PASSOVER, 5780/2020
CONFRONTING THE CORONA-PLAGUE: ISRAEL, THE JEWISH PEOPLE, & THE WORLD
April 15, 2020

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 indefinite 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 media interest.

Yet Israel now has a broad and stable center-right ruling coalition, in the steady and experienced hands of the semiprivate PM, Netanyahu. And this as both Israel and the Arab states confront the spreading coronavirus crisis. Indeed, the Arab regimes, and even the Palestinians, are so preoccupied with the looming pandemic that for once (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 coronavirus cases in Guam), Libya remains (to mix metaphors) a tinder-box of a basket-case, Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan and Mali et all remain unstable, and so on. The Middle East seems to be joining 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 in Judea, Samaria, or more, before year’s end.

The impending election (postponing it is now being discussed, and has 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 US 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, is well-placed—not only to defend itself, but with its medical-technical, racial, and pact geography, and remarkable scientific-technical-medical abilities, is well-placed—not only to defend itself, but also 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, as long as society 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 and working together, and worship, eating “out”, planning for the near, and unremarked-upon a few short weeks ago—moving about and unremarked-upon a few short weeks ago—moving about and never before, to hard-nosed, joint U.S.-Israeli “peace plan” pressure.)

It is a lesson, like

The "Ancient History 101" cartoon below sums up the civilizational impact of the China, coronavirus—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 era, “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 that Wall Street and the Stock Market, mirroring exchanges world-wide, fell into Depression territory, with some analysts predicting...
"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

"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.

"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

"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)

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“In an event that few would have foreseen, Blue and White appears to have de-integrated 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

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 de-integrated 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)

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)
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 person 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 Passover 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 faithfully 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.)
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 determine if a law or a governmental decision represents Israel’s Basic Laws, not to telling Knesset members their own successors. Their juridical role would be limited to 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)

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.
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.

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 maneuverings 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.
“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 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 Co-Editor of CiJR’s latest publication: Zionism: An Indigenous Struggle)
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 center. “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 about the virus’s spread using technology but also about the Israeli attitude in facing adversity and coming out stronger.

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 cabinet had approved the use of controversial “digital tools” – mainly tracking technologies reserved for counter-terrorism purposes – for a

Charles Bybelezer writes for The Media Line in Jerusalem, and is a CIJR 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
world deadly ill from it.

We are beginning to see how we got here, and as we do, we must take our own medi-
cine. 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 the Coro-
virus had spread throughout the United States andEuropean Union, within
some segments of our religious communi-
ties and beyond, we must call out two of
the main culprits who helped it spread: Bei-
jing and Tehran.

The Chinese government is playing us all
for fools and they need to come clean,
owning their culpability in the pre-pand-
emic 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 mil-
lion people from Wuhan were allowed to
leave the city before the travel restrictions
had been enacted. The Chinese govern-
ment then proceeded to weaponize med-
ical supplies by importing — from countries
that might need it — 20 million respirators.
The Chinese leadership also initially down-
played 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 corona virus to Wuhan. The Chi-
inese 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 be-
vavior may very well put the nail in the cof-
f in 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 disen-
tangle America’s economy from China.

If you want the full article, click the following
LINK — Ed.]

(Rabbi Abraham Cooper is the associate
dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and
a CUR 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 approach-
ing 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
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We’re at war, we can beat this virus” — Israeli Prime Minister Ben-
jamin Netanyahu told the people of Israel. He added that other na-
tions were adopting Israel’s policies of preventing the spread of the
Corona, and that Israel would be able to overcome the new chal-


IDF soldiers patrol the streets of Jerusalem during coronavirus outbreak

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 hard-core 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.

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)
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 Erdogan. He also systematically destroyed Ataturk’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. Erdogan has his eye on Libyan oil, whose reserves are estimated at 74 billion barrels. But so do Russia and France. Erdogan 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 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, Erdogan 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. Erdogan, 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.

Erdogan 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.

Erdogan 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)
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 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 Solomon Center)
Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, a noted authority on contemporary anti-Semitism, 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 anti-Semitism, including groundbreaking studies on European anti-Semitism. 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, anti-Semitism became profoundly interwoven with Western culture. However, after the Holocaust, the promotion of Nazi ideology or genocide was considered taboo. Anti-Semitism was, therefore, forced to mutate to remain integral to Western culture. This mutated anti-Semitism – often referred to as the “new anti-Semitism” - focused on the Jewish state. It integrates the core beliefs of classic anti-Semitism 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-Semitism in Western society is left-liberalism. As far as violence is concerned, Muslims and right-wingers play a substantive role in promoting anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism. They, however, play a minor role in the public discourse. The anti-Semitism 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 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 anti-Semitism.

Why is it important to acknowledge this interweaving of anti-Semitism 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 anti-Semitism, can be used effectively to combat Europe’s anti-Israel attitudes. Given the fundamental link between the two, can anti-Semitism be effectively combated 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”.)
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 view 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 stronger one made it clear that he viewed Moses as just another Hebrew. 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.5

The legislation of nations reflects how do other Jews see him, and how do non-Jews view him? Moses made it clear that he viewed Moses as just another Hebrew.6 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 some underlying cases in Tenach. The first 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.7 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.8 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.9

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 before Haman, the latter considers him not just a hostile individual. Haman wants all Jews murdered.9

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There are other expressions of identity in later books of Tenach. The Book of Esther

Haman 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.

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

1. Genesis, Chapter 2, Verse 20
2. blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/07/31/fromm-argues-for-disobedience
3. Exodus, Chapter 2, Verses 13 - 14
4. Exodus, Chapter 2, Verses 1 - 10
5. Exodus, Chapter 2, Verses 11 - 12
6. Jeremiah, Chapter 1, Verses 4-5
7. Hosea, Chapter One, Verse 2
8. The Book of Esther; Chapter 3, Verse13
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.

However, there is another kind of resistance, which is less known and even less documented, but which ultimately proved victorious and last- ing: 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 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 chronicler but also an active participant. As part of the Jewish committee, he was one of the members entrusted to provide food to the Jewish Ghetto 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.

Recently, the remarkable story of Yekuel Yehudah Halberstam, the Klausenburger Rebbe, was documented in a movie titled Hidden Face/Actor Pana. 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 Naaz.”

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 film-maker and CIJR Fellow. She is currently documenting the Life of Cantor Moshe Kousa)
ZIONISM, AN INDIGENOUS STRUGGLE: ABORIGINAL AMERICANS AND THE JEWISH STATE

BERNARD BOHBOT


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 edition's extended enterprise aims to set the record straight and to reaffirm the aboriginal Canadian identity of the Jewish people in the Jewish State.

This undertaking 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” call any claim that Judaism is anything but an aboriginal religion a “religious confession.” Sheer anti-Semitism! 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 connection between the Jews and the Land of Israel. They, the 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. Yagelley, 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 common connection to a homeland that is far more than a “holy site”—several millennia, 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. 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, contemporary history has strengthened and deepened 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 Palestinian conflict 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 the ages. Using this idea, Zionsists 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 (moreso than the Jews) and yet that they, too, struggled to reconcile modernity with tradition. According to Ryan Bellerose, a Métis, and Mara Cohen, an Ogilwa Sioux, Jews’ success in this bid for modernity and tradition may serve as a guideline for First Nations that seek to preserve and restore ancestral traditions shatred by European colonialism.

One could say that proving the historical ties between the Jews and the Land of Israel is meaningless. After all, every body knows where Jews originated. However, Israeli’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 states that before, and after, Europeans, Jews were first and foremost and, identified with, the Land of Israel.

True, certain small extremist strands of Orthdox 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 Zionsism, An Indigenous Struggle: Aboriginal Americans, and the Jewish State specifies, Jews’ claims to the land are strong and eminently defendable, 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 who lives there first—so it is not adequately acknowledged in some of the articles. Fair enough, but so far, anti-Zionist Palestinian nationalists have based their strategy largely 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 Israeli-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 illegitimacy 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 renewal radiculs in Western universities can do nothing to change this fundamental truth.

( Bernard Bobot 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.)
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 colloquia, 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 Chityat, David Anidjar, and Bernard Boboti — 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)