdom Come

One of the most familiar phrases in the Lord's Prayer is this, "Thy kingdom come". But what did Jesus mean by it? You might be surprised to learn that Jews have been praying in a similar way for thousands of years. Listen to the ancient words of the "*Alenu*," which means, "It is incumbent upon us," or "It is our duty."

"Therefore do we wait for Thee, O Lord our God, soon to behold Thy mighty glory, when Thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth, and idols shalt be exterminated; when the world shall be regenerated by the kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh invoke Thy name; when all the wicked of the earth shall be turned unto Thee. Then shall all the inhabitants of the world perceive and confess that unto Thee every knee must bend, and every tongue be sworn. Before Thee, O Lord our God, shall they kneel and fall down, and unto Thy glorious name give honor. So will they accept the yoke of Thy kingdom, and Thou shall be King over them speedily forever and aye. For Thine is the kingdom, and to all eternity Thou wilt reign in glory, as it is written in Thy Torah: 'The Lord shall reign forever and aye.' And it is also said: 'And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His name be One.'"

Even though ancient Jews believed that God already reigned over them, they prayed that the whole world would one day know and honor God. They wanted every nation on earth to repent and worship the true God of heaven.

This can help us understand the Lord's Prayer. To many of us, "thy kingdom come" sounds as if it's about Christ's second coming. But the *Alenu* shows us what it's really about – that all the world will come to worship God. The first three lines of the Lord's Prayer, then, voice our desire for God to expand His loving reign, bringing all people into relationship with Him so that they might revere Him and do His will. In effect, we are praying for the gospel to go

forth. Instead of passively waiting for Jesus to return, we are asking God's help in making disciples of all nations.

Still, Jesus' prayer as well as many other Jewish prayers point out a gap between the ideal reign of God and the way He actually reigns in the present. They seem to be saying that God isn't King of the world just yet. Of course as Creator, God is ultimately sovereign. But in rabbinic thinking, evil still fills the earth because the world has refused to acknowledge that God is its true King.

The Kingdom is Here

Yet, Jesus claimed that God's reign had definitely come to earth in His ministry. Jesus healed or cast out demons and then declared that the kingdom of God was "near" or "at hand" (Luke 10:9). This way of speaking of God's kingdom was unique to Jesus and essential to His message.

One thing might confuse you – the English word "near" can be misleading, because it sounds as though Jesus is telling His friends that the kingdom is "close, but not quite." But it is likely that Jesus was using the Hebrew verb *karav* which means intimately close. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, "came near" (*karav*) to his wife in Isaiah 8:3, and she conceived a son. How much nearer could the prophet get than that? Nuances of language can make it sound as if Jesus is talking about God's reign being "not quite yet," when He is actually stating that it is already revealing itself on earth through His ministry.

Every week in their Sabbath liturgy, Jews recall Israel's miraculous redemption from Egypt with these words: "Your people saw your kingdom as you cleaved the sea before Moses." By this they are saying that when the Red Sea parted, God's power burst in upon creation in an astonishing way. It was as though a giant hand had suddenly reached out of the sky and parted waves, allowing God's people to walk across while their enemies were swallowed up. By performing this great miracle of deliverance, God was showing His people (and His enemies) who is really in charge of the universe.

Similarly, when Jesus walked through the land healing and delivering people, God's kingdom was visibly breaking into history, just as it had in Exodus. But God's reign was revealing itself in a greater way than ever before as people experienced His saving, redeeming love.

After one dramatic incident of deliverance, Jesus' opponents accused Him of using demonic powers to cast out demons. Listen closely to His response: "If I drive out

Continued from page 6

demons by *the finger of God*, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Luke 11:20, italics added). Jesus was making a not-so-subtle reference to Exodus, to the scene in which the Egyptian magicians, after witnessing God’s power in the plagues, exclaim, “This is *the finger of God*” (Exodus 8:19). It is at this moment that Pharaoh’s hirelings realize they have been beaten. God’s power is utterly beyond any demonic force they can conjure. In the same way, Jesus is saying that now is the moment when people should realize that His own power over demonic forces reveals His spiritual authority.

Already Christ has stormed the beaches of Satan’s kingdom, initiating his great defeat. Jesus is taking back prisoners, setting them free one life at a time. No wonder Jesus’ words were so shocking to His accusers.

The Messiah and the Kingdom

Why was Jesus so focused on proclaiming that the kingdom of God had arrived on earth, and why did He link it to His ministry of physical healing and spiritual liberation? Jesus did this because *everyone expected the Messiah to bring God’s kingdom to earth*.

Remarkably, some theologians have completely missed this point, mistakenly concluding that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. But Jesus’ audience would have immediately recognized what He was saying – that He was making the shocking claim to be the fulfillment of God’s great promises. Jesus employed a Jewish way of saying that He was the Christ, the Anointed King whom God had promised.

From the very beginning, in Genesis, God had promised to anoint a king from the people of Israel to reign over the whole world (see Genesis 49:10). Listen to this beautiful messianic passage from the prophet Isaiah: “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever* (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Jesus is all of the things Isaiah prophesied even though He is not yet reigning in full glory. Though He is the Mighty God, the Gospels introduce Him to us as the humble Prince of Peace. One day, though, He will be revealed as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Listen to how Charles Colson explains it:

“Probably the most significant event in Europe during World War II was D-Day, June 6, 1944, when the Allied armies stormed the beaches of Normandy. That attack guaranteed the eventual destruction of the Axis powers in Europe. Though the war continued with seeming uncertainties along the way, the outcome was in fact determined. But it wasn’t until May 8, 1945 – VE Day – that the results of the forces set in motion eleven months earlier were realized.

Christ’s death and resurrection – the D-Day of human history – assure His ultimate victory. But we are still on the beaches. The enemy has not yet been vanquished, and the fighting is still ugly. Christ’s invasion has assured the ultimate outcome, however – victory for God and His people at some future date. The second stage, which will take place when Christ returns, will complete God’s rule over all the universe; His kingdom will be visible without imperfection.

The way we understand Jesus’ words about the kingdom is critical to the kind of life we will live. If we think the “kingdom of heaven” is simply about Christ’s second coming or about going to heaven when we die, we’ll be tempted to become passive and complacent. But if Jesus’ kingdom is a living, dynamic reality – a reality that is right now steadily advancing against the kingdom of darkness – that’s a different story. As followers of Christ, our obedience is vital because it is a catalyst for the Spirit’s work, making us more like Jesus so that His reign can spread across the whole earth.

Jesus’ message of the kingdom is Jewish to the core. It is also at the very heart of the gospel, revealing a God of tenderness and mercy, who postpones final judgment until as many people as possible can be gathered into the Kingdom of His Son.

(Source: *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus – how the Jewishness of Jesus can transform your faith* / Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg – Zondervan, ISBN 978-0-310-28422-2).

Free Speech Has Died in Europe

By Prof. Phyllis Chesler

On February 24, 2011, the distinguished Lars Hedegaard, the President of the Danish Free Press Society and the International Free Press Society, will stand trial for telling the truth about Islamic gender apartheid.

Europe, once the birthplace of freedom, is fast becoming its graveyard.

True, the Church tortured and burned many geniuses as heretics; Dutch Jews excommunicated Spinoza; wars for religious supremacy raged for hundreds of years. Still, concepts such as free speech and individual human rights over and above the divine rights of Kings gradually ruled the European zeitgeist. Americans and other former colonists romanticized Europe as “the” place for artists, free thinkers, and free spirits.

Despite fairly rigid class systems, and the continued existence of symbolic (but well paid) monarchies, European countries are known for providing educational, social, and health care services for all—a reality which, given immigration, and native concepts of a short work week followed by an early, long retirement, may potentially bankrupt them all.

Nevertheless, Europe has been in the forefront of both free speech and libertinism. For example, Denmark legalized gay marriage in 1989; Holland and Germany followed suit in 2001. In 1999, Denmark decided that prostitutes could ply their trade as individuals, but outlawed both pimps and brothels. In 2000, Holland legalized brothels. From 1999 on, buying—but not selling sex—has been illegal in Sweden. In 2009, Norway and Iceland passed similar legislation. Austria, a decadent country, led the pack; since 1986, prostituted Austrian women have been obliged to pay taxes on their income.

One often assumes that freedom of thought and speech must co-exist with such misogynist libertinism. One would be wrong. In 2004, in Holland, journalist and filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was butchered and Ayaan Hirsi Ali was sent into hiding and then exile; in 2009, politician Geert Wilders was also put on trial for trying to tell the truth about Islamic gender and religious apartheid and jihad. Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff is currently on trial in Austria for talking off the record to a journalist about her own experiences while living in the Islamic world.

Please note: Islamists did not launch their legal prosecution. Their own countrymen, in the language of “political correctness” and in the guise of opposing “hate speech” did so.

In 2010, the American author, Bruce Bawer and his Norwegian colleagues were accused of “racism” and “Islamophobia” by Norwegian leftists and Islamists who tried to have their excellent online website Human Rights Service defunded. This site publishes work about Islam and women’s rights. One leftist minister actually reported them to the United Nations for “Islamophobia.” Hege Storhaug and Rita Karlsen, who run the website, have just informed me that they do not believe this minister will succeed in having them declared “racists” or in de-funding their work.

And now, free speech is under full-scale attack in Denmark.

The Danes have, perhaps, been traumatized by what happened in 2005, when Islamists slipped three more offensive cartoons into Kurt Westergaard’s Danish cartoon mix, and then used their own cartoons to justify riots against Westergaard and other infidels. Global publishers became frightened and refused to reprint the less offensive cartoons. Even Yale University Press, which published a book about the cartoons, pulled the actual cartoons from their edition, without telling the author.

To this day, more than six years later, Westergaard still lives in hiding with an armed guard. In 2010, Lars Wilks, the Swedish artist, was nearly murdered by a would-be Muslim assassin.

And now we have the Danish criminal prosecution of two Danish heroes: Lars Hedegaard and Jesper Langballe, a member of the Danish Parliament. Both men are accused of committing “hate speech.” What speech did Langballe utter? He exposed honor killings among Muslims and was actually convicted for doing so, according to Ahmed Mohamud, the Vice President of The Danish Free Press Society, and Katrine Winkel Holm, Chief Editor of Sappho, the Society’s magazine.



Phyllis Chesler

In the past year, the Danish public prosecutor has been waging a lawfare offensive against outspoken critics of Islam and Muslim practices. On December 3, 2010, Member of Parliament Jesper Langballe was convicted of ‘hate speech’ – or as the judge in the lower court of Randers put it: ‘racial discrimination’ – for having called attention to honour killings in Muslim families.

And what exactly is Lars Hedegaard’s crime?

His crime has been to point to the great number of family rapes in areas dominated by Muslim culture. This well documented fact has brought him an indictment under the Danish penal code’s ‘racism’ clause...

According to Mohamud and Winkel Holm, both MP Langballe and Lars Hedegaard have long ago “emphasised that they did not intend to accuse all Muslims or even the majority of Muslims of such crimes. This has made no impression on the public prosecutor. We fear that the public prosecutor intends to stifle open debate on Islam and Muslim culture. And we fear that he is doing so with the tacit approval of the governing parties, which first signalled their intention to remove the racism clause from the penal code but have recently recanted.”

If the government succeeds in silencing Langballe and Hedegaard, who will have the courage to continue to speak out?

If free speech and truth speech become criminal offenses in Denmark, what will happen to freedom in other European countries? Such state censorship and criminal prosecution characterize nearly every Muslim country. Now Europe is rapidly becoming the very country—“Eurabia”—first predicted by Bat Ye’or in 2005. From the British Isles to the south of Italy, from France to Scandinavia, more and more Muslim women (including European converts) are wearing face veils and burqas, marrying their first cousins or polygamous men in arranged marriages, remaining at home as domestic servants, having triple or even quadruple the number of children that their non-Muslim counterparts have. Most happily live on the European dole.

Muslim girls and women are being savagely honor murdered in Europe if they dare resist this larger Islamist goal of colonizing Europe. Thus far, America and Israel may be the last countries standing against just such Arabization and fundamentalist Islamification.

I have published academic studies about honor killings and have written many articles about individual cases. I testify in court cases for potential Muslim honor killing victims who are seeking asylum in America. Will I, too, someday be tried as a “racist”? Will such asylum seekers be tried as criminals for exposing the horrendous violence that they have escaped in the hope that the West will be a sanctuary for them?

Can what is happening in Denmark, Holland, and Austria ever happen in America?

I strongly urge the Danish prosecutors to set aside Jesper Langballe’s conviction and to drop all charges against him and against my colleague Lars Hedegaard. If they fail to do so, they are personally responsible for sending their country and culture back to the Middle Ages, Islamist style.

(Source: Arutz Sheva)

BORN IN AUSCHWITZ

By Jeff Heinrich

Honor thy mother. That's the motto Angela Polgar has tried to live by all her life – a life that began in a death camp. The place was Auschwitz-Birkenau, in southern Poland. Her parents, Hungarian Jews, arrived there on a Nazi transport on May 25, 1944.

Polgar's mother, Vera Bein, nee Otvos, was 25 years old at the time and almost two months pregnant. On the infamous railway platform where "selections" were made, Bein, as Polgar respectfully calls her, was not sent to the gas chambers. Instead, she was assigned to a variety of gruelling work details before becoming a guinea pig for sterilization experiments by a camp doctor.

By the horrific standards of the Holocaust, it's an ordinary story, perhaps -- except for one thing. The patient survived, and so did her child.

On Dec. 21 Bein felt labour pains. She climbed to the top bunk in her barrack, and there, aided by two other inmates, gave birth in secret to a baby girl.

The infant was tiny, weighing only one kilogram; she was too weak to cry but strong enough to drink the meagre offering from her mother's breast, and somehow survived the next few weeks in hiding.

Soviet Red Army troops liberated the camp on Jan. 27, 1945. Baby and mother were among the survivors, and they were an unusual sight – indeed, almost unique.

The only other infant survivor, according to Auschwitz museum records, was a Hungarian boy, Gyorgy Faludi, born the day of liberation with the help of a Russian doctor.

Angela Polgar has decided now is the right time to tell Canadians her family's remarkable story.

She isn't doing it to shine light on herself; she even refuses to have her picture taken, for fear people would accuse her of self-aggrandizement.

Rather, she wants to honor her mother, a woman who never liked to talk about her experience because she thought it would be a burden to her daughter.

"She was a very, very special lady," said Polgar, a former clothing store owner who lives in Montreal with her husband, Joseph.

"My mother felt so terrible for all the people who had lost their children. They lost their babies, and she brought one back," Polgar said.

"And at the same time she didn't want me to have the memories she had. So she didn't talk about it."

Telling it now is a release – and a duty. "It has nothing to do with me, this story. She did it. She's the one who went through all this." And so Angela Polgar begins her story.

Liquidated en masse

That both mother and daughter survived at all is a miracle in itself. About 1.1 million people, mostly Jews, were exterminated at Auschwitz between the start of the organized killing in March 1942 and its end in November 1944. The death machine was at its busiest the summer that Polgar's parents and other Hungarian Jews arrived en masse to be liquidated – more than 132,000



Auschwitz

a month, according to Canadian scholar Robert Jan van Pelt's exhaustive study, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*.

"By the end of June, in just two months, half of Hungary's Jewry – 381,661 souls – had arrived at Auschwitz," van Pelt wrote in the 1996 book he co-authored with U.S. scholar Deborah Dwork. "At no other time was Auschwitz more efficient as a killing center."



Vera Otvos in 1941

They quote one survivor, Alexander Ehrmann, who arrived at Birkenau at night and was aghast at what he saw and heard – especially the piles of burning bracken and rubble he saw and smelled through the barbed wire.

From the pyres came the sounds of children. "I heard a baby crying. The baby was crying somewhere in the distance and I couldn't stop and look. We moved, and it smelled, a horrible stench. I knew that things in the fire were moving; there were babies in the fire."

At selection on the platform, most visibly pregnant women were sent to die; so were babies, children, the obviously sick and the elderly. Others were spared for use as slave labour or fodder for medical experimentation.

Some of the inmates in Camp C, Auschwitz's barrack for Hungarian Jewish women and girls, were able to bring their pregnancies to term, but their babies were

almost invariably taken from them right after and killed – "mercifully" strangled to death by Jewish inmate doctors forced to work for the Nazis.

Most pregnancies never got that far; the usual clandestine practice was to abort fetuses before they could be born – a life-saving measure for the mother, who was an easy target for liquidation if her pregnancy became too obvious.

One of the Jewish physicians who routinely performed this "service" at Auschwitz, a Hungarian gynecologist named Gisella Perl, described that and worse in her 1948 memoir *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*.

Walking by one of the crematoriums one day, she witnessed what happened to one group of women who, promised better treatment, had revealed to their Nazi overlords that they were pregnant. "They were surrounded by a group of SS men and women, who amused themselves by giving these helpless creatures a taste of hell, after which death was a welcome friend," Perl recalled in her book.

"They were beaten with clubs and whips, torn by dogs, dragged around by their hair and kicked in the stomach with heavy German boots. Then, when they collapsed, they were thrown into the crematory -- alive."

Birth in Death Camp

Vera Bein escaped that fate. For the longest while, she kept her pregnancy secret, and was lucky her delivery came within weeks of liberation by the Soviets, unannounced, and not "helped" by any camp doctor.

Her survival – and that of her daughter – is a footnote of the Holocaust, but an important one.

"This does seem to be an unusual story," said Estee Yaari, foreign media liaison for the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. "Although there are others," she said, including one survivor born in Buchenwald in 1944, "it is a rather rare occurrence."

Surviving Auschwitz was one thing. Little "Angi", as her mother called her, was also lucky to have survived the war's chaotic

aftermath, overcoming a bad start from poor nutrition that made her bones weak.

She was even lucky to get official proof of her arrival in this world: a birth certificate that her adoptive father got for her before the family left Poland.

Prepared in 1945 in Oswiecim, the Polish name for Auschwitz, the certificate gave her name as "Angela Bein." The surname was that of her biological father, Tibor Bein, a lawyer, who died of maltreatment in the camp.

"Auschwitz" was listed as her place of birth – a place that has ceased to exist by the German name, except as an expression synonymous with mechanized murder. Auschwitz today exists only as a museum, and Angela Polgar has never been back.

She has a copy of her birth certificate, issued in 1989 by the Communist authorities in her hometown, Sarospatak, in eastern Hungary.

As further proof, she has her original 1966 Hungarian teacher's diploma, which also lists Auschwitz as her birthplace.



Angela Polgar's birth certificate

After the Liberation

After the liberation in 1945, Polgar's mother trekked across parts of Poland, Romania and Byelorussia in a circuitous route leading back to safety in Hungary. There, Vera remarried, and it was that second husband -- Sandor Polgar, also an Auschwitz survivor, owner of a textile shop and a generation older than Vera -- who adopted Polgar and become her "real" father, the only one she ever knew.

Twelve years later, however, he, too, died, and mother and child were once again set adrift. Coming on the heels of the crushing of their country's revolution by the Soviets in 1956, and with a relative now in Canada to sponsor them, they started plotting their flight from Hungary. Vera left in 1966, Angela followed in 1973 with her own daughter, Katy. They settled in Toronto, where Vera worked as a kindergarten teacher and bookkeeper. Katy moved to Montreal and started a family, and in 1996 Vera moved here to be with them.

Continued from page 8

For the longest time, the family saga – especially the Auschwitz part – was kept private. The only public recounting came in the form of a short memoir, written in Angela Polgar’s voice by her sister-in-law, a retired Montreal high schoolteacher named Marianne Polgar. It was published in a small Zionist journal in New York in 2000.

Testimonies

Then, after a barrage of coverage in the media about the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Polgar decided the time had come to let the whole story be told. Polgar also unearthed a precious resource: an old audio tape of her mother recounting her time at Auschwitz. It was an “interview” Vera gave her granddaughter, Katy, in 1984 for a high-school project. The tape – her final word on the subject – will soon be registered as part of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum’s archives in Poland.

As testimonies go, it’s a poignant one: words spoken over the telephone more than 25 years ago, a 30-minute inter-generational dialogue in which the subject sounds like she’d rather not be telling the innocent teenager just how horrible history can be.

“It’s so painful to talk about this,” Vera says at one point, as Katy prods her for details. “I was so curious to hear what she had to say,” Katy, now doing her doctorate in cancer research at McGill University, recalled last week.

“My mother was so protective; she wouldn’t let me read any Holocaust books, so this was my one-time shot to see what my grandmother could give me. The amazing thing was that she was never bitter about what happened to her. She just went on with life.”

On the tape, Vera begins by describing the confusion of her arrival at Auschwitz in May, 1944. She remembers the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele sending her to the left after inspection on the platform while others were sent to the right, to their deaths. Worried she was being separated from the others and unaware of her good fortune to be spared, she remembers telling Mengele she was pregnant, hoping he’d be compassionate and let her stay with the others.

“You stupid goose!” she recalled Mengele snapping at her, ordering her to do as she was told. Healthy and strong, Vera was good stock for the camp’s labor force. Mengele wasn’t going to send her to her death, not yet.

Registration nr. A-6075

She was sent to have her left arm tattooed with a registration number: A-6075. Then she was assigned the night shift in the ample storeroom in Camp A that contained mounds of confiscated belongings of other Auschwitz victims and inmates.

Because it was so rich in stock, the depot was dubbed “Kanada,” like the land of plenty. Vera’s job was to sort clothing, shoes, bedding – anything the Germans wanted to keep for themselves.

Later, she was assigned kitchen duty, where she ate potato peels, a slight but vital source of nutrition for her and the child inside her. The rest of her daily diet consisted of ersatz coffee in the morning, “something warm, a soup made of grass” for lunch, and for supper a slice of bread with a smear of jam or margarine on it.

Then came hard labour outside the camp, building a road and working in a field. Vera was transferred to Camp B2, then



A face from the female camp - author Jan Baras

Camp C, where she got to know children, especially twins, who were used for medical experiments by Mengele and fellow doctors before being liquidated.

Medical Experiments

It was only a matter of time before she became a guinea pig herself.

In October, now seven months pregnant, she was selected by Prof. Carl Clauberg’s medical team for sterilization experiments. They injected some kind of burning, caustic substance into her cervix.

Right behind, in the uterus, was the fetus.

“That was me in there,” Polgar now marvels. “The needles went in, I went to the right side, then the left side. Who knows what he gave her?”

Somehow the fetus survived. After the experiment was over, the patient went back to her barracks – and then disappeared from the doctors’ radar.

“Somehow Mengele forgot her,” Polgar said. “I was so small, the pregnancy didn’t really show. That was her luck. Otherwise, they would have finished her off, and me, too.”

A month later, Vera was approached in her barracks by “a Jewish woman doctor” – possibly the gynecologist Gisella Perl.

The doctor had a warning and an offer. She told her that new mothers usually “disappeared” along with their offspring after the birth – sent to the gas chambers. She offered to give Vera an abortion.

“I promised her to think it over, because she really insisted on it,” Vera recalled on the tape. “She said I was too young to be gassed, and she wanted to save me.” But that night, Vera dreamt of her mother. “She told me, ‘Veruska, you are eight months pregnant, and you don’t do this, because

(the fetus is) alive already and ready to leave. Believe in God and Hashem will be with you. Maybe a miracle will happen. But don’t do it.’

“The next day, Vera gave the doctor her answer: she was going ahead with the birth. It happened on Dec. 21, in the barracks of Camp C. “I felt the pain and told the Block altester (the barrack’s inmate supervisor) that I feel cramps and pain. She asked me to climb on the top of the bunk, and she came with me and she helped me to give birth to your mummy,” Vera tells her granddaughter on the tape. “She knew how to do it, because she was the daughter of a doctor, so she had an idea about cleanliness and how to help a woman in labor. She brought hot water and clean sheets. She cooked a pair of scissors in hot water to sterilize them” before cutting the umbilical cord, she said. “So everything went quite easily.” The infant weighed one kilogram, a little over two pounds “Mummy was so weak and so tiny, she didn’t cry. So nobody knew she was born.”

Three hours after giving birth, Vera had to leave her baby in the bunk and go outside in the cold for roll call – what the Germans called the Appell.

Miracles

Her daughter is still amazed she was able to do it. “What courage, what incredible strength she had to do that,” Polgar said. “Remember, it was December. It was freezing, and they didn’t have any coats or proper shoes, just wooden clogs that made them slip on the ice.”

Just before the liberation, a final scare. Yelling “Schnell! Schnell!” (Quick! Quick!) the German guards herded surviving inmates like Vera into a tunnel beneath the camp and told them they would be exterminated. (It didn’t happen, but to her dying day Vera retained a mortal fear of tunnels; once,

trapped between stations in a stalled Toronto subway car, she lost her senses, screaming to be let out.)

After the scare, there was another miracle.

On the day of liberation another child was born at Auschwitz, Gyorgy Faludi.

His mother had helped Vera with her delivery; now Vera returned the favor.

The woman didn’t have enough milk to suckle her son, so Vera did it. It was the beginning of a long friendship. The two families – Faludi with her son, Bein with her daughter – stuck together for the next few months of wandering back to Hungary. Vera nursed the two children and helped Faludi find her husband and return to their hometown, Miskolc. The war was over. Now the recovery began. After the liberation, no-one except Vera held up much hope that little Angela would live long.

In Budapest, Vera’s mother’s advice was to let the baby die. So, too, said the local doctors they consulted – until one of them did a closer examination.”(He) held me up like a chicken, by the legs with my head down. He wanted to see if I’d try to pull my head up. And I did. And then he said ‘We can let that baby live.’” Her biggest problem in those first few years were her bones. “They were very weak, and I wasn’t allowed to walk. So they put me in a carriage, and my father took me back and forth to school that way,” she said.

In the street, strangers used to stare.” Everybody looked at me ... and said ‘That’s a doll, not a baby.’ They called my mother the crazy lady, because they thought she was only pretending to have a baby.” Over time, though, with better nutrition and care, the child’s bones got stronger, and at six she could finally walk unaided. The legacy of Angela’s early years never disappeared completely. She’s still tiny of stature, under five feet tall, and walks with a shuffling gait. But that doesn’t seem to faze her. These days, she bustles back and forth to a computer class she takes in Montreal and doesn’t seem handicapped by her physique – or her past.

Sixty years after her birth she’s been thinking a lot about her mother. She remembers her on her death bed, 13 years ago in a Toronto hospital. It was a sad, cruel end to a remarkable life. Vera’s body was ridden with cancer of the spine and lung. While she lay dying, paralyzed, she had visions of Auschwitz. “She would say ‘Mengele is at the door,’” Polgar said. “It was horrible. There was not enough morphine to take the nightmare away even from her dying minutes.”

Vera Polgar, previously Vera Bein, born Veronika Otvos, died at age 73 on Jan. 28, 1992 – a day after the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. “She did not want to die on Jan. 27,” Polgar said. “She pulled the suffering through to the next day to die.”

She remembers her mother for many things: the odds she overcame, the perseverance she embodied, the pain she concealed for so many years under a mask of optimism and a survivor’s dream of renewal.

“She was very charming, never depressed,” Polgar said. “But deep down, it was always there.”

Like the ink in the number tattooed on her arm, the mark that Auschwitz left on Vera’s psyche was indelible. Now, thanks to her daughter, so is her story.

This article originally appeared in *CanWest Newspapers*.

(Source: *CanWest News Service* 2005)

What the Western Media Misses

By Arsen Ostrovsky

Recently, I was fortunate to attend a talk by Israeli Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh in Jerusalem.

Toameh gave an incredibly wide ranging talk about the peace process, the double standards rife in the West and the media when it comes to coverage of the Middle East and his perspective as a Muslim Arab of Palestinian descent living in Israel (and you thought you had identity issues!).

Toameh has been working as a journalist for almost 30 years now, covering Palestinian affairs, focusing predominantly on the West Bank and Gaza, including for the Palestinian press under the PLO and for various international media outlets in the US and Europe. He is currently at the *Jerusalem Post* writing on Palestinian issues. Toameh is also an Israeli citizen living in Jerusalem. Khaled Abu Toameh is one of two winners of Israel's Media Watch's 2011 award for media criticism.

However, if you expected Toameh to jump on the anti-Israel bandwagon with the familiar cries that Israel is an un-democratic apartheid state responsible for all that is wrong including the bubonic plague or to have a single-minded focus on the occupation, you would have been sorely disappointed.

Instead, he spoke openly, courageously and in his words, said it "as it is". Asked what he thought was the essence of the conflict, Toameh said it was not about money or even settlements, as many so called pundits often imply, as a precursor to blaming Israel. Rather, his answer was very simple: "This conflict is about Israel's very existence in this part of the world."

But before you get any conclusions, Toameh is not a card carrying Zionist or as somebody once asked him "when did you get on the Israel lobby payroll". In his own words, he says: "I'm not pro-Israel, I'm not pro-Palestinian and I'm not pro-American. But as a journalist, I'm pro the facts and pro the truth."

Here are some of Toameh's illuminating comments:

I asked Toameh how, as an Arab Muslim Israeli, he responds to accusations that Israel is an apartheid state.

His response: "Israel is not an apartheid state. But there are problems and some discrimination with the Arab minority inside Israel. If Israel were an apartheid state, I, for example, would not be allowed to work for a Jewish newspaper or live in a Jewish neighborhood or own a home. The real apartheid is in Lebanon, where there is a law that bans Palestinians from working in over 50 professions. Can you imagine if the Knesset passed a law banning Arabs from working even in one profession? The real apartheid is also in many Arab and Muslim nations, like Kuwait, where my Palestinian uncle, who has been living there for 35 years is banned from buying a house. The law of Israel does not distinguish between a Jew and an Arab."



Khaled Abu Toameh

As for the uniqueness of the Israeli media in the Middle East, Toameh added: "Israel is a free and open country with a democracy that respects the freedom of the media. You can basically write any anti-Israel story and still walk in downtown Jerusalem or Tel Aviv without having to worry about your safety. Anyone can be a journalist in Israel."

Toameh says he finds it ironic that as an Arab Muslim living in this part of the world, the only place he can express himself freely is in a 'Jewish newspaper', noting that: "We don't have a free media in the Palestinian area, we didn't have one when I was working there in the late 70's and early 80's, we didn't have one when the PLO came here after the signing of the Oslo accords and we still don't have one under Fatah and Hamas."

But what about the media's need for an anti-Israeli angle on stories? Toameh says that when he tried to alert many of his foreign colleagues that Palestinians were dying because of an internal power struggle or gross corruption by Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, their reflex response was: "Where's the anti-Israel angle to the story? Give us an anti-occupation story. Make our lives much easier. An Arab killing an Arab, that's not a story for us."

Toameh notes that the same foreign journalists would then ask him: "Are you on the payroll of the Israel lobby? Do they [the Jews] pay you to say these things against Arafat and the PLO?"

Toameh's response to them: "What do the Jews have to do with this? I'm telling you what the Palestinians are saying



Mahmoud Abbas

about there being corruption in the Palestinian Authority. I'm even telling you that the PA is saying that the PA is corrupt."

It is a sad reflection on the state of society, and in particular, the media industry, that not only are they not sufficiently concerned or outraged at the death of Arabs by Arabs (which coincidentally has claimed many more lives than the Israel – Palestinian conflict), but that they will only muster even an iota of concern if they can put in an 'anti-Israel' angle.

On the proposed loyalty oath as well, Toameh offered a pragmatic response: "I have no problem with it because it applies equally to both Jews and non-Jews alike."

One of the biggest and most intractable sticking points has consistently been the Palestinian demand for a right of return, which Israel will not agree to because it would mean the death knell of Israel as a Jewish state.

However, Toameh offers a very simple and pragmatic three stage solution: Palestinian refugees could: 1) Go to the future Palestinian state; 2) Resettle elsewhere, including other Arab states; and 3) Be offered compensation.

Most tellingly though, and in a statement seldom ever heard from Arabs (or the West), Toameh then asked: "And what about Jewish refugees that were forced to flee Arab nations," suggesting that the issue of Jewish refugees must also be part of any future solution.

Focusing on the problem from Arab dictatorships and their insistence on inciting their people against Israel, Toameh says that we have a problem in the West in failing to believe what people tell us. "If Hamas say they want to destroy you, you have no reason not to believe them. And if Ahmadinejad says he wants to destroy you, there's no need to start analysing what he means by that. Stop fooling ourselves and if anyone thinks that Hamas will ever recognise Israel's right to exist, you're also living in an illusion. Take it from their mouth directly...the PLO however is different – they will tell you one thing in English and then another in Arabic.

On the subject of Arab dictatorship, Toameh says: "Arab dictators survive by constantly blaming the misery of their people on Jews and the West and never accepting responsibility for anything. And by inciting against Israel and the West, you divert attention from problems at home. Why? Because you always need to make sure that your people are busy hating someone else. If they're not hating Israel and the West, they might wake up one day and come to you, and God forbid, demand reform and democracy."

The crux of the message is: "If you keep inciting your people, then they ask 'well, why are we then making peace with the Jews?' We should be killing them as Hamas is saying."

So what does Toameh think about Mahmoud Abbas, the PA President? "Abbas is corrupt, discredited, weak and does not have much power.



Continued from page 10

He is reliant on Israel, whose presence in the West Bank is ironically the only reason he has managed to stay in power.”

And if Israel withdrew to the 1967 borders as demanded by Abbas and the PLO: *“Abbas will collapse and Hamas will take over the West Bank in less than a day. If I were Israel, I would not give Abbas one inch of land in the West Bank – not for ideological reasons, but to avoid a situation where Hamas and others would take over the area.”*

When we asked him how best to defeat the extremists, radicals and terrorists like Hamas and Hizbullah, Toameh answered: *“The first and most important thing is you go to the Arab governments and tell them stop the incitement that’s feeding these radicals and driving people into their hands. Sometimes there’s no difference between what is written about Israel and the Jews in the papers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia with what is written by Hamas.”*

Noting again the billions of dollars in aid provided by the US and EU to various Arab dictatorships, Toameh says in other words, and even clearer, they should tell them: *“Stop calling for my death with my money.”*

I asked Toameh about what steps were needed to move forward. According to him, the answer is *“very simple”* and involves the following steps:

1) *“The Palestinians must start investing money (provided to them mainly by the US and EU) for the welfare of their people instead of incitement. Then dismantle all militias, establish a free press and democratic institutions, end the infighting, insist on good governance and speak with one voice so at least we know who we’re talking to. And then he suggests they should go speak with Israel and see what it has to offer them.”*

2) *“Deal with the enemies of peace – if you weaken the enemies of peace, like Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas, the moderates will rise and start speaking out. But as long as Iran is breathing down the neck and threatening, together with Hamas and Hizbullah, who are threatening to kill anyone who makes concessions, no moderate Arab will ever dare sign an agreement with Israel. I don’t even rule out military action against any of them because this is the only language these guys understand. Talking to them and appeasing them is even more dangerous.”*

3) *“We can’t move forward when you don’t have a clear, strong, reliable and credible partner on the Palestinian side”* says Toameh. According to him: *“Abbas is not a partner. He and Fayaad might be nice guys with good intentions – but they cannot deliver. So the PA are not partners because they cannot deliver and Hamas are not partners because they don’t want to be partners.”*

Addressing the issue of whether there was a clear and credible partner on the Israeli side, Toameh said: *“I don’t care who is in government in Israel. There is a partner. And my partner is the Jewish people. Why? Because a majority of Jews have already accepted a 2 state solution. I see a majority of Jews who don’t care anymore about Gaza. I see a majority of Jews who want to disengage from the Palestinians. I see a majority of Jews over the last 15 years marching toward moderation and pragmatism. I don’t know today of one Jewish mother that wants to send her son back to the streets of Ramallah or Gaza. I don’t know of one Jew who wants to control the lives of the Palestinians and run their education and health system. Sadly though, while the Jewish public has been marching towards pragmatism and realism and moderation, on the Arab side the message remains no, no and no.”*

In an incredibly candid address, for me perhaps the most defining statement Toameh made was when I asked him – would you rather continue living as a member of a minority in Israel or move to another Arab country? Toameh’s response was simple, honest and telling: *“Israel is a free and open democratic country. I enjoy living here and I would rather live as a second-class citizen in Israel, even though I’m not, than a first class citizen in any Arab country.”*

In a world where it’s all too easy to turn a blind eye to courage, Khaled Abu Toameh is a welcome breath of fresh air. A man, deeply committed to peace, who is seen as a traitor by many and who bravely continues to put his own life on the line each day, Toameh perhaps says it best himself:

I’m not pro-Israel, I’m not pro-Palestinian and I’m not pro-American. But as a journalist, I’m pro the facts and pro the truth.

(Source: www.israpundit.com)

Israel, the Good Enemy

By Mudar Zahran

Israel’s relationship to the Palestinians has always been globally approached with standardized heavy criticism made to Israel. The main charges waved in Israel’s face have always been “the inappropriate use of force” and “discrimination”.

Israel’s critics, either willingly or out of ignorance, choose to overlook the way many Arab countries mistreat Palestinians. Some Arab countries are almost never blamed for what they have been doing to the Palestinians for decades.

Such selective recognition of facts by Israel’s critics is bizarre when weighed by truth instead of myths.

In December of 2008, Israel launched operation “cast lead” against Hamas, which was launching rockets on Southern Israel on a daily basis. This operation has resulted in the death of more than 1,400 Palestinians, many said to be civilians; an absolute tragedy, nonetheless, those criticizing Israel fail to recognize that the number of casualties is small comparing to Gaza’s population of 1.5 million, considering the high density of Gaza’s population per square kilometer, the number suggests the Israeli forces were very cautious in carrying out their attacks, despite the fact that they were chasing a moving target, Hamas militants. If Israeli forces were targeting Palestinian civilians, the number of the dead would have reached tens of thousands.

On comparison, in 1976, Lebanese militiamen butchered 2,000 Palestinians, almost wiping out the entire population of Tell al-Zaatar refugee camp within days. This was revisited again in 1982 in the Sabra and Shatelah massacre where, in less than four days, Lebanese militiamen killed thousands of women and children who posed no threat as most Palestinian fighters had left then to Tunisia. Two years ago, al-Jazeera satellite network aired rare footage of Palestinians running to Israeli soldiers for refuge from the massacre.

Furthermore, most Arab atrocities against Palestinians have included documented rape cases, even of children, while not a single rape case has been reported against Israeli forces in more than sixty years of operations.

Arab governments’ oppression of the Palestinians does not stop at bloodshed and wholesale slaughters. In fact the more troubling aspects of the way they treat Palestinians is in the systematic long-range exclusion and discrimination. In Arab countries, where Palestinians make up a good percentage of the population, they are deprived of all basic necessities, starting with education, down to basic healthcare. Even in countries that have granted the Palestinians citizenships the Palestinians stand helpless and banned from every potential to improve their livelihoods.

Israel, on the other hand, has always allowed Palestinians to work there and to get paid in Western standards, and even had allowed them generous access to healthcare. In fact, Israel has also welcomed Palestinians

as visitors, patients and even as investors. This generosity was only limited when Hamas started bombing Israeli civilians with no signs of an end in sight.

The complexity Israel has with Palestinians revolves around security rather than ideological issues. Israel does not have an aim to enslave the Palestinians for life or purposely degrade their humanity. While many Arab countries have designed their systems to discriminate and humiliate the Palestinians, squeezing them into illiteracy and poverty, while milking them for tax money. This has become most visible recently with calls in some Arab countries to revoke citizenships of all Palestinians there and actually to force them to seek local guarantors to obtain residency, thus enslaving them for life.

This comes as a deeper shock for Palestinians when they see Israeli Arabs, with many of them describing themselves as “Palestinians in Israel”. Those are full citizens of Israel with access to all privileges.

Israeli Arabs are fully represented inside the Knesset while Palestinians, in their Arab homeland, are allowed only symbolic presence in parliaments, even at countries where they are the majority.

And while some Arab countries selectively withdraw citizenships from Palestinians, many Arab Knesset members do not hesitate to speak against Israel with no fear of losing their citizenships or entitlements.

Still, while the world is most vocal about Israeli military operations, it fails to recognize that Israel has been dealing with non-stop unrest on its soil since the breakout of the Intifada in 1987. Has that Intifada taken place in any Arab country, it would have ended within the first couple of weeks with an Arab army killing more than ten thousands Palestinians, most being civilians.

Examples of this are countless and in all Arab countries hosting Palestinians; yet the world seems to think this reality is too overrated to recognize.

Today, with peace negotiations up and running, some Arab governments seem to want to butcher the Palestinians again on the altar of dictatorship by worsening their living conditions and making their lives more miserable, just to secure a better negotiating position or merely a seat at the negotiations table. Not to mention that many of those actually would rather see the negotiations fail in order to keep more international aid money flowing to them for “hosting” the Palestinians.

Quoting a commentator on one of my articles: “The Palestinians, do obviously need a break from their sworn Arab “friends”, and perhaps they can reconnect to them when they have learned a lesson or two from their Israeli “enemies”. Meanwhile, the world will remain silent about the Palestinians’ suffering at the hands of some of their “brothers”, as it’s too occupied with Israel.

(Mudar Zahran, Jordanian of a Palestinian heritage, is an academic who resides in the UK)

Political Tremors Shake The Region

By David Dolan

Government instability rocked portions of the Middle East and North Africa during January, especially in Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria and Israel. Popular discontent with the governments of Jordan and Egypt was also said to be growing. More terror assaults upon local Christians marred life in Egypt and Iraq, while Christians came under government harassment in parts of neighboring Iran. Closer to home, a fresh spate of Palestinian rocket attacks prompted return IDF fire upon militant Islamic targets in the Gaza Strip. An Israeli soldier was killed during the exchanges.

The pro-Western Lebanese government collapsed the first half of January after the radical Iranian-backed Hizbullah movement pulled its cabinet ministers out of the ruling coalition. The dramatic move came just hours after the current Lebanese Prime Minister held emergency consultations at the White House in Washington with American President Barack Obama. The embattled Lebanese leader later went on to hold crisis talks with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris and Turkish officials in Ankara. Not by coincidence, the Lebanese government collapse also occurred just days before the first indictments were issued by a UN tribunal set up to

investigate the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

The Israeli coalition headed by Binyamin Netanyahu was also shaken up in mid January when Defense Minister Ehud Barak and several cabinet colleagues resigned from the government and quit the Labor party. The Israeli Premier quickly shored up his government by inducting Barak and his new, smaller “Independence” party into the ruling coalition. Unrest gripped the Arab country of Tunisia during the month, forcing the country’s long-ruling leader out of office. Rioting took place earlier in neighboring Algeria, with activists protesting rising food prices. Along with the instability gripping Beirut, the situation in the North African countries was being closely monitored by other autocratic governments throughout the Arab Middle East and the wider Muslim world, with current leaders fearing similar street clashes may affect their governments, especially the repressive Syrian regime and the pro-Western Hashemite government in Jordan.

(David Dolan is a Jerusalem-based broadcast author, journalist and international speaker. Born and raised in the United States, he has lived and worked in Israel since 1980)

“Israel Is Fighting Our War”

By Yedioth Reporter

Geert Wilders, Holland’s extreme politician, founder and leader of the “Party for Freedom” [PVV], fears for his life. “I am just a man. The danger does not come only from Holland. It is outside too. There are very serious threats from various terror groups,” he admits.

He has reason to fear. His statements about Islam, his demands to stop immigration of Muslims to his country, the building of new mosques or wearing the veil in public – all that did the job. In Europe, he is recognized as the most prominent leader of the anti-Islam movement.

Wilders says aloud what many Dutch and EU citizens probably think, and he pays a very heavy price for that. “It is sad that while fighting for my country’s freedom I lost my own,” says Wilders in a special interview for Yedioth. “I have only freedom of speech and thought. Threats to my life prove that my arguments are just. I am sure that if I spoke with criticism about Christianity or Judaism, there would be no such radical response. There would be no demonstrations in Vatican. The Dutch flag would not be burnt. A million and a half people who voted for us in the last elections do not see me as a fascist or a racist.”

Wilders, who is against the two-state solution, says that “Israel is the lighthouse and the only democracy in this backward and dictatorial part of the world,” he proclaims. “Israel is very close to us, to our European identity. Israel fights our war.”

Safe Houses

A Dutch court decided not to punish a Muslim rapper who wrote in one of his songs that he is going to attack Wilders. “Geert, this is not a joke. Last night I had a dream about taking off your head,” the rapper sings and promises “Anyone who talks about Muslims will be killed.”

There are many rumors about Wilders’ way of life. They say that he does not sleep in the same place twice in a row, that he does not see his wife for months.

At first, six years ago, when the government did not have “safe houses”, “My wife and I stayed for a few months in a prison,” he says. “The cells we lived in had been previously occupied by two Libyan agents, responsible for “Pan Am” plane slaughter. We were not there as prisoners, but as protected personas. We also slept on military bases around Holland and military planes took us, if need be, to our meetings. It was insane. There were times when I had to put on a wig, a false mustache, and a pair of sunglasses to prevent others from recognizing me.”

Dutch Politics

Wilders stands out as a leader of anti-Islamic movement in Europe. Six years ago he left the Liberal Party [VVD] and founded an independent fraction. His party’s unpredicted success in elections to EU Parliament stunned the political arena.

In last summer’s elections to the Dutch parliament, The Party for Freedom tripled its numbers and became the third largest party in The Hague’s House of Representatives [Tweede Kamer]. Some polls showed that if new elections were held, his party would be the largest, with 31% of the vote.

The standoff between the two largest parties – Liberals [VVD] and Social-Democrats [PvdA] – left the coalition negotiations stranded until they decided in a surprising move to form a minority



IDF leave Gaza Strip after operation Cast Lead

government that will be supported by the Party for Freedom. From now on Wilders is an officially recognized and accepted part of Dutch politics.

Extreme right? Racist? Fascist? “I am the direct opposite of all this,” protests Wilders. “We use democratic means only. We are definitely not racists; we do not care about the people’s skin color. It is ridiculous to claim that all of our voters are fascists. It is an insult – not just to me, but to them as well. There are not that many insane people in Holland. But the political elite, who failed to solve the problems we talk about openly – massive immigration, crime rates, Islam – still thinks that it is not politically correct to talk about that. They see us getting wide support and they demonize us in response.”

Wilders says that well-established parties around Europe have no idea how to treat parties like his. “They try to stick all kinds of labels on us and then they copy what we do. A few weeks ago I made a speech in Berlin. I told Germans “Please forget your past. New generations are not responsible for what happened. Get rid of your past, because it prevents you from speaking freely about problems created by mass immigration and Islam.”

“Angela Merkel and half of the government ministers criticized my speech and stated that I had no right to say things like that. A few weeks later, when surveys showed that if a party similar to mine were to be founded in Germany, it would get 20% of the voters’ support, Merkel changed direction and proclaimed the failure of the multicultural society.”

“Totalitarian Ideology”

By the way, Islam is not a religion, in Wilders’ opinion. “It is a totalitarian ideology. There is no place in it for anything but Islam itself. It wants to control not only one’s private life, but the society’s life as well. If you are an atheist, a Christian, or a Jew living in a society where Islam is dominant, your life is very difficult. That’s why comparisons must be made between Islam and other totalitarian ideologies like communism and fascism.

“I have nothing against Muslims as human beings. Most of them are law-abiding people like you and me. But I am against mass immigration from Muslim countries, because immigrants will bring their culture here, which, if permitted to be dominant, will change our society. Already in countries with a sizable Muslim minority, those changes for the worse can be seen.”

In your struggle, you find yourself in the company of some very problematic parties such as Party for Freedom of Austria or

France’s National Front.

“We do not have and never will have anything in common with those extremist parties. They are very different from us. We are conservative on issues concerning our culture and liberals on many other issues. The majority of Holland’s gays vote for us – they would never do that if we were extremists.”



Geert Wilders

Romance with Israel

Wilders (47) is one of the most ardent and loud of Israel’s supporters in Europe, and contrary to many others he does not bother to hide this. He had even insisted on including in the platform of the new Dutch government the intention to improve relations with Israel.

“I am very glad that Israel is the only country mentioned by name in the platform; this will get it the needed attention,” he said “We are Israel’s best friends and we will support it in any way possible.” He bursts out laughing when asked about allegations of his being an “Israeli agent”.

“Common!” he says, “It is obvious that I am not an Israel’s spy. It is insane. I am a Dutch politician and I work for Holland and what is best for its citizens. But I am a friend of Israel, and I am not afraid to say so. Because of my open support of Israel, people who do not like me invent these stories. The Iranian press states that I am a Mossad agent. Jordanians call me Shabak’s man. It’s nonsense.”

His romance with Israel started when he was 17 years old and came here to work as a volunteer for a year. “I enjoyed it very much, and not only because of the beautiful Israeli girls,” he recalls. “I was not involved in politics back then at all. I worked in the tourist industry in Eilat, a bakery plant in Jerusalem, and the cooperative settlement Tomar in the Jordan Valley. I went through some tense times in Tomar because the

border with Jordan was not very secure. We had to take shelter from time to time when terrorists managed to cross over. We saw the arrival of IDF helicopters – for someone from the south of Holland who went to Amsterdam just a few times, those were very impressive experiences.”

“Ideological Conflict”

Over the years Wilders visited many Muslim countries, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia and Afghanistan. “I’ve met with some very friendly people over there, too,” he clarifies, “but the power in those countries is in the hands of the dictators. These people deserve better living conditions.”

He has many friends in Israel, and some of them are politicians. He had a very warm relationship with Ariel Sharon for example, whom he still admires. “Sharon was demonized in the West, too, but he was a great politician, and I take an example from him,” Wilders emphasizes.

“I believe that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is not territorial. Anyone who claims otherwise has no idea what he is talking about. If you gave up Western Bank and East Jerusalem and let the Palestinians have it that would not end the conflict. It will take some time – a month, a year, ten years – but they will demand the rest of your country, because it is an ideological conflict. The solution therefore could not be territorial; it has to be ideological.

“Palestinians believe – and this is the nature of Islam – that Israel is theirs, and through the struggle with Israel they fight the non-Muslim West. The fight against Israel is the fight against us. We are Israel. The reason for Dutch parents’ good night sleep with no worries for their children is that parents in Israel go through sleepless nights because their children are in the Army. It does not mean that Israel cannot be criticized, but I am not ashamed to fight for Israel.”

“Jordan is Palestine”

At the conference Wilders will try to convince the public that Palestinians already have a country of their own. “Jordan is Palestine,” he states. “This was true in the past after Sykes-Picot agreement, and thus it is a solution to the conflict. Even the Jordan kings, Abdulla and Hussein, said so in the past. Only after they realized that these statements could endanger their reign, because Palestinians are a majority in Jordan, did they change their minds. I am against the idea of transfer or ethnic cleansing, but if Jordan became Palestine, it would be possible to encourage Palestinians to move there. Of course I will not be the one who decides how to end this conflict. Israel is a democracy and will decide for itself which solution is best for it. It is your decision.”

“Loyalty Oath”

What is your opinion on Israel’s debate concerning the “loyalty oath”? Could it be implemented in Holland too?

“I think it is a good idea. Even though the background in Holland is different, I think that a pledge of allegiance to the country is a good thing. We will not be able to pass such legislation with the current government in Holland.

Continued from page 12

I talked in the past about an integration agreement between the state and the immigrants or a loyalty oath, which will show their commitment first of all to our country and our values, our constitution, and our culture. It would be a positive step to take. The people of Europe have no idea who they are anymore, that's why they do not know what to fight for. We have to reinvent our identity. In France, for example, before every speech by the president, the French flag is displayed and the national anthem is played. If someone tried to do that in Holland, everyone would think that he was out of his mind. We do not have a flag even in Parliament. You are not a racist if you are proud of your national uniqueness and fight to preserve your culture. The idea that all cultures are equal was forced on us by the left and the liberals, and is in fact the Europe's worst sickness. People cannot see any difference between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam anymore despite the fact that they are worlds apart and are different in a thousand ways. We are fighting this idea, and we are slowly winning."

Iran

Wilders does not hide his support for military action against Iran. "Iran is the biggest geopolitical threat to Israel, to the stability of the Middle East region, Europe, and the whole world," he says. "That country is ruled by religious lunatics like Khamenei or like Ahmadinejad. We can see some changes over there these days. Even the Revolutionary Guard is voicing criticism. Iran could explode from the inside. The danger in countries that deal with such an internal threat is that their regime may react violently and unpredictably. I am afraid of that. Because of the growing internal unrest, we cannot allow them to implement any program that could potentially be put to a military use. They will look for the common external enemy, and Israel would be the first to pay the price. I hope that diplomacy will lead to a peaceful resolution, but if Israel decides it has no other option but to strike Iran militarily in order to defend itself against this existential threat, I will understand. The alternative is the destruction of Israel."

"Europe is Not a Friend"

"Turkey is a very complex country. We have good relations with Turkey. It is a respected NATO member. But at the same time it is a country, which can easily turn to the ways of Islam. I am against the American pressure on the EU to grant membership to Turkey. Europe does not need such a large country, where Islam is dominant, as a member. A good neighbor is not the same as a family member. If Turkey were to become a EU member, it would be required to fulfill certain criteria, one of which is to dismantle the army. I am quite uneasy about this. The army is Turkey's only balancing power. If the army is dismantled, people like Erdogan could accelerate the Islamization process, which will turn Turkey into the Trojan horse in the heart of Europe. I also would not want to have a common border with such criminal countries as Iran and Syria."

And what is your opinion on Israel joining the union?

"I would advise my friends in Israel not to consider such an option. The Union has always supported Palestinians. Israel has a lot of friends in Europe, but Europe is not a friend to Israel."

(Many thanks to DarLink for translating it from the Hebrew)

(Source: Yedioth Reporter - YNetNews.com)

Can Christianity Survive in the Middle East?

By Frida Ghitis

The holiday season has now ended, but not without leaving behind a trail of devastation and a rising sense of anguish among Christian communities in the Middle East. A series of deadly assaults and ominous threats – most dramatically the New Year's church massacre in Alexandria – Egypt, and a threat from al-Qaida in Iraq to "open the doors of destruction and rivers of blood" upon Christians have raised fears that Christianity may not survive in the region of its birth. The depth of the anxiety comes through in the words of Lebanon's former-President Amin Gemayel, who declared, "What is happening to Christians is genocide."



Copts demonstrate in Alexandria the morning after the church attack.

To be sure, Christians are facing a ruthless onslaught. And history shows that sizable religious minorities can be swept away by the tides of religious and political turmoil. Turkey, for example, was once home to millions of Christians. It is now an almost exclusively Muslim nation. Enormous, once-thriving Jewish communities have disappeared from most of the Middle East. But today's Christian communities in the region, while undoubtedly threatened, are far from inevitably doomed.

Christians living in the mostly Muslim Middle East are caught in the crossfire of an epochal ideological struggle. As the people of the region battle over highly charged choices regarding the direction their societies will take, Christianity has somehow become part of the very battleground.

The situation extends beyond the immediate Middle East to non-Arab countries. In Pakistan, the blasphemy law that imposes an automatic death sentence on anyone found to cause offense to Islam or the Prophet has become a tool used to target Christians. In November, a Christian woman was sentenced to death there after her neighbors, with whom she had had a disagreement, accused her of blasphemy. The governor of Punjab was recently killed by his bodyguard after speaking out against the controversial law.

Perhaps nowhere are Christians enduring more violence than in Iraq. Even while overall violence has declined precipitously in the country, the situation has worsened for Christians. In late-October, a group of militants stormed a church service, taking 100 people hostage. Security forces blasted in and the ensuing battle left some 70 people dead. Though it was the worst attack the community has suffered, it was just one of many that have occurred with brutal frequency. Iraqi Christians have been leaving the country in droves. Of those that have remained, many have fled to the safety of the Kurdish north. Iraqi Christian leaders estimate that perhaps 400,000 of their flock remain from a pre-war total of 1.4 million.

With few exceptions, those targeting Christians are the same people who wish to see a return to a Muslim Caliphate and a radical interpretation of Islam in the Muslim world. In other words, the ultimate fate of Christian communities is closely linked to the struggle over liberalism and modernity in the region.

Christians are particularly vulnerable, not only because they don't share the religion of the majority, or of those using violence to enforce their views. They are also often portrayed by their foes as a potential fifth column of disloyal citizens who might betray the country. That makes them targets and makes governments less inclined to protect them. It also explains why, after the Alexandria massacre, Coptic Christians in Egypt – who make up about 10 percent of the country's 80 million people – clashed with government forces. Nobody thought the government had perpetrated the bombing, but Copts have been complaining bitterly of growing discrimination throughout society and of authorities' stubborn neglect of their troubles.

The attack shocked the nation, and many Muslims seemed frightened by what it could portend. The influential cleric

Ahmed al Tayeb of the famed al-Azhar University called for "unity of the cross and the crescent," as many newspapers warned that civil war could break out.

Sectarian civil war has already traumatized the balkanized Arab country of Lebanon, where Christians now maintain an ever-more fragile peace with Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Christians made up about 80 percent of Lebanon's population in the 1920s. Today, the most commonly cited number is 40 percent, but many believe the number is much smaller. Statistics in Lebanon are a matter of war and peace, so taking a census is out of the question. And yet, despite a 15-year civil war that left perhaps 150,000 Lebanese dead in all, Lebanon today has a Christian president. The future, however, remains uncertain for Lebanese Christians, as militant religious parties, particularly Hezbollah, become increasingly powerful and the threat of a new war hangs in the air. As a result, Christians are leaving the country faster than any other group.

In neighboring Jordan, King Abdullah made a point of reminding his people that Christians are an integral part of the kingdom. In a message publicized throughout the national media, he sent Christmas greetings and reiterated his commitment to tolerance and religious freedom. Jordan has become a refuge for hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians fleeing persecution at home. But Jordanian extremists – including the infamous Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, once the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq – have previously launched attacks against Christians in Iraq and Jordan. In other parts of the Middle East, Christians live with varying degrees of freedom. Persian Gulf nations are home to millions of foreign workers, many of them Christians. In Saudi Arabia, the law bans them from practicing their religion, so they do it in secret. In Kuwait, large churches adorn the capital, and religious services are held openly. But only a tiny handful of Christians are Kuwaiti citizens. In the Palestinian Territories, Christians made up 10 percent of the population in the 1920s. Today they total just 1 percent. They have experienced the hardships of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict along with the pressures of living in communities where Islamic militancy is on the rise. In Gaza, ruled by the Islamist Hamas, they have seen their churches attacked. In the West Bank, the official stance is one of religious tolerance. Even so, the Christian population in the Palestinian Territories has continued its relentless decline. In Bethlehem, the Christian population has fallen from 20,000 in 1995 to about 7,000.



Perhaps the only country in the Middle East where the Christian population has seen strong growth is Israel proper. Their presence has declined as a percentage of the overall population, but the total numbers have increased steadily, from about 34,000 in 1948 to more than 150,000 today. The sharp contrast with the rest of the region points to the role played by the battle for the heart of Islam in the plight of Middle East Christians: The one country in the region without a Muslim majority is the country where the number of Christians is growing.

Christians have become the canary in the coalmine of the Middle East, with their plight providing a measure of the perils emanating from the region's ongoing ideological battle. If those struggling for a forward-looking, modern Middle East succeed, then Christianity will survive in the lands of its birth. If they fail, then the Muslim Middle East could become a region where Christianity exists only in the history books.

Author Frida Ghitis is an independent commentator on world affairs and a World Politics Review contributing editor.

(Source: World Politics Review)

Covenant of Abraham

By Chaim Wizman

Jewish liturgy is replete with references to the Covenant of Abraham. In many of our most soul-searching moments, we beseech God to “remember the covenant of Abraham.” What exactly is this covenant of Abraham, and why does it play such a critical role in our spiritual self-definition?

On one level, the covenant refers to material blessing. Abraham’s descendants will be numerous, and will inherit a land uniquely suited to facilitate their unique role in human history:

“I will make of you a great nation... and make your name great.” (Genesis 12:2)

“Look toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to number them... so shall your descendants be.” (Genesis 15:5)

“Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever.” (Genesis 13:14)

This physical legacy, however, represents only one dimension of the emerging relationship between God and Abraham. “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you... to be God to you and to your descendants after you” (Genesis 17:7) is God’s promise to safeguard those descendants and nurture them – with all that His omnipotence implies.

Father of All Nations

In addition to the relationship between God and Abraham’s offspring, the Covenant of Abraham also concerns itself with the relationship between Abraham’s offspring and the rest of humanity. “Through you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). This exhortation is the origin of the unique and central role that Jews have played on the stage of human history. The “Chosen People,” as it were.

The scope of Abram’s influence is not limited to his own biological descendants. Abram’s ideological crusade must concern itself with all humanity. God adds the Hebrew letter *hey* to Abram’s name to render him “Avraham,” an acronym for *Av Hamon Goyim* – “the father of a multitude of nations.” Abraham has outgrown his original mission. His horizons are expanded and all of humanity now falls into his orbit.

In a palpable sense, Abraham becomes responsible for the spiritual and physical welfare of the entire world. It is a role that he embraces. When God informs Abraham that he intends to destroy the profoundly wicked city of Sodom, Abraham makes an impassioned plea for God to reconsider. One can’t help but wonder why Abraham should be so concerned with the fate of a people who represented the antithesis of all that Abraham stood for. A lesser man would have been ecstatic at seeing his ideological foes vanquished by God’s hand. Yet Abraham remonstrates with God, serious in his role of being responsible for all mankind.

Spreading the Word

The Sages note that it was precisely this trait of universal concern which stamped Abraham as the standard bearer of God’s message. There had been other righteous men who preceded Abraham – Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem and others. To assert that Abraham was the founder of monotheism is untrue. Abraham did not



Hanukkah

discover God, nor was he the first to remain faithful to Him. The Torah itself testifies regarding the righteousness of Enoch and Noah (Genesis 5:22, 6:9).

What distinguishes Abraham, then, is his commitment to represent those beliefs to all of mankind. His predecessors, righteous as they were, were either content to remain individuals marching against the wave of paganism which had engulfed the world, or incapable of doing much to stem that tide. Abraham, on the other hand, long before God’s first communication, embarked on a mission to spread the message of ethical monotheism, hoping to change the very course of human history.



Mark Twain

Abraham, in partnership with Sarah, tirelessly disseminated the message of One God who did not merely fashion the universe *ex nihilo* and then lose interest, allowing it to function independently or designating intermediaries to do His bidding. Rather, God desires a relationship with man and imposes upon him universal standards of morality applicable to all – thus leading mankind toward the ultimate destiny, the global recognition of God’s sovereignty. This idea of the God of History was perhaps Abraham’s single greatest

intellectual contribution.

Eternal Nation

A covenant, by definition, implies mutual responsibilities. An eternal covenant, by definition, can be ratified only by one who is eternal. This distinction belongs to God alone. Abraham can resolve to educate his children and grandchildren in the ways of God, but only God can guarantee the miracle of Jewish survival.

As Mark Twain wrote (*Harpers Magazine*, 1899):

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of...

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.

All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

Certainly, the laws of nature dictate an exceedingly small statistical probability of national survival over 4,000 years. When we consider the context of Jewish history – with its exiles, dispersion and incessant persecution – the likelihood of survival is infinitesimal. Yet one needn’t wonder at this phenomenon; the Director of History promised Abraham that it would be so.

The miracle of Jewish survival is rooted in the very essence of Jewish formation. All the matriarchs were barren from birth; the Sages assert that Sarah even lacked a womb in which to carry a child. It was only after years of tearful prayer that the righteous matriarchs were able to conceive those who

would go on to form the emerging nation of Israel.

The matriarchs conceived their children in a miraculous fashion because, as God sought to make clear at the outset, the Jewish nation would always transcend the “natural realm.” From our very inception, Jews would be guided by different forces than those which govern the rest of humanity.

This idea finds expression in the biblical text. At one point, Abraham questions the value of “eternal reward” in light of the fact that he was childless. God “took him outside, and said ‘Gaze, now, toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to number them... So shall your offspring be!’” (Genesis 15:5)

The simple meaning of the text is that God took Abraham outside of his tent to enable him to gaze up at the stars. The midrashic explanation is infinitely more profound. God took Abraham out of the realm of the constellations, the planetary influences to which the fate of other nations is tied. The Guardian of Israel, however, is God Himself. Abraham and his descendants are impervious to the natural limitations and statistical probabilities which bind the rest of humanity.

Covenant of Circumcision

The transcendent nature of the Jewish people is alluded to in the Covenant of Circumcision which God instructs to take place on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12). What renders the eighth day uniquely appropriate for the sealing of this covenant?

Biblical numbers are never arbitrary. The number seven is invariably linked with a natural order: seven days of the week, seven notes of the musical scale, etc. By extension, it follows that the subsequent number – eight – represents the transcending of natural order, i.e. God’s direct intervention.

Thus God commands the Jewish nation to seal His covenant specifically on the eighth day, for it is this day, above all others, which symbolizes the unique nature of God’s interaction with His Chosen Nation. They will be born improbably, they will live improbably, and they will survive and flourish improbably – in utter defiance of every law of nature.

This is represented by the very act of circumcision. If God is perfect, why did He create the human body requiring human edification? Because it is His will that perfection be accomplished through the agency of human beings. Circumcision teaches that just as the body must be perfected, so too, we must strive to perfect our souls.

Each and every generation of Jews is charged with the sacred responsibility of *tikkun olam* (perfecting the world), and serving as the moral compass of all humanity. The fact that generations of Jews may stray from these ideals in no way alters the underlying goal.

Incredibly, the rite of circumcision has always been carefully maintained by Jews throughout the ages. This is compelling evidence that God’s eternal bond remains, inviting us to become the beacon to all humanity, as God charged Abraham’s offspring to be.

(Source: aish.com)

Britain – A hotbed of Islamic terrorism

By Melanie Phillips

Some four-and-a-half years ago, a book of mine was published that caused something of a sensation.

It was called *Londonistan*, and it was about the way in which – astoundingly – Britain had become the most important centre, outside the Islamic world itself, for the production and export of Islamic terrorism.

Worse yet, I wrote, even after the 9/11 attacks and the 7/7 London Tube and bus bombings, the British political, legal and security establishments were still refusing to get to grips with the threat posed to Britain by militant Muslims who wanted to conquer it for Islam.

For my pains, I was called ‘mad’ by the *Guardian*, ‘bonkers’, ‘alarmist’, ‘hysterical’ and, of course, ‘Islamophobic’.

Indeed, I had a hard time getting the book published at all. It was turned down by every mainstream London publisher because they regarded my views as dangerous extremism. One even remarked: ‘I’d rather take the poison ricin, than publish this.’ Nice!

For a while it looked as if it would be published only in the U.S., but a few weeks before publication in America, a tiny British publishing house bravely volunteered to publish it here.

Given the terrifying nature of what I wrote in that book, it really does give me no comfort to say this – but the fact is that, ever since it was published, a steady stream of revelations has proved that I was absolutely right.

We learned that Taimour Abdulwahab Al-Abdaly, who blew himself up in a December 2010 terrorist attack in Stockholm, was yet another radicalised British Muslim university graduate who spent several years in Britain. He was but the latest in an unrelenting procession of British Muslims who have committed terrorist attacks in other countries. And many have been educated to a high level in Britain.

Over the past decade, around 30 Muslim graduates or students at British universities have been involved in Islamic-inspired terrorism, including former University College London student Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who has been charged with trying to blow up a U.S. airliner above the city of Detroit on Christmas day 2009 with explosives hidden in his underpants.

As for Luton – where Abdulwahab lived and attended university – this has long been regarded as a hotbed of Islamic extremism.

So why is it that, with the Security Service periodically issuing chilling warnings that it’s monitoring more than 2,000 dangerous Muslim fanatics and dozens of terrorist plots, Britain is still failing so dismally to curb its home-grown industry of Islamic terrorism and extremism?

As I pointed out in my book, most of the British establishment is in denial about what it is up against. Our leaders know there is a major threat of terrorism.

But they remain wilfully blind to the fact that the terrorists’ ultimate aim, the Islamisation of Britain and the West, is being pursued by Islamic groups that are not violent, as well as those that are.

Of course, millions of British Muslims shun violence or extremism. They want only to live peacefully and enjoy the benefits of Western democracy and human rights.

Moreover, since they and their children are themselves among the principal victims and



London Tube and Bus bombings

photo@Isranet

targets of the Islamist fanatics, they beg the British Government to crack down on such extremism.

But here is the most astonishing thing I explored in my book. For the establishment is so heavily imbued by a deadly cocktail of political correctness, multiculturalism and ‘human rights’ law that, far from curbing Islamic extremism, it has actually fanned the flames.



Banner at London march

Over the past decade and more, the judges have made it all but impossible to police Britain’s borders against undesirables or throw extremists out of the country.

Universities have shamefully refused to crack down on extremists on campus, even though countless Muslim students are being radicalised there by Islamist speakers with no fewer than four university Islamic Society presidents having been involved in major acts of terrorism.

Idiotically, politicians cravenly attempting to defuse Islamic rage by appeasing the Muslim community have funded organisations that have turned out to be extreme.

Even more extraordinarily, to this day the Government is employing radical Islamists

in Whitehall as political advisers on curbing Islamic extremism.

The core reason for this supine approach is that the establishment refuses to acknowledge that Islamic terrorism is rooted in religious fanaticism – an extreme interpretation of the religion that dictates Muslims must impose Islamic law throughout the world.

While most British Muslims most certainly do not accept this interpretation, it is rooted in theology and history, and is supported by the major religious authorities in the Islamic world.

So truly moderate Muslims cannot make their voices heard. The extremists therefore have the whip hand. And the way they intend to achieve their ends is through a pincer movement comprising both terrorism and cultural infiltration to gain social, economic and political power.

The threat of violence makes it more likely they will succeed in infiltrating British institutions. And that in turn makes it ever harder to curb radicalisation. It also galvanises the extremists, who perceive correctly that the society they have in their sights has no stomach for the fight.

This is precisely what is happening in Britain. Because our political and security establishment has defined extremism as involving violence, it is blind to the steady process of Islamisation that is taking place.

Astonishingly, it is tolerating – and even encouraging – the relentless incursion of Islamic religious law. Yet this is inimical to British values, and not just because it denies the human rights of women, homosexuals or anyone who wants to renounce Islam.

Fundamentally, it does not recognise the superior authority of the law of the land, against which it therefore asserts itself.

But it is a fundamental principle of a democratic society that there must be only one law for all. And yet in Britain today,

blind eyes are being turned to Sharia courts meting out not just family law judgments that oppress women, but even criminal sanctions, too.

In addition, there has been in this country an enormous growth of Islamic banking – despite the fact this serves as an umbrella for the financing of Islamic terrorism and is a vehicle for putting yet more pressure on British Muslims to subject themselves to Sharia law.

Almost every week, more examples surface of the way in which British culture is giving way to Islamic practices. As a recent BBC Panorama programme demonstrated, some Muslim schools are teaching their pupils to hate ‘unbelievers’ – all under the nose of Ofsted, the schools watchdog organization.

And a growing number of education authorities serve halal meat to all pupils – without even informing the public of this minority faith practice. London hosts three Muslim TV channels – all with ties to fanatical Islamic organisations or regimes.

In short, Britain is being steadily Islamised, and the establishment appears paralysed like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

Four years ago in my book, I delivered a warning. A country that can’t even bring itself to name the nature of the enemy it faces, will be defeated by that enemy.

The Stockholm bomber is but the latest export from Londonistan, and unless the Government gets up off its knees and changes its disastrous strategy, I very much fear he will not be the last.

(Melanie Phillips is an Orwell Prize winning British journalist and author. Her articles appear mainly in the Daily Mail newspaper. She has also written for The Guardian, and is a regular panelist on the BBC Radio 4 programme The Moral Maze and BBC One’s Question Time. She has written four books, including Londonistan and most recently World Turned Upside Down in 2010)

An unforgettable experience!

By Koen Carlier

A VIP flight on 20 December commemorated the past 20 years in which Jewish families had the freedom to make aliyah from the former Soviet Union. Thirty-seven new immigrants departed from Kiev that night. These people, from 2 villages and 3 cities, were driven in three mini-busses to a central point and then taken by bus to Kiev airport.

Christians for Israel's Henriëtte Heuvelman especially came to the Ukraine to participate in this event and accompanied these people on the flight and was there to take the first steps with them in the Promised Land. Henriëtte later said, "It was an unforgettable experience!"

The day before leaving, we visited a few families in two villages from which I had not previously collected olim. Henriëtte had many opportunities to ask questions and witness the emotions of both the olim and those staying behind.

A young family from the town of Lopovet, who studied at the Tikva School in Odessa, jokingly said that, because there is no work and no future, leaving the Ukraine was, as

far as that was concerned, quite easy.

Another family from Citkovchi apparently had more trouble. When they told the residents of the town that they would be picked up and taken to Kiev by bus free of charge, nobody believed it until they saw it happening. To prevent being stuck in the snow, we made use of a sleigh in transporting their luggage to the bus. After the arrival of another young family from a city close to the Romanian border, we started our five-hour journey to the airport. We met the Rabinovich family during this journey and David told us that his great-grandfather was a rabbi somewhere in White Russia.

While travelling, we explained to them that we do this work because the Bible says it is the duty of the nations to assist them in returning. It became quiet in the bus. They wondered if this was the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. On arrival at the airport, they received their final instructions from the Jewish Agency before departing for Israel.

The director of the Jewish Agency in the Ukraine thanked Christians for Israel for the good cooperation that



exists and for allowing the olim to realize their 'dreams' by contributing financially towards obtaining the required official documents. Ours is not always an easy task, and when such a 'compliment' is given, it is a blessing!

We hope that we will be able to assist many newcomers in a practical manner in the New Year! Psalm 69:35 says, "For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it."

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New mini-bus

After a long search, we eventually managed to buy a reliable second hand mini-bus. We had to buy the 2007 model Nissan to fulfil the local Aliyah assignments. Our previous bus was sixteen years old and had 583,000 km. on the clock. Replacement was, therefore, a matter of urgency.

Breakdowns often inconvenienced our trips to the Israeli embassy and airport in Kiev over the last six months, and there is no need for me to tell you about the frustration it caused. Obtaining the necessary documents for the vehicle was quite a job, and led to many hours spent in long queues.

All of this is now finally behind us. A definite advantage of the new mini-bus is that it has much more space for the Olim's luggage. The first trip with the Nissan to bring an Olim family from the village Luca to the Kiev airport on Monday December the 27th, went very well!



Koen Carlier with his new mini-bus

I WANT TO SUPPORT CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL

Please accept my donation to bless Christians for Israel's ministry

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