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Deterrence vs. Delusion

Land-for-Peace: An Historical Perspective

Martin Sherman

One does not have to be a military expert to easily identify the critical defects of the armistice lines that existed until June 4, 1967. – Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmach and deputy Prime Minister (Labor), 1976.

Since the early 1990s, and certainly since the Oslo process (1993), the “Land-for-Peace” principle has been Israel’s dominant policy paradigm, particularly, but not exclusively, with regard to the “Palestinian problem”. This is something that is difficult to comprehend. After all, not only was it a formula that was largely rejected up until that time as borderline sedition, but since then, in every instance, in which it has been applied, it has failed resoundingly (albeit at various rates of speed)—with the land transferred to Arab control invariably becoming a platform from which to launch/prepare attacks against Israel.

Land as a “red herring” in the pursuit of peace

Indeed, the flawed rationale for the land-for-peace doctrine was forcibly articulated by the man who later embraced it—with calamitous consequences—Yitzhak Rabin. In an address before a joint session of the US Congress (January 28, 1976), he cogently underscored the irrelevance of territory as a cause of Arab enmity towards the Jewish state: “Until 1967, Israel did not hold an inch of the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank, the Gaza Strip or the Golan Heights. Israel held not an acre of what is now considered disputed territory. And yet we enjoyed no peace. Year after year Israel called for - pleaded for - a negotiated peace with the Arab governments. Their answer was a blank refusal and more war... The reason was not a conflict over territorial claims. The reason was, and remains, the fact that a Free Jewish State sits on territory at all... It is in this context that the Palestinian issue must be appraised.”

Paradoxically, less than two decades later, the very people who articulated with such chilling clarity the compelling reasons for eschewing a policy of territorial concessions—and accurately foretold the ruinous results of adopting it, embraced it with unreserved enthusiasm.

Predicting the perils of Palestinian statehood

For example, over three decades ago, it was none other than the late Shimon Peres, widely considered the principal protagonist in the Oslo process, who warned ominously:

If a Palestinian state is established, it will be armed to the teeth. Within it there will be bases of the most extreme terrorist forces, who will be equipped with anti-tank and anti-aircraft shoulder-launched rockets, which will endanger not only random passers-by, but also every airplane and helicopter taking off in the skies of Israel and every vehicle traveling along the major traffic routes in the coastal plain.

Indeed, it was Peres who predicted with uncanny precision: The establishment of such [a Palestinian] state means the inflow of combat ready Palestinian forces (more than 25,000 men under arms) into Judea and Samaria; this force, together with the local youth, will double itself in a short time. It will not be short of weapons or other [military] equipment, and in a short space of time, an infrastructure for waging war will be set up in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Israel will have problems in preserving day-to-day security, which may drive the country into war, or undermine the morale of its citizens. In time of war, the frontiers of the Palestinian state will constitute an excellent staging point for mobile forces to mount attacks on infrastructure installations vital for Israel’s existence, to impede the freedom of action of the Israeli airforce in the skies over Israel, and to cause bloodshed among the population... in areas adjacent to the frontier-line.

Underscoring the asymmetry of the conflict

But Peres was not the only one of those who supported the land-for-peace doctrine and Palestinian

statehood, having previously warned of the deadly perils this would entail: Thus, Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, Israel Prize laureate and former Education Minister for the far-Left Meretz party, wrote prior to his entry into politics, essentially echoing Peres’s concerns: “[The proponents of withdrawal] claim if they [the Arabs] threaten us with artillery from Kalkilya [an Arab town close to the 1967 ‘Green Line’], we will threaten Kalkilya with our artillery. However, the answer to this is very simple. The Arab world can exist, prosper, and develop not only if our artillery threatens Kalkilya, but even if it hits it. Israel, small and exposed, will neither be able to exist nor to prosper if its urban centers, its vulnerable airport and its narrow winding roads, are shelled. This is the fundamental difference between them and us, this is the terrible danger involved in the establishment of a third independent sovereign state between us and the Jordan River.”

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The grave asymmetry inherent in the conflict, which Rubinstein points out, was vividly underscored by Yigal Allon, former commander of the Palmach and later deputy Prime Minister for the Labor Party. In an article in the prestigious journal “Foreign Affairs”, he observed: “... the Arab states can permit themselves a series of military defeats while Israel cannot afford to lose a single war... a military defeat of Israel would mean the physical extinction of a large part of its population and the political elimination of the Jewish state. To lose a single war is to lose everything.”

Territory: The strategic value in the era of modern weaponry

Allon took issue with those who argued that in era of modern weaponry, the value of territory has been diminished: “...there are some who would claim that in an era of modern technological development such factors [strategic depth and topographical barriers] are valueless. In a nutshell, their claim is that the appearance of ground-to-ground missiles, supersonic fighter-bombers and other sophisticated instruments of modern warfare has canceled out the importance of strategic depth and topographical barriers... this argument is certainly invalid regarding Israel, and within the context of the Middle East conflict, where the opposite is true. Precisely because of dramatic developments in conventional weaponry the significance of territorial barriers and strategic depth has increased.

These sentiments were reiterated by Peres himself who warned that the range, firepower and mobility of modern weapons enhanced the importance of territory: “In 1948, it may have been possible to defend the “thin waist” of Israel’s most densely populated area, when the most formidable weapon used by both sides was the canon of limited mobility and limited fire-power... In the 20th century, with the development of the rapid mobility of armies, the defensive importance of territorial expanse has increased... Without a border which affords security, a country is doomed to destruction in war.”

“...an almost compulsive temptation to attack Israel ...”

Peres also focused on the economic importance territory has for the efficacy of the allocation of national resources: “The resources available to a country are finite. In the absence of a strategic border, the investment in security that a country requires, comes at the expense of other needs. This difference in the level of investment in security creates in certain cases a qualitative change in the general level of a nation - in terms of its economy, its society and education... A country that has the advantage of a strategic frontier can invest less ... in fortifications, maintenance of battle ready armed forces, armaments...”

Although he conceded that territory itself was not sufficient to deter attack, it was, in and of itself,

necessary to do so. Underscoring the gravity of the lack of minimal geographical size, he wrote: “It is of course doubtful whether territorial expanse can provide absolute deterrence. However, the lack of minimal territorial expanse places a country in a position of an absolute lack of deterrence. This in itself constitutes almost compulsive temptation to attack Israel from all directions ...”

Of course, Peres was not the only Israeli leader to warn of the dire consequences of yielding territory to Arab control—only to embrace it as a national imperative later, precipitating all the dangers of which he had previously warned.

Sharon on Gaza 1992

One of the most striking examples of the radical metamorphoses from an uncompromising hawk to champion of unilateral concessions was the late Ariel Sharon, who reneged on his election pledges and imposed unrequited withdrawal from Gaza, which soon afterwards fell to the Islamist terror group, Hamas, just as he had foreseen it would.

In a 1992 opinion piece, Sharon recalled how Israel overcame the spate of terror attacks in the Jordan Valley following the Six Day War: These experiences prove not only that terror can be eradicated, but also the principle by which this is to be accomplished. It is imperative not to run from terrorism, and it will be smitten only if we control its bases and engage its gangs on their own territory.”

He went on to elaborate regarding Gaza—just prior to the conclusion of the Oslo Accords: “And Gaza is the prime example. The populated sections of Gaza had become in 1970 an area controlled by the terrorist organizations because the Defense Minister [Yitzhak Rabin] decided to evacuate the towns, villages and refugee camps. Fortunately, we returned to the correct policy before the Gaza Strip exploded like festering abscess, which could have poisoned the entire surroundings. But because of mistaken policy - of fleeing from the population centers and refraining from eliminating the danger in its early formative stages—we had to conduct a much more difficult and lengthy campaign.”

“...Gaza will become a launching site for rockets...”

Presciently, he predicted the very perils he later precipitated by implementing precisely the very measures he warned should be avoided: “If now we once more fall into the same mistake, the price will be much heavier than before—because now the terrorists and the means they have at their disposal are different and more dangerous than before. If we abandon Gaza, it will be taken over by the terror organizations. Palestine Square [in Gaza] will become a launching site for rockets aimed at...Ashkelon and what will the IDF do then? Will it once again recapture Gaza? Shell and bomb the towns and refugee camps in the Gaza Strip?”

He cautioned: “We all aspire to a political settlement, but we not will reach it by way of surrender but only after crushing terrorism and we can only eliminate terrorism if we control its bases, and fight its gangs there and destroy them.”

Peres-on the importance of settlements

In the debate on how to achieve peace with the Palestinian-Arabs, the Jewish communities beyond the 1967 Green Line (a.k.a. “settlements”) are widely portrayed as an irksome “obstacle to peace”. It is thus intriguing to discover that Peres himself—in his pre-Oslo era—was one of their most fervent advocates—indeed, in important ways, their founding father.

He urged: “[We need] to create a continuous stretch of new settlements; to bolster Jerusalem and the surrounding hills, from the north, from the east, and from the south and from the west, by means of the establishment of townships, suburbs and villages - Ma’ale Edumin, Ofra, Gilo, Bet-El, Givon, and IDF camps and Nahal outposts - to ensure that the capital and its flanks are secured, and underpinned by urban and rural settlements. These settlements will be connected to the coastal plain and Jordan Valley by new lateral axis roads...”

Peres then stressed the security aspect of the Jewish settlements : "...the settlements along the Jordan River are intended to establish the Jordan River as the [Israel's] de facto security border; however it is the settlements on the western slopes of the hills of Samaria and Judea which will deliver us from the curse of Israel's "narrow waist"; and the purpose of the settlements in the Golan is to ensure that this territorial platform will no longer constitute a danger, but a barrier against a surprise attack..."

No less noteworthy was the attitude of Yigal Allon to what is arguably the most controversial of all the "settlements"—that in Hebron. On January 26, 1969, he wrote the following letter to one of the families there, on the occasion of the first circumcision ceremony in the community:

Dear Nachshon Family,

Unfortunately, I am not able to be with you as I would have wished, to share your joy at the "Brit Mila" [circumcision] ceremony of your son, the first child of the restorers of the Jewish settlement in Hebron, I wish you all, the parents and the entire tribe of settlers, great blessing and joy in raising your son.

Bringing your son into the covenant of the Patriarch Abraham, in the city of Abraham after forty years of separation from it, has a special symbolic significance. It bears testimony to our continuous connection to this place, to which we have returned never to leave.

Yours sincerely,

Yigal Allon

Peres on the value of agreements with the Arabs

As the prime force behind the perilous Oslo Accords, it is noteworthy that Peres once totally dismissed the value of any agreement signed with the Arabs, writing: "The major issue is not [attaining] an agreement, but ensuring the actual implementation of the agreement in practice. The number of agreements which the Arabs have violated is no less than number which they have kept".

It seemed that Peres's skepticism as to agreements and demilitarization did not wane right up until the signature of the Oslo Accords. In his "The New Middle East" (1993), he wrote: "Even if the Palestinians agree that their state have no army or weapons, who can guarantee that a Palestinian army would not be mustered later to encamp at the gates of Jerusalem and the approaches to the lowlands? And if the Palestinian state would be unarmed, how would it block terrorist acts perpetrated by extremists, fundamentalists or irredentists?"

How indeed??

"No greater lie than that which calls for Palestinian statehood..."

Allow me to conclude with the words of Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, former minister and MK on behalf of the dovish Meretz party, who proclaimed; "Not since the time of Dr. Goebbels [Head of the Nazi Propaganda Machine] there has ever been a case in which continual repetition of a lie has born such great fruits... Of all the Palestinian lies there is no lie greater or more crushing than that which calls for the establishment of a separate Palestinian state in the West Bank..."

There seems little need to add to that!

Martin Sherman is the founder & executive director of the Israel Institute for Strategic Studies.

Fake PA Compliance, Fake PLO Charter Change, Fake NYT Story

William K. Langfan

At his recent UN General Assembly speech, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas threatened to cancel all diplomatic agreements with Israel if the next Israeli government carries out Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign promise to apply Israeli sovereignty over parts of the "West Bank". In his address to the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York, Abbas slammed Netanyahu for "arrogantly" promising the annexation of the Jordan Valley and Israel's "colonial settlements," and warned a religious war could break out over Israel's policies in Jerusalem.

The problem for Abbas' threat, however, is that for Abbas' threat of rescinding the PA-Israel Peace Agreements to mean anything, the PA would have had to have first complied with the Peace agreements to begin with. Abbas' threat to rescind "agreements" that the PA never abided by to begin with is fake threat. Fake PA compliance to begin with equals a

fake PA threat of rescinding compliance to end with.

And one of the PA's most important obligations that the PA has faked compliance with is its obligation to have removed the ugly and virulently anti-Israel clauses of the PLO Charter that was last amended in 1968. And to add to the fake mix, leave it to the New York Times to write fake stories claiming the PLO changed its ugly Israel-hating charter.

In sum, a fake PLO Charter change wrapped in several fake NYT articles equals a fake Palestinian threat to rescind its Oslo agreements.

Firstly, the PLO Charter was never changed because Clause 33 of the PLO Charter as amended in 1968 specifically states that there can be no change to the Charter unless 2/3s of the full membership of the Palestinian National Council and such a vote can only be made in a meeting specially noticed for an amendment change. This did not occur.

Clause 1 of the Resolution voted on states that the PNC decides "amending the Palestinian National Charter and cancelling the Charter's articles opposing the exchanged letters between the PLO and the Israeli Government on September 9th and 10th, 1993.

Clause 2 of the resolution states that a legal committee would be formed to draft a new Charter. The committee was never formed. Since, the PLO committee to change the PLO charter was never formed, or offered specific changes that were properly voted on no change in the PLO Charter has occurred. The PLO simply staged a fake PLO charter change.

But, none of the real facts mattered when the New York Times decided to falsely conclude and report that the PLO did change its charter.

The first false NYT false story was published on April 25, 1996 with the headline and the portion of the article stated, "PLO Ends Call for Destruction of Jewish State": "Bowling to the insistent demands of Yasir Arafat, the main assembly of the Palestine Liberation Organization voted today to revoke the clauses in its 32-year-old charter that called for an armed struggle to destroy the Jewish state. . .". This was fake NYT story number one.

This falsehood was then followed with another false NYT story on Dec. 15, 1998 with the headline and the portion of the article on, "Clinton in the Mideast; Clinton Watches as Palestinians Drop Call for Israel's Destruction": "With President Clinton as their witness, hundreds of former Palestinian guerrilla fighters voted here today to rid their organization's charter of any clauses calling for the destruction of Israel, knocking down a critical roadblock on the rutted path to peace. . .". This was false NYT story number two.

One would have thought that the New York Times having clearly already once erroneously reported in 1996 article that the "PLO Ends Call for Destruction of Israel" in its first story would have related in the second 1998 article "Palestinians Drop Call for Israel's Destruction" that it got it completely wrong the first time. But not only did the New York Times omit that important fact, but the New York Times also falsely reported for a second time the same fake PLO charter change.

In conclusion, the Palestinians have clearly come to the conclusion that they don't have to abide by any agreements with Israel because all they have to do is make some fake pronouncements, and the New York Times with print them as if they really mean something. Put another way, why comply with agreements if the New York Times will publish your lie.

Abbas' threats of non-compliance with the Oslo agreements are as empty as the PA's compliance with those very agreements. Just don't ask the New York Times.

The writer is a Israel advocate and lawyer living in Florida

Kurdish, Syrian, and Turkish Ironies

Victor Davis Hanson

Critics now upset about abandoning our Kurdish friends demanded abject withdrawals — and the abandonment of friends — in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Outrage met Donald Trump's supposedly rash decision to pull back U.S. troops from possible confrontational zones between our Kurdish friends in Syria and Recep Erdogan's expeditionary forces.

Turkey claims that it will punish the Syrian Kurds for a variety of supposed provocations, including aiding and abetting Kurdish terrorist separatists

inside Turkey. But what they say they can so easily do and what they really can do inside Syria are, of course, two different things.

A Noble People

Most Americans in general favor the Kurds and oppose the Turks. Aside from Israel, Kurds are about the only American allies in the Middle East who predictably fight alongside our troops against Islamists, theocrats, and Baathists. They admire Americans, and for the most part they do not indulge in the normal anti-American histrionics. They despise ISIS as much we do and are on the front lines combatting ISIS atrocities.

Skeptics might suggest that they do so mostly for self-interested reasons. But all people do that. And what is unusual about the Kurds of Iraq and Syria is the number of times they have risked their lives in battle alongside our own soldiers. For that alone, they deserve special American dispensations and should not be left to the vagaries of Turkish or Russian air power or any combined Turkish, Syrian, Islamist, or Iranian cynical alliance.

Like the Poles, the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Israelis, the Kurds are an honorable, ancient, and brave people who drew history's unfortunate lot of living in a dangerous geography between much larger and aggressive nations. And, to be frank, all these endangered peoples at some point in their histories, ancient and modern or both, seem to have fought against Turkish forces, been targeted by them, or threatened by Ankara.

So, yes, it is incumbent on the Trump administration in general and on Secretary Pompeo in particular to find ways to prevent mass Turkish attacks on the Kurds, while not inserting American ground troops into a cauldron of fire between Turks and Kurds. That effort will require a great deal of skill and deftness that are weirdly forgotten in the current bipartisan exclamations of "We sold out the Kurds!" — given the labyrinth of paradoxes that surround Turkey, Syria, Kurds, and the U.S. and the lack of information about the actual redeployment of American troops.

The chief problem is that the Kurds are our friends but not our legal allies. In contrast, the Turks are not really our friends anymore but are legal, treaty-bound allies.

No doubt depressed Americans at this point would in theory gladly substitute weaker but more loyal Kurds for stronger and more strategically important but fickle Turks as de facto American allies. Turkey, remember, is also holding the foreign policy of the European Union hostage, as it threatens to open the floodgates of Middle East and African refugees inside Turkey into Europe should the EU lecture Turkey too much or cut off its blackmail money. And for that matter, Ankara in theory can also hold 50 or so American nukes likely based on Turkish soil as well.

Turkey, our Frenemy

More ironies abound. Many of the critics demanding that we restrain our NATO ally Turkey are precisely the same who have damned Trump for undermining the NATO alliance by loudly reprimanding allies for not keeping their promises of military contributions. Yet an American presence in between the Kurdish and Turkish trajectories may not necessarily serve as a successful deterrent to violence given our present limited deployment. If all Trump has done for now is to remove a few dozen Americans from a "trip wire" deployment between the two belligerents, he can hardly have "sold out" the Kurds.

Otherwise, our presence in the firing line could raise the specter that we'd either refuse our Article V (collective defense) commitments to Turkey that Erdogan might cynically invoke in a larger war in Syria, or we'd find ourselves actually killing Turks to save Kurds. Either of these scenarios is theoretically quite possible, and both would be far more injurious to the spirit and cohesion of the presently composed NATO alliance than asking Germany and its followers to pony up the contributions that they had long promised.

As I understand the present outrage, the logic goes like this: It is a sellout to leave the Kurds vulnerable to the Turks, and it undermines our noble promises and our credibility in a way that ignoring our ignoble, legal commitments to Turkey do not. That may be a legitimate assumption that we all would like to embrace, but it is not yet the policy of the United States.

Also, there are Kurds — and then there are Kurds. Given the century of broken promises about the birthing of a Kurdish super state of some 30 million, the Kurds now compose minority populations in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, among other smaller countries. The agendas of these disparate groups, again in lieu of an independent Kurdistan, are not uniform; they range from advocacy of free markets and consensual government to authoritarian Communism and Islamism.

These sometime disparate factions, to varying degrees, can employ both honorable methods of resistance and occasional abject terrorism against both our Turkish allies and our Iranian enemies. In other words, as minorities that form less than 25 percent of the population of their four host nations, 30 million Kurds are diverse groups that do what they think they must to survive. Their survival strategies do not always assure compliance with U.S. anti-terrorist protocols. Our allied Syrian Kurds of the YPG in Syria, for instance, are also affiliated with the Kurdish PKK inside Turkey — a group that has often committed terrorist attacks on Turkish civilians and authorities.

Then there is the matter of Turkish forces entering the circular shooting arena of Syria, where they will at times be opposed by — and then in league with — a coalition of Iranians, Hezbollah, Syrians, and Kurds with Russians looking to pile on after they see who gets the upper hand. Who believes that the Turks will have an easy time entering Syria, pushing out Kurds, and then establishing and occupying a border corridor to resettle millions of refugees currently on Turkish soil or in Turkish hands? All of that seems a multibillion-dollar, multiyear, multi-casualty undertaking for a country currently in the economic doldrums.

Again, as a general rule, Never Trumpers and progressives are against anything that Trump is for, and they make the necessary ad hoc adjustments. They might have legitimate criticisms against Trump if he, as they accuse, simply flew off the handle in a call with the Turkish president and revoked established policies, and if he were now pulling all U.S. troops out of Syria.

Sunshine Supporters?

But that has not happened — at least yet. It may, or may not, given that we don't know whether Trump, in art-of-the-deal fashion, was blustering about a radical solution in order to achieve a moderate compromise, or whether he put conditions on the Turkish incursion, or whether he is shifting around rather than removing American troops. For now, only a few American troops have been pulled back from the front-line battle zones, and fewer withdrawn from Syria.

But, again, more irony abounds. Those on the left now screaming about loyal allies, and the ignominy of selling out friends, had no problems abandoning the Vietnamese and Hmong to Communist retaliation. They have demanded abject withdrawals from both Afghanistan and Iraq, which could lead to slaughter in the former case, and actually did in the latter, by creating a void that birthed the mass-murdering ISIS in Iraq.

Many of our newfound Kurdish loyalists supported the Hillary Clinton-Barack Obama misadventure in Libya that bombed the reforming second-generation Qaddafi dynasty out of power in order to support the supposed idealists of the Arab Spring. Yet our air strikes only enhanced a murderous civil war in Libya. And when it got uglier, we fled the ensuing mess, leaving four dead Americans and those idealists, on whose behalf we had intervened, on their own against predatory and opportunistic Islamists whom we had empowered.

Another irony: If Donald Trump announced that he was going to send more troops to save the Kurds from the Turks, he would be immediately damned by his present leftist and Never Trump critics for tearing apart NATO and starting another undeclared Middle East war.

So, yes, let us protect Kurdish lives. But let's also swear that if we do, we must acknowledge that in the distant miasma of the Middle East, the unexpected should be expected, and those who now support American front-line deployments with the Kurds must equally support the possibly messy, long-haul commitment in which both allies and enemies have at times embraced terrorism. And first, let us make a convincing argument for why a 20-year-old from Ohio should die in the badlands of Syria to keep our

NATO ally Turkey from murdering our friends the Kurds. And, second, let's offer a plan for how we may disengage from any possible war as easily as we engaged, given that no one in this case can define final victory as the likely easy defeat and quick retreat of Turkey.

Then there is the Trump 2016 campaign. It was based on a 90-percent Republican traditional agenda of lower taxes, smaller government, deregulation, more energy development, secure borders, and conservative judges and social policies. But among Trump's signature orthodox GOP messages (delivered in an unorthodox style) were also his promises to secure the American border, call China to account, restore industry and manufacturing inside the U.S. — and avoid optional overseas engagements that failed the cost-benefit test for American interests.

Call that reluctance mercenary, cynical, cold-hearted, nationalistic, isolationist, anything you will. But do not claim that in October 2019 staying clear of the Middle East infighting is irrelevant to the Trump voter or that it was suddenly sprung on the American public.

This country has a regrettable record of presidential candidates campaigning for non-intervention, only to become interventionist once in office as commander in chief. In the post-war era, this dates back to Lyndon Johnson's 1964 pledges not to go into Vietnam whole-hog. Barack Obama ran against Bush's supposed war crimes and the futility of a preemptive war in Iraq, and then he compiled the greatest number of drone assassinations of any administration and waged a preemptive bombing campaign in Libya. George W. Bush in 2000 campaigned against Clinton's nation-building in the Balkans, and then after 9/11 felt he had to do the same thing in the Middle East. And so on. The point is not that presidents should not react to changing circumstances, but that Trump for the most part has tried to do what he said he would do on the campaign trail.

The Realities of Protecting the Syrian Kurds

Any current critics calling for the use of American trip-wire soldiers to protect Kurds from the Turkish military — in the current stated mission to defeat ISIS and keep it defeated — should at least make the case that de facto fighting against Turkey means that it is therefore no longer a friend and should no longer be a NATO ally, and thus, in extremis, can be opposed militarily, and also that we can do without its geographic access and bases in the Middle East without harming ourselves or our interests. And note they should also assume that Turkey, out of spite, will release millions of refugees into Europe, and it will react to friction with Americans troops in Syria in who knows what fashion to their U.S. counterparts now stationed with nuclear weapons at Incirlik Air Base inside Turkey. Do we really wish to risk a shooting war with a NATO ally while 5,000 American airmen are inside its country equipped with 50 nuclear weapons?

Or barring that, they should at least argue that the current NATO roster is now becoming a farce, and Turkey's membership in it a cruel joke — and we can therefore ignore all that when we like and as we please.

NationalReview.com

Kurdish/Jewish Relations:

Dr. Andrew G. Bostom First-hand Accounts

Largely autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan is a Sharia-based society, per its own Constitution, (Articles 6 & 7):

This Constitution confirms and respects the Islamic identity of the majority of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan. It considers the principles of Islamic Sharia as one of the main sources of legislation, Kurdistan is not allowed to enact a law inconsistent with the provisions of the fundamentals of Islam. (Articles 6 & 7)

Not surprisingly, given historical Sharia mores, the attendant legacy of Islamic attitudes towards non-Muslims, overall, including Jews, and Islam's own intrinsic theological Jew-hatred, here are the current prevailing conditions for the tiny vestigial remnant population of mixed "Jews" of Kurdistan, forced to practice their faith surreptitiously, as reported less than a year ago (11/30/2018), by the Kurdish media outlet, Rudaw::

"They call us 'Ben Jews' or 'Sons of Jews' because we are mixed Jews, Kurds, or other ethnicities." They keep their Jewish identity hidden for fear of

persecution. They meet for Shabbat — the holy day — at a different home every week. Religious celebrations like Hanukkah and Passover are often celebrated privately inside the home of someone within the community. The event on Friday was organized by many people from the community, but "they didn't want to give their name or picture because of the dangerous situation"

Anti-Defamation League (ADL) 2014 polling data from Iraq on the prevalence of extreme Antisemitism, are entirely consistent with the reported self-protective behaviors of Kurdistan's Jews seeking to avoid persecution from the overwhelmingly Kurdish Muslim population. In brief the ADL surveys the prevalence of those who agree with at least 6 out of 11 Antisemitic stereotypes (for actual questionnaires and embedded pdf files of the surveys, see this blog). In each country, including Iraq, the following survey methods were applied to ensure that all regions are sampled in a representative and balanced manner. This would necessarily include Iraqi Kurdistan.

Telephone interviewing was only conducted in countries where the combined mobile phone + landline penetration exceeded 90%. In all countries where telephone dialing was conducted, interviews were collected using a combination of landline and mobile phone dialing, in proportion to that particular country's coverage rate for each telephone type. Within each country, the data was weighted to be reflective of the national population on a number of demographic measures, including age, gender, religion, urban/rural location, ethnicity, and language spoken. In an overwhelming majority of the countries/territories polled, the samples are fully nationally representative.

The bottom line: 92% of Iraqis exhibit extreme Antisemitism, the world's second highest rate of this hatred after the Palestinian Arab-controlled areas.

Past as prologue.

Here are first-hand accounts of the oppression experienced by Jewish communities under Kurdish dominion not only in Iraqi Kurdistan—where Jewish families existed as chattel, well into the 19th century—but also Turkish Anatolia, and eastern Turkey, during the mid-19th through early 20th centuries, which led to their liquidation by massacre, pillage, and flight.

1. Mid-nineteenth century northern Iraqi "Kurdistan" [Jews as "property", i.e., slaves of the Muslim Kurds]:

"The Jews scattered here and there [in Kurdistan], and forced to remain at the places assigned to them, are in the true sense of the word, surrounded by tribes of savages. One often finds five, ten, or even twenty Jewish families the property of one Kurd, by whom they are burdened with imposts, and subject to ill treatment. Heavy taxes are imposed upon them, which for the poorest, amount annually to 500 piastres. Finally, they are compelled at different periods of the year to perform serf-service, to cultivate their master's field, without receiving or being entitled to demand the smallest compensation for their labor.

"This is really an awful state of affairs and with heart and soul do we sympathize with our distressed coreligionists and we felt deeply grieved that it was not in our power to help them. . . . The [Kurdish] master has absolute power of life and death over his [Jewish] slaves; at his will he can sell them to another master, either in whole families or individually". [p. 658, *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism*]

2. Late 19th/early 20th century Kurdish depredations against Jews rendering Kurdish areas of Turkey effectively Judenrein:

According to the American Jewish Yearbook, almost eight thousand Jews emigrated from Turkey to the United States between 1899 and 1912. Alliance Israélite Universelle reports further indicate that Jews living in rural eastern Anatolia suffered severely throughout this period due primarily to Muslim Kurdish depredations (From p. 108, *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism*):

In Diyarbakir, Urfa, Siverek, Mardin, and several other cities of this region, Kurds continuously attacked Jewish communities, forcing them to pay taxes and contributions in addition to those already exacted by the Turkish authorities. The slightest tendency to resist was immediately suppressed with blood. Jews were crushed with scorn and had to accept all sorts of humiliations.

Thus, for instance, when rains were delayed in spring or late in autumn, Kurds went to Jewish

graveyards, dug up newly buried corpses, cut off the heads and threw them in the river to appease Heaven's wrath and bring on rain. In spite of the complaints of Jews to Turkish authorities, the perpetrators of such misdeeds remained, as was to be expected, undiscovered.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the insecurity of the Kurd[ish] country was so great that Jewish peddlers could no longer venture outside the cities. The communities of the vilayet [province] of Diyarbakir fell into misery and diminished year after year. Thus, whilst in 1874 the town of Siverek situated on the Urfa road counted about fifty Jewish families, three decades later Joseph Niego, entrusted with a mission in Asia Minor by the Jewish Colonization Association, found only twenty-six households, totaling about 100 persons. Similarly, the 500 Jews who, according to Vital Cuinet, constituted the community of Mardin toward the end of the nineteenth century, were all gone by 1906. At that time, there remained in this town only one Jew, who had the task of guarding the synagogue.

This article would not be complete without an eyewitness description of Rosh Hashannah under Kurdish domination in the 19th century:

"(T)hey [Jews] had not only to bear the whole cruelty of the Kurds, but were even sold like cattle, and attacked in that which to them is most sacred—their faith. Thus for instance on New Year's day, when the Shofar sounded in the Synagogue the Kurds rushed into the Temple, attacked the women and maltreated them, broke the symbolic trumpet, and compelled the Jews to desist from their ceremony."—Benjamin [Binjamin], I. J. (Israel Joseph), 1818-1864. Eight years in Asia and Africa from 1846 to 1855. Hanover [Germany], 1863; pp. 120-21

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In Other News...

"Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land"

Rochel Sylvestsky

The Sukkot holiday is a particularly appropriate time to review a unique project that has resulted in a most enlightening and informative new book.

Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land, The Hebrew Bible in the United States, a Sourcebook (edited by Meir Y. Soloveitchik, Matthew Holbreich, Jonathan Silver and Stuart W. Halpern. Toby Press, The Zehava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, Yeshiva University) is an eminently readable but thoroughly scholarly addition to any library, a combination of Judaica and Americana.

The sourcebook meticulously traces and analyzes the way the Hebrew Bible (the term is used in the book for what is called the Old Testament in Christian terminology) functioned as a foundational text of America's tradition – whether in building a collective identity, deducing political ideas, adopting the concept of an intergenerational covenant or simply in the plethora of parallels, quotes, vocabulary and verses employed in multiple writings and at significant occasions to strengthen resolve and impart messages.

Why review it on Sukkot? Not just because the Simchat Torah holiday ends the festivities, but because the Hebrew Bible's influence in the New World was the impetus for the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving holiday in 1621, emulating the joyous biblical harvest holiday of Tabernacles – called Sukkot in Hebrew. And every American child is taught to connect Thanksgiving with the beginnings of American history.

The book informs us that the Pilgrims adopted the Mayflower Compact in 1620, after a journey they described as analogous to the Exodus, gaining inspiration to create a new society from the special destiny of the Israelites. The Exodus from slavery to freedom is a recurrent theme used to describe the efforts to define a country based on liberty, democracy and the pursuit of happiness. In fact, Thomas Jefferson's suggestion for the Seal of the United States was a depiction of the Israelites in the desert complete with Clouds of Glory and Benjamin Franklin's was the Splitting of the Red Sea.

When the West was won, the idea of Manifest Destiny was an extension of that theme of chosenness. Herman Melville was to write that "we

Americans are the peculiar chosen people – the Israel of our time- we bear the ark of the liberties of the world."

The book's title, dramatically depicted on its cover, is taken from Leviticus and engraved on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. It is perhaps the most famous example of the way the Hebrew Bible's Judeo-Christian values, ideas and moral guidance formed a natural part of a young America's mainstream.

The editors have chosen to elucidate this historical fact in clearly delineated chapters where the writings and oratory of each period are juxtaposed with their biblical sources in both original Hebrew and English translation. They begin with the formative years preceding the establishment of the United States, up to and including the Civil War, and ending with an epilogue on the civil rights movement although the Bible became less of a source after that war. Except for a few connections which seem somewhat contrived, the writings are unquestionably based on the various scriptural sources brought by the editors. The readers' understanding of the historical documents is sure to be greatly enhanced by perusing the biblical sources on which each was based, as will be his empathy and identification with those who wrote them. The introductions to each chapter are an integral part of the sourcebook, providing an interesting perspective and overview of each period.

On a personal note, reading of the central place of the Hebrew Bible in the history of the United States was something of a bittersweet experience for me, an observant American-born religious Zionist who decided to live her adult life in Israel. The book struck a painful chord for me, a student of the legendary Professor Nechama Leibowitz whose analyses of biblical passages always included the relevant moral lessons, because the Bible's message seems to play such a minor part in today's Israeli weltanschauung.

In the still young State of Israel, established in the land of the Bible, quoting the Book of Books is often associated with coercion instead of vision, guidance and ethics. The secular population's familiarity with its language and admiration for its timeless wisdom is far more limited than that of the Founding Fathers, who spoke Hebrew and knew much of the Bible by heart.

Brigade Commander Ofer Winter, for example, a rising star in the IDF, commanded the Givati brigade during 2014's Gaza Operation Protective Edge. Like all brigade commanders, he penned a "Commander's pre battle message" to his troops. In addition to reminding them of their role in defending their homeland and the need to succeed in their mission, he added the following words of encouragement, paraphrased from the Biblical words of David as he went out to battle Goliath and hauntingly similar to the examples in the Sourcebook:

"History has chosen us to be at the cutting edge of the war against a terrorist Gazan enemy...I lift my eyes to the heavens and cry along with you 'Hear O Israel the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.' God of Israel, make our path a successful one, for we are about to fight for your people Israel against those who would 'profane Your Name'."

In Hebrew, these words, with their biblical allusions, including the most well-known biblical verse to be found in the Jewish prayer book, were meant to connect Israel's soldiers with Israelites of ancient times, granting their mission a historic dimension of continuity, and strengthening belief in the justice of their cause.

But soon after the message was delivered to his men, slingshots were aimed at Winter in lieu of Goliath. He was accused by the left of trying to "religionize" the IDF rather than simply using historic words to enhance a contemporary message—and the media storm was so violent that then Chief of Staff Eizenkot caved in and added a critical remark to Winter's sterling record, blocking his advancement. The appointment of a new CoS put an end to the witchhunt and the unusually capable and dedicated observant officer is once again in charge of a combat unit.

In fact, most secular Israelis identify with the historical justification for returning to the land of Israel, ignoring the spiritual resonance of its being the land promised to the Israelites who agreed to accept the Torah's commandments at Sinai.

America, in contrast, was founded during a period when being religious was the normal state of affairs. It is enlightening to read how alive and meaningful

the Hebrew Bible was to American society, how America's founders adopted the story of the Exodus while believing that their successes showed them to be the chosen people in the newly-settled promised land of America.

And there is another unexpected reward to be gained from reading this book. It is a unique way to understand American history from a hitherto unexplored viewpoint, one which was central to the lives of those who built the country. It introduces readers, including this one, to well-known figures but also to leaders and ideologues whose names are familiar but whose works many of us have never read – and to some we may never have heard of before—although they are outstanding persons who influenced American history and whose words are well worth reading. These men of character were so deeply dedicated to the causes they championed that the sincerity and idealism that characterized them, enriched by their use of biblical phrases and motifs, shines through their writings.

A few of the striking examples include Revolutionary War fighter Jonas Phillips, a Jew who wrote a letter to the Constitutional Convention asking it to protect religious freedoms; Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, who corresponded with his friend, rabbi of the Newport, R.I. synagogue, in Hebrew; John Witherspoon, member of the Continental Congress, whose most famous sermon is based on Psalm 76 and the miracle of Jerusalem's salvation from Sennacherib's forces; Harvard president Samuel Langdon, who, along with others, saw the biblical form of government, "the republic of the Israelites, an example to the American states" as a precursor to American democracy – since the Jewish king did not have absolute power and in effect, there was a balance of power and a judicial system which developed from Jethro's advice to Moses. (This attitude to the Bible's civil law is also a far cry from the prevalent Israeli attitude, mostly due to lack of knowledge, and one need only look at the recent elections to realize that.) The book contains many more personalities whose lives, biblical erudition and writings elicit interest, respect and admiration.

Decades later, African-American slaves were to see the North as Canaan, an analogy present in many spirituals, expressing their yearning for freedom in biblical terms. The editors devoted a chapter to the sources of these evocative songs which are an integral part of American history.

The Bible's influence was so pervasive that both sides in the slavery conflict used it to attempt to prove the correctness of their views – the editors claim convincingly that this was because of the Bible's exalted status, as using it would provide credence to the writer or orator. Their analysis of the debate, however, puts paid to the use of the Bible to justify slavery as it existed in much of the South – because while slavery was a way of life everywhere in biblical times, the point of its appearance in the Bible was to carefully regulate the practice, forbidding the breakup of families as well as the other forms of cruelty it led to in the South.

Henry Ward Beecher used the model of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, emancipated and taught to be men by Moses, to the necessity – and possibility – of doing the same for America's slaves. Frederick Douglass, born a slave, paraphrased the mournful psalm "By the rivers of Babylon" to declare that slaves cannot feel joy at the July 4th celebrations of the founding of the United States: "...if I do not remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, may my right hand lose its cunning." Abraham Lincoln used the same chapter to allude to bringing that slavery to an end, saying "may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I ever prove false to those teachings" – referring to those of the Declaration of Independence.

It is important to state that the book does not whitewash the unpleasant truths in America's eventful history nor the fact that America has become much less devout in the last century. Nevertheless, it is a beacon for what America can be.

Will the Hebrew Bible continue to speak to America, in its timeless words or at least in its eternal moral truths and values? Will appreciation of the people who gave the world the Book of Books overcome resurgent antisemitism? Will the ideals and ideas upon which the society of the United States was constructed continue to guide its people? Reading this book makes one wish very much that they will. Rochel Sylvestsky is an editor of Arutz Sheva's English site.