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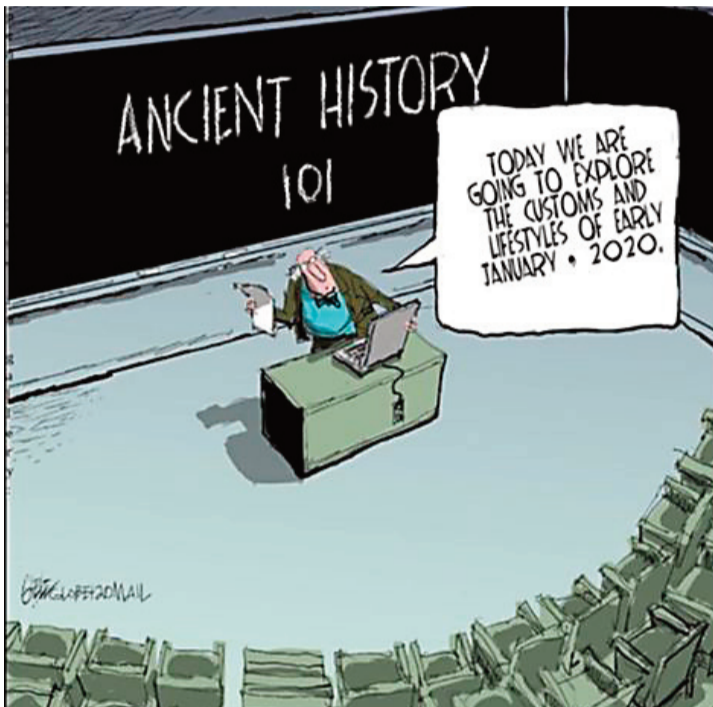
CONFRONTING THE CORONA-PLAGUE: ISRAEL, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, & THE WORLD

Arthur Szyk (1894-1951), The Haggadah, The Family at the Seder (1935), Łódź, Poland

“ANCIENT HISTORY 101 — JANUARY, 2020”: LIVING THE CORONA-VIRUS PLAGUE CRISIS

FREDERICK KRANTZ

The “Ancient History 101” cartoon below sums up the civilizational impact of the China-, or corona-, virus plague as it continues to cut a devastating global swath. What was normal and unremarked-upon a few short weeks ago—moving about as we wished, travelling, enjoying group events like sports, theater, and worship, eating “out”, planning for the near, and distant, future, being with and embracing those we love—seems today distant and remarkable. We are unsure whether the past, receding so rapidly, can or will ever be restored to what it was.



This plague, entirely unforeseen by our “experts” and “leaders”, is rendering the cultural-political givens of our once-lived lives provisional and impermanent. To paraphrase an apocalyptic prophet of an earlier age, “all that was solid seems to melt into air”, and one hears again the proverbial, despairing millennial plaint, “Give me a stable point, where I can stand firm”.

Many recent assumptions, liberal and conservative, about social stability and material well-being are turning into smoke as the global infection-and death-rates spiral up, in Italy and Spain and France, and the U.S., Britain, Canada, and Australia, with eastern Europe, Latin America, East Asia and Africa now a bit belatedly bringing up the rear.

As I write, three and a half million Americans applied for unemployment relief in the week ending March 21, an all-time record, with many more expected by month’s end. In New York the Stock Market, mirroring exchanges world-wide, fell into Depression territory, with some analysts predicting American unemployment by year’s end at ca.30% (worse than post-1929). One Canadian dollar dropped to US\$0.70 cents, Alberta crude oil sank to C\$4.00/barrel, and the Canadian national debt, estimated in February to be \$28 billion, is now—given Parliament’s multi-billion dollar emergency relief plan—expected to reach at least \$120 billion, or more, before year’s end.

As some economists begin using the “D”-word, President Trump in the U.S. sought and gained Congressional approval for a \$2.3 trillion program of individual and corporate unemployment and tax relief, the largest in history. The post-Brexit European Union’s vaunted supra-national border-less Schengen vision has largely collapsed, as each panicked nation, seeking to protect its own people, seals off its territory. NATO is hastily being pressed into trying to fill a civilian role, and the United Nations (and its incompetent, China-dominated World Health Organization) has shown itself, once again, to be largely irrelevant.

In the U.S., the “major media”, while not giving President Trump the support one might expect a severe national crisis to elicit, have nevertheless largely shifted their coverage from “Trump Derangement Syndrome” to virus-related issues. The impending election (postponing it is now being raised) is largely forgotten, and as Trump dominates dramatic daily virus-update news conferences, his fumbling Democratic rival, Biden, gives largely-unwatched teleprompter-based interviews from his living-room.

Corona-virus out of China, the new plague, has re-directed the world’s attention away from old verities and concerns to more narrowly national and existentially pressing issues. This has produced the remarkable circumstance that, finally, the presumed debilities and transgressions of the Jewish state in the Middle East are no longer the obsessive focus of the

world’s media. The ending of Israel’s year-long political paralysis, after three indecisive national votes, with Benny Gantz deserting leadership of his Blue-White bloc to enter coalition negotiations with Bibi Netanyahu’s Likud, attracted little more than minor, momentary media attention.

Yet Israel now has a broad and stable center-right ruling coalition, in the steady and experienced hands of the semi-piternal P.M., Netanyahu. And this as both Israel and the Arab states confront the spreading corona-virus crisis. Indeed, the Arab regimes, and even the Palestinians, are so preoccupied with the looming pandemic that for once they (if not the Iranians, who—in the midst of their suffering—are threatening that they have enough uranium for a nuclear weapon) are *de facto* cooperating epidemiologically with the Jewish state.

We are still, of course, far from achieving that oft-proclaimed, and ever-receding, mirage, “a New Middle East”. Lions and lambs are not yet together in the manger. The Russians remain (with Iran and Hezbollah, and Turkey’s Erdogan) in Syria, two U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups have recently been sent to the region (one, the *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, currently becalmed with corona-virus cases in Guam!), Libya remains (to mix metaphors) a tinder-box of a basket-case, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Mali *et al* all remain unstable, and so on. Yet even the Middle East seems to be being jolted into a newfound inward-turning stasis as, inexorably, the viral plague spreads.

(The Palestinians, a special case, deserve a bit more consideration. Whether in Gaza or the West Bank, they have never been weaker, never more divided, never less able to attract world attention and concern. And given Bibi’s electoral triumph, and Trump’s growing public-opinion approval in the midst of U.S. crisis, never have the Palestinians—without an effective state structure, economically backward, and possessed of barely minimal public-health resources—been more susceptible, once the virus crisis lifts, to hard-nosed, joint U.S.-Israeli “peace plan” pressure.)

So, as a plague-ridden *Pesach* approaches, Israel and the Jewish world, like the world generally, face disorientation, disaggregation, and suffering given the still-virulent virus. Yet while down, we are far from out, and—after a period of confusion and uncertainty—we are finally directing the full panoply of Western medical-technical-public health and emergency economic resources against the disease. In this regard, Israel, with its disciplined population, compact geography, and remarkable scientific-technical-medical abilities, is well-placed—not only to defend itself, but to contribute to the well-being of the region, and the world.

Stepping back from the day-to-day struggle and individual deaths and sadness, so long as societies can maintain the steady provision of basic resources and services—above all, clean water, and electricity, basic IT services, pharmaceutical production, and adequate hospital-medical access—they can avoid crises and will more than survive. We will also need patience, discipline, forbearance, and determination—and the day-to-day heroism of ordinary people, of health service and transportation and food-supply workers, persons doing their jobs despite daily exposure to peril.

As Jews we should also remember that our tradition teaches that our purpose in this world is to do *mitzvot*, to live free and responsible, loving and joyful, lives and to support one another. It is a vision, and a lesson, being retaught and relearned once again today, as we celebrate the Passover holiday while respecting quarantines and six-foot separations, and using screens and social media to make (electronic) familial *Seders* possible.

In the *Tanakh’s Psalms of Ascent*, *Psalm 121* tells us (it is *CIJR’s* emblem) that “*netsach Yisrael, lo yishaker*—“the Protector of Israel will never forget us”. It is a lesson, like Passover’s vision of freedom, which has instructed and comforted us as a People throughout our often difficult, and sometimes tragic, history. And it speaks to us again today, here in Diaspora and in our Jewish State as, supporting and comforting one another and working together, we will not only endure, but will finally overcome the current crisis.

Be well, and have a happy, and safe, *Pesach*.

(Prof. Frederick Krantz, editor of *ISRAFAX*, is Director of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research)

WEEKLY QUOTES

“We will never forget this period, the way people never forgot the Second World War. I didn’t know how my parents kept remembering that war as if that was such a vivid moment in their lives, but they did because when you do face a danger, and you face it together with lots of other people it becomes incredibly vivid and personality shaping in terms of your memory,” – former UK Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in reference to the coronavirus. (*Algemeiner*, Mar. 20, 2020)

“We discussed Iran, but we also spoke at length about the historic opportunities that we will have in the coming months. Among them are [establishing] the Jordan Valley as the recognized eastern border of the State of Israel as well as a defensive alliance with the US. These are things that we could only dream about, but we have the possibility of implementing them.” – said Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu following his telephone call with US President Donald Trump. Netanyahu then called on Benny Gantz — head of the centrist Blue and White alliance – to join a unity government with his right-wing Likud party so Israel could **“realize these historic opportunities”** and avoid a third round of Knesset elections. (*Algemeiner*, Dec. 2, 2019)

“But like the vile ideology that it is, anti-Semitism has changed forms in recent days. No longer does it give vent to hatred of the Jewish religion or hatred of the Jewish people on every occasion; now it often propagates as simply hatred of the State of Israel. So let me be clear about one point: It is the position of the United States government that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism...,” – Vice President Mike Pence to AIPAC attendees. (*Human Rights Voice*, Mar. 2, 2020)

“They have a perfect track record of blowing every opportunity they’ve had in their past,” – Jared Kushner, one of the architects of the peace deal, to *CNN*, responding to the Palestinians’ outright rejection of the peace plan. (*WIN*, Jan. 29, 2020)

“I am disappointed that York University allowed for a hate-filled protest to take place last night at Vari Hall. I stand with the Jewish students and the Jewish community.” — Ontario Premier Doug Ford. He commented on the violent protests that erupted when IDF soldiers spoke at an event at Toronto’s York University sponsored by Herut Canada. York University has launched a review of how it handles free expression on campus over the Middle East conflict. (*National Post*, Nov. 21, 2019)

SHORT TAKES

POLITICAL SHOCKER: BLUE AND WHITE APPEARS TO BREAK APART AS GANTZ JOINS NETANYAHU (Jerusalem) –In an event that few would have foreseen, Blue and White appears to have disintegrated as its leader Benny Gantz led his faction into a unity government with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Details are still emerging but reports say that Gantz will lead the 15 members of his Israel Resilience party into the government. Israel Resilience is one of the parties that makes up Blue and White, a coalition of parties brought together to better compete against Netanyahu’s Likud. (*WIN*, Mar. 26, 2020)

TRUMP TO SIGN EXECUTIVE ORDER DEFUNDING COLLEGES THAT FAIL TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM (Washington) — President Trump is expected to sign an executive order that will allow the administration to cut funding from colleges and universities that have failed to quell anti-Semitism on their campuses. The order reclassifies Judaism as a race or nationality, affording Jews Title XI anti-discrimination protections under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (*Washington Examiner*, Dec. 10, 2019)



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left); Benny Gantz, leader, Blue and White

US HOUSE DEMOCRATS BLOCK PRO-ISRAEL, ANTI-BDS BILL (Washington) — The Israel Anti-Boycott Act, introduced by Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.), would have expanded the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 to include prohibiting U.S. support for foreign boycotts of Israel from groups including the European Union and the U.N. Human Rights Council. Lawmakers defeated consideration of the bill by a tally of 219-194. (*WIN*, Mar. 6, 2020)

POMPEO VOWS TO FIGHT UN BLACKLIST (Washington) — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told AIPAC attendees that he will not hold back from helping U.S. companies conducting business in Judea and Samaria, who have found themselves on the UN Human Rights Council’s blacklist. According to Pompeo, all the UN blacklist does is strengthen the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Notable U.S.-based companies that conduct business in Judea and Samaria include Motorola, Airbnb, Trip Advisor, Expedia, and General Mills. (*WIN*, Mar. 3, 2020)

POPULAR AL JAZEERA TALK SHOW HOST SETS OFF FIRESTORM BY CLAIMING ZIONISM ‘MOST SUCCESSFUL PROJECT OF THE PAST CENTURY’ (Qatar) — Faisal al-Kasim, a pugnacious but widely admired host on the Qatari network *Al Jazeera*, caused a storm of controversy when he tweeted “The majority of Arabs, if they want to insult you, describe you as ‘Zionist,’ knowing that the most successful project of the past century and the present is the Zionist project, while all projects of the Arabs, especially Arab nationalism, have failed.” (*Algemeiner*, Feb. 9, 2020)

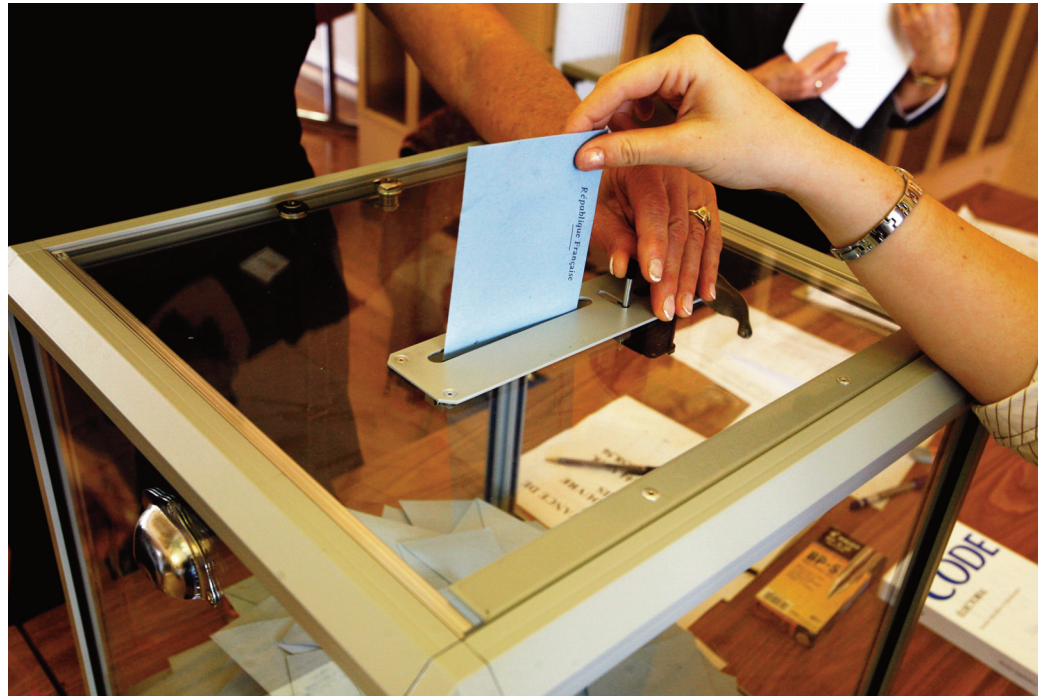
AMERICAN AND ISRAELI JEWS FACE POLITICAL CHALLENGES

HAROLD M. WALLER

2020 is proving to be politically challenging for both American and Israeli Jews. With both countries striving to control the coronavirus crisis, Israel has already had its third election in about a year while the U.S. is preparing for a consequential election campaign. Both elections reflect significant challenges faced by the respective Jewish communities. Neither community's challenge can be resolved easily. And the pandemic complicates matters immensely.

Looking at the U.S. situation, the vast majority of American Jews continue to identify with the Democratic Party, which has been undergoing far-reaching changes in recent years. These changes have probably been accelerated by the election and presidency of Donald Trump but by no means are they all about Trump. Despite having three years to prepare and having over 20 candidates, the Democrats find themselves in a tough spot because of the way that the delegate race has worked out. After much preparation and many debates involving a raft of candidates, the arithmetic of the primaries left only two candidates standing by mid-March – Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has never been a registered Democrat, and former Vice-President Joe Biden. For Jewish Democrats the choice seemed clear: Biden is acceptable and they feel comfortable with him while Sanders, though Jewish, promises to take the party too far to the left, including on Middle East policy and support for Israel.

The move to the left underscores the dilemma for American Jews. Although Biden's preference would be a center-left position, the left wing's pull is evidently too strong for him to resist. The consequence is that the election of a Democratic president is likely to create major challenges for the U.S.-Israel relationship. Even if trepidation, or perhaps even a crisis, over Biden's age, condition, and ability to lead results in another per-



son getting the nomination, perhaps New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo or former nominee Hillary Clinton, the leftward tilt of the party is unlikely to be arrested, with potent implications for Israel. And would Bernie simply fall in line if a non-Biden candidate were chosen over him by the convention? This election is likely to be a stressful test of loyalty to a party that has commanded the support of Jews since 1932. A new Democratic administration will likely test American Jews in ways that they have not been tested for decades.

Israel's parlous political situation since the first of the two 2019 elections, with no leader able to form a government, also provides cause for concern. Even if Benny Gantz and Benjamin Netanyahu finally do find a path to their tentative (as of this writing) unity government before the Pesach holiday, the country will still be suffering from a governing crisis, which is much more difficult to resolve than a government crisis. Are there characteristics of the Israeli system that make it especially difficult to govern? We have known for years that proportional representation systems do a great job of converting votes into seats in a way that faith-

fully reflects the choices that the voters have made. However, we also know that such systems necessitate coalition governments. Moreover, since the 1980s the two leading parties have won declining shares of the votes and seats, thereby making coalition building and governing increasingly difficult. This dilemma was brought into stark relief by the need for three elections in 2019-2020.

Consequently American Jews committed to Israel's well-being have reason to be concerned both about their own system, in particular the state of the party with which most of them identify, and the Israeli system that faces so many ongoing challenges, not least its continuing identity as a Jewish state. Moreover, American Jews are primarily following their party to the left while their Israeli counterparts continue to reaffirm a preference for the right and center-right. Let us hope that the experiences of 2019-2020 will enable American Jews to come to terms with their priorities, both for the U.S. and for Israel.

(Harold M. Waller, Professor of Political Science [ret.], McGill University, Montreal, is a CIJR Fellow. He currently resides in Florida).

ISRAELI LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE SUBORDINATE TO JUDICIARY: IS THIS DEMOCRACY?"

JULIEN BAUER

That Israel is often heralded as the only democracy in the Middle East, is correct: all the surrounding States are autocracies and dictatorships. Unfortunately, this democracy is also under attack—rather than based upon the “power of the people by the people,” its democracy is slowly evolving into one expressing the “power of the people by the Judiciary.”

A few years ago, I wrote an article titled “The Supreme Court, Jewishness, and Democracy: Suggestions for a More Effective Balance,” which appeared in *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 21-1/2, Spring 2009, 137-152. It noted that, as the Court of last appeals, the Israeli Supreme Court was working well, more efficiently than in most liberal democracies.

However, following Supreme Court Justice Aharon Barak’s revolution during the eighties, it is becoming more and more the ultimate political decision-maker. The process, already close to forty years old, is an increasing threat to the universal rules of democratic societies. Instead of being the abode wherein the constitutionality of legislation can be assessed (even if Israel has no constitution, its Basic Laws play the role of a Constitution), it is becoming the place wherein what the law is, is decided.

On June 30, 1998, at a meeting held for foreign professors at the Supreme Court, Itzhak Zamir, the Court’s Vice-President, was very clear. Asked what his reference in determining a case was, he answered:

“We check the Basic Laws. If needed, we look at external democratic systems, such as the United Kingdom, the US, and France. If we do not find any guideline, we determine, as educated members of a democratic society, what are the values of Israel.”

In other words, a few unelected men and women—smart, educated, and open-minded—have the right to determine, meaning impose, *their* values on Israeli society.

A few Israelis criticized this bizarre view of democracy. Law Professor Ruth Gavison, who is on the left of the political spectrum, stated that the Knesset should decide democratic rule. Even if the process is messy, the whole process of give-and-take marks the essence of democracy.

Instead, political leaders remained mum. Those on the left decided not to limit the self-assumed power of the Supreme Court, because most of its rulings were post-Zionist, anti-religious, and, therefore (to them) palatable. Those on the right did likewise because they were afraid to be labeled anti-rule of law, as if the rule of law, the supremacy of the Supreme Court, and democracy were synonymous.

The result is that anybody in Israel, including people who are not personally affected by a law or a government decision, can go directly to the Supreme Court

Instead of being the abode wherein the constitutionality [Basic Laws] of legislation can be assessed, it is becoming the place wherein what the law is, is decided.

and complain, with a reasonable chance of winning their case, something unheard of in any other democracies.

Today, after three rounds of elections, and a show of petty politics nobody is proud of, the Supreme Court has assumed the royal mantle. It is telling Israelis it will decide for them who will govern Israel. Any law passed by a coalition of Centrists, extreme Leftists, a rabid anti-Arab party, and the anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic Arab Joint List that prevents Binyamin Netanyahu from becoming the next Prime Minister, is now acceptable.

I call the Joint List antisemitic because they refuse to support a government that retaliates against Hamas and Islamic Jihad missile attacks on Israeli citizens, as well as insist upon prohibiting Jews from visiting the Temple Mount, Jews’ holiest site. But for this Supreme Court, the most radical candidates—such as Joint List Chairman Ahmad Tibi, who praise terrorism and deny the Jewishness of the Israeli State, or Heba Yazbak, who praised Samir Kuntar, the murderer of an Israeli Jewish father and his four years old son in 1979—are entitled to participate in the Knesset.

The Supreme Court supports legislating an election and determining who won—all in the name of “defending democracy.” That elected politicians are not in tune with the urgency of the situation does not give the Supreme Court the right unilaterally to determine the political future of Israel.

Sooner or later, and sooner would be better, the Knesset must legislate the composition and role of the Supreme Court. Appointments should be, as in other democratic systems, decided by the Executive and Legislative and not, as is the case now, dominated by judges choosing their own successors. Their juridical role would be limited to determining if a law or a governmental decision respects Israel’s Basic Laws, not to telling Knesset members and Government ministers what they should do.

It will not be easy. We can anticipate demagogic arguments, such as: Asking the Judiciary to respect the Executive and the Legislative is an attack against democracy. Contrary to this position, I would argue that such a change, which will indicate a return to what constitutes a democracy, is mandatory. Only then will Israel, once again, truly be a model of democracy.

(Julien Bauer is Associate Professor of Political Science, UQAM, and a CIJR Fellow)

THE ARAB “JOINT LIST” IN ISRAEL’S KNESSET: PROBLEM —AND OPPORTUNITY?

IRA ROBINSON

One of the key elements of the political fallout from the most recent Knesset election concerns the potential inclusion of the Israeli Arab Joint List in a Blue and White-led coalition. This event would have marked an important shift in the tenor of Israeli politics and governance and it thus created much controversy within political circles in Israel.

Non-Jews (mostly Muslim, but also including Christians, Druse, and others) make up approximately 20% of the population of Israel. Their political influence in the Knesset, however, has not been fully felt until now because Arab parties have never been part of governing coalitions in the Knesset. Even in the 1990s, when the Yitzhak Rabin government relied on Arab votes for a Knesset majority to pass the Oslo Accords, Arab parties never formally became part of the government.

This situation looked like it might have been about to change and that change would have presented both problems and possible opportunities for the State of Israel and its democratic system.

The problem is that the Arab members of the Knesset are non-Zionist at best, desiring to change much of the Jewish character of the State of Israel, and staunchly anti-Zionist at worst. Some factions of the Joint List, like members of the Balad faction, have not only taken radical anti-Zionist positions but acted on them. Thus one of its members, MK Hanin Zuabi, joined the 2010 Turkish flotilla to break the Israeli “blockade” of Gaza. It is clear that many Israelis see in the Joint List a danger to the Jewish character of the State of Israel and on this basis they oppose Joint List participation in any governing coalition, whether formal or not. On a practical level, moreover, Joint List participation in any Israeli government would have posed a problem in terms of the stability of any governing coalition in the Knesset that depended on its support, given that tension between Jerusalem and Hamas in Gaza, leading to Israeli military intervention, is practically inevitable.



Ahmad Tibi, Chairman, Joint List

On the other hand, the potential inclusion of the Israeli Arab Joint List in a Knesset coalition could have presented Israeli democracy with an interesting opportunity. There are a number of Joint List MKs, including Joint List Chairman Ayman Odeh and Ahmad Tibi, who have shown some willingness and ability to work within the Israeli political system. If these relative “moderates” within the Joint List could have prevailed, Joint List participation in the Blue-White coalition might possibly have served to mitigate the largely self-imposed political marginalization of Israel’s Arab minority, to whom Israel’s Declaration of Independence promised “full and equal citizenship.”

Perhaps this might have served as well to moderate the politics of Israel’s Arabs, many of whom value their Israeli citizenship, and most of whom resist proposals that would make them citizens of a Palestinian state. How much of the radical anti-Israel stance of certain of the Joint List’s MKs is a result of historical Arab political marginalization in Israel? These are questions that the recent political manoeuvrings in Israel brought to the fore. One way or another, the possible partnership of the Arab Joint List in a Knesset governing coalition marked a historic moment for democracy in Israel.

(Ira Robinson is Professor of Religion at Concordia University and Associate Director, CIJR)

WHEN PLAGUES AND ANTISEMITISM INTERTWINE

NATHAN ELBERG

"All I maintain is that on this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it's up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences."
— Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Jews have faced many plagues throughout history. In the 14th century the Black Plague killed up to 2/3 of Europe's population, Jew and non-Jew alike. Jews were also afflicted by neighbors who blamed them for poisoning wells. Many believed that Jews suffered less from the illness, and 2,000 were burnt alive as retribution in the Strasbourg massacre; 3,000 were annihilated in Frankfurt am Main. Christians ignored their Pope, who said Jews were not at fault. An intriguing hypothesis for why Jews became scapegoats in the plague is that grain was removed from their houses for Passover, discouraging the rats that spread the disease.

In 19th century New York, tuberculosis was known as the "Jewish disease." Jewish immigrants were considered physically weak, more likely to spread the illness. When the Spanish Flu ravaged the world in the early 20th century, Jews were blamed. It wasn't a consensus, but rather the view of anti-Semites; health officials declared publicly that Jews were not at fault. The rabbi of Albuquerque, New Mexico was publicly recognized for his quarantine advocacy, which saved many lives.

There have been more deadly plagues than Coronavirus, in a world far less able to cope. The response also has its precedents. Some people are of course blaming the Jews. Iran claimed it is a Zionist attack. A BDS group declared that the Israeli regime is more dangerous than the virus. Those who want to blame Jews find solace in the high infection rates of Jewish communities such as Cote Saint Luc, Lakewood and Boro Park. The pandemic coverage of the *Journal de Montreal*, the largest French-language daily newspaper in North America, has emphasized the religious identity of Quebec Jews. The paper was founded by a man who said Jews "take up too much space." A Home Depot store refused entry to a Hassid. A police spokesman explained "It's not because you're Jewish. It's because you're part of a Jewish community." Those who want to dislike Jews can always find a way.

Although extremists may consider Israel responsible for, or more dangerous than coronavirus, it is responsible for a great many of the advances in the battle against the



The Great Plague - Getty Images

virus, from medication to breathing devices to potential vaccines. This presents a dilemma for those who hold Israel or the Jews responsible for the pandemic: do they accept treatment from a people more dangerous than the disease?

We've already seen that the enemies of Israel and their allies tend to be pragmatic, using innovations coming from Israel. Although it's hypocritical, we can expect them to depend on Israel to save their lives. A prominent Iranian cleric says to use a coronavirus vaccine developed by Israel if "there is no substitute."

This abandonment of principles must be disheartening to Israel's foes. How can the Boycott, Divest, Sanction movement hope to destroy Israel if they don't boycott Israeli innovation? Accept a coronavirus vaccine, a cell phone, whatever, and you sow the seeds of BDS failure. Perhaps this explains the movement's increasing reliance on intimidation. But browbeating will not be enough to keep people from recognizing how Israel, how Jews, continue to make their lives better.

(Nathan Elberg is Chairman, International Board of Directors, CIJR and a CIJR Fellow. He is also co-editor of CIJR's latest publication: Zionism: An Indigenous Struggle)

ISRAEL AT WAR WITH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

WHAT THE US CAN LEARN FROM ISRAEL'S HANDLING OF CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Jonathan Frankel

Israel 21C, Mar. 24, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has fundamentally changed our daily lives. The virus has ushered in economic uncertainty, fear of losing loved ones, and the general anxiety of not knowing how long this crisis could last.

Each country facing this threat has adopted different strategies on curtailing the spread of this disease. The global community is still trying to figure how best to “flatten the curve” and save lives.

In today's connected world, other countries can learn from each other's best practices. It is worth noting and learning some of those practices from Israel, the Startup Nation.

It is not just about how Israel is combating the virus's spread using technology but also about the Israeli attitude in facing adversity and coming out stronger.

For Israelis, this pandemic is a war.

Since its inception, Israel has had to prepare for any possible scenario with a strong partnership between the Israel Defense Forces and the public sector.

Americans, who are a resilient people, could learn from how the citizens of Israel have been able to thrive despite wars, terrorist attacks and the daily stresses of life.

Part of what makes the coronavirus so frightening is the seeming open-endedness of these lockdowns. Being resilient during a period you know will end eventually is one thing but being strong despite not knowing how long a difficult situation will persist is another. ... [To read full article, click the following LINK – Ed.]

THE MAN BEHIND THE MASKS

Gedalia Guttentag

Mishpacha Magazine, Feb. 26, 2020

“Argaman Tech?” says the overall-clad delivery man in the Talpiot industrial zone. “Is that the events hall?”

It's Sunday afternoon, and the warren of garages in Jerusalem's car repair district is a far cry from the gleaming high-tech parks of Wuhan, China's coronavirus epicenter.

The streets of the one are full of Israelis beginning their week after a Shabbos break; the streets of the other are empty as Chinese authorities keep the place under lockdown.

Even the container-loads of plastic baubles disgorged into the nearby stores, whose “Made in China” label does the People's Republic no PR favors, has nothing to do with the city that is panicking the world: Wuhan produces advanced optics, not cheap toys.

Which makes it all the more incredible that the man whose high-tech face masks became a viral video sensation in the global coronavirus scare is sitting right here between the rows of greasy body shops lining the Talpiot street.

“Argaman Technologies” reads the sign over the nondescript front door. Inside,



Medical staff seen after the arrival of a patient to the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, over suspicions she may be infected with COVID-19 on January 27, 2020.

talking to a group of PhDs and engineers, is New York-born Jeff Gabbay, officially a textile engineer, but with a long background in military projects that he doesn't want to talk about. ... [To read the full article, click the following LINK – Ed.]

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: HOW THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES IS GRAPPLING WITH CORONAVIRUS

Charles Bybelezer

Whether fighting Hamas or Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip or conducting air strikes in Syria targeting Iranian assets, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is typically on high alert. The same applies to the present where, however, the battle currently being waged is against a new, invisible enemy: coronavirus.

The IDF has progressively imposed tougher restrictions in a bid to curb a potential outbreak within its ranks. These include prohibiting soldiers from leaving many training and combat bases as well as forward-operating outposts, in addition regularly to checking the temperatures of those dealing with critical equipment.

Moreover, all soldiers have been grounded, prevented from traveling abroad for any purpose; gatherings of more than 10 troops, apart from operational meetings, are a no-go; and joint exercises with foreign militaries were cancelled. Civilians are barred from visiting IDF bases without explicit approval under extraordinary circumstances.

The moves come in parallel to the government's implementation of severe regulations on both the public and private sectors, shuttering places ranging from cafes to malls to holy sites. Government employees engaged in tasks deemed non-essential have been placed on paid leave until at least the Passover holiday in three weeks' time, whereas private firms with more than ten workers have been ordered to reduce the number of staff on-site by 70%.

On Tuesday, the Health Ministry recommended that people not leave their homes unless absolutely necessary.

For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu confirmed that his cabinet had approved the use of controversial “digital tools” – mainly tracking technologies reserved for counter-terrorism purposes – for a thirty-day period. The ostensible goal is to monitor past and future movements of potential carriers of coronavirus.

Overall, Israeli officials have confirmed over 320 cases of COVID-19—the disease caused by the pathogen—and it is estimated that about 60,000 residents are in quarantine, in accordance with guidelines requiring all individuals returning from abroad, or who might have come in contact with a carrier of the virus, to confine themselves for two weeks. ... [To read the full article, click the following LINK – Ed.]

(Charles Bybelezer writes for The Media Line in Jerusalem, and is a CIJR ISRAFAX contributing editor.)

DON'T BLAME G-D, BLAME BEIJING AND TEHRAN

Rabbi Abraham Cooper and Pastor Johnnie Moore

From Biblical times through the Nazi Holocaust, to the present suffering in northeast Nigeria, to our local emergency room, man's reaction to innocents' suffering has often prompted the same question: “Where is G-d?”

When it comes to COVID-19, no one can blame G-d. It's people who have gotten us into this coronavirus mess, and it is people — with G-d's help — who can help heal a

Continued on page 9

ISRAEL AT WAR WITH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

world deathly ill from it.

We are beginning to see how we got here, and as we do, we must take our own medicine. That medicine is the truth. And you don't have to look to the Heavens to find the truth, in this case.

While there is plenty of blame to go around for mistakes and failures made as COVID-19 spread, mistakes and failures made as the Coronavirus had spread throughout the United States and European Union, within some segments of our religious communities and beyond, we must call out two of the main culprits who helped it spread: Beijing and Tehran.

The Chinese government is playing us all for fools and they need to come clean, owning their culpability in the pre-pandemic phases of COVID-19.

A few Chinese doctors identified the virus as early as November (though they were unaware of what it fully was at the time), and the mayor of Wuhan, before being fired, admitted in January that over five million people from Wuhan were allowed to leave the city before the travel restrictions had been enacted. The Chinese government then proceeded to weaponize medical supplies by importing — from countries that might need it — 20 million respirators. The Chinese leadership also initially downplayed the true extent of the threat — both to their own people and the outside world. These are facts.

It is also a fact that two spokespersons from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs have engaged in blood libel against the United States Armed Forces by claiming that it may have brought the coronavirus to Wuhan. The Chinese misinformation campaign might work with a few million of their own citizens and others who hate America, but there will be a day after this disaster when such behavior may very well put the nail in the coffin of the booming China-US economic pipeline. After all, multiple United States senators have already drawn a legislative line in the sand, demanding that we disentangle America's economy from China. ... [To read the full article, click the following LINK – Ed.]

(Rabbi Abraham Cooper is the associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and a CIJR Fellow. Rev. Johnnie Moore is the president of the Congress of Christian Leaders.)

CORONA-VIRUS: THE DANGEROUS FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

Daniel Rickenbacher

Since mid-January a calamity has been steamrolling slowly, but inescapably, from China across Europe and North America. All those who read about whistleblowers being silenced, whole regions quarantined and new hospitals built from scratch, should have been aware of the approaching danger. The understated numbers from China should have offered consolation to no one but the most naïve. History teaches us that while authoritarian societies fail at basic things, they are experts in covering up the truth.

In light of the abundance of information, it came as a big surprise in late February and early March that many countries were wholly unprepared to confront the spreading pandemic. They had squandered two months of forewarning: Having failed to stock up on medical supplies in the first

place, they now wasted precious time before taking the necessary steps to contain the pandemics. In each country, the wave of infections was preceded by a wave of willful ignorance. When Italy became the first European victim of the virus, its neighbors, as if they were immune, refused to learn the lesson, only to be struck a couple of days later. Since then this story has been repeating itself around the globe.

The corona disaster offers a general lesson about the condition of our societies and our politics, revealing a glaring incapacity of many, even in the most senior positions, to extrapolate current events into even the most immediate future, only a couple of weeks or days away. How then, can our societies be expected to deal with dangers which are years, or even decades away? Evidently, societies usually act too late, and with too little, to confront grave challenges.

This observation is also relevant for Jews: Israeli Jews learned the lesson from the Holocaust that a lack of imagination is dangerous to their survival. It is, therefore, no coincidence that they were among the first to take strict measures against the pandemics, and are better off for the moment than most others. ... [To read the full article, click the following LINK – Ed.]

(Dr. Daniel Rickenbacher researches in the fields of Modern History and International Relations in Geneva, Switzerland. A CIJR Fellow, his work focuses on the history of the Arab-Israel conflict, international terrorism, Islamism and antisemitism.)



IDF soldiers patrol the streets of Jerusalem during coronavirus outbreak

THE CORONAVIRUS COVER-UP

Kapil Komireddi

The Critic, Mar. 24, 2020

The calamity unfolding all around us did not emerge from a void. It originated in China. And its eruption into a global pandemic is inseparable from the nature of the regime that has ruled China since 1949. Had the authorities in that country intervened early to contain the fresh strain of the Chinese corona virus, COVID-19, there would likely have been 95 per cent fewer casualties. Instead, China's one-party state created the conditions for the spread of the virus. For weeks, it suppressed information and punished those who shared it.

In December, Li Wenliang, a 33-year-old ophthalmologist in Wuhan, the site of the outbreak, told his friends on a private online chat group that patients exhibiting symptoms akin to SARS—severe acute respiratory syndrome—were in quarantine at the emergency department at the city's central hospital where Li worked. When SARS first flared up in China in 2003, Beijing covered up the scale of the horror for four months. The upshot of that concealment was 774 fatalities at home and abroad. Li warned his friends—all of them doctors—to be careful this time. China's internet police intercepted the exchange. And three days later, Li was berated by his bosses, accused by the police of "making false comments" and coerced into signing a statement expressing contrition for disturbing "social order". ... [To read the full article, click the following LINK— Ed.]

Bill Gates Warned Us of a COVID-19-like Pandemic — Watch his TED Talk from 2015: Taylor Soper, Geek Wire, Mar. 17, 2020 — Bill Gates saw the COVID-19 outbreak coming — and he knew we weren't prepared for it.

'We're at war, we can beat this virus' – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the people of Israel. He added that other nations were adopting Israel's policies of preventing the spread of the coronavirus and that Israel would be able to overcome the new challenge. (*Arutz Sheva*, Mar. 14, 2020)

PANDEMICS CHANGE EVERYTHING

BARBARA KAY

"This changes everything," celebrity socialist Naomi Klein announced in her eponymous 2014 book. By "this," Klein meant our overheated planet. By "everything," she meant capitalism.

Right up until January, many people considered Klein a prophet for our age, able to see around temporal corners and competent to prescribe remedies for the great ills that plague humanity. An ideologue, Klein could only see one villain – capitalism – and, therefore, one unitary explanation for every human problem under the sun.

How very inconvenient that something entirely absent from her theory-based calculations – a pandemic that has no ideology whatsoever – should wrench the rapt attention of her acolytes from a passionate progressive narrative of oppressed and oppressor, with a planet teetering at the abyss, and focus it on such primordial matters as a deadly virus that is no respecter of intellect constructs and political dogmas.

I single out Klein because I think her book's success marked a pivotal moment, when eco-warriors pushed the environmental movement from alarmism to hysteria, producing, for one pertinent example, angst-ridden Greta Thunberg's infectious apocalypticism.

Pandemics change everything. What will this one mean for Jews and Israel? Nothing will change for the hardcore anti-Semites. Those who already blame Jews for their own unhappiness or the poor outcomes of their tribes will double down on their paradoxically seething/soothing fantasy that the coronavirus is just another Jewish conspiracy.

But what about ordinary young people who have for years been caught up in the toils of identity politics, forced to choose their attitudinal fare from a *prix fixe* doctrinal menu that always includes anti-Zionism?

One disruptive element for young people is the closing of the universities, ground zero for anti-Zionism. I am not expressing approval for Covid19 when I say that the absence of campus BDS news is a pleasant sidebar to the lockdown. During their enforced detachment from the herd, what will happen to these students' worldview?

For one thing, they will have plenty of time to think about their future, and plenty of time to worry about their prospects in a damaged economy. For another, up to now, most university students, although well acquainted with performance alarmism around identity politics, have never known what true dread feels like. Now they have a taste of it. When they re-congregate, will they be content to return to compliance with childish theatrics of blame and the over-wrought finger-pointing at Israel as the source of all evil? Or will they have become real adults and learned to think for themselves?

A cynic might argue that anti-Zionists will leverage the pandemic for fresh accusations against the Jewish state.



A young lady wearing a mask in the subway

Indeed, on Twitter, some are already trying to do so. It doesn't help their case that Israel is "as of this writing" experiencing dramatically disproportionate spread of the virus to that in the PA and Gaza. Since Wuhan is so demonstrably the ground zero for this virus, conspiracy theories with China playing a central villainous role are flourishing, but there simply isn't any purchase for anti-Israel conspiracies, or any other country. Indeed, China's ludicrous attempt to shift the blame to the U.S. military has met with mockery and derision everywhere, serving only to cement the consensus that China must somehow answer for this catastrophe when the world returns to a semblance of normalcy.

Unlike climate change alarmism, news of this pandemic has been driven by hard data and predictable effects. So I do not anticipate a post-pandemic situation in which a fanciful anti-Israel conspiracy theory cut from whole cloth gains traction. Especially since it is probable that Israel will be a leading contributor to effective treatments and a vaccine.

The great English writer Dr. Samuel Johnson said, "Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." A pandemic can have a similar effect in its instant elimination of mental baggage that is not needed for the voyage, shining a light on the essentials that are. Suddenly most of us are all less interested in the political dogmas and self-serving narratives of perpetual victimhood of special-interest groups, and more interested in their own literal - and their nation's economic - survival. Will this event "change everything" in the progressives' war against Israel?

(Barbara Kay is a columnist for the National Post, and a CIJR Fellow)

NEO-OTTOMAN AMBITIONS

DAVID BENSOUSSAN

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire extended from the Balkans to the Caucasus and from the Near East to Algeria. The Mediterranean was given over to piracy. This gradually declined after the defeat of the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto in 1571 and the American reprisal raid on Tripoli in 1805. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled from the 19th century when Greece became independent and was reduced to present-day Turkey by the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. Nostalgia for the geopolitical centrality of the Ottoman Empire animates many of the speeches of Turkish President Erdoğan. He also systematically destroyed Atatürk's secular legacy and put an end to Turkey's gradual opening to democracy by imposing an authoritarian regime.

Turkey has a contingent of 30 000 troops in Northern Cyprus, 5 000 troops in Qatar and a base capable of training 10 000 troops in Somalia. A dozen Turkish military bases have been established in northern Iraq to better control Iraqi Kurdistan. Until recently, Turkey had a 99-year lease on Suakin Island in Sudan to establish a military base there.

The Libyan Swamp

Imitating Iran, Turkey has conscripted several mercenaries who have been sent to defend its interests by interfering in civil wars. Turkey imports more than 90% of its oil and natural gas needs. Erdoğan has his eye on Libyan oil, whose reserves are estimated at 74 billion barrels. But so do Russia and France. Erdoğan has decided to extend its exclusive economic zone in the Mediterranean by drawing a Turkish-Libyan diagonal strip that divides the Mediterranean, in addition to other riparian countries such as Greece.

The Syrian swamp

Turkey attacked the Kurdish forces



Left to right: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

in northern Syria which were allied with the United States in their fight against the Islamic state. President Trump agreed to allow Turkish forces to occupy a 30-km territorial strip in northern Syria. To protect themselves from the Turkish army, the Kurds and their allies called on the Syrian army. The first clashes with Turkish convoys took place despite the Astana agreement ratified in 2017 by Russia, Iran and Turkey and the Sochi agreement ratified the following year by Russia and Turkey. A deadly conflict could only be stopped after lengthy negotiations which culminated in joint Russian-Turkish patrols. But these were cancelled after nine days.

Difficult relations with several countries

Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf emirates are opposed to Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, Erdoğan makes unfounded accusations against Israel and the West.

Turkey, which is a member of NATO, has acquired the Russian S-400 air defence system despite American objections. As a result, Turkey has been excluded from the program to

acquire and manufacture F-35 stealth aircraft.

Russia is playing a subtle game to bring Turkey under its tutelage and separate it from the United States and NATO. Turkey and Russia support opposing camps in Syria and Libya. Erdoğan, for his part, reacted to the recent Turkish-Syrian skirmishes by speaking out against Russia's annexation of the Crimea and offering \$200 million to the Ukrainian army.

Erdoğan wants to transfer nearly three million Syrian refugees to the strip of territory that the Turkish army occupies in northern Syria, which is populated mainly by Kurds and regularly threatens to send Syrian refugees back to Europe.

Erdoğan collects enemies and seems to be plunging Turkey from Charybdis to Scylla.

Translated from French by Jacques Chitayat

(David Bensoussan a professor of science at the Université du Québec, and a CIJR Fellow)

HOW THE IRANIAN REGIME'S ALLIES ARE CALLING THE SHOTS IN WASHINGTON

BRADLEY MARTIN

The National Iranian American Council (NIAC), a non-profit civic action group which spreads regime propaganda in the United States, continues to manipulate American foreign policy through aggressive lobbying and pressure campaigns.

During the most serious anti-regime protests in Iran since the Islamic Revolution, NIAC endorsed a letter from 17 members of Congress to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin calling on the White House to halt sanctions. Just a day after Iran launched ballistic missiles at U.S. armed forces stationed in Iraq, NIAC and a coalition of left-wing anti-war groups launched a public teleconference convened to drum up opposition to military deterrence against Iran. The call included remarks from Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

Although NIAC presents itself as an American organization free from foreign influence, it is indelibly tied to an Iranian regime network which includes business interests, foundations, and Khomeinist clerics. NIAC staff are more than just savvy political activists; they are true believers in Shiite theocracy, while seeking to defund actual democratization programs in their homeland. NIAC has also deployed prodigies to embed with members of Congress through its Congressional Fellowship Program.

As international calls for Iran to denuclearize intensified between 2006 and 2007, internal emails demonstrated NIAC founder Trita Parsi's instrumental role in arranging congressional meetings with Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif. Parsi also consulted with Iranian intelligence officers and state-controlled Iranian media to prepare for Capitol Hill briefings.

Responding to gas hikes related to U.S. sanctions, Iranians took to the streets in November and December to participate in large-scale protests against the regime. But that didn't stop NIAC from "working with members of Congress" to reverse sanctions. In December 2018, the pro-regime lobbyists helped convince Representative Jared Huffman and 13 other lawmakers to compose an incendiary letter to the State Department, asking if it was a "strategy of the Trump administration to starve the Iranian people...."

Even a Senate bill aimed at sanctioning the bloodthirsty Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp was inappropriate for



Trita Parsi, founder and former president of the National Iranian American Council

NIAC, which complained that the designated terrorist organization is already "the most heavily-sanctioned entity in the entire world."

NIAC has done everything in its power to stop the implementation of Trump's executive order banning travel from select high-risk countries such as Iran, echoing erroneous claims that it is a "Muslim Ban." To counter the executive order, which the Supreme Court upheld, NIAC rallied 118 progressive organizations to the cause and delivering 150,000 signatures demanding action. In January, the lobby mobilized Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Representative Judy Chu (D-CA) to introduce legislation to defund the travel ban.

NIAC must be called out for what it is: a propaganda front for the Iranian regime. Members of Congress must stop lending credibility to this vile organization and join calls from their colleagues to investigate this group.

(Bradley Martin is Deputy Editor at the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research and a Senior Fellow at the News and Public Policy Group Haym Salomon Center)

DR. MANFRED GERSTENFELD: COMBATting THE WORLD'S OLDEST AND MOST LETHAL HATRED

MACHLA ABRAMOVITZ

Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, a noted authority on contemporary antisemitism, has carefully analyzed this escalating phenomenon since his retirement in 2000. Dr. Gerstenfeld, 82, was born in Vienna, educated in the Netherlands, and made Aliyah in 1968, where he pursued a career as an international strategic business consultant. An esteemed scholar, he authored 16 books on contemporary antisemitism, including breaking studies on European antisemitism. His myriad articles appear in the *Jerusalem Post*, *Times of Israel*, and *Arutz Sheva*. The following Q&A is based on his keynote address that he delivered at the CIJR 2019 annual gala in Montreal.

According to an ADL global study, over one billion people covering 89% of the world's population are classic anti-Semites who target the Jewish religion as well as Jews as a people. Moreover, studies indicate that 75% of people who never met a Jew, 25% of them harbor anti-Semitic attitudes. After the Holocaust, how do you explain these shocking percentages?

Due to the intensity of the propaganda waged against Jews over the centuries, antisemitism became profoundly interwoven with Western culture. However, after the Holocaust, the promotion of Nazi ideology or genocide was considered taboo. Antisemitism was, therefore, forced to mutate to remain integral to Western culture. This mutated antisemitism – often referred to as the “new antisemitism” – focused on the Jewish state. It integrates the core beliefs of classic antisemitism that sees Jews and Judaism as inherently evil. Studies indicate that 38% of European adults believe that Israel intends to commit genocide on the Palestinians, and that Israel behaves toward the Palestinians as the Nazis did toward the Jews.

The most significant source of anti-Israelism in Western society is left-liberalism. As far as violence is concerned, Muslims and right-wingers play a substantive role in promoting antisemitism and anti-



Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, Recipient of CIJR's 2019 "International Lion of Judah Award for Lifetime Service to the Jewish People"

raelism. They, however, play a minor role in the public discourse.

The antisemitism and anti-Israeli incitement of the left is not new. These views are part of a tradition that can best be called “progressive perversity,” which began in the early 16th century. This ideology manifests itself not only against Jews but also against other progressives. Progressive perverts should not be confused with a sub-category, the humanitarian racists. These racists may single out Israel for blame and sometime may even make valid claims—but they do not blame other states for far more egregious behaviors. The human rights movement, for instance, is replete with anti-Israeli NGOs; its highest organ, the United Nation’s Human Rights Council (UNHRC), is a morally corrupt body permeated by antisemitism.

Why is it important to acknowledge this interweaving of antisemitism and Western culture?

Because doing so makes it easier to point out the arrogance and hypocrisy of countries, such as Germany, as regards Israel. This awareness, combined with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)’s definition of

antisemitism, can be used effectively to combat Europe’s anti-Israel attitudes.

Given the fundamental link between the two, can antisemitism be effectively combatted within Western societies?

I believe it can. One: politicians and high-profile figures must be persuaded to acknowledge this link publicly. Two: the Israeli Government must be convinced to set up an anti-propaganda organization. Among its many functions, the agency must publicly expose the plagiarism and weak scholarship of many pro-BDS academics. Three: “Jewish masochists” must be countered. These Jews, such as Senator Bernie Sanders, criticize Israel for not being perfect while ignoring significant deficiencies in Western democracies. Another disgusting example of Jewish masochists is the 240 Jewish academics. When the German Parliament voted to outlaw BDS, they urged the Government not to do that, in support of free speech.

(Machla Abramovitz is the CIJR Publications Editor and a freelance journalist. She co-edited the book titled “Zionism: An Indigenous Struggle”)

NEW TERMINOLOGY AND BIBLICAL EVENTS

MANFRED GERSTENFELD

There are many relatively 'new' terminologies which cover events, which took place millennia ago. Some scholars claim that labelling them as such is anachronistic. This is a mistaken concept. There is more truth in saying that the appropriate semantics have been developed belatedly.

For several modern expressions one can find examples of underlying cases that appear in *Tenach*, the Hebrew Bible. One of these is 'identity.' It occurs already in the first chapters of the Torah. Adam gives animals a name.¹ By doing this the cow and the sheep get different identities. Before that, they both were 'cattle.'

German-born Jewish psychologist Erich Fromm, claimed that the identity of humanity started with Adam and Eve disobeying a Divine order. By eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil they gained their human identity.²

Jewish identity today has three aspects: How does a Jew see himself, how do other Jews see him, and how do non-Jews view him? Moses is a good ancient illustration. He is a Hebrew by birth and an Egyptian by education.³ When Moses saw that an Egyptian was beating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian. From his double identity, he opted for the Hebrew one.⁴ The next day he saw two Hebrews fighting. He tried to intervene but the reaction of the stronger one made it clear that he viewed Moses as just another Hebrew.⁵ Yet in Midian, when Moses waters the flock of the daughters of the priest Reuel, these tell their father that an Egyptian has helped them.⁶

The legislation of nations reflects their culture and identity. The Divine legislation the Jews receive in the desert after the exodus from Egypt is yet another expression of Hebrew—and later Jewish—identity. So is

¹ *Genesis*, Chapter 2, Verse 20

² blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/07/31/from-adam-and-eve-to-gandhi-erich-fromm-argues-for-disobedience/

³ *Exodus*, Chapter 2, Verses 1-10

⁴ *Exodus*, Chapter 2, Verses 11 -12

⁵ *Exodus*, Chapter 2, Verses 13 - 14

⁶ *Exodus*, Chapter 2, Verse 19



Adam naming the animals.
(Etching by G. Scotin and J. Cole after H. Gravelot and J.B. Chatelain, 1743.)

the earlier commandment of circumcision.⁷

There are other expressions of identity in later books of *Tenach*. The prophet Jonah flees God on a boat. During a storm he tells the sailors that he is a Hebrew. He also informs them that he worships the God of Heaven who made both sea and land. The God he prays to is yet another expression of his identity.⁸

Stereotyping is another modern expression of which an example can be found in the *Tenach*. When Mordechai the Jew refuses to kneel before Haman, the latter considers him not just a hostile individual. Haman wants all Jews murdered.⁹

A major debate in our day concerns nature versus nurture. Is human behavior determined by a person's genes or by his environment? We can read *Tenach* to investigate how this issue is dealt with there. It becomes clear that for some people an additional factor is at play, which is not commonly included in the term 'environment.' There is divine interference in the fate of some individuals.

⁷ *Genesis*, Chapter 17, Verse 10-12, *Genesis*, Chapter 34, Verses 13-17, *Exodus*, Chapter 4, Verses 25-26

⁸ *Jonah*; Chapter 1, Verse 9

⁹ *The Book of Esther*; Chapter 3, Verse 13

Jeremiah is told that God had predestined him already in his mother's womb as a prophet.¹⁰ Yet another example among several is that of the Prophet Hosea who is told that he has to marry a prostitute.¹¹ This must have had a major impact on his life. A Biblical example where the environment (nurture) dominates the DNA (nature) of a person, concerns Absalom, the favorite son of King David. He declared himself king while David was alive. Ultimately, he was killed in the battle between David's troops and his.

These are some examples of how semantics coined much later cover specific experiences in *Tenach*. These can be expanded by many other illustrations of later terminology. Among these are psychological insights, the application of political science to Biblical situations, for instance in the developing field of Jewish political studies, and various examples of economic analyses on cases in *Tenach*. My doctorate deals with the environmental views and policies of Judaism throughout history.

(Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld is a leading authority on contemporary anti-semitism, and a CIJR Fellow. He resides in Jerusalem)

¹⁰ *Jeremiah*; Chapter 1, Verses 4-5

¹¹ *Hosea*, Chapter One, Verse 2

JEWISH RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

ABIGAIL HIRSCH

Although many of us are aware of Holocaust history, it still may be hard to place ourselves into the shoes of those Jews who experienced the day to day crises of World War II that upended their lives. Sitting in my apartment in Montreal in the heat of the Covid-19 worldwide shutdown, I may be beginning to understand how Jews in Poland, Hungary, or France may have felt as they confronted their visibly malicious and lethal enemies, with none to rely on but themselves.

The dates, the numbers, the people who comprise much of the story of the Holocaust can be accessed quickly enough; Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance is replete with the names of those who are no longer with us. When we contemplate Jewish resistance, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising often comes to mind - a remarkable feat wherein emaciated Jews, with very few weapons held Nazi forces at bay, for over a month (April 19 - May 16). Tragically, with brute force, the Nazis eventually burned down the ghetto, and very few inhabitants survived to tell the tale.



Warsaw, Poland - Jews around the seder table reading the Passover Haggadah

view of Jewish rescue efforts organized in Budapest during the 1944 Nazi invasion of Hungary, including the efforts of many Jewish and non-Jewish undercover volunteers. It is an astonishing story that was not told or shared enough. The book is a first-person account by Holczler, a Jewish survivor, who is not only the chroni-

Recently, the remarkable story of Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, the Klausenburger Rebbe, was documented in a movie titled *Hidden Face/Astir Panai*. Having lost his wife and eleven children in the camps, this spiritual giant was able to retain his faith in G-d, as well as strengthen the faith of others. An illustration of the depth of that faith and love for his people was the rebbe's response while in the camps, to whether he could continue reciting the prayer thanking G-d for choosing Israel from among the nations. He replied, "Maybe until now I didn't say it with enough intention. But now when I say 'You chose us among all nations,' I'll say it more intently and joyfully than ever before because I'm lucky to be a Jew, because if I weren't 'chosen from among all nations,' I'd be like that Nazi."

To stay alive during those dark times took extraordinary courage. The efforts to support the life and resistance of every survivor were nothing short of remarkable. The survival and revival of Jewish life and peoplehood in those times ought to rouse the courage and pride of every Jew.

Once again, as we face the Covid - 19 challenges as part of the enveloping community, our spiritual leaders are in the forefront in addressing the needs of their Jewish communities, organizing inspiring zoom classes, resource lists, and volunteers. May we all be blessed with a speedy recovery leading the world to the messianic peace foretold in our scriptures - speedily and in our time, as we are all called upon to do what we can to support the healing of our planet.

(Abigail Hirsch is a documentary filmmaker and CIJR Fellow. She is currently documenting the Life of Cantor Moshe Kraus)



Westerbork, Holland - a Chanukah party in the camp

However, there is another kind of resistance, which is less known and even less documented, but which ultimately proved victorious and lasting: maintaining Jewish spiritual life in every country, even within the concentration and labour camps. Several books that chronicle these exceptional stories. Written by survivors who document their day-by-day struggles, they speak of personal and communal courage and illuminate the inner strength that enabled Jews to face their individual and collective destinies with some measure of dignity.

Budapest 44, Rescue and Resistance, by Moshe Holczler, is one such account. The book provides a panoramic, yet remarkably detailed

cler but also an active participant. As part of the Jewish committee, he was one of the members entrusted to provide food to the Jewish Ghettos in Budapest during its siege. Holczler details his and others' many challenges and miraculous escapes.

Eliezer Berkovitz's *With G-d in Hell: Judaism in the Ghettos and Death Camps*, is replete with the testimonies of survivors who were firmly grounded in Jewish values and practices. These testimonials illustrate the role of faith in supporting life and spiritual resistance during those darkest times, as well as how significant one's commitment to Jewish values and practices was and continues to be to the survival of our people.

ZIONISM, AN INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE: ABORIGINAL AMERICANS AND THE JEWISH STATE

BERNARD BOHBOT

Zionism, An Indigenous Struggle : Aboriginal Americans and the Jewish State, edited by Nathan Elberg Machla Abramovitz, Roslyn : RVP Press, 2020, 228 pages, \$20.00 ISBN 978 1 61861 342 4

This essential book is an anthology of original essays edited by Machla Abramovitz and Nathan Elberg, from the *Canadian Institute for Jewish Research*, in the making over the last five years. This extended enterprise aims to set the record straight and to reaffirm the aboriginal status of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

This endeavour might sound odd to anyone who has even limited historical

notions. Unfortunately, however, over the last half century, the anti-Zionist far-left has invested tremendous efforts in belittling the historic connections between the Jewish people and the land that is the cradle of its identity. Indeed, some of these “scholars” any claim that the Jews are not a people at all, but merely a “religious confession.” Shlomo Sand’s tremendous popularity in leftist circles in the West is the latest example of this trend.

The book also points to the specious arguments used by the anti-Israel far-left to deny the connexion between the Jews and the Land of Israel. The Jews, they assert, are *not* the “biological descendants” of the ancient Hebrews. Instead, they argue, only cultural transmission, not DNA, defines a People.

A strength of this book is that it highlights the similarities between the Jews and North American Aboriginal populations. Anti-Zionists love to compare the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel to the Conquest of the West, an analogy that contributor Dr. David A. Yeagley, an aboriginal scholar and activist, vehemently denies. While Steven Salaita built his academic career by linking the fate of the Palestinians to that of the North American indigenous population, it is essential to remember that, very much like North American Natives, Jews, dispossessed of their homeland, continuously identified with it across the ages.

And of course, the book also convincingly shows that Judaism is and always was more than a mere religious confession. Jews share national features that do not exist in the other “Abrahamic” religions. They share a common language (that wasn’t always widely spoken but remained part of the Jewish religio-national heritage nevertheless). They also share a constant connection to a homeland that is far more than a distant “holy site”—several *mitzvot*, Biblically-enjoined good deeds, can only be performed in the Land of Israel.

Alan J. Hertz, a former senior advisor in the Privy Council Office serving Canada’s Prime Minister, reminds us that Jews cannot merely be called “indigenous” to the land of Israel, as indigenous means merely being “born there.” Indeed, Jewish peoplehood was born in the Land of Israel, but the Land of Israel is not only the formative place of this identity. Jews are also, to use Latin etymology, *ab origine* (aboriginal) to this land, *i.e.*, “being [the] first.” (p.21) In other words, no other nation alive today has stronger and deeper roots and more enduring roots in this land than the Jews.

The book also makes the case that from a legal standpoint, the Jews had the right to return to their ancestral homeland, as majority rights do not supersede the rights of aboriginal populations to the lands from which they were dispossessed, but must be balanced instead. It thus presents the Balfour Declaration not as a colonial scheme, (a notion dear to the hearts of leftist critics) but as a clear and substantial recognition of the Jewish people’s right to its ancestral homeland.

One other significant aspect of the book is that it deals with the “Western character” of the Jews, who have both contributed to, and absorbed, much of Western cultural habits throughout ages. Usually, anti-Zionists use this to “prove” that Jews don’t belong in the Middle East. This important book, however, shows that First Nations were also largely

acculturated (more so than the Jews) and yet that they, too, struggle to reconcile modernity with tradition. According to Ryan Bellerose, a Métis, and Mara Cohen, an Oglala Sioux Jew, Israel’s successful blending of tradition and modernity may serve as a guideline for First Nations that seek to preserve and restore ancestral traditions shattered by European colonialism.

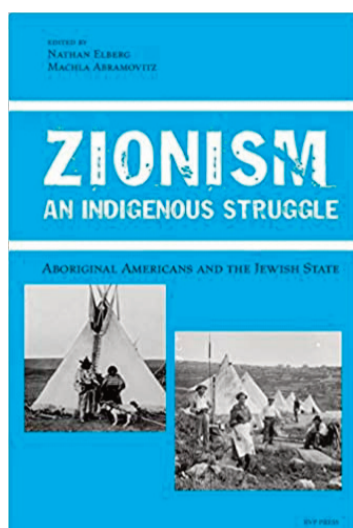
One could say that proving the historical ties between the Jews and the Land of Israel is meaningless. After all, everybody knows where Jews originated. However, Israel’s enemies have successfully dwelt on White guilt (for the supposed sins of colonialism) to portray Israeli Jews as European interlopers whose connection to the Land of Israel is weak. As well, anti-Zionists use the Jewish state’s very modernity against it, falsely asserting that Zionism is foreign to the Middle East. This book clearly indicates that before, and after, Europeans, Jews were first and foremost from, and identified with, the Land of Israel.

True, certain small extremist strands of Orthodox Judaism (the Satmar for example) may oppose Zionism for theological reasons. While they have the right to do so, attacking Zionism by ridiculing or distorting Jewish history is unacceptable. Instead, as *Zionism, An Indigenous Struggle: Aboriginal Americans, and the Jewish State* specifies, Jews’ claims to the land are strong and eminently defensible, regardless of the linguistic and ideological acrobatics of Shlomo Sand and Steven Salaita.

Does the book have flaws? Some leftist Zionists might argue that the Land of Israel/Palestine is the cradle of both the Jewish and Palestinian identities—regardless of whoever was there first - is not adequately acknowledged in some of the articles. Fair enough, but so far, anti-Zionist Palestinian nationalists have based their strategy largely not on proving their own historical claims, but by denying the existence of the Jewish people and its connexion to the Land of Israel. There is no reason for Jews to be generous while their neighbours in the still on-going Israel-Palestinian conflict still use every platform available to instill in peoples’ minds that the Jews are not a real People with a real connexion to its ancient homeland. This implies the legitimacy of destroying the Jewish State, something the Palestinians must surely know that Jews will never ever accept.

Zionism, An Indigenous Struggle: Aboriginal Americans, and the Jewish State sets the record straight. The Jews in Israel are not like the Belgians in Congo or the French in Algeria. The vital, dynamic and democratic Jewish state is here to stay, and hostile critics in the “international community” and tenured radicals in Western universities can do nothing to change this fundamental truth.

(Bernard Bohbot is a Ph.D. student in history at the University of Quebec in Montreal, and a CIJR Fellow. He is working on the tortuous relations between Israel, the Jews, and the left.)



Latest Acquisitions

Bederman, Weber, *The Serpent and the Red Thread / The Definitive Biography of Evil*. Canada: Mantura Books Ltd. 2019

Brookhiser, Richard, *Give me liberty: a history of America's exceptional idea*. New York: Basic Books, 2019

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Mullins, Sam, *Jihadist infiltration of migrant flows to Europe. Perpetrators, Modus Operandis and Policy Implications*. New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2019

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Thompson, Morton, *The cry and the covenant*. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1949

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We welcome your letters, comments and materials, which can be faxed or e-mailed (see cover.)

EXTRA! EXTRA!

From The Chairman

Jack Kincler

As is everyone else, I am managing to get through each day as best as possible in these exceptional times.

In keeping with the Pesach spirit, redemption from slavery to freedom goes hand in hand with our hope for salvation from this pandemic. Hopefully, human ingenuity will find a means of eradicating this destructive COVID-19 virus.

I returned from Israel the day after the third elections that took place on March 2nd. I witnessed first-hand how passionate Israelis are about politics in their country. Pundits, including myself, expected another electoral deadlock. However, with the pandemic omnipresent, political negotiations about forming an emergency unity government have thankfully come to pass.

At CIJR, just before the lockdown, we were busy redesigning our web site, planning new seminars and colloquiums, and cataloging our extensive research library (a comprehensive collection of books, pamphlets, and journals—reference and non-reference, some quite old and/or rare—on Israel, the Middle East, Jewish history and Jewish-world issues, including anti-Semitism, Holocaust, and demography). Scholars, researchers, and the general public are welcome to use CIJR's Library and research facilities.

New employees have joined us: Hilda Ibarra is our office administrator and bookkeeper, and, as always, talented student interns — Jacques Chitayat, David Anidjar, and Bernard Bohbot — assist with research and publications.

Kudos to Prof. Fred and Lenore Krantz, Publications Editor Machla Abramovitz, Social Media coordinator Megan Shapiro and our dedicated Toronto chapter Executive members Alan Herman, Doris Epstein and Sally Zerker and all our Board members, supporters and volunteers, for their hard work and dedication to the cause of Israel and the Jewish People. I wish all our readers and their families, good health, and a happy Passover under quarantine—perhaps; after all, our prayers will be answered during this difficult time!

(Jack Kincler is CIJR's National Board Chairman)

From the Toronto Chapter

Alan Herman, Doris Epstein, Prof. Emerita Sally Zerker

(CIJR Toronto Chapter Co-Chairs)

Shalom Chaverim — it's been a hectic time for CIJR in Toronto, please find below a sprinkling of the excellent events we held.

CIJR worked directly with Herut Canada and other partner organizations to host the IDF Reservists on Duty at the Lodzer Shul. That evening, these young heroes spoke from their hearts about their experiences on the front lines defending Israel from terrorism. Unlike the reception they received days later at York University where they encountered an anti-Zionist riot, we celebrated their service.

Partnering with the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation (CAEF), Hasbara Fellowships, and Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, we presented at the Adath Israel synagogue an informative debate between Professors Asaf Romirowsky and Renan Levine titled: "Supporting Israel in The Partisan Era." The two esteemed scholars - one conservative and the other liberal - led a rigorous discussion about Israel's position in North American partisan politics.

Then on November 30, just after Shabbat, CIJR proudly hosted at the Lodzer Shul the world-renowned scholar on contemporary antisemitism, Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld. With lucid and insightful detail, he outlined the three streams of antisemitism— far right, far left, and Islamism—while also presenting clear proposals on how to address this oldest and most lethal of hatreds. Dr. Gerstenfeld welcomed tough questions, and the audience appreciated his no-nonsense answers.

Then on December 12, partnering with Beth David Synagogue, CAEF, and B'nai Brith Canada, we presented B'nai Brith Canada CEO Michael Mostyn, who spoke on "How to Stop Antisemitism Today: Proven Lessons from B'nai Brith Canada." Mostyn walked Toronto audiences through numerous ways we can all make a real difference in the fight against Jew-hatred.

On January 16, 2020, Dr. Lawrence Hart, a CIJR Academic Fellow, helped to fill a powerhouse roster of panel speakers at the kickoff event of Agnes Imani's "Antisemitism Toolbox" series. Dr. Hart provided hard lessons learned in his many years of fighting antisemitism at McMaster University in Hamilton, including concrete measures that all universities can take to curtail the vile blight of Israel-demonization on their campuses.

We look forward to having more to report in the coming months!