



Jerusalem 5:26
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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*

By every possible standard, however, the UN has conspicuously failed to live up to its own objectives of maintaining global peace and security.

It has failed to keep peace in the world, failed to stop global conflicts, failed to halt the

carnage in Syria. It has done nothing to prevent Islamic jihadi aggression, nothing to halt the horrific mass murder of Christians in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world, nothing to stop the murder of opposition politicians and extinction of human rights in country after country.

Instead, the overtly anti-American, anti-western and anti-Israel UN provides a rhetorical shield and effective justification and incitement for tyranny and oppression. It has turned the free societies among its members into effective accomplices to terrorism, genocide and other abuses of human rights.

It's high time to acknowledge the failure of the original ideal and why it has failed. What's needed instead is a United Democratic Nations. Such an organisation would command more respect than a trans-national institution founded on the mistaken belief that tyrannies and free societies can be bound together for mutual advantage.

The UN was created as a result of the shattering impact of the Second World War. It was founded on a starry-eyed belief in the brotherhood of man. But if a lion lies down with a lamb, the lion doesn't turn vegan. The lamb gets eaten.

(MelaniePhillips.com Oct 12)

Commentary...

The UN Human Rights Council is a Sick Joke

By Melanie Phillips

Some of the world's worst human rights violators have now been placed in charge of protecting the world's human rights.

China, Russia, Cuba and Pakistan are among the 15 countries that have won seats on the UN Human Rights Council in a secret-ballot of the 193-member UN General Assembly.

China jails opponents of the regime and has sent hundreds of thousands of Uighurs into state re-education camps. Russia poisons its dissidents. Pakistan represses Christians, Hindus and Ahmadis. Cuba is a police state.

Farical as this is, it's nothing new. The council has often included human rights abusers such as Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Angola, Qatar and Venezuela.

Its activities also make a mockery of its remit. "If a state thinks they can conceal the human rights violations they may have committed, or escape criticism by sitting on the Human Rights Council, they are greatly mistaken," said the council's spokesman Rolando Gomez. But that is exactly what does happen.

The council routinely ignores violations by tyrannical regimes while perversely and egregiously targeting its condemnations instead at Israel, the sole democracy in the Middle East. Since 2006, the council has adopted 90 resolutions condemning Israel — more than all the resolutions against Syria, North Korea and Iran combined.

The US has expressed its disgust over this monstrous travesty of human rights, with the Trump administration pulling out of the council altogether in 2018. To their shame, Britain and the EU remain silent about its intrinsic moral bankruptcy and continue to lend it authority and implicit approval by remaining members. The UK and France are now to take their places on the council once again, with Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab having refused to say whether the UK would support China in the vote.

The reason for the council's systemic perversity, however, lies deeper — in an existential problem with the UN itself.

Gomez boasted that when the newly elected members take their seats in January, 119 of the 193 UN's member states will have served on the council, reflecting its diversity and giving the council "legitimacy when speaking out on human rights violations in all countries."

But this is in fact the essence of the problem. The UN does indeed represent the world — and most countries in the world are tyrannies, authoritarian despotisms or failed states.

The UN's original membership of 51 states has swelled over the years to 193. This growth transformed it from the defender of freedom into a vector of injustice, corruption and moral indifference. By 1993, only 75 out of 184 member states were free democracies.

Everything changed with the arrival of the non-aligned nations. This bloc of countries, mainly from Asia and Africa, believed the west had dominated the UN for too long. Their numbers enabled them to dominate it instead and suffuse it with a poisonous ideology aimed at taking revenge on the west for their perceived oppression under colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Their arrival turned the UN into an intrinsically anti-western body. Having been sidelined by the Cold War, which exposed its irrelevance, the UN became in effect the captive of the Soviet bloc and its allies.

In 1985, the Soviet bloc and its associates introduced a resolution, passed the following year in watered-down form, which was designed to preserve their power to abuse their citizens' human rights. The UN turned into a platform for anti-western, anti-American and anti-Israel hostility while sanitising or ignoring real human rights abuses.

Yet as if it has turned itself into the chorus to John Lennon's Imagine, the pathologically guilt-ridden and deluded liberal west (the current Trump administration apart) persists in regarding the UN as a dispassionate and moral arbiter of global peace and security whose sanctified decisions have the authority of holy writ.

Chevron's Purchase is Another Nail in the BDS Movement's Coffin

By Jonathan S. Tobin

For many decades, one of the givens in the discussion about the Arab world's war on Israel was the role that the American and international oil industry played as a supporter of the Arab war on Zionism. One of the most important factors in sustaining the hostility of the foreign-policy establishment to Israel was the enormous influence of the huge oil companies that viewed the U.S. relationship with Israel as a threat to their ability to do business in the Middle East. The notion of any of those corporations doing business in Israel was unthinkable since they were among the primary enablers of the Arab boycott of the Jewish state.

That's why last week's completion of the purchase of Noble Energy, the company which operates and holds the rights to most of the natural-gas reserves off of Israel's coastline by the Chevron Corporation, should be regarded as a milestone in the country's economic history. The fact that even many news sites treated it as just an interesting, if not particularly earth-shaking, piece of Middle East business news isn't so much curious as it is a sign of just how absurd the BDS movement's efforts to economically isolate the Jewish state have become.

If the economic muscle behind the Arab world's long campaign to treat Israel as a pariah state has not only given up that fight, but is making a massive investment in that country's future, then where does that leave a movement that still imagines that its anti-Semitic propaganda will erase the Zionist experiment?

While something for friends of Israel to cheer, the \$4 billion sale price was actually a bargain. Noble took all the risks in a hazardous project that it embarked upon more in 1999. The energy industry has been hard-hit by the slackening demand brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, the success of fracking in the United States and the opening of new sources outside of the traditional oil-producing nations.

But Chevron also sees a golden opportunity in the Eastern Mediterranean as vast new fields of cheap energy under the seabed are still waiting to be tapped. As The New York Times recently reported, natural gas from new energy suppliers like Israel has become much more marketable because of concerns about climate change in which it is somehow viewed as less of a problem than oil.

We don't know whether that will hold true in the long run, but for now, Israel's new role as an energy exporter—due to the fields already developed by Noble—rather than an importer (with \$25 billion in contracts to supply gas to power the Egyptian and Jordanian

economies) has effected a revolution in the country's financial future.

Though it is now increasingly taken for granted, the hostility of Arab oil-producing nations for Israel, which was enough to ensure that a company like Chevron would avoid all official contacts with Jerusalem, is equally a thing of the past. Last month's normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were only possible because Saudi Arabia approved of the deals. The Saudis once financed hate for Israel and Jews around the world. But now, thanks to the appeasement of Iran by the Obama administration, it views Israel as a strategic ally against Tehran. That means that it also acquiesces to business agreements like Chevron's investment in Israeli natural gas.

Egypt, the most populous Arab nation, was once Israel's most potent military foe. But now, under the dictatorial regime of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, it looks to Israel as an ally against common foes in the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as the Al-Qaeda terrorists operating in Gaza.

The effort to exploit natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean has also brought together Egypt, Cyprus and Greece in an effort to build an oil pipeline and for joint security against threats from Turkey. Chevron's involvement is a signal that Turkey's efforts to intimidate these new allies failed to scare off the kind of massive investment that will ensure that the group's efforts ultimately succeed.

It's also noteworthy that Nobel managed to survive the difficult task of navigating the Israeli government's role in developing the natural-gas fields. Doing so in a political system that, despite the switch to free market principles from the damaging socialist mindset that dominated the Jewish state's economy for its first few decades, is far from business-friendly was no easy task.

That the effort was not squelched by a bureaucracy, political hacks and left-wing critics who could never see the big picture of this venture's importance to Israel's future was something of a miracle. It's a tribute to Nobel's patience and the efforts of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who for all of his faults remains one of the few Israeli politicians who understands economics.

Chevron's move is not the solution to all of Israel's economic problems, especially when one remembers that the country remains in the grip of an ongoing global pandemic that, as it has elsewhere, devastated the country. However, it must still be seen as a signpost that makes the end of Israel's economic isolation and its status as a First World economy official. Even in hard times, that's something that everyone who cares about the Jewish state should cheer, as well as a reminder to its enemies that they have failed miserably. (JNS Oct 13)

The Palestinians are Losing the Arab World's Support

By Eyal Zisser

The recent wave of rapprochement between Arab countries and Israel and the Palestinian Authority's glaring inability to prevent more nations from pursuing normalization with the Jewish state have left Ramallah stunned.

The Palestinians' efforts to prevent the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain from signing peace treaties with Israel fell flat after the Arab League refused to back them, despite a routine statement condemning the Gulf states for "abandoning" the Palestinian cause.

The days when Palestinian bullying intimidated the Emirates are over. The new generation of Gulf rulers is made from sturdier stuff.

Last week, Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz mounted an unprecedented assault against the Palestinian leadership, saying, "There is something that successive Palestinian leadership historically share in common: they always bet on the losing side, and that comes at a price."

The shock felt in Ramallah was palpable. So much so that even chief PLO Executive Committee Secretary-General Saeb Erekat reluctantly agreed that Arab countries seeking to normalize relations with Israel "can do so," asking only that they refrain from attacking the Palestinian leadership as the Saudi prince had.

It seems that Gulf rulers are not the only ones that have had enough of the Palestinians. Both Lebanon and Syria have recently said that they no longer dismiss the notion of negotiating a peace deal with Israel.

Even for Beirut and Damascus, potential normalization with Israel is no longer inextricably linked to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There is no doubt that the Palestinians have rightfully earned such

treatment.

For decades they have taken Arab countries' support for granted, demanding their every whim be met, no matter the price. The Arab countries agreed lest they be branded "traitors" to the Palestinian cause.

But those days are gone. Arab rules now put their own interests ahead of the Palestinians, and this has ushered in a new era—one of normalization and peace with Israel. (Israel Hayom Oct 12)

Gal Gadot's Rude 'Wokening'

By Ruthie Blum

Israeli actress and "Wonder Woman" star Gal Gadot is no stranger to controversy, but the current brouhaha surrounding her latest project seems to have taken even her by surprise. The stir arose after it was announced on Sunday that she had been cast as the lead in "Cleopatra," a historical drama about the legendary queen of Egypt produced by Paramount.

Revealing that she would be teaming up again with "Wonder Woman" director Patty Jenkins in the epic, she told the Twittersphere that she was happy "to bring the story of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, to the big screen in a way she's never been seen before. To tell her story for the first time through women's eyes, both behind and in front of the camera."

Though Gadot may have thought she would elicit cheers for her feminism, she was treated instead to a cacophony of booing and hissing.

Her many and varied detractors were divided into two categories: the vicious BDS-ers with a long-standing grudge against her because she's from Israel, and the "woke" choir, obsessed with "white privilege" and "cultural appropriation," in art as in life. To such fanatics, poetic license is taboo unless it involves rewriting history in the direction that they deem politically acceptable.

A sample of responses to her innocent tweet is illustrative.

Take the comment posted by self-described "father/writer/Prince fan/proud to hate Trump #Biden/Harris 2020" Tony LaFace, for example, who wrote: "Another attempt to white wash [sic] a historical figure! U are a white Israeli [sic] woman. Cleopatra was MACEDONIAN and EGYPTIAN. Its [sic] awful how u deny important roles to women of color!!!!"

Then there's Egyptian singer and radio/TV host Wael Mansour, whose more succinct remark was equally inane: "Can't wait to boycott this white washing [sic] disaster, so many wrongs!"

Someone nicknamed "Fashionable Mom" contributed: "The day you stop trying to hijack and rewrite the history of the different peoples of this world and insert your likeness as an ideal is the day you will start to create history for yourselves. Cleopatra was a great woman and she was an African woman, an Egyptian woman!"

Content creator Dicc Clair said: "Yup ... ANOTHER WHITE WASHED [sic] Movie Filmed in Africa w/ALL WHITE CASTS. The darker skinned as the underlings. CLEOPATRA WAS "BLACK."

That the real Cleopatra actually was Greek made no difference to these ignorant social-media pundits. They had a point to make, and that was all that mattered.

If Gadot hadn't just been listed by Forbes magazine as the third highest-paid actress in the world in 2020—mostly as a result of earnings from the yet-to-be-released Netflix film "Red Notice"—one might feel sorry for her. She is a true bleeding heart, after all, whose desire to play Cleopatra had nothing to do with race or creed.

It's common for Israeli liberals to experience a rude awakening when their politics don't protect them from the wrath of their country's enemies abroad. Gadot got a hefty dose of reality in 2014, for instance, when she dared to voice solidarity for her people and condemn the terrorist group trying to wipe them out.

During "Operation Protective Edge"—Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza—Gadot got raked over the coals by Palestinians and their apologists for an Instagram photo of herself and her daughter lighting Shabbat candles, with the accompanying text: "I am sending my love and prayers to my fellow Israeli citizens. Especially to all the boys and girls who are risking their lives protecting my country against the horrific acts conducted by Hamas, who are hiding like cowards behind women and children ... We shall overcome!!! Shabbat Shalom! #weareright #freegazafromhamas #stopterror."

Suddenly, the international sensation with a sexy Hebrew lilt was blasted for having served in the Israel Defense Forces and—gasp—

being proud of it. This was a huge no-no for the BDS crowd, who began to accuse her of war crimes.

Luckily for Gadot, her box-office success was of greater interest to her Hollywood studio than her country of origin or the fact that her military duty involved teaching calisthenics to combat troops. If anything—as she herself has said in interviews—her fitness prepared her for the role with which she has become synonymous.

Even if she had been a commando, however, she would have been at a loss in the face of American “woke” culture, in which the pen has become stiff competition for the sword. What she ought to have learned by now, after so much time among progressive bullies in the United States, is that the animosity she’s currently experiencing cannot be countered through appeasement.

Indeed, she can argue that Cleopatra was a descendant of Macedonian Greek general Ptolemy; she can shout “Joe Biden for president” from the rooftop of her L.A. mansion; and she can work to reassure her social-media followers that her main mission is to promote female empowerment—you know, in the vein of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose Sept. 18 passing spurred her to thank the late judge on Instagram “for everything [she] brought to this world,” and to punctuate the tribute with a broken-heart emoji.

None of the above would or does suffice for the radicals bent on discrediting her, not only as a fair-skinned Israeli, but as someone who hasn’t gone far enough to the left. Short of renouncing her roots and refusing the cinematic role of her dreams, there’s nothing she can do to satiate their cancel-culture hunger.

But she might want to consider expressing a bit of gratitude to the slew of conservatives engaging in ideological warfare on her behalf. That would make her a genuine superhero. (JNS Oct 13)

A Reminder to American Jews: Civilization is Fragile

By Dennis Prager

The question I receive more than any other from non-Jews is: Why are so many Jews on the left?

Before addressing it, I should note that the same question could be asked of Christians and other non-Jews. Why have so many mainstream Protestants and Catholics (up to and including the Pope) embraced the left? Why have nearly all blacks, the majority of Hispanics and Asian Americans, the most successful ethnic group in America, embraced the left? And, outside of the United States, why have most Germans, French, Canadians, Australians and others in the West embraced the left?

This question could be asked about almost every group in the world.

Nevertheless, it is valid to ask it about Jews because, if any group should be wary of dismantling a society, especially a decent one, it is the Jews. The moment civilization begins to disintegrate, the Jews are the first victims—never the only, but always the first. That’s why Jews have so often been likened to the proverbial canary in the coal mine. Miners take canaries down with them because when there are noxious fumes, canaries die, and when the miners see the dead canaries, they know there are toxic fumes they must fight, or they, too, will die.

That’s why decent non-Jews who don’t fight anti-Semitism are fools. They don’t understand that anti-Semitism represents a mortal threat to them. Tens of millions of non-Jews were killed because decent non-Jews ignored Hitler early on, dismissing him and Nazism as a Jewish problem.

It is often asked how the most culturally advanced country in Europe, perhaps in the world, could produce Nazism and the Holocaust. Or, as it is often put, “How did the country that gave us Bach, Beethoven, Heine and Schiller give us Auschwitz?”

One answer is that advanced culture and advanced morality are not the same. The Nazis loved classical music.

The other, more important answer is that civilization is fragile.

It is fragile because civilization consists of human beings, and human nature is profoundly flawed. Exceptional evil is as common as exceptional good. It takes a great deal of effort and a great deal of time to make a decent society. But it takes little effort and little time to destroy a society.

That most American Jews do not appreciate how extraordinarily decent America is—compared with other countries, not compared with some childish utopian vision—only proves the lack of relationship between education and wisdom and between intelligence and wisdom.

The left is tearing down America because the left in America is what the left has been everywhere: a purely destructive force. Conservatives and liberals build everything, and leftists destroy everything: music, art, universities, high schools, elementary schools, economies, late-night comedy (for that matter, all comedy), journalism, sports, and now, the sciences.

In addition, everywhere the left gains power, it suppresses personal freedom, beginning with the most important freedom, freedom of speech.

Every violent demonstration (also known as “riots”) over the past six months has been a left-wing riot.

Why, then, does this left-wing destruction not frighten America’s Jews? Do they not know the more power the left has, the less freedom they and all other Americans will have?

Do they not know how much Black Lives Matter, Antifa and the rest of the left loathe Israel? Or do they not care? (The answer is that, increasingly, many American Jews do not care—especially young Jews, who have been raised by left-wing teachers and left-wing media.)

How do they not recoil when statues of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are violently removed?

Do American Jews not know that the unique esteem in which they (and Israel since 1948) have been held in American society has been entirely due to the Judeo-Christian roots of America’s values and its Judeo-Christian identity?

Do they not know that in a post-Christian America, they will be just another minority and that, as the left gains influence, non-left Jews (specifically religious and pro-Israel Jews) will be singled out for opprobrium? (Just look at how Jewish students who publicly identify as Jews, let alone as pro-Israel Jews, are treated on many American campuses.)

We conservatives know the answer to the question, “How did the country that gave the world Beethoven give the world Nazism?”

The answer: Civilization is fragile.

That was true in Germany, and it is true in America. (Townhall Sep 29)

Turkey is the Next Iran By Dan Schueftan

Bernard Lewis, the preeminent Middle East researcher of the past few generations, said after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rose to power that Iran could turn into Turkey and Turkey might morph into Iran. Lewis meant that after the mullah regime was ousted, Iran might fulfill the hope for moderation and contribution that were once hung on Turkey, whereas Erdoğan could drive the modern and moderate Turkey he inherited into destructive radicalism in the style of the Islamic Revolution. For now, the threat from Ankara is materializing, but not the hopes for Tehran.

In addition to the disaster he has brought down on his own country, Erdoğan’s megalomaniacal policies have outraged his neighbors in the Fertile Crescent, the Arabia Peninsula and the Mediterranean Basin. The damage he is causing is being discovered in Europe. His policy is hurting American and Israeli interests. Hamas, Qatar, Azerbaijan and the government of Fayeze al-Sarraj in Tripoli are his only allies.

In Europe, he poses a multifaceted threat. The NATO alliance was established by democratic nations to address the Soviet danger. Turkey was a little unusual, but gradually developed democratic characteristics, and NATO could depend on its large military. Recently, we have been seeing a stark contrast between the democratic characteristics of most NATO members and Turkey’s regime of oppression. Erdoğan’s close ties with Russia, and acquisition of an air defense system that poses a threat to NATO aircraft, testify to his intentions. Erdoğan’s steps to eradicate government functionaries and weaken Turkey’s armed forces erode its value as a military asset. His policy is ruining Turkey’s credibility; it is now a Trojan horse in NATO.

Erdoğan isn’t even trying to hide the threat to European society and politics in two sensitive areas: enclaves of Turks and refugees. He is blatantly encouraging a process of radicalization among the million Turks who have emigrated to Europe since the 1970s, mainly to Germany. That radicalization demands that they remain loyal to Turkey and their Islamic culture, at the expense of their citizenship and process of integrating into their new home countries.

In the fall of 2015, Erdoğan encouraged a wave of about a

million refugees to Europe, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given the Europeans' helplessness in addressing the matter, he struck a "protection" deal with German Chancellor Angela Merkel—he would stop the influx of refugees for a billion euros. Since then, he has been using his ability to reopen the dam as a way of extorting benefits and money from the frightened Europeans.

The danger he poses to American interests is clear, and it's hard to understand why President Trump accepts his outrageous behavior. The damage he has done to NATO hurts the United States, too. Weakening European society through radicalized Muslim citizens and a flood of refugees also hurts Europe's ability to stand up to Russia and bolsters their already-strong tendency for pacification. Erdoğan's battle against the Kurds hurts the United States' trusted allies in Syrian and Iraq and sends a message to local forces that the Americans cannot be depended upon.

We also need to add the threats the Muslim Brotherhood—with Erdoğan's encouragement—poses to pro-American governments in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf and Jordan, and his hostile policy toward Israel. Nor does the United States want Turkish hegemony in the Mediterranean Sea. The only American punishment meted out to Erdoğan so far—a refusal to sell him F-35 aircraft because he bought a missile system from the Russians—is no deterrent.

Israel has a long list of problems with the anti-Semitic megalomaniac from Ankara. He supports Hamas, he tried to break the maritime weapons blockade on the Gaza Strip and allows terrorists to operate in his country under Turkish passports. He threatens Turkey's most important Arab allies, wages a pan-Islamic war against Israel in Jerusalem and sends his agents to fight it. In the Mediterranean, he threatens Israel's economic assets as well as its allies.

Erdoğan is hated and isolated. Turkey is vulnerable mostly in the economic sector. About a month ago, Moody's lowered Turkey's credit rating to B2, the lowest in the 30 years it has been measured and five steps below the rank it needs to attract investment. Aside from his nationalist incitement and oppressive measures, Erdoğan is holding on because the economic situation remains tolerable. This is where he can be reined in, but for that to happen, we need the Americans to take the lead. Trump hasn't suggested it yet and Joe Biden will almost certainly not want anything to do with it. (Israel Hayom Oct 13)

Are Jews Indigenous People? Here's What a Native American Jew Thinks By Hen Mazzig

In recent months, the never-ending heated debate on the Israel-Palestinian conflict has sometimes boiled over to a new debate: Are Jews indigenous to the land of Israel?

Thousands of years of archaeological and historical evidence shows that Judaism and the beginnings of Jewish people, began in Judea—known today as the state of Israel. Through conquests and imperialism, ethnic Jews have been exiled from their ancestral homeland and subsequently settled in every corner of the world, from Eastern Europe to the Peruvian Amazon. The people who came from that place, what is today called Israel, are referred to, even by people who think we do not belong there, as Jews. Even adversaries like Hamas and Hezbollah do not dispute our right to call ourselves Jews—or, in Arabic, "Yahud" ("Yehuda" meaning Judea).

But as the indigenous rights movement grows, the meaning of indigeneity has become more nuanced. Even some who aren't trying to deny the geographical history of Jews might be hesitant to call us an indigenous group.

It seemed to me that the best way to tackle this matter would be to let another indigenous party without a dog in the fight, so to speak, weigh in on the matter. So I sat down with Mahrinah von Schlegel, an indigenous advocate belonging to the Tewa people of the Northern Rio Grande Pueblos. Well—her "dog" is partially in the "fight" because she also happens to be a Sephardic Jew. Currently, von Schlegel is a development consultant with Zia Impact and a United Nations NGO representative who also serves on the Ethnic Coordinating Council of the Democratic Party.

"Judaism is a land-based agricultural religion," von Schlegel told me. "We have had a spiritual and stewardship relationship with the land of Israel since the beginning of our collective memory. Land relationships and stewardship is a critical foundation for any tribe's indigeneity."

Von Schlegel draws her definition of indigenous peoples from the

United Nations, which defines the term as inheritors of unique cultures who have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. She noted how indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their identities, lifestyles and their right to ancestral lands throughout history, but their rights have continuously been violated by empires, nation-states and external colonial powers.

This is something to which any Jew over the past thousand years who has chanted "Next Year in Jerusalem!" at a Passover Seder can relate. "I will add that indigenous peoples must practice a land-based tribal religion," said von Schlegel. "Whether Jews want to acknowledge it or not, our religious practice is both land-based and agrarian, additionally sharing our tribal history across a cyclical lunar calendar."

As a member of both communities, von Schlegel has experienced firsthand how Pueblo People and Jews share ritual practices of giving thanks for the food, land, knowledge and other gifts from our Creator. In particular, she believes what Jews do every Friday, as we ritually welcome in the "Angels of Peace" to mark the beginning of Shabbat, resembles customary native rituals of welcoming spirits or ancestors.

"It is a completely similar practice, as Jews are also indigenous people," she explained, noting that her Jewish faith aligns with Native beliefs, with separate expressions due to geography, tribal preference and the way those relationships have evolved. "It is not interfaith; it is intertribal," she points out.

Von Schlegel believes that all Jewish holidays, and Sukkot in particular, have customs that resemble those of other indigenous cultures. All Native American groups orient themselves among their sacred directions and ritually utilize species (medicines). "We, as indigenous people, pray in the ways and languages of our ancestors as much as we are able. Jews do, too."

When it comes to the question of Israel, the answer is clear to von Schlegel: "We are indigenous to Israel because it is our ancestral homeland, home to the history and accomplishments of our people, the bodies and blood of our ancestors." However, some anti-Zionist Jewish activists, such as CODEPINK National Co-Director Ariel Gold, have recently claimed that not all Jews are indigenous to Israel. She has personally disowned her indigenous ties to Israel, claiming that because her family lived in Spain in the 1400s, Spain is her indigenous homeland instead.

Von Schlegel believes that one can lose indigenous identity, but not by living in the Diaspora. "If they became a different identity and are no longer Jews, then they're no longer indigenous. They're whatever they became," she said. "If they don't pray for Israel, feel themselves a part of our people (in the greater sense—past, present and future generations) or have relationships with our ancestors there, if they don't identify with our tribe...then they're not."

As an indigenous advocate, von Schlegel takes issue with how anti-Zionists have tried to compare Palestinians to Native Americans. According to her, pro-Palestinian activists have visited numerous tribes in America to argue that their narratives are the same. "They are not," she says, emphatically explaining that pro-Palestinian activists are co-opting the indigenous experience for their own political gain. She believes American Jews should be owning their identity as indigenous peoples, and building relationships with analogous communities.

"Jews are not only indigenous to Israel—we are indigenous peoples. We must remember that," she noted. "Look into Native communities around your area, learn about them and their needs—connect with them. Understand how similar we are as indigenous peoples, and how we must work together."

Von Schlegel says she speaks particularly to Jews who live in the Americas. "Native American battles for sovereignty, language reclamation, traditional food production, water protection, ecological preservation, religious expression and defining our modern realities through our own cultural lens not only reflect the same struggles and accomplishments of the Jewish people, but also positively benefit Jewish lives in the United States."

As indigenous people who reclaimed our ancestral homeland, we must be sensitive to others undergoing that same process.

The writer is an Israeli writer and a senior fellow at The Tel Aviv Institute. He descended from Babylonian Jews and Jews of the Amazigh tribe of North Africa. (Newsweek Oct 15)
