



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*

creates impossible situations like the one in North Korea. Iran is already emulating North Korea by using Hezbollah's missiles to hold Israeli cities hostage. If left unchecked, Iran's aggression will ultimately threaten Europe and North America as well. All should urgently

work together to counter this threat to global security.

Mr. Aznar and Mr. Harper are former prime ministers of Spain and Canada, respectively. Both are members of the global Friends of Israel Initiative. (Wall Street Journal Mar 4)

Commentary...

The World Must Unite to Stop Iran

By Jose María Aznar and Stephen Harper

The Israeli military was forced last month to engage an Iranian drone launched into Israeli airspace from Syria. Israel's defensive actions in this case were limited, but the world should take note. There will be more such incidents if Tehran is permitted to continue projecting force throughout the Middle East. To prevent a full-scale crisis, North America and Europe must join Israel in stopping Iran.

Iran is a revolutionary theocratic state committed to spreading religious extremism throughout the Islamic world. It combines this ideological mission with pragmatic tactics, projecting political and military power from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean and Red seas. To support its ambition, Iran has illegally pursued nuclear weapons and fought wars using terrorist proxies. Iran's leaders have threatened Israel time and again with total destruction, and now, for the first time since the Islamist revolution of 1979, Iranian power has arrived at Israel's border.

Despite Tehran's quest for regional control, popular protests in December and January showed that most of the nation's citizens don't share their leaders' designs. The regime's destabilizing actions have also triggered resistance from Saudi Arabia and other regional powers. Iran's own citizens and neighbors are convinced of Tehran's malice, and all concerned nations should heed their warning.

The first objective must be to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. The Friends of Israel Initiative, of which we are members, has always maintained that the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement does not adequately prevent the regime's progress. The nuclear inspections for which the agreement provides grant Iran too much time to conceal evidence of illicit activity. And the agreement doesn't prohibit the development of delivery mechanisms such as ballistic and cruise missiles. Worst of all, the agreement's sunset clause provides a clear horizon for Iran to resume its race toward a nuclear bomb.

Rather than preventing Iran's nuclear ambitions, the 2015 agreement gave the regime a road map to achieving them. Predictions that the agreement would de-escalate tensions and improve cooperation have proved wrong. Since signing the agreement, Iran's aggression and hostility have increased.

But fixing the agreement and stopping Iran from going nuclear would not eliminate the threat. The U.S. and its allies must also roll back Iran's aggression and influence throughout the Middle East. Tehran continues to wage war using terrorist proxies in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Thankfully, the U.S. has demonstrated its ability to rally its Middle Eastern partners in stabilizing the region. Iranian theocracy appeals mainly to a few neighboring Shiite Islamic factions, and Iran's long-term conflicts with other sects have made many states eager to cooperate in restraining its influence. Numerous allies can be mobilized in the struggle against Iran, from the Kurds and tribal elements to many Sunni Arabs and Shiite forces not co-opted by Tehran. These factions must collaborate to contain Iran's hegemonic ambitions.

Israel remains the greatest bulwark against Iran, and Iran remains committed to destroying the Jewish state. The recent border skirmish was the first time Iranian weapons directly infiltrated Israeli space. Iranian operatives have established themselves ever closer to Israel's northern border and pose a growing threat to Israeli security.

President Trump seems to understand instinctively how poorly the Iran deal is playing out. He also seems to understand that the U.S. and its allies have a broad interest in standing firmly behind Israel. And he is right to say that the nuclear agreement must be renegotiated. The U.S. must demonstrate its leadership by increasing the pressure on Iran and resisting the interference of countries, including many in Europe, that prefer the status quo.

Applying halfhearted diplomatic fixes to grand-strategic problems

Letter to AIPAC on Two-State Solution By Yossi Dagan

Dear leaders of the AIPAC family,

Shalom from Israel,

We are – speaking for all Israelis - extremely appreciative of AIPAC's devoted efforts to strengthen, protect and promote the U.S.-Israel relationship. The Hebrew accolade is, "Kol haKavod!"

We do however note that the AIPAC talking points are still very much tied to establishment of a Palestinian state (what has been called "the two-state solution"). The AIPAC website also seems to imply that Israel is committed to a two-state solution and that the United States takes this position as well.

Please note this assumption has no basis in fact: The sovereign entity in Israel is of course the Government of Israel (GOI). The official GOI Guidelines are available to the public (e.g. here: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/IsraelGov/GovDocuments/Pages/kaveyesod.aspx>). As you see, they contain not one word or even hint of support for the "two-state solution".

Furthermore, as for the United States, while the previous (February 2015) National Security Strategy report did state that the United States remains "committed to ... a two-state solution", it is our understanding that the National Security Strategy currently in effect, as of December 2017, (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>) does not indicate support for the two-state outcome. This is presumably in an effort not to coerce an American ally, the State of Israel, into an outcome which that ally does not regard as desirable, just or safe.

I am astounded as to why such a great, meaningful organization as AIPAC, whose raison d'etre is pro-Israel advocacy in the United States, would represent the positions of the State of Israel (and of the United States) so inaccurately before senior government officials, senators and congressmen, and the general pro-Israel public. The position that AIPAC is representing as that of the State of Israel -- in the AIPAC mission statement and in the AIPAC talking points inter alia -- not only fails to represent Israel properly, it is detrimental to the efforts to achieve dialogue in the Middle East.

Therefore, we strongly believe that the AIPAC mission statement and talking points should be updated at this time. This would allow AIPAC to participate even more effectively in Israel's great quest – for survival as an independent, secure, moral, democratic, peaceful Jewish state, benefitting the world in the spirit of Tikun Olam.

Very sincerely, Yossi Dagan, Chairman, Shomron Regional Council

American Jewry's Outcry By Dror Eydary

American Jews came from far and wide to Washington this week, to attend the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy Conference. They do so every year. The AIPAC conference is monumental even in American terms – three and a half days in which the Jewish American establishment hosts a show of power, all but saying, "We are here" and the American administration would be wise to take note.

True to form, prominent American politicians took to the stage at the conference one by one, underscoring their commitment to the bond between the United States and Israel.

Senator Bob Menendez (D-New Jersey), who courageously voted against the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, told AIPAC that the United States

would be safer if Israel was safer; and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence quoted Deuteronomy 30:4, saying, "If any of thine that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee." He sees the inception of the State of Israel as a miracle that has fulfilled this ancient prophecy.

AIPAC's audience also included numerous non-Jews, who share the understanding that in the current global climate, Israel is at the front line of the war for freedom and against Islamist tyranny.

In this respect, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address was the highlight of the conference. He put aside his notes and walked the length and breadth of the stage, illustrating Israel's achievements.

In its political sense, the phrase "light unto the nations" shines in the form of Israel's contribution to many fields, from which the entire world has benefited: water for the thirsty in Africa, high-tech medical solutions and intelligence sharing that has foiled terrorist attacks the world over.

As I have said before, the gap between Netanyahu's global standing and abilities and the mundanity of the investigations held against him domestically is a source of great sorrow, which was underscored further by the speeches given by other Israeli politicians at AIPAC.

But this was all on the surface. On a deeper level, it seems the miracle of the inception of the Jewish state is lost on the younger generation, who take it for granted. The importance of the Holocaust as one of the core issues that shaped the country is also fading.

This stems from a lack of education, a lack of knowledge, and mainly a lack of interest to deal with the question of identity. Therefore, it is not only the approach toward Israel that has been eroded but the approach toward Jewish identity, as well.

This is what brings about the quiet disappearance of tens of thousands of our people each year. The attitude towards Israel – pursuing activities on its behalf – can also serve as an element of identity among Jewish American youth, but this requires a change of attitude.

Israel, as the Jewish state, should champion this important mission, making it into a worldwide Jewish national enterprise. We must hear American Jewry's outcry. After decades of it supporting Israel, we would be wise to come to its aid. (Israel Hayom Mar 7)

Will a Corrupt Man Save his Own Skin? By Haim Shine

Nir Hefetz, a former spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has joined the list of state's witnesses in the cases directly or indirectly involving the prime minister. The longer the list gets, the stronger the impression that the police are having real difficulty collecting solid evidence that can prove beyond reasonable doubt that there were criminal acts and intent. The police "tender" for additional state's witnesses includes other candidates – or as the Book of Job puts it, "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life'" (Job 2:4). It's very disheartening that individuals suspected of major corruption, who appear to have made corruption into an art, are given immunity for their deeds simply because of the false hope that they can help bring down the prime minister.

When such a fuss is made over cigars, it's a sign that there isn't any smoking gun. How silly do you have to be to assume that the prime minister would give out a billion shekels worth of benefits so he could garner favorable coverage on a second-tier website? How much mean-spiritedness and insensitivity does a person need to claim that the prime minister would spearhead the acquisition of unnecessary submarines or harm national security to help one or another of his associates? The day isn't far off when the public will demand, justifiably, an explanation for the attempts to frame the prime minister, to undermine the basic principles of democracy, to destabilize the government, and promote blatant politicization of law enforcement through selective enforcement. It will also demand an answer to the disturbing question of why Zionist Union co-chairwoman Tzipi Livni and Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid and their colleagues weren't investigated on similar matters.

When the police-backed hunt of Netanyahu is over, society will be free to understand and internalize the depth of the crisis and the ugly manipulation by Labor adviser Eldad Yaniv and former caretaker of the Prime Minister's Residence Meni Naftali, with help from the obsessive media. The system of law enforcement is in serious crisis. The public's faith in it is collapsing under the impression of overzealousness in hunting down Netanyahu in order to bring about a change in power. It seems like the police see every method as kosher if it forces the attorney general to issue indictments for major crimes.

We should also add the constant leaks from the investigations, the bizarre interview Israel Police Commissioner Insp. Gen. Roni Alsheikh gave to journalist Ilana Dayan, the prosecutor who cherry-picked which judge would rule on remands for suspects, the text-message exchange that was glossed over in record time, the conduct of former Judge Hila Gerstel

and Supreme Court Justice Esther Hayut (now Israel's chief justice) regarding alleged offers of bribes, and more.

For years, the Left has tried to convince the people that the Right could pose a threat to democracy. Any right-winger who dared to criticize law enforcement or the police was immediately painted as a fascist and a danger to democracy. It's clear today that the real threat to Israeli democracy comes from those who are trying to instill a new government without any need to go to the polls. (Israel Hayom Mar 6)

For Prince William's Israel Visit to Mean Anything, There's One Thing He Must Do By Liel Leibovitz

When news broke of Prince William's upcoming official visit to Israel, I was tempted to treat the news as I do all other dispatches concerning the royal family: By rolling my eyes, sighing softly, and wondering why these waxen wallydrags still managed to interest anyone but their unfortunate subjects. But the facts, as they so often do, began to chafe, and a rethinking of my position was in order. Even if, like me, you see the Windsors as a slightly less elegant version of the Kardashians, the visit is still one you should contemplate, as it is, incredibly, the first official one.

In a maddening and wonderful essay on the subject, the British historian Andrew Roberts explained that "although Her Majesty the Queen has made over 250 official overseas visits to 129 different countries during her reign, neither she nor one single member of the British royal family has ever yet been to Israel on an official visit." And it's not that the elderly monarch doesn't travel much: She's been, Roberts helpfully recounts, to "Libya, Iran, Sudan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan and Turkey. So it can't have been that she wasn't in the area."

And yet the region's lone democracy and the Crown's former charge was never graced with the royal touch. Even when Prince Phillip asked to visit his mother's grave in Jerusalem, he was denied permission to do so until 1994, and even then was forced to go on a private, not an official, visit.

What, in light of this grim history, to make of William's upcoming jaunt? If you are cheerful and hopeful, you may see it as a long-awaited peace offering, a signal from a state accustomed to giving Israel the coldest of diplomatic shoulders that the times they may be a-changin' and that Israel will be snubbed no more. But such niceties are hardly enough. If William wants to repent for his family's truly abysmal record when it comes to the Jewish state, he should show that he's keenly aware of the historical debt his people owe when Israel is involved. And there's no better way to do that than visit the new memorial to the Exodus, in the port of Haifa.

If the name evokes nothing more than the Leon Uris novel and Paul Newman's star turn as its protagonist, Ari Ben Canaan, in the subsequent film version, a brief examination of the historical record is in order. The real life Exodus arrived in Haifa on July 18, 1947. It was carrying 4,554 passengers, the overwhelming majority of them survivors of the Holocaust. As it approached the port, British war ships rammed into it, determined to stop what the Mandate government, eager to appease the Arabs, deemed the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine. The men, women, and children on board resisted, and the Brits showed no mercy: They opened fire into the crowd, killing three men, including the ship's second in command and two Holocaust survivors, the younger of them only fifteen years old. Eventually, the tired and hungry immigrants had no choice but to surrender, and disembarked the ship singing Hatikvah and weeping. They were put on other vessels outfitted with barbed wire to prevent escaping, and deported to France. There, they refused to disembark, and the Brits, ever the gentlemen, retaliated by refusing to provide their prisoners with food. Eventually, the ships sailed to Germany, where its passengers spent another year in detention camps before finally being allowed to immigrate to the newly born state of Israel.

And so, if William is serious about turning a new page, let him lay a wreath in Haifa and apologize for the death and the suffering his nation had caused mine. Otherwise, the visit, like sound and fury, like the royal family, will signify precisely nothing. (Tablet Mar 5)

Why Isn't AIPAC Lobbying For Taylor Force? By Shmuley Boteach

Eighteen thousand people are here in the nation's capitol being fired up about Israel. On Tuesday they will fill the halls of Congress to lobby for important pro-Israel legislation, including legislation that would punish countries and corporations who boycott Israel. That's all highly admirable. But why did AIPAC, which supports the Taylor Force Act, choose not to lobby for Senate and congressional passage of the act?

On March 8 The World Values Network (WVN) will be posthumously

awarding the Elie Wiesel Prize – chosen and presented by Marion and Elisha Wiesel – to Yonatan Netanyahu and Taylor Force, two heroes who defended liberty and were murdered by terrorists.

Yonatan Netanyahu is arguably Israel's most revered military hero and achieved immortality for his unequalled leadership in the Entebbe rescue mission, the most electrifying anti-terrorist battle in modern history. Taylor Force was a West Point graduate and US Army officer who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and was murdered in Tel Aviv by a Palestinian terrorist on March 8, 2016. The award being presented by the Wiesel family at the Plaza hotel at the WVN gala will occur two years to the day since his murder and will be received by Robbi and Stuart Force, his parents.

As it stands, Congress is considering legislation, the Taylor Force Act, to cut aid to the Palestinian Authority for paying large stipends to individuals who commit acts of terrorism, including the murderer of Taylor Force, and to the families of deceased terrorists.

Force was on a study trip with his fellow MBA students from Vanderbilt University when he was stabbed along with 11 other people. This horrific crime was celebrated by the Palestinians, who offer incentives to murder Jews and rewards to those who are imprisoned or "martyred." Under this "pay to slay" policy the PA, which has repeatedly pledged to end terrorism, provides generous monthly stipends to terrorists and their families for attacks against Israelis.

Men who have served at least five years in Israeli jails, and women who served at least two, are entitled to these "salaries" for life. The more heinous the crime, the more money a prisoner receives. Terrorists receive health benefits and priority for employment after they are released from jail. Palestinians can earn more money by attacking Jews and going to jail than they can working most jobs in the West Bank.

The PA, which pleads poverty and begs for international aid, spends roughly \$140 million a year for payments to terrorists. That money is coming out of the pockets of Americans, whose tax dollars are ostensibly used for the welfare of the Palestinian people. Given the fungibility of money, however, any US funding allows the PA to divert other resources to the pay-to-slay program, which now consumes about 7% of the PA budget.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized the PA for this policy and told PA President Mahmoud Abbas directly that it had to stop. Abbas thumbed his nose at the president, as well as at the Europeans who also demanded a halt to the policy, and declared his determination to not only continue to incentivize murder, but to increase the amount paid to terrorists.

Trump subsequently decided to withhold aid from the Palestinians. Congress has also become fed up with seeing taxpayer money go to support terrorism. The Senate is now poised to pass bipartisan legislation, the Taylor Force Act, to cut the roughly \$400 million in US assistance to the PA if the payments continue. It is essential that Congress quickly pass this law, named in honor of the murdered American soldier, and send a message to Palestinian officials that America will no longer stand by silently while they pay their people to attack innocent men, women and children, Jews and non-Jews, Israelis and non-Israelis.

It is tragic that it took the murder of an American citizen to prompt Congress to finally act. Sadly, Taylor was not the first American to be killed by Palestinian terrorists. Since Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo Accords in September 1993, and pledged to end violence, at least 54 Americans have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists.

I wish that we did not have to give a posthumous award. Taylor Force should be alive today pursuing a career in business and continuing to contribute to the welfare of the United States, as he did during his military service. It is with a heavy heart that we will present the Elie Wiesel award to Taylor's parents. No parent should have to bury their child and no child should die at the hands of terrorists.

There is a direct connection between Taylor Force and the other recipient of the Elie Wiesel prize at our gala, Yonatan Netanyahu, who was murdered 41 years ago in Entebbe. Both men fought for democracy and liberty. And both had their lives cut short by terrorists.

Most Americans don't know that Yonatan Netanyahu was born in New York City on March 13, 1946, the son of Ben Zion and Cela, who had moved to the US to work for the New Zionist Organization. I knew Ben Zion Netanyahu. I hosted him in Oxford and London over a few days and used to visit him in his home in Jerusalem. He was a great man and a scholar, a man of ferocious Jewish pride who conveyed that pride to his three sons.

After Israel's independence, the Netanyahus returned to Israel where Yonatan's brothers Benjamin and Iddo were born.

Yonatan's moving letters were published posthumously. In one letter he writes to his parents: "In another week I'll be 23. On me, on us, the young men of Israel, rests the duty of keeping our country safe. This is a heavy responsibility, which matures us early... I do not regret what I have done and what I'm about to do. I'm convinced that what I am doing is right. I believe in myself, in my country and in my future."

Not long after, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. That devastating war was won thanks to the bravery, guile and indomitable spirit of the members of the Israel Defense Forces (a US airlift, ordered by president Richard Nixon, was also vital).

One of the fighters who distinguished himself during the fighting was Yonatan, who commanded an elite Sayeret Matkal force that helped protect citizens in northern Israel following Syria's attack on the Golan Heights. During the war, he also rescued a soldier who was wounded behind Syrian lines. He was later awarded the Medal of Distinguished Service, Israel's third highest military decoration.

He had written to his brother Benjamin, the current prime minister of Israel, a few weeks after the Arab invasion:

"We're preparing for war, and it's hard to know what to expect. What I'm positive of is that there will be a next round, and others after that. But I would rather opt for living here in continual battle than for becoming part of the wandering Jewish people. Any compromise will simply hasten the end. As I don't intend to tell my grandchildren about the Jewish state in the twentieth century as a mere brief and transient episode in thousands of years of wandering, I intend to hold on here with all my might."

On June 27, 1976, an Air France plane flying from Tel Aviv to Paris with 248 passengers aboard was hijacked by Palestinian and German terrorists and diverted to Entebbe. Israeli and other Jewish passengers were separated from the rest and 148 hostages were released. The hijackers held 94 passengers hostage, along with the 12-member Air France crew, who heroically insisted on staying with the remaining passengers, and threatened to kill them if a group of prisoners was not released from Israeli and other prisons.

Israel decided to mount a seemingly impossible rescue mission. Israeli transport planes carrying approximately 100 commandos would have to fly more than 4,000 km., get past Ugandan soldiers, surprise the terrorists and free the hostages. Yonatan Netanyahu was chosen to lead the team that would assault the terminal where the hostages were being held.

On July 4, the Israelis landed at the airport in Entebbe. It took just 53 minutes to carry out the entire operation. All the hijackers, four hostages and 45 Ugandan soldiers were killed, and 102 hostages were rescued. There was only one Israeli fatality – Yonatan Netanyahu, who was killed by a sniper. The raid was posthumously renamed Operation Yonatan.

Defense minister Shimon Peres eulogized Netanyahu during his funeral at Mount Herzl cemetery on July 6, 1976, saying "a bullet had torn the young heart of one of Israel's finest sons, one of its most courageous warriors, one of its most promising commanders – the magnificent Yonatan Netanyahu."

We are proud to honor Yonatan and Taylor Force with the Elie Wiesel Award and we are eternally grateful to Marion and Elisha Wiesel for choosing Yonatan and Taylor and personally presenting the award on March 8 in New York. But the greatest homage to Taylor Force will come with the passage of the Taylor Force Act.

AIPAC, are you listening? (Jerusalem Post Mar 5)

American Jewish Leaders and Their Egos By Rafael Medoff

Seventy-five years ago this week, as the Academy Award-winning screenwriter Ben Hecht was putting the finishing touches on a dramatic pageant to alert the world about the Holocaust, his telephone rang.

The caller was Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, longtime leader of the Zionist Organization of America, the American Jewish Congress and several other Jewish institutions.

"Rabbi Wise said he would like to see me immediately in his rectory," Hecht recalled. "His voice, which was sonorous and impressive, irritated me. I had never known a man with a sonorous and impressive voice who wasn't either a con man or a bad actor. I explained I was very busy and unable to step out of my hotel."

So Wise got straight to the point. "I have read your pageant script and I disapprove of it," the veteran Jewish leader declared. "I must ask you to cancel this pageant and discontinue all your further activities in behalf of the Jews. If you wish hereafter to work for the Jewish cause, you will please consult me and let me advise you."

Wise had no problem with the content of the pageant. Titled *We Will Never Die*, its intention was to survey Jewish contributions to civilization throughout history and describe the Nazi slaughter of Europe's Jews, culminating in an emotional recitation of "Kaddish" by a group of elderly rabbis.

"Will it save the four million [Jews still alive in Europe]?" Hecht wrote on the eve of the opening. "I don't know. Maybe we can awaken some of the vacationing hearts in our government."

Rabbi Wise's objection was that *We Will Never Die* was created by the Bergson Group, a handful of upstarts who were acting independently

of the established Jewish leadership.

Wise and his colleagues opposed the project “not because they are against it, but because they are against us,” a Bergson Group leader explained to the bewildered Hecht. “Stephen Wise will not tolerate any other Jewish organization [that is] stealing honors and publicity from him.”

One of the most revealing anecdotes about Wise’s personality comes from Wise himself. He enjoyed recounting how Sigmund Freud once asked him to name “the four greatest living Jews.” Wise named Einstein, Ehrlich, Freud and Brandeis. Freud expressed surprise that Wise had not included himself in the list. “No, no, no, no, you cannot include me,” Wise replied. To which Freud responded: “If you had said ‘no’ once, I would believe you, but four ‘nos’ leads me to suspect that you protest too much.”

Today, too, the American Jewish community is saddled with “leaders” whose self-perception sometimes seems a tad inflated. An Israeli newspaper recently described how one Jewish official “reveled” in describing how he was introduced by someone in Washington as “the most important Jew in America.” Some of the Jewish figures involved in the recent visits to Qatar have compared themselves to “Moses, Esther and Herzl,” and characterized their critics as “haters” and “antisemites.”

One leader of an American Zionist organization recently was quoted as boasting that his group’s banquet was “the greatest Jewish dinner in history.” Does getting a lot of Jews to eat really qualify as an organizational accomplishment? “Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she laid an asteroid,” Mark Twain wrote.

Back to 1943. To their credit, Ben Hecht and his Bergson Group colleagues ignored Rabbi Wise’s objections. They understood that in view of the crisis facing Jewry, the show must go on. More than 20,000 people jammed Madison Square Garden on the chilly evening of March 9, 1943. There were so many people gathered on the sidewalks outside – because all the seats inside were filled – that the cast decided to do a second performance immediately afterwards. The second show, too, filled the arena.

“If there was a dry eye at Madison Square Garden Tuesday night, it wasn’t mine,” wrote reviewer Nick Kenny in the New York City daily newspaper PM. “It was the most poignant pageant we have ever witnessed. It is a story that should be made into a moving picture, just as it was presented at the Garden, and shown in every city, town and hamlet in the country.”

The Bergson Group did, in fact, take the show on the road. In the months to follow, *We Will Never Die* was performed before sell-out crowds in Chicago Stadium, the Boston Garden, Philadelphia’s Convention Hall, the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, and Washington, DC’s Constitution Hall. All together, more than 100,000 Americans attended the performances – and millions more read about the Nazi mass murders for the first time when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote about *We Will Never Die* in her syndicated newspaper column.

The wall of silence surrounding the raging Holocaust was finally shattered, despite the damaging disunity fostered by Jewish “leaders” whose own egos sometimes got the best of them – as they do today, as well. (Jerusalem Post Mar 5)

Israeli Supreme Court Turnover: A ‘Win-Win’ for the Public and for Policy

By Alex Traidman

Rising political star Ayelet Shaked just confirmed the fifth and sixth Israeli Supreme Court justices in her short tenure as justice minister.

In a historical anomaly, within a span of only two years, six different Supreme Court justices of the 15 who sit on the court reached the mandatory age of retirement at 70 — or retired for personal reasons.

Shaked single-handedly took advantage of the opportunity to do what no right-wing government had been able to achieve in the seven decades since the state was founded: fundamentally change the makeup of Israel’s Supreme Court.

Four of the six new justices are significantly more conservative in their approaches than their predecessors.

For decades, Israel’s court has been widely known as one of the most activist courts in the Western world; some also claim that it is the body of government with the broadest powers and fewest checks on those powers.

The court regularly overturns legislation passed by the Knesset. Not bound by the interpretations of a constitution — as Israel does not have one — the high court proceeds to judge the cases it selects in accordance with a limited set of basic laws, in addition to its own set of self-determined ethos, often established on a case-by-case basis.

Until Shaked’s sweeping reform, the court has routinely replenished itself through a self-selecting process that advanced the candidacies of like-minded justices. Israel’s heterogeneous court often represented a left-wing elite minority that ruled contrary to the Israeli public’s sentiments on critical issues.

In the view of some, the court routinely favored, for example, petitions raised by a network of dangerous, nongovernmental organizations that receive funding from the New Israel Fund.

In recent years, the court has also set back critical commercial advances made by the government, and has worked to prejudice the government’s abilities to deal with difficult questions of Jewish sovereignty in the disputed Israeli territories of Judea and Samaria.

In 2016, the court set a precedent in Israeli politics by ruling that a 10-year natural-gas supply contract signed between the government, and Nobel and Delek energy companies — the conglomerate responsible for exploiting Israel’s offshore natural-gas resources — was illegal because the agreement locked the price of gas for the entire period.

The agreement provided the conditions necessary to gain the foreign investment and expertise needed to turn a once resource-starved Israel into an energy exporter. The ruling nearly derailed the government’s partnership with Noble and Delek, which had already invested billions of dollars into Israel’s gas infrastructure.

At the time, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that “the High Court of Justice decision severely threatens the development of the gas reserves of the State of Israel,” noting at the time that “the gas is liable to remain in the depths of the sea, and the hundreds of billions of shekels will not reach the citizens of Israel.” He sharply criticized the court, stating that Israel was “seen as a state with excessive judicial interference in which it is difficult to do business.”

The court’s overturn of the agreement sent a direct message to multinational corporations within and beyond the global energy sector that a contract signed with Israel’s government was not worth the paper it was printed on — unless the court felt in its own judgement that such a contract was in the best interests of the country.

In addition to the fact that there was no precedent for such a ruling, which otherwise appeared to be out of the bounds of the court’s authority, there was similarly no legal mechanism in place to overturn or challenge the court’s ruling.

Hearing petitions on one of the most sensitive diplomatic and security issues facing the state, the court has ruled time and again in favor of plaintiffs represented by Israel’s most extreme left-wing elements that settlement housing not built on land registered to the state should be demolished, even when the houses sit well within the long-established borders of Jewish communities.

The court has refused to accept the notion that property disputes of this nature could be solved by monetary or other means, as Palestinian claimants are unable to their sell properties to Jews or receive compensation under the threat of death. It is of little interest to the court that in almost every case, the land on which the houses were built was never going to be turned over to Palestinian claimants due to security considerations.

In several settlements across Judea and Samaria, piles of rubble — the remains of houses once were filled with Jewish children — lay just meters away from houses on the other side of an invisible an irrelevant property border. Other hilltop communities have been completely removed, only to be rebuilt by the government as new entities sometimes less than a few kilometers away on state-owned land. The net effect of populations in Israel’s settlement enterprise is seemingly unaffected by each ruling, while each demolition makes international headlines with photos and video that send a message to the world that Israel’s building rights — within areas it controls militarily and administratively in the only province in the world historically named Judea (and Samaria) — are irrelevant and illegal.

Upon explaining the absurdity of one of the impending demolition cases to a senior adviser to Netanyahu several years ago, the adviser told me that while the government wholeheartedly agreed with the facts on the ground as presented by homeowners — facts that bared little interest to the court — the administration was unable to challenge the ruling unless a legal “silver bullet” could penetrate and deflate the court’s verdict.

Legislators have received legal opinions in favor of laws that would officially legalize existing settlements and halt the practice of demolishing existing Jewish home. Yet the threat that the court would overturn such legislation, and not rule according to the international community’s view of Israel’s settlements, keeps such legislation from passing.

Shaked’s successful and surprising initiative to change the composition of the Supreme Court is a tremendous win for Israel’s public and will have a profound effect on the government’s ability to advance the will of the public that voted them (and not the judges) into office.

Like Donald Trump’s nomination of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, the Netanyahu government’s confirmation of six — yes, six — new justices will not only diminish the influence of Israel’s extreme-left elements and bring the court in line with the will of the general public, but will stand among this governing coalition’s greatest accomplishments. (Algemeiner Mar 7)