



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*

Maintaining social cohesion—the sense that, ultimately, we are all in this together—will become a greater challenge as income disparities fueled by the growing tech sector are increased.

We need to create and foster a mindset and an environment that elevates empathy with the citizenry over any entitlement coming from individual achievement. The governing models for our elites need to be Abraham and his open tent, and Joseph, the ultimate elite, who never forgot who he was or where he came from. (JNS Jan 9)

Commentary...

When Elites Betray Us By Douglas Altabef

One of the great maladies afflicting Western democracies today is the decoupling of national elites from their own people. This was the background story to Brexit in the United Kingdom and also to the rise of Donald Trump in the United States.

Here in Israel, with its breathtaking ethnic and religious diversity, we expect our leaders, political and social, to show a fundamental empathy and identification with our citizens, regardless of any particular issues involved. So, when Deputy Economy Minister Yair Golan recently called Samaria settlers “subhuman,” we considered him to have crossed a red line that cannot be erased nor should be forgiven.

Not only was Golan channeling the same Nazis whom he alluded to Israel's resembling in his notorious 2016 Holocaust Remembrance Day speech; not only did he commit a blood libel against his own people; he broke faith with them.

For a country so dependent on social cohesion in the face of rampant differences, Golan committed the cardinal sin of disloyalty—of a lack of identification and affinity, not to mention empathy, with his fellow citizens. His attempt to walk his statement back only made things worse, since he tried to contextualize it. If there were any question that this man is unfit for a leadership role in a Jewish state, this “clarification” should have been the decisive proof.

The irony is that Israel's current government prides itself on being something for everybody, a big tent encompassing the spectrum of Israeli society. Golan, thus, has no business being part of it. Conversely, if Golan's libel is allowed to fade into the woodwork, it will put the lie to the government's claims of inclusivity and universal respect.

At Im Tirtzu, the organization I am proud to serve as board chairman, we have become used to being called fascists. But even our worst detractors have not crossed the line into Der Sturmer rhetoric. Indeed, Golan has taken demonization to a whole new level. In the name of social cohesion and human decency, it must be rejected wholeheartedly, and the only way to do that is to thank him for his prior military service, and to show him the door.

Another case of failed morality, this one among elite academics, involves the awarding of the Israel Prize to mathematician Oded Goldreich. Though the selection committee appropriately singled him out for his brilliance and contribution to computational understanding, he had also distinguished himself with his support for BDS and his joining of a petition to the European Union urging the end of backing for Ariel University due to its being in Samaria, over the Green Line.

Fortunately, two consecutive education ministers had the foresight and wisdom to understand what is truly at stake in this highly symbolic award, and rightly concluded that Goldreich, however accomplished professionally, is not a figure whom we as a nation wish to extol.

It's not an issue of free speech, as some of his supporters, including Weizmann Institute president Alon Chen, have argued. Chen takes the position that political views have no place in the awarding of the Israel Prize, though I wonder what political positions might prompt him to think otherwise.

Regardless, he misses the import of the Israel Prize, which is a recognition of role-model greatness bestowed by the nation on its own. The significance of the award's true meaning was brought home by a petition organized by Im Tirtzu's Ariel University branch, which garnered more 1,000 student signatures.

The petition pointed out that if Goldreich were to succeed in his mission, thousands of his peers in academia would be displaced and many would have their careers ruined.

Does the State of Israel wish to enshroud in greatness one who is happy to delegitimize it? What kind of message does this send to the rest of us? The answer is a corrosive one that would only reinforce the undesired perception that our leaders are speaking out of both sides of their mouths, and that there is one set of standards for them and another for the rest of us.

The Electricity Law: Who Knew, and who should have Known Better? By Naomi Kahn

Last week, following stormy committee debates, application of highly unusual parliamentary rules, dismissal of the Knesset Legal Counsel's explicit and adamant recommendations, and a confrontational plenum session resulting in one of the most unusual votes ever conducted on the Knesset floor, the Israeli parliament passed legislation sponsored by the Ra'am Party that will allow connection of unlicensed structures to national electricity, water and gas systems.

Dozens of legislative objections to the bill were submitted, all of which were voted down, including the opposition's motion that the law extend beyond the Arab sector and be applied to Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria as well. But all the background and foreground noise, the name-calling, shouted insults, feigned and real moral indignation, in-your-face confrontations, even the opposition's boycott of the majority of the voting process—all of it was essentially a distraction. The scenery overtook the plot; the political backdrop obscured the substance of the law and its far-reaching impact.

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the Electricity Law is bad legislation that was passed by a bad legislative process. The law not only rewards illegal construction but also lays waste to the entire concept of land-use and planning policy.

What does this new law do that the old law didn't? Even before Ra'am used its political leverage to pass this new law, infrastructure hook-ups could be expedited for neighborhoods or individual structures that lacked permits but which the government actively sought to regulate or legalize. The new law takes what was an exception and makes it the rule. It takes a clause that was applicable to select outlier cases and applies it in wholesale fashion and virtually indiscriminately. How indiscriminately? No one—not even the MKs who voted for it—actually knows, and that's part of the problem.

As the legislation made its way through the Knesset Interior Committee, MKs repeatedly requested data on the impact of its numerous clauses, but the committee chairman, MK Walid Taha (Ra'am), would not allow the professionals to present this crucial information to the committee members. The legislative process was one of the most brutal, non-democratic, politicized processes in Knesset history—and like other highly questionable pieces of legislation in the recent and not-so-recent past, the consequences for the State of Israel will be irrevocable.

The new law, and the procedures stipulated for its implementation as addenda to the legislation, lack effective mechanisms for Interior Ministry oversight. There is no apparatus for monitoring the impact or ramifications of “whitewashing” unplanned, unpermitted structures, no method of assessing the long- or short-term damage to Israel's ability to plan or build new homes, new neighborhoods, new roads, new schools or public-service structures or sewage, water, communications systems to improve the lives of present and future residents.

The Ra'am MKs, on the other hand, knew precisely what they were doing when they forced this regressive, backward, destructive legislation to a lightning-speed vote.

The members of the Ra'am-Yemina coalition that allowed them to get away with it have not only brought Israel's democratic institutions to the brink of collapse, but they have also endangered the future of land use policy and the rule of law in the State of Israel in ways that it will take years to correct—if they can be corrected at all. (JNS Jan 9)

How the Israeli Economy can Remain Strong Amid Omicron Uncertainty

By Stuart Hershkowitz

Prior to the intensification of the Omicron variant, the Israeli economy had received multiple forecasts for strong growth in 2022. The Jewish state's own finance ministry projected 4.7 percent growth for the economy this year (following 7.1 percent growth in 2021), while the OECD predicted 4.9 percent growth in Israel's GDP for 2022 and 4 percent for 2023.

Both internal and external assessments have attributed the resilience of the Israeli economy during the COVID-19 pandemic to the country's world-leading vaccine rollout. But what else can Israel do to further strengthen its economic position in these continuously uncertain times?

The unemployment rate is among the typical measures of a nation's economic strength, yet the pandemic has added a new layer to the dynamics surrounding the workforce. Today's environment poses the challenge of not only creating jobs and getting people back to work, but also convincing people to go back to work. In the United States, for instance, the so-called "Great Resignation" has seen record numbers of Americans quit their jobs (4.5 million in November 2021 alone). Factors that are driving this trend have included boosted federal and state unemployment benefits (earlier in the pandemic); the desire to leave retail jobs that do not allow for remote work and involve a high degree of potential exposure to coronavirus; and the inclination to use the pandemic to rethink one's personal and professional trajectory.

Israel is no stranger to the challenge of lagging workforce participation. The employment rate for haredi men typically hovers around 50 percent, as many of them opt to study Torah on a full-time basis. Whether haredim or Arabs or other underserved populations, expanding employment among largely untapped demographic sectors represents a crucial way of ensuring Israel's economic strength.

This is particularly true in the talent-starved sector of high-tech. Last year, State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman issued a report that documented 18,500 vacant positions in the Israeli high-tech industry, resulting from a shortage of skilled university graduates with training in the computer software and hardware fields. And make no mistake: Higher education is an indispensable pathway to such training. Basic certificate or vocational courses in computer programming do not provide students with the high-level, well-rounded skill set they need to effectively fill the current gaps for Israel's technology-focused employers.

The Jerusalem College of Technology (JCT) has long worked to advance an academic solution to this employment challenge, striving to bolster Israel's labor market by increasing access to technology-related educational and employment opportunities for underserved populations. The college's haredi graduates attain an 89 percent employment rate, far exceeding the employment rate for haredi men throughout Israel. This past year, our Mechina (pre-academic) preparatory program, which helps religious Jews gain basic education in the STEM subjects that is required for entry into academia, saw a 20 percent increase in enrollment.

Further, 53 percent of all JCT's computer science students are women, which is 18 percent higher than any other Israeli academic institution. The new Tal Campus for women, which is on track to break ground early this year, will expand the college's impact on women's empowerment. As the permanent home for up to 3,000 of JCT's female students in nursing, computer science, electro-optics, industrial engineering, accounting and management, the campus will provide increased opportunities for national religious, haredi and Ethiopian women to pursue higher education and attain quality employment in scientific and high-tech industries.

The Omicron variant means that many sectors, including higher education, could once again be subjected to severe restrictions and disruptions.

Remote learning was a necessity at the outset of the pandemic, and it seems like academic institutions could now be headed back towards March 2020-style conditions. While JCT did its best to adapt to this unprecedented environment two years ago, students at our college and across the board have reported that distance learning is far from ideal. For instance, many haredi students have large families, inadequate workspaces at home and weak Internet connections—obstacles that make it exceedingly difficult to learn online.

Meanwhile, for all students, the absence of socialization when distance learning is implemented presents morale and mental-health challenges that should not be ignored.

Bar-Ilan University, Israel's second-largest higher-education institution, has already transitioned to remote learning amid the Omicron crisis. But other major Israeli campuses have not yet followed suit, and the Israeli government should be applauded for its ongoing push for students of all ages to continue in-person learning.

"There is no reason for entire classes to automatically switch to distance learning when they have no confirmed cases" of COVID-19, said Israeli Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton recently.

In turn, the looming threat of school closures also ties into Israel's economic outlook. A college campus is a microcosm of a city, and when we essentially shut down an entire city, we halt all of the economic growth and contributions that come with its day-to-day operations. That is why Israel must do everything in its power to keep our campuses open.

By expanding educational and employment opportunities among underserved populations, which happens to be a highly difficult proposition when college campuses are closed, Israel can take at least one key step towards weathering the storm of Omicron. (JNS Jan 12) *The writer is vice president of the Jerusalem College of Technology.*

Politics and Combating Anti-Semitism don't Mix

By Jonathan S. Tobin

At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise around the globe, the office of the U.S. State Department's Special Envoy for Combating and Monitoring Anti-Semitism ought to be filled. Indeed, the Biden administration seemed to signal its interest in the subject when it decided to upgrade the post by expanding the office's staff and conferring the title of ambassador on the envoy. President Joe Biden also named someone that was considered eminently qualified for the job in Emory University professor and historian Deborah Lipstadt, a widely respected expert on the Holocaust.

But as some political insiders worried when the change was first mooted that the decision to make the envoy an ambassadorship would come with a price. In doing so, it made the post subject to Senate confirmation along with all other ambassadors. And in an era when bipartisanship is dead and all Senate confirmations are part of a zero-sum political game, the result was predictable. Along with a number of other people appointed by Biden, Lipstadt's nomination is being held up by Republican senators who are determined to play hardball in an evenly divided Senate over every confirmation, and she is no exception.

In Lipstadt's case, the obstacle is Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho), the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who has used his position to place her nomination in legislative limbo because he has not even consented to schedule a confirmation hearing. And so, like a great many other nominees, it will remain that way until the Democrats manage to persuade the GOP caucus to give in by making some concession on another issue.

According to The New York Times, the justification for the hold stems from a tweet by Lipstadt about Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) in which she responded to his claim that senators would have been more afraid during last year's U.S. Capitol riot if the demonstrators had been affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement or Antifa rather than being Trump supporters. For this, Lipstadt, who is known for her sharp tongue and strong opinions, accused him of being an advocate of "white supremacy/nationalism." Not surprisingly, Johnson took it personally, and his fellow members of the GOP caucus probably see no reason to relent absent some kind of apology or similar gesture by Lipstadt.

This is frustrating for her and the organized Jewish community—where she has broad support—and which wants the post filled. It's also unproductive since the Republicans, who are uniformly supportive of Israel, back the mission of the anti-Semitism envoy.

But as much as they're right that Risch and the Republicans ought to relent and let her be confirmed, it's no good pretending that politics can be separated from the business of fighting anti-Semitism in the current environment.

Lipstadt deserves credit for her willingness to acknowledge—as some on the Jewish left and the Democratic Party sometimes have

trouble understanding—that Jew-hatred is present on both the left and the right. As such, she is probably as good a choice as can be imagined from a Biden administration that has unfortunately proved that it is in thrall to its leftist activist wing.

The Democrats are increasingly split on a lot of issues, including Israel, and progressives are guilty of either trafficking in anti-Semitism—as “Squad” members Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) have done or of making excuses for their colleagues who advocate woke ideas like intersectionality, which are inextricably linked to prejudice against Israel and the Jews.

Since Lipstadt has in the past called out Omar for her outrageous statements, theoretically that should be enough to convince Republicans that she ought to be allowed to serve.

Similarly, she showed her integrity by writing in *The Atlantic* that those who have made inappropriate analogies between the plight of illegal immigrants to the United States and that of Jews during the Holocaust are wrong, even if she disagreed with former President Donald Trump’s policies.

Still, it has not escaped the Republicans that Lipstadt did not earn her nomination by her estimable work as a scholar or even the celebrity that she earned by being the subject of a film “Denial,” starring Jewish actor Rachel Weisz (who played the historian) for her pivotal role in a case in which Holocaust-denier David Irving was defeated in a British court.

Lipstadt may have deserved the post, but no one should be under any illusion that the decision didn’t have a lot to do with her willingness to play the partisan in 2020 by endorsing a shameful ad from the Jewish Democratic Council of America that likened the Trump administration to the rise of Nazi Germany. She followed that up by co-authoring an op-ed in *The Washington Post* in which she compared those who raised questions about the outcome of the 2020 presidential election to Holocaust-deniers.

In both cases, she crossed the same line that she had previously drawn between the Holocaust and partisan-issue advocacy. Whether she did so because she genuinely has come to believe those who disagree with her about Trump are either Nazis or their enablers—or had her eye on the post that she later claimed she had to be persuaded to accept—is irrelevant.

Having taken those stands, she put herself in the same boat as any other Democrat with a record of vicious partisanship who had to then try and persuade angry Republicans that she would carry out her duties in a fair-minded manner. Nor is this any different from the way Trump appointees were made to jump through hoops about quotes or tweets that got them in hot water with Democrats. An example of this was the way David Friedman had to walk back his characterization of J Street as being “worse than kapos” before being confirmed as ambassador to Israel.

The lesson that we take away from this episode can’t be just a partisan attack on Republicans for acting the way parties behave when they are out of power and wish to make the White House pay for confirmations. As much as the post of anti-Semitism envoy should be filled right away, the problem is not so much how partisanship has made the Senate a dysfunctional institution, though that is certainly true. Rather, it’s the way too many people who ought to have known better were willing to sanction inappropriate Holocaust analogies or to otherwise link the battle against anti-Semitism to political sparring.

If Americans are to keep politics out of the discussion about anti-Semitism—and therefore enable both the Jewish community and the government to condemn it, whether it comes from the right or the left—then those who are looked to as the gold standard on the issue, like Lipstadt, must not allow themselves to toy with the issue in the manner they have. And if they do, they can’t credibly complain about how unfair it is that those who not unreasonably resent such inappropriate accusations see them as disqualifying.

As much as it is to be hoped that Lipstadt’s nomination will eventually be salvaged, there are appropriate conclusions to be drawn from this contretemps. It is important that the Jewish community understand that trying to weaponize anti-Semitism for partisan advantage in the way too many liberals have done in recent years when seeking to justify their opposition to Trump or the Republicans is a terrible mistake as well as wrong. If that lesson is ignored, then the effort to unite Americans against anti-Semitism will be lost even before it has even begun. (JNS Jan 10)

The UN’s Final Solution to the Israel Question

By Clifford D. May

Historians usually date the start of the Holocaust to June 1941, when German troops invaded the Soviet Union, identified Jewish civilians, lined them up and shot them by the thousands. Later, concentration camps equipped with gas chambers elevated the slaughter to an industrial scale.

But that timetable omits something important. After his accession to power in 1933, Hitler began a campaign to demonize and delegitimize Jews, accusing them of imaginary crimes, conveying the message that Jews are a vile and guilty race, deserving of punishment.

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws officially made German Jews second-class citizens. In 1938, thousands of German Jewish stores and homes were ransacked and burned in the pogrom known as Kristallnacht. In 1939, after the Nazi invasion of Poland, Polish Jews were confined to ghettos.

All this and more laid the groundwork for the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” the Nazi euphemism for the genocide of European Jews.

Before their defeat by the Allied forces, the Nazis managed to exterminate six million European Jews—two out of every three. Post-war, most countries of the broader Middle East, many of them influenced by Nazi ideology, drove out their ancient Jewish communities.

Refugees fled or, as many saw it, returned to a land in which Jews had survived for thousands of years despite multiple foreign conquests, massacres, enslavements and expulsions.

Israelis declared their independence following the departure of the British Empire from territories taken from the defeated Ottoman Empire after World War I. Israel’s founding was thus an act of anti-imperialism and de-colonialism.

Recalling this history now is relevant and perhaps urgent. For decades, the United Nations has been at the forefront of a campaign to demonize and delegitimize Israel. That campaign is now set to sharply escalate.

Last week, the United Nations approved a \$4.2 million budget to establish a so-called Commission of Inquiry—essentially a Grand Inquisition targeting and vilifying Israel.

Under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, a body dominated by such notorious human rights violators as China, Russia, Cuba, Pakistan, Qatar and Venezuela, an 18-member staff will be led by Navi Pillay. The former U.N. high commissioner for human rights has “an appalling record on Israel,” in the considered judgment of Hillel Neuer, executive director of U.N. Watch.

The COI will be “dedicated to manufacturing charges and mounting a global chase to arrest and incarcerate Israeli Jews,” Anne Bayefsky, director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, wrote in a paper for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

The ostensible inspiration for the COI is the 11-day conflict initiated by Hamas last May. Over 4,000 rockets were launched against Israeli cities, towns and villages. Israelis defended themselves, for which the COI will accuse Israelis of imaginary crimes. Hamas, by contrast, will not be seriously criticized for either its attacks on Israeli civilians or its use of Palestinians as human shields—indisputably crimes under both international and U.S. law.

Expect the COI also to broadcast the slander that Israel is an apartheid state, implying that Israel has no right to defend itself—indeed, no right to exist.

I plan to say more about the bogus charge of apartheid in future columns. Still, for now, I’ll just point out that Israel’s Arab Muslim minority, roughly 20%, enjoys rights and freedom unavailable to Arab Muslims even in countries where they constitute a majority. No positions or jobs are denied to Israeli citizens based on ethnicity or religion. Mansour Abbas, head of the Islamic Ra’am Party and an elected member of the Knesset, serves in the current Israeli governing coalition.

Gaza, from which Israelis withdrew in 2005, is ruled by Hamas. The West Bank is governed by the Palestinian Authority. Israelis have repeatedly offered to withdraw from most of the West Bank in exchange for a conflict-ending agreement. Those offers were turned down. Should Israelis withdraw without an agreement, the West Bank would become a second Gaza. Is that not obvious?

The endless drumbeat of anti-Israeli vilification by the COI is

sure to energize the economic campaign against Israel (echoing the 1933 Nazi “Don’t buy from the Jews” campaign) and perhaps lead to prosecutions of Israelis by the International Criminal Court, a politicized entity whose authority is recognized by neither Israel nor the United States.

More concerning: The “findings” of the COI “inquiry” will be used to justify the genocidal threats frequently made by the Islamic Republic of Iran, its Lebanese-based proxy, Hezbollah, and of course Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

I could fill this column with examples of such threats, but just one should suffice. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has called on Muslims “to remove the Zionist black stain from human society,” adding that there is a religious “justification to kill all the Jews and annihilate Israel, and Iran must take the helm.”

When Nikki Haley was ambassador to the United Nations, the Trump administration withdrew from the UNHRC, having concluded that significant reforms were unachievable. The Biden administration returned to that body this month, asserting that it can make a difference through diplomatic engagement. We shall see.

The U.N. campaign will make settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict impossible for the foreseeable future. Why would any Palestinian leader compromise so long as there is a possibility that what happened to the Jews of Europe—defamation followed by extermination, a “final solution”—could happen to the Jews of Israel, with the assent of the “international community”?

The United Nations was established following World War II to prevent and resolve conflicts. Today, it promotes antisemitism and enables both terrorists and genocidaires. Acknowledgment of this reality must precede any attempt to change it. (JNS Jan 12)

The Reverend Father of ‘Israeli Apartheid’ By Yishai Fleisher

Back in 2003, I was a student at Yeshiva University’s Cardozo Law School. I had married my classmate, Malkah, and we were both halfway through the last year of school.

One day, we heard that the famed Reverend Desmond Tutu was going to be honored on our campus by the student publication the Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution and the International Law Students Association—and awarded the prestigious International Advocate for Peace Award.

Not knowing much about Tutu, other than his work to end apartheid in South Africa, we regarded this news positively. However, it did not take long for my mother-in-law, herself a graduate of Cardozo, to send us disturbing information that showed that while Tutu was a hero in South Africa, he also held deep anti-Semitic and anti-Israel convictions.

So we began an information campaign, hanging signs on the walls of the law school with his quotes about the monopoly of the Jews on the Holocaust and the Jewish lobby’s grip on America. This caused friction with parts of the student body, and even with teachers at the law school.

The impending event started garnering attention, and some people began questioning the wisdom of inviting Tutu to Cardozo. Even then-Anti-Defamation League head Abe Foxman chimed in, calling it “a poor and inappropriate choice for a Jewish institution. [Tutu] is not a friend of Israel or the Jewish people; he has flirted with anti-Semitism and his condemnations have been angry and nasty.”

The tension rose, and finally our student group secured a meeting with the dean of the law school, David Rudensine. At the meeting, we demanded the cancellation of the event. The dean denied our demand on the grounds that there was no way to back out now, and besides, many people were thrilled that Cardozo was hosting Tutu.

We then asserted our right to protest at the event. But the dean told us that we would only be allowed to rally outside the building where the presentation was to take place, and that the lobby would have to be kept clear. Now, feeling like I was standing before the Supreme Court, I gave my best plea: Yeshiva University was built, I said, because Jews were once barred from being accepted into non-Jewish academic institutions. Jewish money built this school precisely so that we, young Jews, would stand a better chance in an anti-Semitic world.

Now an open anti-Semite was coming to the school built to protect me, and I should be forced outside? Dean Rudensine appreciated a good argument and relented. We would be allowed to protest inside the school.

And so it was that when Tutu came into the building, self-assured

and full of pride, he heard not the murmur of adoration as he expected, but loud cries of “racist!” and “anti-Semite on campus!” His face became filled with rage, and I saw with my own eyes his hatred for Jews and Israel.

Fast forward to the last week of 2021. Alan Dershowitz, the indefatigable defender of Israel, laid into the just-deceased reverend in writing and on TV. He explained that while Tutu should be lauded for his great achievements against South African apartheid, he should also be seen for what he is: a classic religious bigot and anti-Semite. Dershowitz cited many examples of Tutu’s statements against Jews, many of which we had tacked up on the walls of Cardozo in 2003: how Jews have an outsized influence in American politics; how Jesus hates the Jews; and how Zionism is racism.

Yet, for all the pluck of calling out Tutu’s racism, both Dershowitz in 2021 and we in 2003 failed to comprehend what Tutu had actually managed to achieve. Tutu’s real anti-Semitic accomplishment was not the mere perpetuation of classic bigoted tropes, but rather the utter reversal of the Israel narrative in the minds of millions.

For centuries, a riveting historical account gripped much of the Protestant world: the story of the Jewish people—a chosen nation, the liberation heroes of the Bible, the people who stood up against Pharaoh and Egyptian slavery, walked through the split Red Sea, received the Torah at Sinai and finally made it into the Promised Land. Later, after a temple stood in Jerusalem, these same Jews disappointed God, were defeated and dispersed, and yet prayed through the millennia for a return to that good land—a herald of global salvation.

For many civil-rights leaders throughout history, from the pilgrims and the leaders of the American Revolutionary War to the abolitionist movement and Martin Luther King Jr., the Jewish people have been an inspiration for the very idea of liberation. When the improbable State of Israel was born, it became again a beacon of liberty by taking on the giant armies of the Arabs, and facing the Soviet empire—all in the just cause of rebuilding a commonwealth on ancient, hallowed and blood-soaked ground.

But Tutu was one of the pioneers of a radically different narrative.

With his credentials in fighting apartheid, he worked to reframe Israel in the same category as South Africa: as white oppressors, interlopers, colonialists, a foreign entity in the Middle East. For Tutu, all of Zionism was an occupation and the Jews were abusers, suppressing the Palestinians in nothing less than the evil apartheid system—an accusation that his credentials made credible. In the same vein, Tutu helped flip the image of the Palestinians from jihadi terrorists to indigenous freedom fighters. Indeed, if Jews used to face a “replacement theology,” now we confronted a replacement narrative.

This Israel-villain framework was incorporated en masse by the many entities looking for an excuse to verbalize their anti-Semitism from Western European and American universities to Soviet Russia and the Arab entities that they backed.

Therefore Tutu’s legacy is much more than that of a mere bigot. He was one of the main architects of a movement to reframe Israel as the antagonist in the global battle against oppression. Terms like “Israeli apartheid,” “Israeli occupation” and “Israeli genocide” are the new-speak accusations that Jewish students on campus face and which are trumpeted daily at the United Nations.

Turning around the Tutu-inspired perception of Israel should be one of the Jewish state’s most pressing goals. Yet so many hasbara groups try to paper over the accusations by showing how nice, successful, inclusive or willing to compromise Israel is.

They don’t understand that the attack on Israel is not about specific points of behavior that can be addressed or lies that can be disproven, but rather about the very legitimacy of a Jewish nation-state. The Tutu accusation of colonialization and apartheid comes from a place of hating Israel.

The U.N.’s denial of Jewish history in Jerusalem and Hebron, its endless resolutions accusing Israel of racism and genocide, come from the same hateful yearning to see the end of Israel. It’s a war of total delegitimization, and it is the real anti-Semitism of our time.

Understanding the battlefield and facing it directly by unapologetically asserting Israel’s rights to a Jewish national state in the ancestral homeland would be a much-needed public diplomacy turnaround in the narrative war. (JNS Jan 12)