ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week’s news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

Commentary...

A Jewish and Zionist Speech
By Haim Shine

Every time an Israeli prime minister or president, no matter what political party they are from, speaks at the U.N., I get excited. Standing in front of representatives of the world's nations, they represent a country that rose from the dust and ashes, fulfilling a 2,000-year-old dream that is now an oasis of enlightened democracy in the midst of extreme madness and violence.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu directed his speech on Monday to three audiences -- the citizens of Israel, the American government and the heads of European nations. To his Israeli audience, Netanyahu made it clear he would never give up the Jewish state's right to security and defensible borders. The IDF, the most moral army in the world, will forever be responsible for defending Israel. History has proven that the world has no room for Jews who cannot defend themselves.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, considered by many in Israel to be a partner for peace talks, was portrayed by Netanyahu as the person responsible for the war crimes committed by his partners in Hamas, as well as being a deceitful dialogue partner, who for many years has subscribed to the Palestinian ideology that a Palestinian state must replace Israel, instead of being established alongside it. Holocaust denial and refusal to recognize a Jewish state are the foundation of Abbas' worldview.

Abbas' speech at the U.N. on Friday marked his divorce from peace, and Netanyahu's speech on Monday marked Israel's divorce from Abbas as a negotiating partner.

Israelis yearn for peace. An opening for peace can be created by forming new alliances with Arab states that adopt an appropriate, measured approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

To the American government, Netanyahu explained that it was impossible to differentiate between radical Islamic organizations. They may have different names, but their essence is the same.

Their aim is to destroy Western civilization and impose an Islamic caliphate in its place. These groups are different tentacles of the same octopus, and Iran plays a significant role in its violent activities. The Americans should know from their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq that doing only half the job without achieving victory is dangerous. Merely taking out Islamic State pickup trucks without preventing a nuclear Iran would be a monumental strategic error.

To the heads of European nations, Netanyahu recalled the days of World War II. We must not underestiminate threats, even ones that sound ridiculous, and anti-Semitism is rearing its head again in Europe. Europe's disregard for contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism, as well the hypocrisy of the U.N. Human Rights Council, both undermine the moral foundation of the struggle against an enemy that endangers Europe itself.

Netanyahu spoke clear Zionist truths. There are Israeli media commentators who deny the truth. It is fortunate that a majority of the Israeli public prefers the truth over illusions and wishful thinking. (Israel Hayom Sep 30)

Netanyahu’s Words Matter
By Ruthie Blum

As he set off for New York to address the 69th session of the UN General Assembly on Monday, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu indicated he would be delivering a “razor-sharp” speech. Given his oratorical track record, there was little doubt he would make good on his promise, and indeed he did not disappoint.

Netanyahu’s 35-minute monologue from the podium of the hornet’s nest in midtown Manhattan was a masterpiece. And it took a great performer to be able to pull it off, particularly since the plenum was nearly empty and the only people present cheering him on were members of his entourage and some of his Jewish-American supporters in the balcony.

But Netanyahu is a pro, and he knows how to talk into a camera, with his sights on a far wider audience.

What he did on Monday, with a mixture of toughness and elegance, was to use the consensus about combating the Islamic State (IS) terrorists to warn against militant Islam in all its permutations, emphasizing the danger of a nuclear Iran – the original and ultimate “Islamic State.”

He began by likening militant Islam to a cancer that “starts out small... [but] left unchecked... grows, metastasizing over wider and wider areas.”

He proceeded to point out that Israel’s war with Hamas this summer was not only defensive, and as necessary as that which is being fought right now against IS, but was carried out in the most moral way possible, with the IDF taking special care to prevent civilian casualties.

And then he went for the proverbial jugular of the very body he was addressing (in stark contrast to the literal neck-slicing that has become the trademark of the Islamic caliphate).

“By investigating Israel rather than Hamas for war crimes,” Netanyahu said, “the UN Human Rights Council... is sending a clear message to terrorists everywhere: Use civilians as a human shield... [T]he UN Human Rights Council has thus become a terrorist rights council.”

He continued: “We live in a world steeped in tyranny and terror, where gays are hanged from cranes in Teheran; political prisoners are executed in Gaza; young girls are abducted en masse in Nigeria; and hundreds of thousands are butchered in Syria, Libya and Iraq. Yet nearly half... of the UN Human Rights Council’s resolutions focusing on a single country have been directed against Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East; Israel, where issues are openly debated in a boisterous parliament, where human rights are protected by independent courts, and where women, gays and minorities live in a genuinely free society.”

This treatment of Israel, he said, is “only one manifestation of the return of one of the world’s largest prejudices. We hear mobs today in Europe call for the gassing of Jews. We hear some national leaders compare Israel to the Nazis. This is not a function of Israel’s policies. It’s a function of diseased minds. And that disease has a name. It’s called anti-Semitism. It is now spreading in polite society where it masquerades as legitimate criticism of Israel.”

As former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton subsequently commented on FOX News, it was the speech that President Barack Obama should have made.

Reactions in Israel have been a bit less positive, however. Snide remarks about Netanyahu on either end of the political spectrum immediately emerged.

The Left ridiculed him for using the “same old clichés” about the threat of Islamic terrorism to avoid Palestinian statehood. The Right, much of which is still reeling over what it considers to be Netanyahu’s weakness during the war in Gaza – not finishing off Hamas – has expressed being sick and tired of the prime minister’s great speeches.

In other words, both groups of cynics view his gift of the gab as meaningless.

I beg to differ.

Words are extremely important. And Netanyahu’s reiteration of...
certain truths that are under global assault is more crucial than ever, especially with a hostile administration in the White House and difficult opposition at home.

But it is because words matter that I have to take issue with the last part of his tour de force on Monday. Concluding that the only way to achieve peace with the Palestinians is to create regional cooperation with the Arab world and international community, Netanyahu asserted that he is “ready to make a historic compromise in the name of territorial withdrawals.”

Though he said that this is not because Israel is an occupier in its own land, and added that any peace deal would have to be “anchored in mutual recognition and enduring security arrangements,” he actually repeated that any peace agreement “will obviously necessitate a territorial compromise.”

Announcements like that, particularly in the context of an increasingly radicalizing Middle East and Europe, only serve to embolden the worst elements of Palestinian society. Offering “land for peace” is the best way to convey to all of its enemies that they should continue clinging to what Netanyah himself called the “branches of the same poisonous tree” from which Hamas and IS cultivate their “fanatical creed.”

He, like all Israelis, ought to know this by now. (Jerusalem Post Sep 30)

**Hypocrisy Takes Center Stage** By Haim Shine

The Jewish people love peace, and pursue it. The prophets of Israel preached the vision of world peace to humanity: “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

For thousands of years, the Jews have paid with blood the price of the violence, hatred, and aggression directed at them. In the 20th century, we lost a third of our people in a massive extermination, and the remnants of our community were unwilling to lead to the “final solution” of the Jewish problem. It take a lot of cruelty, insularity and evil to accuse Israel of committing genocide. A lie that is repeated often enough becomes the truth.

The State of Israel, the home of Holocaust survivors and other Jews who arrived from all over the world, has been forced since it was founded in 1948 to fight time and again for its right to exist in peace and security in its historic homeland. In all the years of its existence, its citizens have not known a moment of quiet or tranquility: constant wars, rocket barrages on innocent civilians, anti-tank missiles fired at school buses, gunfire on kindergartens and event venues, teenagers kidnapped, suicide bombers in city streets, and hundreds of terrorists attacks that only a demonic imagination could conceive.

Even since the Twin Towers fell, the world has begun to understand the existential and security threats that Israel faced and continues to face, including Iranian attempts to develop a nuclear weapon after declaring it intends to destroy us.

Israel has made honest efforts to reach peace agreements with our neighbors. These efforts led to peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. In the 1990s, the Oslo Accords were signed in hope of reaching a deal with the Palestinians. The hope proved false, and nearly a thousand Israelis were murdered following the accords. In 2005, thousands of Jews were forced to leave their homes in the Gaza Strip, once again in the hope of reaching a peace agreement. And once again, the result was that productive greenhouses were leveled and turned into rocket launching areas for Hamas terrorists.

In June 2009, the Bar-Ilan speech offered the Palestinians an opportunity to discuss a solution based on the idea of two states for two peoples, which came from an understanding that Jews and Palestinians would have to live as neighbors forever. We hoped that this would open the door to real peace talks.

But as in the past, even this extended hand was spurned. The Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, turned its back on peace, established a unification government with Hamas, and essentially gave it the backing to launch massive rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. Millions of innocent Israelis were exposed to hits by thousands of rockets shot at them. Israel had no alternative but to launch a battle to protect its cities and communities.

Hundreds of millions of dollars that were transferred to Gaza by other countries and aid organizations were used to dig terror tunnels intended to do nothing but kill hundreds of Israelis in cold blood in surprise terrorist attacks that would burst out from underground. The concrete used to wall the tunnels could have been used to construct thousands of housing units for Gaza residents. The enormous sums that came from Qatar helped the tunnels could have been used to construct thousands of housing units for Gaza residents. The enormous sums that came from Qatar helped Hamas expand its military industrial capability and essentially give Hamas the means to devastate a third of Israel’s territory.

The Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Abbas and the Hamas terrorists are the only ones responsible for the Palestinian suffering. You have to be pretty untrustworthy to stand on the important stage of the United Nations and claim that Israel is responsible for the events of last summer. The Palestinian Authority has joined the Axis of Evil, and Abbas acts innocent, makes forlorn eyes, and accuses Israel of acts that he himself is responsible for. It takes a lot of hypocrisy to wave the flag of peace while simultaneously joining the forces of darkness.

Recently, the entire world has identified the danger extremist Islam poses. We aren’t talking about another local Middle East problem, but a true threat to Western culture and humanity as a whole. It’s a real shame that the Palestinians are led by their leadership into war and not peace.

Even today, Israel is ready to make peace, but after thousands of years of experience, it will never be prepared to gamble its security. Jews don’t have a historical margin of error. (Isreal Hayom Sep 29)

**Kicking the PLO Habit** By Caroline B. Glick

The signs are everywhere that the time has come for Israel to abandon the PLO. So long as the PLO remains in power, the lives of Israelis and Palestinians will only get worse.

PLO chief Mahmoud Abbas’s speech last Friday at the UN General Assembly where he repeatedly accused Israel of committing genocide was not merely an abandonment of direct peace negotiations with Israel. Abbas abandoned the very concept of peaceful coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians.

Abbas called for the UN to pass a resolution that will require Israel to cede Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria in their entirety to the PLO within a set period of time. No Israeli consideration can be taken into account. No Israel concern can be attended to.

As he put it, “Palestine refuses to have the right to freedom of her people, which is subjected to the terror by the racist occupying Power and its settlers, remain hostage to Israel’s security conditions.”

As is always the case, the immediate victims of Abbas’s blood libels are the Israeli Left. The politicians and media elite that have hitched their horse to the PLO were again left stuttering by the wayside.

For some, like Meretz chair Zehava Gal-On, stuttering is a fine option. So she pushed out an endorsement of Abbas’s genocide speech.

Gal-On said “Meretz supports Abbas’s international efforts to bring the end of the occupation and to get international recognition as a [Palestinian] state and member of the UN before and as a corridor to reaching peace in bilateral negotiations between equals.”

And she joined Abbas in blaming Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for Abbas’s rejection of peace.

As the center-left commentator Dan Margalit noted in Yisrael Hayom, Gal-On and others are basically alone in their embrace of Abbas today.

But they are far from alone in maintaining their slavish devotion to the idea that the only way to improve the situation is by giving Abbas whatever he wants.

And here the circle of victims of Abbas’s hostility expands from the Left to the entire country.

In a Facebook post on Saturday, Opposition leader and Labor Party leader Yitzhak Herzog latched all of Israel to the Left’s position by seeming to condemn Abbas while insisting that he is Israel’s only hope.

Herzog wrote that Abbas’s remarks, “were disappointing but not surprising.”

“I have met with [Abbas, aka] Abu Mazen dozens of times: He is not a friend or a sympathetic ally. He is someone we have to make a deal with,” Herzog insisted.

Herzog then repeated the same points he and his fellow leftists have made for decades: that Abbas is better than Hamas, that Israel’s security cooperation with the PLO is really great, and that the only way to get the world to be nice to us is by maintaining our allegiance to Abbas and the PLO.

Herzog concluded by joining Gal-On and Abbas in attacking Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and blaming him for Abbas’s open transformation into Israel’s enemy.

The first problem with Herzog’s statement is that if it is true that he has always knows that Abbas is our enemy, then he just told us that he is a liar.

Like all his friends on the Left, Herzog has continuously embraced Abbas and insisted that he is a man of peace and a moderate and interested in making a deal with Israel.

Yet far worse than his apparent serial dishonesty is Herzog’s insistence that Israel remain in the same policy straitjacket of embracing the PLO.

It is true that Israel gets some security cooperation from the Palestinian security forces. But it is also true that the only guarantor of Israel’s security is the IDF. Were the Palestinian security forces to disband tomorrow, Israel would be better off, not worse off.

This is the case because as Abbas showed, the PA views Israel as its enemy. For tactical reasons PLO militias do work with the IDF from time to time. But their strategic goal – Israel’s destruction – is unchanging. Any doubts that this is the case were dispelled by Abbas’s remarks in New York.

As for the PLO being preferable to Hamas, the PLO is Hamass’s
coalition partner. Abbas staunchly expressed his commitment to the unity government he forged with Hamas in his UN speech.

Supporting the PLO in Gaza is the same as supporting Hamas.

Finally, Israel’s international position is continuously degraded, and has been since 1993 as a direct result of its embrace of the PLO. As Abbas showed yet again on Friday, the PLO is leading an international campaign to delegitimize Israel’s right to exist. By embracing the PLO, Israel is legitimizing the campaign against it.

Due to our adoption of the Left’s catechism, that Israel has no choice but to continue its embrace of the PLO, we find ourselves at this juncture — where the PLO no longer even tries to hide its rejection of peaceful coexistence with the Jewish state — unable to mount a concerted defense of our rights and legitimate concerns.

If we have no choice but to cut a deal with a group that openly seeks our annihilation in collaboration with Hamas, a terrorist group supported by Iran, then how can we defend ourselves and ensure our rights are respected and our interests are secured?

The short answer is that we cannot.

Since the PLO seeks our destruction, everything we do to strengthen it weakens us. Abbas made clear in his UN speech that he is playing a zero-sum game with Israel. Everything he gains comes at our expense.

Herzog and his comrades are right about one thing. Chances for peaceful coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians will increase in an environment where the Palestinians enjoy civil rights and economic opportunities. The problem is that the PLO has harmed, and will continue to harm both for as long as it remains in power.

In large part because the PLO recognizes that freedom and economic opportunity engender social happiness and peace, for the past 21 years they have taken active steps to repress freedom and strangle economic opportunities. Only a Palestinian society that is poor, immiserated and indoctrinated to hate Jews will agree to serve as foot soldiers in a perpetual war for the destruction of Israel.

Palestinians whose lives he insists on imperiling and embittering by locking them into a perpetual war for the destruction of Israel.

They for many years in the pre-electoral period, in addition to the demographic factor. The Russian immigrants, with the exception of the Chechen refugees, are mostly on the right. The Ethiopian immigrants are not likely to support the left. And now come the French Jews, who leave a country that is mismanaged by the left and seem to love Israel the way it is. It looks like the right is here to stay, at least for a while.

It is true that the majority may not always be right, but it is the will of the majority that is obeyed in a democracy. (Haaretz Sep 28)

Abbas Incites and We’re to Blame? By Dror Eydar

What is the meaning of this tendency to make excuses every time the Palestinians expose their true selves?

Now it’s our fault that PA President Mahmoud Abbas shattered the harm done to the image of the Left had fashioned for him. We watched as he stood up and lied in the worst speech of incitement a Palestinian parliamentary representative has ever made to Westerners, using the verified accusations made against the Palestinian Authority and turning them against Israel without batting an eye. Not a word about the reason for the war this past summer; not a word about the putsch Hamas planned against him. And we’re expected to trust him?

Here are some of the terms he used heavily in his speech: genocide, a new "nakba" ("catastrophe"), a racist occupier state, apartheid, colonialism, a state above the law. This is our fault. For years, the Israeli media and academia have pounded this false doctrine. Zion was the starting point for the dogma that reached the strongholds of Western fundamental liberalism, the ones that are ashamed to admit their hatred for Jews and find a substitute in hating and slandering Israel.

Genocide? In the second half of the 20th century alone, across the Muslim world -- in Algeria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Chad, Kosovo, Tajikistan, Syria, Libya -- Muslims slaughtered millions of other Muslims and Christians. In most places, it was a brutal, methodical extermination that fit the chilling definition of genocide. Who cares? They were Muslims, not Jews trying to protect themselves.

Toward the end of his speech, this so-called moderate partner asserted that what had caused terrorism in our region was -- get ready -- international leniency toward Israel. He then discussed the Islamic State group, saying: "Confronting the terrorism that plagues our region by groups such as ISIL and others that have no base whatsoever in the tolerant Islamic religion or with humanity and are committing brutal and heinous atrocities requires much more than military confrontation. ... It
requires, in this context and as a priority, bringing an end to the Israeli occupation of our country, which constitutes in its practices and perpetuation, an abhorrent form of state terrorism and a breeding ground for incitement, tension, and hatred.”

Here is what Abbas truly believes: he doesn’t examine the Islamic State phenomenon as a deviation from its Islamic roots like other Arab leaders, his are general condemnations. Islamic State may as well have come from outer space.

On the other hand, he certainly juxtaposed the Islamic State with a much more loathsome entity – the State of Israel, which, according to the moderate partner, is a “terrorist state” and a “breeding ground for incitement, tension, and hatred,” and is actually more dangerous than the behemoth Islamists. This sentiment is present throughout the entire speech. So why do we cling to the golden calf called the “peace process”? We are marking the Days of Atonement – it’s time to wake up.

(Israel Hayom Sep 29)

Obama’s Hypocrisy on Civilian Casualties

By Seth Mandel

A few weeks ago, the State Department’s incoherent spokeswoman Marie Harf all but accused Israel of war crimes. As Tablett noted at the time, Harf said that “the suspicion that militias are operating nearby does not justify strikes that put at risk the lives of so many innocent civilians.”

She said a full investigation and accounting of Israel’s actions was warranted (as if Israel doesn’t already conduct such investigations). Expect her, then, to be asked about the following:

• The Tomahawk missile struck the village of Kafr Daryan in Syria’s Idlib province on the morning of Sept. 23.

• The Obama White House appears to have expanded Richard Nixon’s famous maxim to international law: when the (American) president does it, it’s not illegal. The Obama administration’s air war on terror has operated under the standard referred to as “near certainty”: that they be all but certain no innocent civilians will be endangered by air strikes. But as the Obama administration continues withdrawing from these battlefields, that gets more difficult to ensure since sources of on-the-ground intelligence dry up.

Such sources weren’t there to begin with in Syria, at least not to the extent they were in Iraq and Afghanistan. So it’s not as though President Obama suddenly decided he doesn’t care about innocent Syrian lives. It’s that he’s doing his best to prevent civilian casualties within the realm of realistic but effective warfare. The double standard is still glaring, as Jonathan pointed out last week. And it only becomes more so with yesterday’s report on the shift in standards. The White House was asked about just how much effort they’re putting into their aim after a particularly damaging errant strike:

“People seem to be creating this grey zone,” said one US government official. “We recognize the word but do not recognize us.”

The walking disaster that is a disruption in the entire peace process.

Seth Mandel

A Teetering Palestinian Illusion

By Zvika Fogel

The unpredictable Middle East obligates us to reassess the situation around us almost on a daily basis. We see, on the one hand, the terrorist armies of Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda and the Islamic, and the vulnerable states of Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon on the other.

We are living in the age of the futureless Syrian revolutionaries without national identities, facing radical Islamist warmongers like Iran, Qatar and Turkey, who put the future in jeopardy. All of these together create possibilities that even the most gifted of Hollywood script writers could never imagine. Yesterday’s enemy can become tomorrow’s ally, and whatever happens two days from now is anyone’s guess.

The Western world is beginning to internalize the situation, which does not coincide with common sense or healthy logic, and is starting to understand that the only way to tidy this mess up is not to surrender to it. If we fail today, with international forces working together, to treat these poisonous Islamist tree branches, then we will be forced to chop the entire tree down in the not-so-distant future. No one wants to fight a third world war after the Islamists acquire a nuclear bomb with which to send us back to the Stone Age. Or, in the words of Albert Einstein: “The fourth world war will be fought by stick and stone.”

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’ malicious and deceitful speech at the U.N. General Assembly was predictable. At the end of the day, what more can be expected of a Palestinian politician incapable of making decisions, who extends his hand to the leaders of Hamas in Gaza and conducts a revolving door policy with Hamas terrorists in Judea and Samaria; a man who speaks about peace and tolerance in English and about the right of return in literary Arabic. For Abbas, alleviating tensions with Hamas, which he despises more than anything, is more important than peace with us. He is more afraid for his life than for the future of the Palestinians. He is completely devoid of the leadership skills and charisma required of a leader who must make decisions that involve compromise, which in turn can breathe new hope into the peace process.

Whoever had pinned his or her hopes on Abbas will be disappointed. Indeed, they should do more: will the New York Times shove down their noses and Meretz to find her petty sniping and cheerful ignorance intimidating in the least. Does the New York Times think these are war crimes, now that her government isn’t the one conducting them? And does she believe she owes Israel an apology? There’s no question she does owe Israel that apology, and does the Obama administration more broadly. But it would be interesting to see if they could summon the necessary integrity to offer it.

(CommentaryMagazine.com Oct 1)

Israel conduct war boils down to: Israel puts the greatest effort it can into avoiding civilian casualties and then follows up with transparent investigations, while Obama basically just hopes for the best. The press should ask him about that.

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