



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*

Events...

Sunday March 17, 8:30am – 4:15pm

Canadians for The Rule of Law www.cfrl.org presents an All Day Teach-in, 'The New Taboo: Respect for the Rule of Law'. Price: \$75 includes breakfast and kosher lunch; special rates for students. For security purposes the location is only to be disclosed to registrants.

Commentary...

Fear and Loathing at IDF Checkpoints By Douglas Altabef

A critical function of the Israel Defense Forces is to secure borders and sensitive locations, in addition to the transition points in and through such areas.

Guard duty is deceptively routine and simple. Like other military functions, most of the time there is a familiar routine that can seem mind-numbing to the casual observer.

However, the trained soldier knows all too well that the seemingly mundane and insignificant can be a ruse – a cover for something intended to be deadly. Therefore, vigilance and skepticism are part of a checkpoint soldier's professional DNA.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to see groups, often from Europe, hovering around checkpoints with a very different orientation and objective from those who come to support soldiers with pizzas and good wishes. These folks come with loathing and an unvarnished hatred of the soldiers and what they are doing.

They are there to play "gotcha." They come armed with video cameras, often planted just inches from the face of the guarding soldier, and hope to catch the soldier doing something – anything – that can, out of context, look like some heinous act.

Whether it's a scowl at an uncooperative Palestinian passing through a checkpoint or an attempt to search a suspicious-looking person, there are ample opportunities to create a context in which the soldier appears to be the personification of an oppressive Israel.

This is cynical manipulation but sadly, with the internet, social media and Photoshop and other apps, we live in a world increasingly filled with such out-of-context videography.

Yet the situation at a checkpoint is far more fraught with risk, not just embarrassment from manipulated misrepresentation.

There are life-and-death implications at checkpoints; no one knows that better than the soldiers on duty. Besides obtrusive and invasive cameras, there is often verbal harassment as young soldiers are being demonized for doing their duty.

For some soldiers, this is a nonevent, but for others, it is profoundly unsettling to be told that you are a disgrace and a war criminal. The risk – actually, the desired result – is for the soldier to become flummoxed, upset, and therefore less vigilant and attentive than he or she should be.

This could lead to a soldier reacting, which might also make for a choice video morsel. But more frighteningly, it could result in a soldier losing his concentration and being vulnerable.

This appears to have been what very well happened in the appalling case of Solomon Gavriya. Solomon was a 20-year-old border policeman of Ethiopian descent who was standing guard at Har Adar, a town right on the 1949 Green Line and next to Abu Ghosh.

While on duty, Solomon and other guards were verbally harassed by people from Machsom Watch, an Israeli nongovernmental organization heavily funded by European governments and organizations, as well as the New Israel Fund. Machsom Watch's mission is to show up at various checkpoints and monitor the activity of the guards there.

Usually, such monitoring is accompanied by verbal harassment, and that was exactly what happened on Sept. 26, 2017, while Solomon was on duty. Reports from his fellow guards said that he was relentlessly verbally

abused for more than a half-hour by Machsom Watch operatives.

Minutes after the verbal assault ended, a terrorist broke through the gate, shooting Solomon and two others dead. Is it unreasonable to suspect that Solomon's concentration and preparedness had been

compromised by the verbal attack that immediately preceded the physical one?

The clear implication of the groups harassing soldiers is that they – and the state they represent and protect – are illegitimate, and thus worthy of such contemptuous treatment. The idea that foreign nationals are allowed to harass soldiers protecting their own country seems inconceivable, yet until recently it has been a common Israeli reality, devoid of pushback.

Happily, the days of free reign for demonizers might be coming to a close. Not because the government or the army has changed its protocols to prevent such behavior from occurring. Change is coming because Zionist organizations and citizens are revolted by the free hand that these loathers have had.

One effort undertaken by Im Tirtzu, Israel's largest grassroots Zionist organization, is particularly promising. Im Tirtzu has recruited a group of volunteer "video commandos" who have been fighting fire with fire, employing the same rights of proximity exploited by the demonizers.

With the slogan of "Aim, Click and Shoot," the video commandos film the demonizers as they film soldiers.

The video commandos recently achieved a significant victory when the primarily Scandinavian EAPPI, an affiliate of the anti-Zionist World Council of Churches, announced that they were leaving Hebron because of the "harassment" their volunteers had recently been subjected to. That "harassment" was nothing more than turning the tables on them, presenting EAPPI with a new reality.

Suddenly, the video commandos were showing exactly what EAPPI members were doing in their efforts to demonize soldiers.

That new reality and new perspective are exactly what the video commandos seek to do wherever there is harassment of Israeli soldiers.

It is a classic grassroots effort, like Im Tirtzu itself. It reflects the desire of Israelis to protect those who are doing the protecting. It is an effort to make sure soldiers can do their duty without having to worry about cynical manipulators seeking to denigrate, and yes, even endanger soldiers in the name of their ideology.

At a time when IDF soldiers are being harassed by these people with impunity, there is nothing more fitting than to fight fire with fire. (JNS Mar 12)

The Israeli People were 'With the Golan.' They were Right.

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Sometimes, the best deals are the ones you don't make.

This week's news that Hezbollah is seeking to establish a cell in the Golan Heights from bases in Syria without the knowledge of the Bashar Assad regime illustrates the foolishness of Israel ever leaving the strategic plateau. It's also a reminder of the close escape Israel had in the 1990s, when it vainly sought to trade land for peace with the current Damascus dictator's equally tyrannical father Hafez Assad. And it is the memory of such past follies that is motivating both the Israeli government and some of its American friends to push for recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan.

For the first time this effort has met with at least a modicum of success when the U.S. State Department changed its description of the Heights from "Israeli-occupied" to "Israeli-controlled" in its annual global human-rights report released on Wednesday. This also comes after a visit to the Golan by U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during the course of which he vowed to lobby U.S. President Donald Trump to formally recognize that it belonged to Israel.

Given that Trump has already scrapped a decades-old policy of not recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the possibility that the United States will do just that can't be discounted. Few are foolish enough to suggest that Israel hand it over to Assad while his country is still wracked by a civil war and foreign armies still operate there with impunity. But the international community and the American foreign-policy establishment have not given up their insistence that the Golan will always be Syrian

territory.

Why then push for U.S. recognition now? Part of it stems from the fact that Trump is more attuned to Israel's desires, as well as Middle East realities, than most of his predecessors. And as long as the idea that Syria will one day be able to return its army to the Golan, efforts to force an Israeli retreat will never cease.

Yet current developments would be unthinkable had not past Israeli governments failed in their efforts to get rid of the Golan for promises that would have been worthless once Syria descended into the horrors of a civil war that has cost the lives of half a million people and forced up to 5 million more out of their homes.

In 1992, when Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister, he thought that Syria was Israel's best option for peace, not the Palestinians. While Shimon Peres's deputy Yossi Beilin was beginning the secret talks that led to Oslo without Rabin's knowledge, the prime minister was concentrating on an effort to broker a land for peace deal with Hafez Assad. This led to a protest movement against Rabin's efforts in which banners and bumper stickers proclaiming in Hebrew that "The people are with the Golan" were seen everywhere in Israel.

Historian Itamar Rabinovich, whose scholarly work was devoted to the debatable notion that Israel had passed up opportunities to make peace with previous Syrian dictators, was appointed ambassador to the United States, as well as chief negotiator with Damascus. But despite Rabin's genuine desire for a deal, the indirect talks with the Syrians failed. Assad senior had no interest in further hostilities with the Jewish state and also wanted the Golan. But he never had any intention of making peace. The effort was eventually superseded by Beilin and Peres's coup in getting the Palestine Liberation Organization to accept Israel's offer that brought the terrorist Yasser Arafat into power in the West Bank and Gaza.

That wasn't the last Israeli flirtation with Damascus.

During his first term in office later in the decade, Netanyahu also dabbled with the idea of a deal with the Assad clan even though a previous Likud government had formally annexed the Golan in 1981. He exchanged secret messages with Damascus via American philanthropist Ronald Lauder. While Netanyahu has denied that he offered a full withdrawal from the Golan, it's clear that he was at the very least prepared to give up most of the Golan had Assad been willing to negotiate.

At the time, both of these initiatives seemed defensible since Assad's regime was a stable, if brutal, government that had observed the terms of the agreement that ended the 1973 Yom Kippur War. No one then foresaw that Syria would collapse after the "Arab Spring" in 2011 and unravel into an orgy of bloodshed in which the country became a base for ISIS, as well as Iranian, Hezbollah and Russian forces. But had Rabin or Netanyahu succeeded, the Golan would have become one more battlefield in the Syrian civil war and placed northern Israel in even greater peril than it already is, given the always-present possibility of renewed fighting with Hezbollah and Iranian troops on both the Lebanese and Syrian borders.

As Israelis learned when they withdrew from Gaza in 2005—only to see the strip soon become a terrorist state ruled by Hamas—the unforgiving law of unintended consequences hangs over all proposed land-for-peace deals. Repeating that experiment in the West Bank would be as mad as a Golan withdrawal. Giving up strategic territory in a region where even stable Arab regimes can fall to pieces under the weight of their contradictions is a reckless gamble that the Jewish state's friends should never force upon it.

American recognition of Israel's claims to the Golan won't change the opinion of the rest of the world on the subject. But doing so would, as is true of Trump's Jerusalem move, impress upon the Arabs and the international community that attempts to pressure Israel into dangerous concessions are a diplomatic dead end.

As it turned out, the Israeli people were right about holding onto the Golan. If Trump is looking for another opportunity to highlight the idiocy of the foreign-policy establishment's obsessions, he can do no better than once again choose to recognize Middle East realpolitik, rather than to hold onto destructive fantasies on the Golan. (JNS Mar 14)

Public Criticism, Private Cooperation By Oded Granot

Several days ago, King Abdullah of Jordan hosted in his palace in Amman the annual summit of parliamentary leaders from around the Arab world. The main piece of news to emerge from the summit was the comeback of the Syrian parliament speaker, who was banned from the forum eight years ago when his country's president, Bashar Assad, began slaughtering his people.

The other item of note to emerge, unsurprisingly, was found in the forum's jointly issued summary, which called on Arab states to "avoid any indication of normalization with Israel." Ironically, while Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states tried, according to various reports, to soften the statement, the speaker of the Jordanian parliament, which is a signatory to the peace treaty with Israel, enthusiastically pushed for a more strongly worded final draft.

Israeli-Jordanian relations have known their share of tribulations over the past 25 years, and have recently reached a low point. One of the more

prominent expressions of this was the king's announcement several months ago that he wouldn't renew the clause in the peace treaty allowing Israeli farmers to access certain fields near the border.

Additionally, the king has responded strangely to the Muslim protests at the Gate of Peace structure on the Temple Mount. Jordan, the peace treaty stipulates, enjoys special status as protector of Muslim holy sites, and one could have expected it to try tempering the waqf religious authority under its control and maintain the status quo.

The impression in this case, however, is that the Jordanians worked to pour fuel on the flames, waiting for Israel to ask it for help to put the fire out. According to several reports, Jordanian representatives, who arrived specifically to attend the waqf's deliberations, either encouraged or at the very least didn't try stopping the continuation of prayers at the contested site. At the same time, they rushed to condemn Israel for the steps it implemented to temporarily ban waqf leaders from the Temple Mount.

Moreover, inexplicably, the Jordanians have recently tried expanding the waqf authority to include officials from the Palestinian Authority, perhaps as an expression of defiance toward Israel. That is to say: We and the Palestinians are united against Israel's efforts to "harm the rights of Palestinians," and in the same vein against the Trump administration's "deal of the century" soon to be unpacked in the region.

What is happening to the Jordanian king? He has to contend with two difficult challenges internally. The first is determined opposition in parliament and on the streets, demanding that he abolish the peace treaty with Israel – beginning with expelling the Israeli ambassador and recalling the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv. The king's response to this challenge has been a concerted effort to avoid any overt form of civic cooperation with Israel and to highlight all anti-normalization measures, for instance revoking Israeli farmers' access to fields.

The other challenge is the kingdom's severe economic crisis. Jordan is facing high unemployment, slow growth and has been forced to harbor over one million Syrian refugees. A few months ago, violent protests targeted tax hikes and high costs of living. As a result, Abdullah fired his prime minister and replaced him with someone else.

The king's solution to his country's economic woes has been to desperately seek donations. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates have already begun channeling funds to the Central Bank of Jordan in what will amount to \$2.5 billion in aid. Some of these funds are guarantees on loans from the World Bank and others come as cash, to allow the kingdom to survive and keep its head above water. In the meantime, Abdullah has rejected proposals for joint economic initiatives with Israel, which could have given the Jordanian economy a much-needed boost.

None of this has precluded the royal palace from reaping the benefits of close security and intelligence cooperation with Israel, out of the public eye, which has clearly helped the monarchy survive. What's absurd about this is that King Abdullah indulges in open condemnation and criticism of Israel, and even does things plainly unpalatable from Jerusalem's perspective, in the knowledge that Israel, which doesn't want the regime in Amman to crumble, will forego too harsh a response and will continue supporting him against all threats internal or external.

(Israel Hayom Mar 13)

Frustration Makes a Poor Political Strategist By Haim Shine

Frustration makes for a poor political strategist, and during an election campaign, for example, it can sometimes lead politicians to lose their senses and engage in demagoguery. We saw a concrete example of this on Sunday, in an interview New Right party leader Naftali Bennett gave to the Kan public broadcasting authority.

In the interview, Bennett said the defense minister must be replaced because the residents of the south are less important to him than the residents of Tel Aviv. According to Bennett, had a rocket fallen on Tel Aviv, the Israel Defense Forces would have immediately embarked on an operation to take over the Gaza Strip, something that does not happen when a rocket falls in the south. Since the prime minister's decisions are made in consultations with the defense establishment, it may be that Bennett believes IDF commanders are not rushing quickly enough to infiltrate Gaza's alleys and not killing enough Palestinians, as Benny Gantz recently boasted of doing. Bennett's remarks are the obscene accusation of a desperate politician, whose plans have collapsed all around him.

The New Right party was born in sin. The national-religious public carried Bennett on its shoulders and bestowed upon him a shelf corporation. Bennett had planned something of a high-tech "exit" on his path to the Prime Minister's Office. When he realized that wasn't going to work exactly as he had planned, he formed an alternative political party many months ago. In order to justify this move and his throw-away attitude, Bennett explained to the public that former *haredi* rabbis had prevented him from making certain moves and that the New Right would

stop the trickle of votes from the Right to the Blue and White party.

There is an old Yiddish expression that says, "Man plans, and god laughs." That is what happened to Bennett's plans that went awry. The national-religious public is furious, and rightfully so. Even in politics, there are minimum ethical standards. At lightning speed, the Habayit Hayehudi party that Bennett abandoned was back on its feet, accepting with mixed feelings members of the far-Right Otzma Yehudit party. And the voters came home in droves.

Intelligent Israelis have internalized that the Blue and White list is a left-wing party that purports to be on the Right. Right-wing voters have no reason to vote for that party and certainly don't need to stop at Blue and White on their journey leftward.

To the New Right's surprise, Moshe Feiglin's Zehut party – with the blatant assistance of the fake news and fake polling – has begun to steal some of its Knesset seats. Young people who identify as religious are excited by the cheap anarchism and enticing cannabis. Among young religious people, and even on the fringes of the haredi sectors, they have found a continuation of the Green Leaf party. Bennett can sense the Knesset seats slipping through his fingers.

In a desperate move following his party's bleak showing in the polls, Bennett has joined the leftist choir in its criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. With that all-too-familiar cynicism, he explained that his issue is with Netanyahu the defense minister, not Netanyahu the prime minister.

A majority of Israel's citizens on both the Right and the Left, including those in the south, understand the difficult price we would have to pay were we to engage in a military operation in Gaza. We've been there a few times. We paid a heavy price.

Before embarking on an all-out military campaign, one must first exhaust every possibility of reaching an agreement, even if that means being dealt a blow to your honor and pride. It is better to transfer suitcases of Qatari cash than – heaven forbid – caskets in the opposite direction.

Even in an election campaign, it is important to keep your cool. True leadership is tested precisely at those moments when mental fortitude is required. (Israel Hayom Mar 11)

Making Peace with Arab States and the PA Must Be Unlinked

By Hillel Frisch

US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and numerous US officials have warned of the coming storm: The concessions required from both sides as part of the "deal of the century" will be painful.

To cushion the pain and reduce resistance, US officials, such as Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, offer Israel the bait of peace with Arab states as the reward for painful concessions on the Palestinian issue. The theme finds numerous supporters among Israeli politicians, think tanks and academic experts, who invoke the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 as the basis for such a solution.

However, accepting the linkage between the two issues would be a grave strategic mistake for Israel. Simply put, the rewards of making peace beyond the two Arab states with which Israel has a peace treaty already – Egypt and Jordan – are too paltry compared to the complexity and importance of the Palestinian issue.

This holds true whether one considers the prospect of a binational state to be a mortal danger – the position that defines much of the Center and Center-Left – or sees annexation of major parts of Judea and Samaria as the best option, the position that represents most of the Right.

Why the bait of making peace with the other Arab states is insignificant stems mainly from the radical decline in power and influence of those states over the past 40 years – a process that seems in recent years to be accelerating rather than being reversed.

Behind the logic of a regional solution that lies at the basis of Trump's thinking is the idea that the Arab states would have the influence over the Palestinians to ensure that any deal they would accept would not be characterized by future irredentist drives, for example, directed toward Israel's Arab citizens, in the quest of further dividing the Land of Israel in the Palestinians' favor.

There are too many examples from the past running into the present that demolish this argument. Perhaps the best example is the Arab Peace Initiative itself. The plan, drawn up by the Saudis, undoubtedly the Arab state with the most financial clout, was publicized over 16 years ago. Yet since then it has had no influence whatsoever on Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab relations.

The plan was irrelevant to the continuation of the Second Intifada, where only military assertiveness defeated it in Judea and Samaria, and the lack of such assertiveness in Gaza yielded three major bouts of confrontation between Israel and Hamas.

Nor did the will behind the plan prevent the inter-Palestinian partition between a Hamas-dominated Gaza and Abbas's Palestinian Authority in the

West Bank, which has rendered peacemaking so complicated, if not impossible.

Certainly, the Arab states had no influence over the other war waged between Israel and an Arab adversary – Hezbollah, a proxy of Iran. Though some of these states intimated that they were with the Israelis, their intimations had no influence in either intensifying the war (which states such as Saudi Arabia may have wished, in the hope of decisively defeating an Iranian proxy) or bringing the bout to an end.

Not only do Arab states have little collective clout to ensure that Israeli concessions will prevent Palestinian efforts to bring about Israel's demise in stages, but precious little leads one to believe – after over 73 years of their trying to act collectively since the emergence of the Arab League in 1945 – that Arab states will succeed in unifying over Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

After all, the only example of near unity, in 1973, revolved around making war with Israel, rather than making peace, as the temporary isolation of Egypt after it signed a peace agreement in 1979 amply proves. Unity also prevails in the verbal belligerency these states express in the United Nations and other international fora.

In fact, there is every reason to believe that their disunity will continue to feed both Israeli-Palestinian and inter-Palestinian tensions. Three Arab states are obvious candidates to play the role of spoilers – Syria, as Iran's proxy, Lebanon, forever on the verge of becoming one, and Iraq, where the United States is still trying to compete with Iran to avert Iraq's slide into the Iranian orbit. Iran and its proxies will have a strong vested interest in undermining a peace agreement.

Close at their heels are Qatar and Turkey (albeit not an Arab state, but a political actor with clout in the Arab world).

Even relations between the more friendly Arab states can be the basis for exacerbating tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, as they have in the past. There is no assurance that Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia will necessarily see eye to eye on many aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian peace.

All these tensions will all too readily be absorbed in a local setting characterized by the hard-and-fast division between a Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Gaza and a nationalist PA.

Rest assured that immediately after the signing of an agreement on the White House lawn, Hamas would launch rockets, incendiary balloons and thousands of demonstrators and terrorists against the fence to assert its claim to all of Palestine, just as Hamas, along with Islamic Jihad, sent its terrorists after the signing of the Declaration of Principles over 25 years ago.

Even such a comparison proves how weak is the bait of Arab regional support. The spoilers pulled off their destructive feats at the height of US hegemony soon after the demise of the Soviet Union and the military triumph of defeating Iraq – a blitzkrieg easily compared to Germany's onslaught on Poland and Israel's victory in the Six Day War.

Today, Trump is signaling, like his predecessor, Obama, a pullback from the Middle East. How much more so, then, will the local spoilers – supported by their regional sponsor, Iran – be willing to play the same role they did over a quarter of a century ago.

As my colleague, Prof. Benny Miller, observed, cold war or cold peace is made with the help of international powers. Warm peace or hot war is made exclusively by the locals.

Peace is not made on the White House lawn but in Ramallah, in Jerusalem, on the Temple Mount and in Gaza. The rest is wishful thinking. (Jerusalem Post Mar 11)

Ilan Omar is Throwback to Days of Segregation, When Racists Openly Roamed Halls of Congress

By Shmuley Boteach

The Democrats leading the House of Representatives could not bring themselves to make a simple declaration condemning Rep. Ilan Omar (D-Minnesota) for her repeated anti-Semitic remarks, in which she suggested that Israel is mesmerizing members of Congress, that members are being bribed by Jews, that Jews are concerned only with money, and that they have dual loyalty to the US and Israel.

Instead, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) wilted under pressure from her far-left colleagues and not only refused to explicitly condemn Omar, but endorsed a milquetoast resolution condemning nearly every form of bigotry (anti-Christian prejudice was notably missing).

Pelosi listened to people like Ayanna Pressley (D-Massachusetts), who insisted that there must be "equity in our outrage," that all forms of hate needed to be denounced, and that "there is no hierarchy of hurt."

Indeed, many forms of intolerance exist; however, that does not excuse the failure to condemn a 2,000-year-old hatred that is unlike any other. Anti-Semitism is endemic in most of the world's societies, and responsible for centuries of blood libels, pogroms and terrorism directed only at Jews because they are Jews, leading to the greatest genocide in

world history – the murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust. Tragically, that was not the culmination of this ancient hatred. It continues to this day in the genocidal aspirations of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and extremists on the political Right and Left.

We see this scourge today in the form of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement – endorsed by Omar – which seeks the destruction of Israel. Its advocates have spread to college campuses, United Nations bodies, the women’s and Black Lives Matter movements, faculty and professional academic associations, and the entertainment industry.

Yes, hatred is hatred, but no form of bigotry is as pervasive in as many places as anti-Semitism.

And now purveyors of anti-Semitism are ensconced in the world’s greatest democratic institution. I use the plural because Omar’s colleague Rashida Tlaib (D-Michigan) is also a BDS supporter who has made her own anti-Semitic statements, such as raising the trope of Jews’ dual loyalty by suggesting that senators who supported anti-boycott legislation “forgot what country they represent.”

I gave Omar the benefit of the doubt at the outset of her tenure in Congress. I applauded her wearing traditional Muslim garb and openly expressing her faith. Now, however, it appears that she is consumed by hatred for Jews. I don’t believe that anyone in the history of Congress has so openly and vilely attacked Jews and Israel. Other bigots have tried to disguise their hatred, but Omar can’t contain her contempt, doubling down on her views even after being told they are anti-Semitic.

Listening to Omar’s defenders, I was reminded of the days of segregation when racists roamed the halls of Congress, openly expressing their prejudices and fighting against civil rights legislation. I never thought I would see any members express anti-Semitic views with impunity and be appointed to positions of power – in Omar’s case, the Foreign Relations Committee – where they can try to adversely influence legislation affecting the Jewish people and its homeland.

The Democrats’ inaction on Omar was in stark contrast to the unequivocal and deserved condemnation of the bigoted remarks of Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), who was stripped of all his committee assignments.

Omar represents a threat to the Jewish community because her incendiary antisemitism is penetrating the broader body politic. She is challenging the morality of the Democratic Party, which failed the test last week to demonstrate its intolerance for Jew-hatred. The resolution it passed was meaningless, because any statement that condemns everything, condemns nothing.

So, who will rise to oppose Omar?

Now that it is clear her Democratic colleagues do not have the backbone to stand up to Omar, it is up to her constituents to act. Just two months into her first term in office, instead of serving the needs of her constituents, Omar has decided to use the platform they have given her to attack Jews and Israel.

Is that what the voters of the Fifth Congressional District had in mind when they elected her?

“Rep. Omar has used up the reservoir of goodwill generally granted to those who begin new jobs by repeatedly insulting the Jewish people even after being told that her words are dangerous and hurtful,” Democratic Minnesota state senator Ron Latz said, urging her to “discuss policy without inflaming religious conflict.”

Constituents also have reason to be angry about her “bait-and-switch” position on BDS. During a primary debate in a Minnesota synagogue, Omar said she did not support BDS, but after winning her seat, she admitted to being a proponent of the campaign that seeks the destruction of Israel. This seems less surprising now that she has been exposed as an anti-Semite.

In 2020, Omar will again face the voters, and it is up to them to send a message to Omar, the Democratic Party and the rest of America that Jew-hatred has no place in American politics, and that people of the great state of Minnesota do not want to be represented by an anti-Semite. (Jerusalem Post Mar 11)

Life Lessons from Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein By Tuly Weisz

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein not only distributed more charity for the Jewish people than anyone else in history, he brought about a revolution in Jewish-Christian relations.

Yechiel – as he liked to be called – made a powerful impression on everyone he met through his larger-than-life personality. It’s hard to fathom how much he accomplished in his much-too-short lifetime.

I clearly remember the first time I met him, shortly after my aliyah, at his Jerusalem office. His office had a coat rack, and hanging next to his navy blazer was a tallit. I had never seen a tallit hanging in an office before, and it struck me that as he was the most recognized rabbi in the world, his tallit was a part of his uniform.

Before he started the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews 35 years ago, there was mistrust, if not outright hostility, between the Christian

and Jewish communities. However, through his outreach, media appearances and his books What Christians should know about Jews and Judaism and A Gift of Jewish Wisdom for Christians, Eckstein taught a new generation of Christians to embrace the Jewish people in genuine friendship.

The tallit hanging from his coat rack symbolized to me that Eckstein was that Jew whom the Prophet Zechariah described long ago: “In those days it shall come to pass that 10 men from the nations shall take hold of the corner of the garment of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:23).

But in Eckstein’s case, he did not stop at 10 men: millions of men and women from the nations had taken hold of the corner of his tallit, for he had shown them for the first time that God is with the Jewish people.

Eckstein not only took seriously his role in teaching Christians about Jews, he also knew how to deliver a strong message to Jews about Christians.

Having achieved extravagant success in galvanizing Christian support for Israel, Eckstein earned a seat at the table of the most important Jewish organizations. His resources were behind the critical issues of our day, including the aliyah of Jews from the former Soviet Union, an initiative near and dear to his heart. However, when he felt that the Jewish community was not willing to properly recognize or show appreciation toward his Christian donors, he walked away – from the organization but not the cause. In recent years, Eckstein became even more committed to assisting aliyah.

He was adamant about teaching hakarat hatov (gratitude) to the Jewish people. He made all of Israel aware – on the airwaves and in the airport – that Christians willing to make financial sacrifices on behalf of the Jewish people deserve our immense gratitude.

The fact that so many non-Jews are passionate about supporting aliyah is not something the Jewish community should be embarrassed about or try to dismiss.

Here again, Eckstein was helping facilitate the words of the Tanach: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my sign to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders’” (Isaiah 49:22).

Eckstein believed that bringing non-Jews into the miraculous rebirth of the State of Israel was part of our divine mandate as a nation and his personal calling.

Those of us who are trying to follow in his footsteps by working to strengthen Christian support of Israel realize that none of us would be doing what we do but for him. As such, many of us at Israel365 were especially distraught this past week at the terrible news of his sudden death.

I was sharing some of my personal memories about Eckstein with my colleague Eliyahu Berkowitz who told me that out of all the people he has interviewed, no one was more personable than Eckstein.

Berkowitz once interviewed Eckstein about one of his latest initiatives, either “On Eagle’s Wings,” “Isaiah 58” or “Guardians of Israel.” However, Eckstein was more interested in hearing the details about Berkowitz’s own family. He told me that he felt like the one being interviewed and was deeply moved that Eckstein was so genuinely interested in the personal life of a stranger.

Eckstein treated everyone with such respect, but especially so when it came to Israel’s neediest and most vulnerable.

While most Israelis love celebrating our latest technology breakthroughs, Eckstein constantly reminded us that we must not forget the more than 20% of our population that lives below the poverty line. Only someone who loved his fellow Jews as much as Eckstein could have dedicated his life to building such an enormous legacy of charity and kindness.

Eckstein’s fingerprints are all over Israel, and every Israeli has benefited in some way from his largesse. For anyone involved in Jewish-Christian relations, or for anyone who has benefited from his contributions to Israeli society, we can carry on Eckstein’s legacy by recalling some of his life lessons.

Whether we are wearing a tallit or not, we must always remember that we always represent the Jewish people and Hashem.

We must be adamant that our fellow Jews show basic appreciation toward our Christian friends.

And finally, we must not rest until all of Israel’s most vulnerable citizens are provided for.

Let us internalize these lessons from the life of Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, and may his memory be an eternal blessing. (Jerusalem Post Mar 10)
