

**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*

And how, specifically, have American pro-Israeli lobbying groups (and even what I consider to be an anti-Israeli group like J Street) converted financial clout into political power in the US? They gave money to politicians for their campaigns. The earth-shattering result

Commentary...**The Consequences of Backing a Loser** By Brian Thomas

I'm reading a succession of whining articles across the Left and far-left American Jewish world about a decision in Israel. If I had to pick one modern Internet phrase to describe all of the sentiments expressed, it would be "butthurt." Non-Orthodox Diaspora Jews have just experienced the first concrete result of overwhelmingly backing the wrong horse in 2016.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has taken a local, pragmatic, political decision to renege on a deal over mixed-gender prayer adjacent to the holiest place Jews are currently allowed to pray. Local Israeli politics are, correctly, decided by those who live and vote in Israel. Netanyahu needs a coalition which includes Orthodox parties to counter the farleft forces that would, in the big picture, weaken his stance on defeating jihad and what he considers to be furthering the legitimate interests of the Jewish State of Israel.

Many of the Diaspora and far-left Jews currently experiencing this extraordinary sense of betrayal are the same ones who, on a different day, would call for Jews in Israel to be expelled from Jewish lands Jews regained in 1967. When exhausted, sometimes concentration camp-surviving Jews fought to an armistice line they could hold in 1949, it failed to include much of the beating heart of Jewish Israel. Not just the Western Wall: all of the Old City of Jerusalem, the burial places of our matriarchs and patriarchs and numerous other sites of incredible significance. Not only ancient sites but communities that had already re-grown following the centuries of jihadi occupation. Those reborn and ancient communities of Jews were marched out of their homes at Jordanian gunpoint (or murdered) in 1949.

Those of us lucky enough to live in Israel today and go about our daily lives without regard to that obsolete 1949 green crayon line have moved past regarding it with any reverence. We feel we've gone through every necessary process to prove that land for peace is predicated on the false assumption that conflict here is centered on land. Most of us are satisfied there is nothing we can ever afford to give up which would completely placate our foes. We will never return to being subjugated dhimmis under Muslim overlords: that has been the negotiating stance throughout all dealings with the Arabs for the past century. Subjugated Jews is their only acceptable solution to Islam's internal crisis of having lost control of Jews who now fail to submit to Islamic Sharia law.

Those same, largely American, Jews who feel deeply betrayed by Netanyahu's latest pragmatic political maneuver overwhelmingly wish to participate in inter-faith bridge building with Islam in America. They're vehemently against US President Donald Trump's attempts to look closely at the implications of Islamic hate for non-Muslims. They're fighting huge internal battles over whether it is even possible to separate a desire to destroy the world's only Jewish state (anti-Zionism) from Jew hatred. Perhaps in the context of a John Lennon-inspired "Imagine" dystopian nightmare one could call for all nations to be abolished, but if you're attacking only the Jewish claim to nationhood and no other nation, then anti-Zionism is hatred of Jews.

These Jews backed all the causes which lost in the 2016 election, and they didn't just back the losing side – they were vehemently dismissive and contemptuous of so many who voted for Trump. Perhaps in their own eastand west-coast bubbles, they managed to avoid wider contact with the red MAGA-hat wearing, unwashed masses, but they are out there, filling all the space between the coasts.

What power do these Jews still hold in Washington then? Far less than they did nine months ago. Can they bring a halt to defense aid? Unlikely: many in Israel would like to see us less reliant on American defense spending aid. It is also obvious most of the US aid, overwhelmingly given as a gift card, valid only for purchasing from the big American defense contractors, is a symbiotic relationship. Both sides need it.

of 2016 (and it has continued into 2017's special elections) is the precipitous decline in the link between campaign spending and winning. This spending used to go to buy adverts on main-stream media. There will be books written on why this link is broken: collapse in trust of mainstream media; social media and so forth – but broken it is.

Left-wing Jews represent a sharply declining power base in America, and they're also breeding themselves out of existence. Jews who voted for Hillary wish to create a new assimilationist, progressive Judaism which they think suits their own position in a Diaspora society. It isn't clear there is widespread political support for this transformation in Israel. Israel is stronger than it has ever been: the same foreign Jews who advocate two states on the '67 lines effectively don't want Israeli Jews to own apartments which overlook the Western Wall Plaza. Thankfully they no longer get to decide the way in which Jews pray there. (Jerusalem Post Jul 5)

The writer made aliya from the UK to Israel in 2009. He runs a business in Israel while writing and broadcasting about Israel and Islam. He is an indigenous rights activist living on the ancestral lands of his forefathers.

Who Are We to Tell Religious Jews What to Do at the Western Wall?

By Irit Linur

Like many secular Jews, I am not particularly interested in the Kotel. It has no shade or Zara outlet. But, I hoped over there this week for a surprise visit, and two things caught my eye.

First, there was the mixed gender prayer space. It is beautiful, built on an impressive archaeological site below Robinson's Arch. Unlike the Western Wall plaza, it is shaded, and you can enter it without a security check.

The second impression was the difference in the number of visitors to the two plazas. There were thousands of people in the Western Wall plaza on a regular weekday. There was just a cat in the mixed section. In light of the outcry that arose around the mixing of the Kotel agreement one would have expected to see thousands of Women of the Wall, imbued with religious spirit, alongside bar mitzva ceremonies in which grandma need not stand on a chair to get a peek at the men's section.

However, the mixed section was practically abandoned.

A few meters away, the Western Wall is teeming with Jewish life, despite the long – and gender-segregated – security inspection line. It is full of life because for hundreds of years its natural guardians – the Orthodox – preserved its holiness.

They engage in it, with texts that are hundreds or thousands of years old, and a rabbinic hierarchy, and tradition and strict rules that if they change at all, change s-l-o-w-l-y.

And they are engaged in the daily observance of commandments and prohibitions that not everyone can rationally explain, and some of them are unacceptable.

And even those that are acceptable can be deceiving: Orthodox Jews' strict observance of Shabbat does not stem from an adherence to socialism or primordial support for workers of the world but rather a godly commandment.

Orthodox Jews avoid schnitzel with butter even though they know chickens do not produce milk. And the Kotel is most definitely holy because anyone who keeps chicken and milk separate is exactly the type to find holiness in stones.

The obsession with holiness is sometimes annoying, perhaps even arrogant, so particularly witty secular Jews can mockingly call God "an imaginary friend" or compare him to the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

But when faith in an imaginary friend begets the Bible, a people and a 2,000-year-old culture as well as a moral system that ignited Western culture, you can drop the smugness with which people brag about their atheist purity.

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And let's admit the truth: Not keeping commandments is much easier than keeping them.

Some will say that even without commandments secular Jews are no less Jewish than religious ones, so they should be equal partners in determining the character of the Kotel.

It is correct in principle, but there is meaning to keeping your religious traditions, or at least recognizing them, before pretending to make religious rulings.

I, for example, am a typical product of state secular education. I was surprised to discover in my first year of university that the Rambam was a world-famous philosopher and not just another baba from the graves of righteous Jews.

Thus, I still don't feel ready to write a prayer equal to the Aleinu, or to prove that God is totally cool with driving on Shabbat and with a female rabbi. You have to wait 500 or 600, or even 2,000 years for that.

And if we insist on secularism as a value, it's hard for me to understand the accompanying insistence on sitting on the tribunal, free of religion's bonds, and shouting out directives to a Jew who fasted not only on Yom Kippur but also on... nu, remind me ... oh, right, Tzom Gedalya, and furiously reads the entire Hagaddah every Passover seder, including the part after the meal.

We are arguing with these people about Judaism, and what is the right Judaism, and how Judaism should be, while we are armed with ignorance that we acquired through state secular education, a very partial study of the Bible, "Two are holding a tallis" from seventh-grade Talmud class, and that's it.

We sometimes seem like six-year-old children who are trying to join a philosophy discussion without knowing who Plato is.

You don't have to be religious to recognize the religious contribution to turning the Kotel into much more than an archaeological site.

Religious Jews made the Kotel holy long before we extended Israeli sovereignty over it, including periods in which praying there was dangerous. They prayed without a partition between men and women when the Ottoman regime forbade Jewish worship.

Religious Jews adhered to their imaginary friend, whom we banished from our secular lives.

We rejected large parts of the cultural enterprise that Judaism fostered, and we even defended our children from it.

We complained about religious influence in the education system, instead of complaining that they didn't teach us how a siddur looks.

Excuse me, but I don't believe a sudden outburst of holy lust has overcome us. It looks to me like the disappointment of those who fully believed you could have a Jewish state without Judaism, and perhaps an overreaction by those whose enlightened sensitivities are repulsed by any level of religious feeling.

The fight over the Kotel isn't really about Reform Jews. They are a marginal group in Israel. They may be a – not especially effective – barrier against mass assimilation.

However, Israel is the only place in the world in which you can be a Jew and, without fearing for the Judaism of your grandchildren, cast off the burden of commandments and still feel as Jewish as Moses.

None of this could exist without religious Jews.

As a secular person, I believe that if we run the Kotel according to secular standards, it will look less like a holy site and more like a parking lot.

Fortunately, the Orthodox will keep praying there even then. (Haaretz Jul 10)

Indian Prime Minister Makes Historic Visit to Jerusalem, Skips Ramallah By Efraim Inbar

Narendra Modi's July 5-6 visit to Israel, the first-ever by an Indian prime minister, reflects the significant expansion in relations between the two countries that has taken place since the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992.

Since Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in May 2014, his administration has shed its predecessors' reservations about regular public discourse regarding India's ties with Israel. It is worthy of note that Modi's trip to Israel was not "balanced" with a visit to the Palestinian Authority, indicating that India has freed its relations with Israel from its historical commitment to the Palestinian issue. Indeed, India has modified its voting pattern at international organizations by refraining to join the automatic majority against Israel.

India and Israel display high levels of threat perception and share a common strategic agenda. Both have waged major conventional wars against their neighbors and have experienced low-intensity conflict and terror, as they are both involved in protracted conflicts characterized by

complex ethnic and religious components not always well understood by outsiders. Both face weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of their rivals.

India has freed its relations with Israel from its historic commitment to the Palestinian issue.

The two nations share a common threat: radical offshoots of Islam in the greater Middle East. Israel regards parts of the Arab world — Saudi Arabia in particular — as hubs for Islamic extremism, while India views Saudi-Pakistani relations with suspicion. Moreover, India fears the Pakistani nuclear arsenal might ultimately fall into the hands of Islamic radicals.

For Israel, Islamic radicals in the Arab world and in the Islamic Republic of Iran constitute a constant security challenge. This challenge has become more acute as Iran's nuclear potential has grown. The more recent ISIS phenomenon has ramifications beyond the battlefields of Iraq and Syria, as its offshoots threaten the stability of Egypt and Jordan — Israel's neighbors — and are increasingly sources of concern in south and southeast Asia.

India has gradually overcome its inhibitions and engaged in security cooperation with Israel. In the wake of diplomatic normalization in 1992, then Indian Defense Minister Sharad Pawar admitted to having already cooperated with Israel on counterterrorism. This cooperation, which involves exchange of information on the finances, recruitment patterns, and training of terrorist groups, is conducted away from the public eye. The November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks underscored the need for better counterterrorism preparations in India and elicited greater cooperation with Israeli agencies.

India has relied on Israeli companies to upgrade aging Soviet platforms, such as Mig-21 fighter jets and T-72 tanks.

Arms supply and technology transfer have become important components in the bilateral relationship. Initially, Russian failure to deliver promised weapons at expected prices and/or schedules led India to turn to Israeli companies to upgrade some of its aging Soviet platforms, such as its Mig-21s and T-72 tank fleet.

Difficulties in the development of weapons systems at home have led to the purchase of Israeli products and to partnership in developing advanced military technology. New Delhi purchased advanced radar and communications equipment from Israel, as well as portable battlefield radars, hand-held thermals, night warfare vision equipment, and electronic fences to improve border monitoring. A long list of Israeli military items, such as ammunition, UAV parts, and even missiles (Spike anti-armor, the Python-4 air-to-air, naval Barak-8 surface-to-air) are being produced in India.

Examples of high-end items include the airborne Phalcon radar Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS), which is mounted on the Russian IL-76 transport aircraft, and the long-range Green Pine radar. The sale of the Phalcon by Israel to India required American approval, which was finally secured in May 2003. India signed a contract for the purchase of two additional Phalcon/IL-76 AWACS valued at \$1 billion during the November 2016 visit of Israel's President Reuven Rivlin to India. Israel was the third-largest arms supplier to India in the three years ending March 2016.

India has purchased high-end defense equipment from Israel, including Phalcon radar Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (left, mounted on a Russian transport aircraft) and the ground-based missile-defense Green Pine radar (right).

In April 2017, India signed a contract worth about \$2 billion to procure anti-tank missiles and air defense systems from the Israel Aerospace Industry (IAI). This was the largest order in Israel's history. One month later, the IAI secured another contract for \$630 million to supply Barak-8 missiles for the Indian Navy. Both deals involve technology transfer and production in India. These deals are part of PM Modi's \$250 billion plan to modernize the armed forces by 2025 amid tensions with neighbors China and Pakistan.

The Indian-Israeli nexus has various Indian Ocean implications, particularly in response to China's growing presence. The Indian Ocean, where India is an important actor, has become an area of growing interest for Israel because of its apprehensions about Iran and Pakistan.

While India, a major player in the international system, has improved relations with Washington, New Delhi's links with Jerusalem have the potential to smooth over some of the remaining difficulties in dealing with the US. Working with Israel fits into Modi's plan to deepen relations with the US given the US-Israel friendship.

New Delhi believes improving relations with Israel has had a positive effect on the U.S. disposition toward India.

New Delhi believes its normalization of relations with Israel in 1992 had a positive effect on the American disposition toward India. The

often-exaggerated power of the Jewish lobby in America was appreciated in New Delhi. In the 1990s, the American Jewish organizations valued the importance of India for the US and for Israel, as well as the potential advantages of nurturing good relations with the Indian community in America, whose congressional power is on the rise. Many members of the Indian lobby, the US-India Political Action Committee (USINPAC), which was formed in September 2002, expressed the desire to emulate American Jewish groups and showed interest in cooperation.

The Jewish and Indian lobbies worked together to gain the Bush administration's approval for Israel's sale of the Phalcon to India. Moreover, in July 2003, they were successful in adding an amendment to a bill giving aid to Pakistan that called on Islamabad to stop Islamic militants from crossing into India and to prevent the spread of WMD. In the fall of 2008, Jewish support was important in passing through the US Congress the US-India nuclear deal, which allowed India access to nuclear technology for civilian use despite its not being a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The decline of the US and the rise of China have strengthened the strategic glue between India and Israel.

Two strategic developments of the 21st century are likely to strengthen the strategic glue between India and Israel: the decline of the US and the rise of China. In the Middle East, the Obama administration projected weakness and encouraged Iran's quest for hegemony. US weakness is inevitably having ripple effects in other parts of the globe. Indeed, Asian states view the declining American role with concern. It is not clear whether new American president Donald Trump will adopt a more assertive foreign policy than that of his predecessor. Nor is it known how he will go about confronting China, as he displayed isolationist impulses during his election campaign.

India and Israel represent two ancient civilizations. They share a British colonial past and were the first to become independent (in 1947 and 1948, respectively) in the post-WWII decolonization wave. Both were born as the result of messy partitions and have maintained democratic regimes under adverse conditions ever since. Nevertheless, it took over four decades to establish a fruitful bilateral relationship.

For Israel, good relations with India reflect awareness of structural changes in the international system as the center of gravity moves to Asia and the Pacific Rim. India is an extremely important protagonist that requires Israel's utmost attention. (BESA Jul 1)

Under Trump, Settlements are No Longer the Obsessive Center of Attention By Raphael Ahren

On March 9, 2010, then-US vice president Joe Biden started a visit to Israel by asserting the administration's "absolute, total, unvarnished commitment to Israel's security."

A few hours later, when it emerged that Israel had approved 1,600 new housing units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo, he denounced "the substance and timing of the announcement," fuming that it "runs counter to the constructive discussions that I've had here in Israel." The next day, Biden doubled down: "At the request of President [Barack] Obama, I condemn it immediately and unequivocally."

The crisis continued to grow over the next few days, with Israel's ambassador in Washington being summoned to the State Department for a dressing down, secretary of state Hillary Clinton telephoning Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to convey Obama's anger, and the president's chief of staff terming the dispute "a pimple on the ass of US-Israel friendship."

Today, such DC-Jerusalem drama over Israeli plans to build houses in Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem has become unimaginable. Indeed, since Donald Trump moved into the White House, the international community's single-issue hyper-focus on Israeli settlements would seem to have been consigned to a past era.

Even the Europeans, who haven't substantially changed their policies regarding settlements, have toned down their criticism, to some extent, of Israeli building beyond the pre-1967 Green Line.

To be sure, Trump in February asked Netanyahu to "hold back on settlements for a little bit." And White House and State Department spokespersons routinely reiterate the administration's view that "unrestrained settlement activity does not help advance the peace process."

And yet, whereas in the recent past, settlements were considered by many as the most important of all core issues, today they have been relegated to one of several bitterly disputed issues that need to be addressed if progress is to be made toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

When Obama in his first year in office sought to restart peace talks, he pressured Israel into a nine-month settlement freeze. This inevitably turned it into a Palestinian precondition for entering negotiations with Israel —

since the Palestinians cannot ask for less than the White House — and thus in many respects crowned it the king of all core issues, the key to unlocking the Israeli-Palestinian impasse.

The Israeli government, too, contributed to the central importance given to settlements in recent years.

In 2013, Jerusalem chose to release dozens of Palestinian security prisoners rather than agree to another settlement freeze. In fact, the Netanyahu government adamantly announced the approval of hundreds of new East Jerusalem homes during another round of peace negotiations, initiated by then-secretary of state John Kerry. Kerry later partially blamed the settlement issue for the collapse of the talks in his valedictory "poof" speech.

Over eight years, the Obama White House consistently condemned almost every single brick Israel announced the intention to lay down for building outside the pre-1967 lines. The relentless disagreement reached record heights in December 2016, when the US abstained on, and thus allowed the passage of, a United Nations Security Council Resolution that affirmed that Israel's settlement enterprise "has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to ... a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

Israel accused the outgoing administration of planning what it termed an ambush against Israel, sparking the worst crisis in bilateral ties in years and insuring that the issue of settlements was firmly center stage.

And there it remained for a while even after Trump took office. Having donated \$10,000 to Beit El and having tapped David Friedman, an outspoken advocate for the settlement movement, as his ambassador to Israel, it seemed that the new president's approach to Israel's presence in the West Bank would be fundamentally different than that of all his recent predecessors. Some settlers and their political advocates hailed him as a veritable messiah, whose arrival heralded an unprecedented building boom.

Europe's responses to new building plans appear to have softened. That has not happened, but while Trump asked Israel to rein in settlement expansion, he has not castigated existing settlements as an obstacle to peace. In a sharp contrast to the previous administration, the current White House appears to understand Netanyahu's political predicament — as hawkish members of his coalition demand more settlement construction — and may even empathize with the settlers' need for natural growth.

The administration has asked both Israelis and Palestinians to take steps to help create a climate conducive for peace, and therefore it would be problematic if Jerusalem were to dramatically increase settlement construction and build new outposts on hilltop after hilltop across the West Bank, senior US officials make plain in private conversations. But as long as the Israeli government coordinates its moves with the White House and does not embarrass it, the Trump administration will likely refrain from denouncing Israel for plans to expand existing settlements.

This new wind from Washington is clearly being felt by the Palestinians. Tactically determined for the time being to stay on the US president's good side, they have dropped the demand for a settlement freeze as precondition for talks without much arm-twisting. This shift alone powerfully underlines that Israel's construction of homes in the West Bank is longer the central point of peace process deadlock.

Rather, the fixation on settlements has been superseded by a focus on a large portfolio of issues that need to be addressed in Trump's bid for an accord he claims may "not be as difficult as people have thought." To Ramallah's great chagrin, those issues include incitement to violence and the Palestinian Authority's payments to incarcerated terrorists and their families.

The Europeans have not adopted Trump's more tolerant stance on settlement, still adhering to their traditional opposition to any Israeli building outside the Green Line. However, their formulaic responses to Israeli announcements of settlement expansions appear to have softened.

In July 2016, months before Trump's election victory, the European Union said Israel's planned construction of several hundred new housing units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank "calls into question Israel's commitment to a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians." Noting that settlements are illegal under international law, the EU urged Israel to "stop this policy and to reverse its recent decision."

In October, an additional statement on the issue called "into question Israel's commitment to a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians."

Fast forward a few months. In early February, days after Trump entered the Oval Office, EU foreign policy czar Federica Mogherini called Israel's intention to build 3,000 new West Bank housing units "a very worrying trend, posing a direct challenge to the prospects of a viable two-state solution, which is increasingly difficult and risks becoming impossible."

The EU "deeply regrets that Israel is proceeding with this, despite the

continuous serious international concern and objections," she added.

This was certainly still a strong statement, but it did not repeat the previous doubts about Israel's commitment to peace.

Last Friday, as Israel issued building permits for over 1,500 new housing units in East Jerusalem, the EU produced an even tamer statement, asking the government "to reconsider these decisions."

Settlements are illegal and undermine "the prospect for a lasting peace," the statement stressed. But while previous such texts called into question Israel's desire to reach an agreement — giving the Palestinians a free pass, Israel would often argue — last week's statement called on "both sides to engage in a meaningful process towards a negotiated two-state solution."

Most decision-makers in the Western world still consider unfettered settlement expansion to constitute a major impediment to the creation of a viable Palestinian state, which they see as the only way to reach a durable peace. Even Trump is not giving Israel a carte blanche to build wherever it wants. "Every time you take land for settlements, there is less land left," the president told the Israel Hayom daily in February.

But nearly a decade after Barack Obama indicated that the path to Israeli-Palestinian peace would be via an indefinite settlement freeze, and the world followed him in prioritizing the issue, settlements are now just one of the many vexing issues that will have to be tackled if Trump is to achieve his self-styled "ultimate deal." (Times of Israel Jul 12)

A Red Line for Jordan By Nadav Shragai

Is Israel treating Jordan with kid gloves? Does Israel cut the Hashemite Kingdom too much slack even though Amman is now spearheading anti-Israel efforts on the world stage, alongside the Palestinians?

Jordan's Minister of State for Media Affairs Mohammad Al Momani recently boasted that the kingdom was the driving force behind UNESCO's decision to declare Hebron's old city an endangered Palestinian world heritage site. Over the past several years, Jordan has repeatedly besmirched Israel with falsehoods and libelous allegations, resulting in a growing number of anti-Israeli U.N. resolutions.

Jordanian diplomats' main focus is Jerusalem, and particularly the Temple Mount: Jordanian media regularly reports ludicrous claims about Israel's alleged actions at the site, including the libelous assertion that Israeli encroachment is threatening the Al-Aqsa mosque. Even the preposterous claim that Israel is allowing settlers to "conquer" the site and alter the status quo has become prevalent in the Jordanian media.

And yet, Israel has let the Jordanian behavior slide. After all, there are economic, security and economic considerations at stake that Israel does not want to jeopardize. But above all, the "handle-with-care" approach is meant to ensure the monarchy's stability. The unofficial explanation for this posture is that Israel needs Jordan. But while this may be true, Jordan needs Israel as well. In the grand scheme of things, both countries need the other. For obvious reasons, I cannot go into details on the exact nature of the ties.

To ensure that this special relationship thrives, Israel has been willing to make concessions on the Temple Mount. Over the last several years, Jordan has become a de-facto administrator of the site. In 2014, Jordan and Israel struck an agreement on how the site was to be governed. This agreement, made possible through U.S. mediation, all but made Jordan's presence on the mount official. Jordan also has a written agreement with the Palestinian Authority that makes the kingdom the representative of the Palestinian interests in the city until a Palestinian state is established, with Jerusalem as its capital. But Jordan's agreements with Israel and the Palestinians are often incompatible with one another, and this is clear on the world stage, where Jordan is determined to prove its anti-Israeli chops as a means of obtaining a Palestinian stamp of approval.

Perhaps this is good time to remind the Jordanians of the dubious "tolerance" they exhibited during their 19-year occupation of Judea and Samaria between 1948 and 1967. For example, they chose to blatantly violate their written pledge to allow Jews to visit holy sites beyond the border, including the Western Wall and Rachel's Tomb. Under their watch, tens of thousands of Jewish graves on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives were vandalized or demolished to make room for rudimentary toilets, trails and stairs. Dozens of synagogues and yeshivot were destroyed as well during that period, to ensure that the city's Jewish heritage was erased. Jordan also destroyed the cemetery in Hebron, where the victims of the 1929 Jewish massacre were buried, and used it to grow vegetables, with bones occasionally appearing among the crops. The famous Avraham Avinu Synagogue in Hebron was turned into a public bathroom and a goat pen. Meanwhile, Jordanians took over the yeshivot and synagogues in the two Jewish quarters -- in Hebron and in Jerusalem -- and turned them into homes.

There is nothing wrong with reminding people of Jordan's actions, and

Israel should not be reluctant to employ this tactic. Israel also has every right to arrest the administrators on the Temple Mount whenever they incite to violence. The Israel Police has justifiably done so and the officers should have our support.

A red line must be drawn when it comes to the Jordanian-led efforts on the Temple Mount, to make it clear that the site is under Israeli sovereignty and must be subject to Israeli laws. Israel should also drive home the message that under Israeli control, the Muslims and Christians in the city can worship freely and that the religious freedom they enjoy is a world apart from what the Jordanians allowed. (Israel Hayom Jul 13)

Our Heritage is the Answer By Michael Lobovikov

UNESCO's outrageous decision last week to designate the Old City of Hebron, including the Cave of the Patriarchs, as a Palestinian world heritage site reminded me of something an Israeli archaeologist once told me on a tour of Samaria. Describing how he discovered the historical site we were visiting that day, he said: "I saw several chiseled stones in a field and rubbed one of them, to clean off the dust. All of a sudden I saw two words engraved in ancient Hebrew: 'High cohen' ['priest']. Turns out I was standing in the middle of a Hebrew village abandoned after the destruction of the First Temple, during the Babylonian exile, and had been sitting there untouched for 2,600 years!"

The words he discovered were engraved in a stone situated above the entrance to the home of the high priest who had lived there. In an area of 5 square kilometers (1.9 square miles), the remnants of new fewer than six Jewish communities from that period were found. This incredible heritage site stands abandoned to this day. Aside from minimal excavations and documentation, it has not been comprehensively researched yet. The general public has no access to it because it is in a military zone and is opened up to visitors only on rare occasions.

The same is true of most historical sites in Israel. While we are all familiar with popular sites such as Masada, the City of David, the Cave of the Patriarchs, Herodium and Beit Shearim, the vast majority of Jewish heritage sites are still insufficiently accessible to the public. We all know about Caesarea, Beit Shean, Atlit and Crusader-era fortresses such as Montfort Castle and Belvoir Fortress -- but these are not Jewish heritage sites. Gamla, Beitar, Hippos-Sussita, Alexandrium (or Sartaba in Hebrew) and hundreds of other sites are still waiting for the Israeli public to visit them, and even just hear about them for the first time. The overwhelming majority of these sites have not been excavated and studied by archaeologists, and the few people who do "visit" them are antique robbers who plunder the depths of our national history with their destructive pirate excavations.

If a site has not been excavated, it has not been studied. And when it is not studied, it remains unknown to the general public, which consequently cannot connect with its heritage and roots. This creates a cycle of ignorance and contempt for our national history and for our link to the past and the land. We do not invest enough in preserving our heritage sites, and we open the door to the type of political opportunism exemplified by UNESCO's recent decision on Hebron.

The Palestinians already have three sites that UNESCO has recognized as "Palestinian heritage" sites: the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, a historical agricultural field around the village of Battir, and now the Old City of Hebron. Suffice to say that all three have no connection to the Palestinians -- not even Battir, which stands on the ruins of the Hebrew city of Beitar, where Bar-Kochba made his final stand. His death at the hands of the Romans and the subsequent slaughter of his followers symbolizes the end of the Jewish revolt. Simply by virtue of our failure to preserve our heritage and historical sites, our enemies are able to exploit and distort history and disseminate lies that serve them in their war against us.

We have to understand that studying and researching heritage is not just an academic and cultural endeavor. The Education Ministry needs to institute this subject matter as essential learning material, whether in geography or history classrooms, and expose the younger generations to our national history here in the land of Israel.

Israeli teenagers, who have not learned about the Maccabees or about the strategy used during the Great Revolt, will not know what they are fighting for when they enlist in the army. The depth of our history, and the understanding of our national rights that stem from it, are a weapon no less powerful than an armored division or Iron Dome battery.

The writer is an architect with an expertise in preserving cultural heritage sites. (Israel Hayom Jul 10)
