

עש"ק פרשת שמיני

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Jerusalem 6:32  
Toronto 7:50**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***A Golden  
Opportunity**

By Ariel Bolstein

The incarcerated terrorists' hunger strike is meant to challenge Israel, but it also presents us with a significant opportunity. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we must understand what motivates our enemy. Beyond

the power struggle within the terror organizations and the Palestinian Authority, the terrorists are interested first and foremost in achieving a propaganda victory. Their goal: to turn the tables on right and wrong and present the Jewish state as cruel and inhumane, while branding themselves the victims.

Israel has not had much success in preventing the terrorists from achieving these public diplomacy victories because, for one thing, it refrained from exposing their despicable crimes. The very use of the technical term "security prisoners" serves the terrorists' goals in that it erases any memory of their vicious and murderous campaigns. The next stage is to drop the word "security," leaving us to refer to the worst criminals as merely "prisoners," a term that is known to evoke feelings of compassion and pity. The hunger strike aims to complete the whitewashing of terrorism among public opinion.

No one could be further from having a conscience than the jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and his ilk. True prisoners of conscience and freedom fighters dare to stand up in the face of the forces of evil and give their lives for lofty ideals. Palestinian terrorists help promote this evil, feeding it with the lives of hundreds and thousands of innocent victims -- Jews, Arabs, and others.

Israel's first response, then, must be to make the hunger strikers face the truth. Not one day must pass in which one of the crimes that earned the terrorists their imprisonment in Israel is not mentioned. Israel must also remind the world that the prison conditions for murderers from Fatah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad far exceed what is both accepted and even appropriate. The government's previous decision to cut the benefits given to such prisoners was the right decision to make, but even their current privileges would make a reasonable person's blood boil. The purpose of punishing and placing restrictions on an offender is to make them suffer and regret what they have done. Does anyone really believe that the convicted terrorists who get to live their lives in Israeli prisons with almost complete autonomy, cooking for themselves and holding celebrations in honor of the new murderers who join their ranks, truly suffer and feel regret?

The hunger strike provides a golden opportunity to amend this situation. All the privileges that make the lives of the terrorists pleasant must be revoked. Anyone who has taken a life and never expressed regret for their actions does not deserve leniency.

Israel should base its second response on a simple equation: For every day that the prisoners strike, the government will permanently revoke one of their privileges.

The organizers behind the strike are trying to scare Israel with the repercussions of the death of one of the hunger-striking terrorists. This is an empty threat. A show of weakness would mean a victory for terrorism. Israel must stand firm. It must not give in to evil, and it must work to suppress it in the prisons and in the propaganda war. (Israel Hayom Apr 19)

**Russia, the Friend of our Enemies** By Moshe Arens

An enemy of our enemies is our friend, and a friend of our enemies is presumably our enemy. So what should we make of Vladimir Putin, an enemy of the Islamic State, which is an enemy of Israel, but who is also a friend of Iran, Hezbollah and Syria, who are also enemies of Israel? Has Putin made the wrong choice?

Sergey Lavrov, Javad Zarif and Walid Moallem, the foreign ministers of Russia, Iran, and Syria, sit in Moscow coordinating their positions, claiming the charge that Bashar Assad's forces used chemical warfare on Syrian civilians is a complete fabrication, despite the incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. Putin no doubt knows the truth but has put his money on the Syrian president -- who is allied with Iran -- and has decided to stick with him for the time being. Presumably he is still counting on

**Events...****May 21-28**

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem and to mark this extraordinary year the BAYT Brotherhood is running a second mission -- in addition to its annual mission in December -- to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. The BAYT Yom Yerushalayim Mission to Israel will incorporate the World Mizrahi mission, plus add additional touring and Shabbat in Jerusalem. For information email Larry Zeifman at [LWZ@Zeifmans.ca](mailto:LWZ@Zeifmans.ca)

**Commentary...****The Fight for Sanity** By Nadav Shragai

Hannah Bladon's murderer, like the dozens of murderers and terrorists who carried out attacks at light rail stations in Jerusalem in the two years prior, had two goals: Harm Jews and disrupt the fabric of coexistence and normalcy in the capital.

The light rail is the litmus test for the fragile coexistence that perseveres in the city. It serves hundreds of thousands of Jews and Arabs, and along with representing a microcosm of the conflict and struggle for the city it also embodies all that remains sane in Jerusalem, and there is still quite a bit of that as well.

On the eve of the 50-year anniversary marking the city's unification, the stabbers and car rammers are attacking Jews -- and it is no coincidence they are targeting places that symbolize partnership, integration and coexistence the most. Thus, for example, the attacks on Hagai Street in the Old City, the light rail, and around Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus, where Jews and Arabs work shoulder to shoulder to serve both populations. The threats and violence aimed at the Arab population, seeking to partake in Jerusalem's democratic game and vote in its municipal elections, are also part of the problem.

Hannah Bladon, who did not know her murderer, was part of the normalcy and sanity in Jerusalem, that which overcomes European boycotts. A religious studies student from Birmingham University in Great Britain, she had just recently worked on an archaeological excavation aimed at shedding light on the city and the Western Wall.

Her murderer, a certifiable nut job, still knew he wanted to select a Jewish victim. Since the end of 2015, dozens of murders and terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and its environs are perpetrated due to the assailant's personal circumstances -- for instance a quarrel with a father, mother or girlfriend. Somehow, however, the terrorists with "personal motivations" or mental instability, including the one who murdered Sgt. Elhai Taharlev on Passover Eve, were still "healthy" and focused enough to unload their personal frustrations and mental problems on Jewish targets only. They were careful not to attack Arabs. The Palestinian street in recent years has been oriented toward hating anything Jewish or Zionist, and that impacts would-be attackers of all types, the "sane" ones and the crazy ones alike.

Esther Cailingold, who died at 22 years of age after suffering severe wounds in the fight to defend the Old City's Jewish Quarter in the War of Independence, wrote to her parents shortly before her death 69 years ago: "I am proud and ready to pay the price it may cost us to reprieve [the Old City]."

Without knowing it, Hannah Bladon, 21, also native of England, was part of a different war. She fell in the battle for the perseverance of sanity, normalcy and shared life in the city. (Israel Hayom Apr 16)

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Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of BAYT.

Assad to defeat his adversaries with the help of Moscow and Tehran, thus maintaining Russia's military presence and influence in Syria. He has continued good relations with Israel, and yet backs forces that are pledged to Israel's destruction. How has it come to this pass?

At least part of the answer is the attempts by ISIS, that zany radical Islamist group, to set up a caliphate spanning parts of Iraq and Syria, as well as the organization's success with making inroads into Libya and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and spreading terror aimed at "nonbelievers" throughout the world. A worthy enemy for sure. A broad coalition has been formed to fight ISIS, and Assad insists he is a member of that coalition. Assad the terrorist is fighting terrorists and insists that he deserves the world's sympathy and support. Putin, intent on fighting the Islamic State, has decided to help Assad "fight terrorism."

U.S. President Donald Trump began going down the same path. At first he saw no need to replace Assad, since he was presumably fighting ISIS, the common enemy. In the profusion of "enemies" taking part in the bloody war in Syria, ISIS looked like the worst of the lot. But militarily, it turned out that it was also among the easiest to defeat. There was no need to ally oneself with Assad to accomplish that aim. If you fight alongside Assad, as the Russians are doing, you find yourself fighting alongside Hezbollah, which is financed, trained and equipped by Iran. Iranian militias are taking part in the fighting against ISIS in Mosul. How do you solve this puzzle?

Trump seems to have found his way out of this labyrinth by condemning Assad for using chemical weapons against civilians and sending him a message via 59 Tomahawks to make sure he and everyone else knows that he means business. Assad's latest chemical attack against his own citizens dispelled any illusions people may have had about him – and his allies. Maybe the message will be coming through in Moscow as well.

As the dust after the Tomahawk strike settles it is becoming clear in Washington that the West's real enemy in the Middle East is Iran. Iran has already essentially taken over Lebanon, is embedded in Syria and is trying to establish itself in Yemen. The Islamic State can be defeated, but rolling back Iran is a much bigger challenge, especially after it has been strengthened by the nuclear deal signed by Barack Obama. That is the real challenge facing the U.S. in the Middle East. That was already recognized by James Mattis, the current U.S. secretary of defense, some years ago when he said that the three primary threats the United States was facing were "Iran, Iran, Iran." Iran is also the primary threat facing Israel.

In contrast to the eight years of the Obama administration, we can now expect that there will be considerable coordination between Washington and Jerusalem on dealing with Iran. The enemy of our enemy is our friend. (Haaretz Apr 18)

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### **The UNRWA Book Battle** By Jonathan S. Tobin

It is an article of faith for the international community and the Jewish Left that the Palestinian Authority is a moderate force that wants to make peace with Israel. That belief has been undermined by many of the PA's actions and statements since its creation after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, yet somehow it survives and forms the basis for many of the assumptions critics make about Israel's government.

The latest proof that the PA is a principle obstacle to peace rather than its best hope has not received any attention in the Western press. But a discussion of the conflict that has arisen between it and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency speaks volumes about everything that is wrong with the PA.

UNRWA is the world body that is devoted solely to aiding Palestinian refugees. Unlike the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is tasked with helping all other refugees around the world, UNRWA doesn't try to resettle refugees or resolve their problems. On the contrary, since its creation after the Arab failure to destroy Israel in its War of Independence, UNRWA has helped to perpetuate the clash between Israel and the Muslim and Arab worlds and championed the "right of return" that would spell Israel's end. Its schools and aid projects have been hotbeds of radicalism aimed at erasing the existence of the Jewish state and have even been used by Hamas. In particular, critics have noted the way UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza have curricula and textbooks that teach up to 600,000 Palestinian youngsters to reject Israel's legitimacy and glorify the struggle to destroy it.

But, like the rest of the U.N., UNRWA has been feeling some pressure to reform. The Trump administration has shown a willingness to throw its weight around that directly contrasts with former President Barack Obama's support for the U.N. Under new Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who previously headed the U.N.'s other refugee agency, efforts to promote the libel that Israel is an apartheid state were rejected. So when the Arab press reported leaks about a shift in UNRWA's education policy, this seemed to

indicate that even that agency was feeling some pressure to change its ways.

According to those reports, UNRWA was planning to alter the textbooks it uses in its schools. Among the planned changes, cities inside Israel would stop being labeled as Palestinian, a practice that instills a sense in readers that the Jewish state is merely a colonialist intrusion built entirely on "stolen" Arab land. Other changes included an effort to tone down praise of Palestinians who commit terrorism against Jews and Israelis. Its teaching about Jerusalem would treat it as a city that is as holy to all three monotheistic religions, rather than just Islam. That's significant because Palestinian efforts to claim that shrines such as the Temple Mount and even the Western Wall are exclusively Muslim were part of a campaign of incitement that led to the recent "stabbing intifada." Perhaps just as significant is that the new texts would also seek to correct gender bias that was part of the old books.

But rather than welcome reform, the Palestinian Authority has reacted with fury. Last week, the PA announced that it was suspending ties with UNRWA over the proposed changes, which have yet to be formally announced. It said the revisions to the curriculum were an "affront to the Palestinian people, its history and struggles" and that the suspension would continue until the agency's "positions are corrected."

The PA Education Ministry issued the following statement: "Any distortion of the Palestinian curriculum is a flagrant violation of the laws of the host country, and any change to any letter to appease any party is a betrayal of the Palestinian narrative and the right of the Palestinian people under occupation to preserve its identity and struggle."

The implications of the PA position for the prospects for peace in this or future generations cannot be overestimated.

For more than a century, Palestinian national identity has been inextricably tied to the war on Zionism. Throughout two decades of failed peace negotiations, the supposedly moderate Palestinian Authority has consistently rejected Israeli offers of independence that would obligate it to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state within any borders. Any chance that this will change rests not so much on more Israeli concessions but on a sea change in Palestinian political culture. Leaving aside the role of Hamas, unless the PA's future leaders are able to embrace peace without fear that doing so will be seen as a betrayal, the failure of more talks is foreordained. UNRWA's proposed changes are a step in the right direction. The PA's opposition is more proof that it is an obstacle to any hope for a better life for both Israeli and Palestinian children. (Israel Hayom Apr 20)

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### **No Nelson Mandela** By Reuven Ben-Shalom

Imagine this: Terry Nichols, who carried out the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, publishes an op-ed in *The New York Times*, in which he compares himself to Nelson Mandela, no less. He relates to himself as a freedom fighter, claims that he seeks peace, dignity and freedom, bashes the authorities for his "arbitrary arrest" and accuses the federal prison staff of torture and systematic infringement of human rights.

He says nothing about the 168 people he murdered and the article concludes with: "Terry Nichols is a businessman and former US Army soldier."

I assume my American friends would have a few harsh words for the convicted mass murderer, as well as for the paper that gave him a voice.

An April 16 *New York Times* op-ed by Palestinian terrorist Marwan Barghouti is no different.

Quick recap: As leader of Tanzim, the terrorist offshoot of Fatah, Barghouti planned, approved and directed multiple terrorist attacks, both in the West Bank and within the Green Line. He was convicted on five counts of murder and assisting in four other attacks, and sentenced to five life sentences.

I would have strongly recommended that the *Times* refrain from serving as a propaganda tool for terrorists. At the very least it would have been appropriate to explain to readers who the writer is, and not state drily that he is "a Palestinian leader and parliamentarian" (seriously?).

But now that it's out there, I do recommend reading it, because it serves as a lesson on the power of narrative manipulation, and how terrorists skillfully exploit democratic tools and values against those who hold them dear.

Claiming to be a "witness to and a victim of Israel's illegal system of mass arbitrary arrests," Barghouti shapes an image of a passive, innocent bystander who has been senselessly snatched and illegally incarcerated by the brutal Israelis.

Barghouti was no witness, but the perpetrator.

And he is no victim, but a murderer who inflicted pain and suffering on many innocent victims.

He repeats the phrase “mass arbitrary arrests” twice throughout his emotional plea, attempting to instill this ridiculous falsehood in the minds of people who don’t live in Israel and don’t know the truth. Barghouti would have you think that Israel is not trying to defend itself from brutal terrorism, but conspiring to “break the spirit of prisoners and the nation to which they belong.”

This concoction of nonsense needs no explaining, but as someone who has spent many years planning and executing counter-terrorism operations, and having closely observed Israel’s prisons, I must attest that this claim is a despicable lie.

“Hunger striking is the most peaceful form of resistance available,” righteous Barghouti preaches. I don’t know about you, but when a mass murderer uses the term “peaceful” it makes me sick.

He then references “dark [prison] cells,” attempting to portray harsh conditions imposed by Israeli authorities. I actually visited Barghouti’s prison, so again I can attest that he’s lying. Not only is his cell well lit, but the abundance of books supplied by Israel Prison Service enabled him to complete a PhD in political science within his prison cell.

His academic degree is, of course, deliberately omitted from his credentials at the end of the op-ed, for this piece of information would tarnish the image he has so carefully constructed.

Barghouti wants his readers to sympathize with his “sacrifice,” a term which has a positive connotation, as does “martyrdom” – except when spoken by terrorists.

Barghouti makes every attempt to vilify Israelis, and he not only twists, omits and inflates, but makes serious allegations relating to torture during interrogation when he was 18 years old. It’s impossible to relate to such claims about something that may or may not have happened four decades ago.

Today Israel has strict laws prohibiting torture, which are so carefully monitored and enforced that authorities sometimes feel as if their hands are tied, even when trying to extract vital “ticking bomb” intelligence before an imminent attack. That’s right – sometimes Israeli civilians die because of the self-imposed boundaries of democracy.

The entire piece is fraught with absurdities, but some stand out more than others.

If this were not such a serious matter, it would be amusing to see a terrorist arguing about international law and lamenting “breaches of the Geneva Conventions.”

But on a serious note, certainly he couldn’t be lying about everything, could he? Well, why would a terrorist have moral reservations about lying? If killing innocent civilians is justified in fulfilling his political goals, then certainly utilizing a prestigious platform for winning hearts and minds is an accepted means.

And it works. It’s truly difficult to read this moving text and turn it all down as manipulation. Without appropriate background and context, his words garner sympathy and solidarity. What human being wouldn’t be touched by the words “struggle for freedom”? “Our chains will be broken before we are” cries out the martyr, the saint, the champion of peace and justice. “Freedom and dignity are universal rights,” declares Barghouti, and wisely coins this as the slogan for his campaign.

Narrative manipulation continues to the very last word: “Only ending occupation will end this injustice and mark the birth of peace.”

Again that word – “peace.” Smart move.

But we must relate to all these words as if uttered by Terry Nichols.

Yes, Mr. Barghouti, you are a terrorist.

And you certainly are no Nelson Mandela. (Jerusalem Post Apr 18)

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### **Exploited By the Enemy** By David M. Weinberg

Two Gazan women were caught on Wednesday smuggling explosives from Gaza into Israel for Hamas. The sisters hid the weapons in medical supplies they had been given in Israel, after one had been treated here for cancer.

Last month, Deputy Defense Minister Eli Ben-Dahan revealed that Hamas was using Gazan cancer victims as mules to smuggle money and gold into Israel to finance terrorist operations.

Everyone remembers Wafa Samir Ibrahim al-Biss, the 21-year-old Palestinian woman from Gaza who in 2005 was caught wearing 10 kilo of explosives in her underwear, en route to blowup Soroka-University Medical Center in Beersheba where she was being treated for burns.

She admitted to being recruited by Fatah’s Aksa Martyrs Brigade, and added that she had wanted to kill as many Israeli children in the hospital as possible.

Despite the security risk, Israel annually allows tens of thousands of Palestinians to leave the Gaza Strip for medical treatment in Israel (and in the West Bank and Jordan).

I know this firsthand. For a decade I served as a public affairs and development officer at Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer, the largest hospital in the Middle East. At any given time, one-quarter of all patients in that institution’s Edmond and Lily Safra Children’s Hospital are Arabs from Gaza.

Treating these children from enemy Hamastan is a complex humanitarian commitment that stems from compassion that is ingrained in Jewish history and tradition.

The doctors and administrators at Sheba (and other Israeli hospitals that offer similar care to Palestinians from the West Bank, to Syrian refugees, and quietly, to Arabs from across the Mideast) are proud of their efforts.

But it hurts when wicked forces exploit this professionalism and goodwill for nefarious purposes; when they abuse our humanitarian generosity to commit terrorism.

I was eyewitness to the following sordid tale.

Several years ago, there was an eight-year-old Palestinian boy ill with a rare form of cancer. He was clearly going to die without a bone marrow transplant, and was brought to Sheba.

Sheba worked hard to obtain permission to enter Gaza and test the child’s relatives, until doctors found an 18-year-old brother who was an almost perfect bone marrow match. The problem was that Israeli authorities didn’t want to grant this brother entry to Israel for the operation, because he was a hard-core Hamas activist with ties to known terrorist operatives.

Nevertheless, a number of doctors at the hospital successfully petitioned the Defense Ministry to grant special dispensation and allow the older brother into Israel, in order to save his little brother’s life.

The older brother arrived late Friday afternoon.

The doctors began the delicate procedure.

Within a 24-hour window, the plan was to suppress the patient’s immune system, harvest the bone marrow from the donor brother, and carry out the transplant.

But Friday night at midnight, when it was time for the donor brother to do his part, he was gone.

Disappeared! The doctors went crazy. One nurse said: I saw two Shin Bet agents come and take him away. This was a death sentence for the sick eight-year-old Palestinian child.

What do you do in the middle of the night? The hospital director called the Prime Minister’s Office (which oversees the security services).

Where is my bone-marrow donor, he demanded to know! Within two hours, a very senior security official was on the line admitting that, yes, the Shin Bet took him away. You see, the Shin Bet had been taking precautions. It had been eavesdropping on the 18-year-old’s cellphone conversations.

And from within the Israeli hospital to which he had been specially brought in order to save the life of his younger brother, this youthful Palestinian terrorist had been giving instructions on the phone to his Hamas handlers in Gaza on how to get past security at Sheba Medical Center and blow the place up.

(The end of the story is that, despite this outrage, the director of the hospital asked that the young terrorist be returned to the hospital for a few hours in order to save the life of the eighty-year-old. The Shin Bet brought him back at 4 a.m. in leg irons to donate bone marrow, and the doctors indeed managed to save his baby brother’s life. Then the 18-year-old terrorist was whisked away again.) Needless to say, this story makes the blood boil. It stings to be taken advantage of by radical Palestinians; to act with humanity and compassion, while our enemies act with inhumanity and cruelty.

The story exacerbates our sense of isolation and demonization, when in fact, the demons are those who would blow up an Israeli hospital that is going out of its way to treat Palestinians, and even Hamas family members. The story breeds Israeli indignation, rightfully and righteously so.

It also adds to our chagrin about being unappreciated by the world. Let’s say I had told this story to a senior foreign journalist (something that wasn’t possible at the time) like The New York Times correspondent in Israel. Do you think the paper would have run the story? Do you think the paper would have made such a story – sympathetic to Israel and severely unflattering to Palestinians – a front-page feature? Unlikely. I can tell you from years as a professional spokesman for Israeli medical, academic, defense and diplomatic institutions just how difficult it is to get a story placed that doesn’t fit the conventional, politically correct line about Israel being the victimizer and the Palestinians the victims.

A direct line runs between this bias and the suave op-ed article by Palestinian “leader and parliamentarian” Marwan Barghouti published in the Times this week.

That paper never would have run an op-ed by convicted Taliban or al-Qaida terrorist sitting in Guantanamo Bay, and certainly not without correctly labeling him as a convicted mass murderer.

So why didn't the Times brand Barghouti in this way? Because doing so would be unflattering to the Palestinian national movement, and by inference too sympathetic to Israel. (Jerusalem Post Apr 20)

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### General Mattis and the Fatah Tautology By Caroline B. Glick

On Friday, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis will visit Israel as part of a tour of the region that will bring him to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Djibouti. The declared purpose of Mattis's trip is to "reaffirm key US military alliances, engage with strategic partners in the Middle East and Africa, and discuss cooperative efforts to counter destabilizing activities and defeat extremist terror organizations."

Ahead of his visit, Mattis should spend some time considering the hunger strike being carried out by the Palestinian terrorists imprisoned by Israel. A serious consideration of the strike will tell him more about the nature of the Palestinian conflict with Israel than a hundred "expert" briefings.

There are several important things for Mattis to consider in relation to the strike.

The first thing he needs to note is that all of the terrorists on strike are members of the Fatah terrorist group.

This fact should signal to General Mattis that Fatah is not a normal political party. In fact, it is a terrorist organization that has a political party.

The second thing Mattis needs to consider about the strike is that it is supported by the international Left.

To understand why, Mattis needs to recognize the Fatah tautology.

But first, a bit of background.

The terrorists' strike is the brainchild of convicted mass murderer, Fatah leader and darling of the international Left, Marwan Barghouti.

Barghouti is serving five life sentences in prison for murdering five Israelis. Israeli authorities believe Barghouti was directly responsible for 37 murders, but were only able to convict him on five counts.

Barghouti's role in the killings goes far beyond the terrorist attacks he directly ordered.

From 2000 until his arrest in 2002, Barghouti was the commander and mastermind of the Palestinian terror war that began in September 2000 after Fatah leader Yasser Arafat rejected Palestinian statehood at Camp David.

In other words, hundreds of Israelis are dead today because of Barghouti.

But for the Left, none of this matters. For the Left, Barghouti is a hero.

The Left insists Barghouti is a moderate and a peacemaker and that Israel should release him and let him take over Fatah and the PLO from octogenarian Mahmoud Abbas.

They insist this because of the Fatah tautology.

According to the tautology, Fatah is "moderate" and "pro-peace." Barghouti is a leader of Fatah. Therefore Barghouti is moderate and pro-peace.

Since Fatah is "moderate" and "pro-peace," it isn't a terrorist organization. And since it isn't a terrorist organization, its terrorists are moderate peace-activists.

So despite the protests of irritating Israeli terrorism victims, and the verdict of the court, Barghouti isn't a terrorist and none of the terrorists he commanded are terrorists.

None of them are terrorists because they are members of Fatah. And Fatah is a moderate, pro-peace party. So they are moderate peace activists.

Under this tautological reasoning, it makes sense for the US to give nearly a billion dollars a year in aid to the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority. It makes sense for the Pentagon to train Palestinian "security forces" who double as Fatah terrorists. It makes sense for the US to turn a blind eye to the fact that the PA spends more than \$300 million, or more than 7% of its donor-financed budget, to pay salaries to terrorists in Israeli prisons and their families.

After all, the Palestinians can't be incentivizing terrorism.

They're from Fatah and Fatah is a moderate peace party.

The Fatah tautology is what informed The New York Times' decision to publish an op-ed by Barghouti in its Sunday edition in support of the prisoners' strike.

Not surprisingly, Barghouti slandered Israel repeatedly in his essay.

Also not surprisingly, in its tagline the Times described Barghouti as a "Palestinian leader and parliamentarian."

It would be bad enough if this circular reasoning was relegated to the fever swamps of the Left.

But it isn't.

Numbered among Fatah's most fervent supporters are Mattis and his

fellow generals at the US Military's Central Command.

Mattis arrives in Israel with a public record replete with anti-Israel statements that indicate he swallowed the Fatah tautology hook, line and sinker.

In 2013, shortly after retiring from his post as Centcom commander, General Mattis resonated Barghouti and his leftist supporters when he blamed Israel for the absence of peace.

Speaking at the Aspen Institute Mattis said that the US must make the establishment of a state run by Fatah terrorists – on land Israel controls, that it requires for its national security and that it has sovereign rights to – a key US goal.

In his words, "We've got to find a way to make the twostate solution that Democrat and Republican administrations have supported. We've got to get there, and the chances for its starting are starting to ebb because of the settlements and where they're at, they're going to make it impossible to maintain the two-state option."

Also echoing Barghouti's libels, Mattis said that if Israel continues to allow Jews to live where they have rights to live and property rights to build then it will become an "apartheid" state.

Mattis is reputedly a very smart, well-read man. And yet, his claims show that despite his intelligence, he has a stunning lack of intellectual curiosity about Israel and the Palestinians and their positions in the wider Middle East.

Lest we give in to the temptation to believe that Mattis's ignorant, tautological thinking was simply a function of his service in the Obama administration, during his Senate confirmation hearings as President Donald Trump's nominee to serve as Defense Secretary, Mattis doubled down.

When asked point blank to name Israel's capital, Mattis refused to acknowledge that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Instead, he stunned lawmakers when he proclaimed that Tel Aviv is the capital of the Jewish state.

Mattis's hostile view of Israel and the Palestinians isn't surprising. And the reason it isn't surprising isn't because Mattis is a member in good standing of the lunatic Left. He's not.

Mattis's ignorance is understandable because he hails from the US Military's Central Command. The Pentagon's area command responsible for the Middle East has one debilitating problem. It is a problem that guarantees that Centcom officers will fail to understand the Middle East and fail to win America's wars in the region.

Centcom's problem is that it deliberately does not include Israel.

As far as Centcom is concerned, Israel is not part of the Middle East. Israel is in Europe.

Centcom officers speak only to Arabs. And their Arab counterparts insist that Israel is the problem.

Rather than critically analyze this claim, Centcom officers internalize it.

Rather than notice and get irritated by the fact that due to their Arab colleagues' antisemitism the US is forced to pretend that Israel is located on a completely different continent, Mattis and his underlings adopted their reason-bereft prejudice.

Rather than rebel against their inability to communicate directly with their Israeli counterparts and insist that they be permitted to bring the US's closest ally in the Middle East into their regional plans and analyses, Centcom officers have embraced the irrational and strategically catastrophic view that the main source of instability in the Middle East are the Israeli communities located beyond the 1949 armistice lines.

Mattis's visit will take him to Jerusalem, rather than Tel Aviv. No doubt Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will mention that Jerusalem is Israel's capital and express his enthusiastic support for moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

But as far as Israel's relations with the US generally and the Pentagon specifically are concerned, moving the US embassy to Jerusalem is of secondary importance.

The most important contribution Israel can make to the US war against "extremist terrorism" and to the Trump administration's efforts to "reaffirm key military alliances," is for Netanyahu to insist that the Trump administration stop accepting the bigoted dictates of the Arabs. He must insist that Israel be integrated into Centcom. Only when the American officers responsible for determining US policies in the Middle East recognize that Israel is part of the Middle East will they have the cognitive capacity to understand the realities of the region. And the first reality that will become clear to them is that despite the Fatah tautology, Fatah is a terrorist organization, and an extremist one at that. (Jerusalem Post Apr 19)

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