



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*

Commentary...

Seven Lessons from the Halamish Massacre By Stephen M. Flatow

The Friday night slaughter of three Jews in the Israeli town of Halamish encapsulates pretty much everything one needs to know about the conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and Israel.

It takes a special kind of savagery to murder people the way Omar al-Abed did, repeatedly stabbing defenseless civilians at their dinner table. And there have been so many similar attacks. The Halamish massacre was not an aberration; it is exactly what countless Palestinians do, or aspire to do, or cheer and admire. That's a sad statement, but it's true.

And it takes a special kind of cold-heartedness to defend and excuse the murderer, as Omar's parents did. His father said the stabbing was the fault of the "occupation," even though the al-Abed family lives in a suburb of Ramallah, which is occupied by the Palestinian Authority, not Israel.

His mother told Israel's Channel 2 that she is "proud of my son, may Allah save him and release him and look out for him." Many other Palestinian parents have reacted the same way to the murderous deeds of their children.

So here's lesson #1 of the Halamish slaughter. This is how Palestinian Arabs behave when they have self-rule and kitchen knives. Imagine what they would do if they had a sovereign state and shoulder-launched missiles (the kind that could take down a plane approaching Ben Gurion Airport).

The killer did not ask his victims their political or religious opinions. Like every Palestinian stabber or sniper or suicide bomber before him, he didn't care whether they were Reform or Orthodox, left-wing or right-wing or anywhere in between. He murdered them because they were Jews.

That's lesson #2. They hate all Jews.

Lesson #3 is that settlers do not "provoke" their murderers. Halamish did not displace any Palestinians. It was established in and around an abandoned British fort from the Mandate era. The residents of Halamish have harmed nobody. Their presence in that region has done nothing except make the formerly arid land bloom. They are not persecuting or oppressing or occupying anybody.

Halamish, by the way, happens to be one of the many Israeli communities that spent countless years and countless funds defending itself against baseless Arab claims to its land. With the active assistance of left-wing Jewish financial backers in Israel and abroad, Palestinians tie up Jewish communities in court with the flimsiest of "claims" to their land. The international news media and so-called human rights groups then drum up hostility against Israel by claiming that it must be Palestinian land.

In the case of Halamish, residents of a nearby Palestinian Arab village, Deir Nidham, went all the way to Israel's Supreme Court with their allegation that the area on which Halamish was situated had been cultivated and inhabited by Arabs back to Ottoman times. Lo and behold, aerial photos from the early 1900s showed the land was in fact completely barren. Which is why Israel's Supreme Court – which is hardly known to favor the Israeli right, to put it mildly – rejected Deir Nidham's claims.

And while we're on the subject of Palestinians claiming to be mistreated, let's say a few words about the killer. We don't know a lot about him, but the photo of him on his Facebook page offers some clues. He is well dressed. He has a stylish haircut. And he had a computer, from which he posted on his Facebook page. He wasn't unkempt or unshaven. He wasn't dressed in rags or malnourished.

Lesson #4 from Halamish: poverty does not cause terrorism. Ideological and religious hatred of Jews and Israel causes terrorism. Omar al-Abed proves that.

Lesson #5 from the Halamish attack has to do with the Palestinian Authority's response to the massacre. I am writing this 36 hours after the attack. PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas has not condemned it. Israel's leaders are urging him to speak out. Sorry, too late for that. If Abbas

genuinely opposed stabbing Israeli civilians to death, he would have done so immediately. Once 36 hours have passed, any statement he makes would be completely meaningless – a transparent attempt to keep the U.S. Congress from cutting off his \$500-

million annual aid package. No doubt Abbas will eventually issue some kind of mealy-mouthed statement opposing "violence on all sides." Hopefully nobody will be fooled by such insincere blather.

The other aspect of the PA's response to the slaughter has to do with how Omar al-Abed will be treated in the months and years ahead. The PA position is that all Palestinian terrorists imprisoned by Israel are "political prisoners" and should be released immediately. That now includes al-Abed. And as long as al-Abed is in prison, he will be receiving a handsome salary from the PA, calibrated according to the number of Jews he killed.

So that's part of lesson #5: once again, the PA's policies show that it endorses and subsidizes terrorism.

Lesson #6 is that no matter how savage Palestinians behave, the major international news media will search for ways to downplay it. The headline writers at The New York Times wrote: "Deadly Clashes Erupt in Standoff Over Security at Mosque in Jerusalem."

"Deadly Clashes" somehow just "erupt." The Arab side is never the aggressor. And it's all because of "security at the mosque." It has nothing to do with Arabs hating Jews.

"Six people were killed on Friday in an outbreak of violence," Times correspondent Isabel Kershner began her story.

Six? Yes, three Palestinian Arabs who tried to stone and burn Israeli policemen to death elsewhere in Jerusalem were shot in self-defense. But the three terrorists and the three victims in Halamish are all lumped together so that the Arabs don't look like the bad guys.

Cops have guns? Robbers have guns? That must mean that cops and robbers are morally equivalent. Arab terrorists die? Unarmed Jewish civilians die? Well, they all died so they must be all the same.

The seventh and final lesson from the Halamish massacre is a history lesson. It turns out that Michal Salomon, the widow of one of the Halamish victims, is no stranger to terrorism. Members of her paternal grandmother's family were murdered in the Palestinian Arab pogrom in Hebron in 1929. That's right: 1929. There were no settlements, no "occupation," no Jewish state at all. But they murdered Jews then, too. And they did it the same way Omar al-Abed did it last Friday night, with knives. Nearly a century later, the Palestinian Arab war against the Jews rages on. (Jewish Press Jul 28)

Islam's War for Al-Quds By Ephraim Herrera

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is an umbrella group that unites 57 Muslim countries across the globe. At the request of Turkey, which currently holds the rotating presidency, the organization met this week to hold an urgent discussion on the matter of Jerusalem.

It comes as no surprise: The organization was launched in 1969, after a mentally unstable Christian man tried and failed to set Al-Aqsa mosque on fire. One of the organization's goals is "to support the Palestinian people, which is under a foreign occupation, and provide it with tools to restore its rights, including the right of self-determination and the right to establish a state of their own, whose capital is Al-Quds Al-Sharif [the noble Jerusalem], while preserving the city's historic and Islamic character."

At the meeting, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he hoped that the Muslim world would come together to address Israeli "aggression" against the Palestinians, and mentioned that the goal of the organization was to work to unite "the nation" in taking a stance against "Zionist expansion."

For years, Turkey has been trying to enhance its influence in Jerusalem. It has invested millions of dollars into this effort, transferring funds to the Palestinian Authority, funding imams in the Old City,

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supporting Turkish language instruction, and more. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's portal into Israel is the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement and its leader, Sheikh Raed Salah. Salah is a chief inciter to violence who called the terrorists who murdered two Israeli police officers on the Temple Mount last month shahids (martyrs). Turkey has weakened Jordan's standing in the Old City and nurtured the Murabiton, the Muslim Arabs positioned on the Temple Mount to harass and attack non-Muslim visitors.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation does not limit its activity to fighting on behalf of the Palestinians. At the beginning of July, it came out in support of the Kashmir region's right to self-determination -- meaning the right to split off from India -- despite India's objections. The organization supports Muslims wherever they are engaged in conflict with non-Muslims: Lebanon, Kosovo, Bosnia, etc. It also works to ensure that Muslims in Europe adhere to their Muslim identity rather than becoming westernized.

Loyal to the fundamental Islamist worldview of the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization works to bring the entire world under Islamic control through what Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi calls "fatah silmi" -- a victory through peaceful means. The group's newsletter, Islam Today, carried the statement: "The success of the Muslim minority is that one day, it will be the majority. We will achieve this by integrating the Muslim minority into the non-Muslim majority, so the latter receives Islamic morality and religion bit by bit, and eventually comes to identify with Islam."

Given this, it's obvious that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is an existential threat not only to Israel, but also the entire West. So Israel, rather than justifying itself in the face of the group's plan demands about Jerusalem, should emphasize that the organization's battle for the city is a stage in its plan to impose Islamic rule everywhere in the world. Many experts are afraid to call a spade a spade, as we all know that religious wars are bloody. But we didn't declare this one, and denying the reality does nothing to change it. In fact, it only makes it worse. To win, we must present the problem truthfully. (Israel Hayom Aug 3)

Between Blood and Democracy By Reuven Berko

Al Jazeera's coverage of the murdered Israeli police officers on the Temple Mount, the ensuing metal detector controversy and the consequent Arab riots was another chapter in the ongoing, lethal war against Israel waged by the network as a Qatari propaganda machine on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups. Al Jazeera's activity in recent weeks has again raised the need to shut down its Israel office and expel its representatives.

The network played a central role, first in sparking the events and later in exacerbating them. It propagated political and religious incitement, idealized shahids (martyrs) and terrorism. It slandered "the occupation" and its tendentious, incendiary video coverage essentially legitimized spilling Jewish blood by fanning the flames at flash points between Palestinian civilians and security forces.

Via its English-language version, Al Jazeera covers events ambiguously, mistakenly painting the network as moderate and balanced. On Al Jazeera, which argues for journalistic freedom, one will never find criticism of the Qatari regime and its rulers, or their corrupt and exploitative policies. Qatar will never permit coverage of the low morale festering on the street, where everyday people continue to suffer economically from the sanctions imposed by neighboring countries. Despite all this, left-wing activists in the West are campaigning "in the name of democracy" to keep Al Jazeera open in the face of Arab pressure.

In Arabic, the network's inflammatory messages are intended to escalate violence against neighboring regimes, on behalf of Islamic terror in all its forms while offering a wink and a nod toward Iran. The thinking is that whoever blows up "outside" Qatar won't blow up inside. By means of its fomentation, Al Jazeera mobilized the masses during the Arab spring to topple regimes through violence, murder, rape, the destruction of mosques and churches and forcing millions from their homes. In light of Al Jazeera's role against Arab regimes, its reporters in Egypt and other Arab countries have been arrested and most of its offices are in the process of being shut down. The "boycotting states" presented a besieged Qatar with an ultimatum to close Al Jazeera. Qatar rejected the proposal. Meanwhile, in an effort to import the Arab-Islamic brand of chaos to Israel, Al Jazeera's highly paid reporters raised their hostility toward the Jewish state to an art form.

The need to shut Al Jazeera down highlights the dilemma between the electronic warfare branches, whose mission is to disrupt enemy transmissions and hamper his combat capabilities, and the eavesdropping

units charged with gathering information on the enemy's moves and intentions. The need to close the network raises ethical questions about democracy and freedom of the press, freedom of expression, the public's right to know, pluralism and more.

On the other hand, in a world of cellular phones, how will shutting the network down help? Banishing Al Jazeera, its reporters, high-budget offices, and the equipment it uses to impact morale and mobilize violence in service of the enemy will hamper the destructive efforts of the Islamists and Palestinian terrorists.

The damage in allowing Al Jazeera to continue its hostile broadcasts outweighs the potential damage to Israel's image by shutting it down. Because this issue pits blood against democracy, the latter must be allowed to defend itself. (Israel Hayom Aug 2)

Qatar's Support of Islamists Leads to Global Terrorism

By Ariel Ben Solomon

Should Israel join the status-quo Sunni states led by Saudi Arabia in their pressure campaign against terrorism-supporting Qatar, which is promoting Islamist revolutionary movements across the region, including in Israel? Israel took a step in this direction on Wednesday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated on Facebook that he will seek to remove Qatar's pan-Arab media channel Al Jazeera from the country for inciting violence in Jerusalem.

Also on Wednesday, US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) stated in congressional testimony, "Qatar has been known to be a permissive environment for terror financing reportedly funding US designated foreign terrorist organizations such as Hamas as well as several extremist groups operating in Syria."

The congresswomen went on point out that all Gulf states have had problems with facilitating terrorism, but that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are dealing with the issue at a "faster rate." Not so in Qatar.

In a study by David Andrew Weinberg that was published in January by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) titled "Qatar and Terror Finance: Part II: Private Funders of [al-Qaida] in Syria," he wrote: "Based on these cases, there is no persuasive proof that Qatar has stopped letting certain terror financiers off the hook."

"Indeed, it is impossible to identify even a single specific instance of Qatar charging, convicting, and jailing a US- or UN-designated individual," said the report.

Qatar is a principal funder of Hamas -- both in Gaza and in the West Bank.

For example, Israel could lobby the US and European governments to up the pressure on Qatar, so that it withdraws support for radical groups, preachers and the radical Islamist content promoted on its popular pan-Arab Al Jazeera media channel, which is broadcast in hundreds of thousands of Israeli Arab living rooms.

By joining with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain, which already cut ties with Qatar, Israel would be able to further align its national interest with these countries, and particularly in opposition to Iran, the leading sponsor of terrorism in the world.

Israel could also join the lobbying effort to get Qatar to break off its relations with Iran, with which it shares the largest offshore gas field in the world, known as the North Dome/ South Pars.

Qatar hedges its position with Iran because it fears that its relatively small population of 250,000 citizens and over 2 million people total (and lackluster military prowess), would place it at risk from the regional power of nearly 83 million that is located just a hop across the Persian Gulf.

Qatar has invited Turkey, another supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, to deploy its troops there, to deter Saudi Arabia and other neighbors.

Additionally, Qatar feels protected because it hosts the Al Udeid military base, the largest US base in the Middle East.

However, the Trump administration has hinted that it could easily be moved to another Arab country.

"If we ever had to leave, we would have 10 countries willing to build us another one, believe me, and they will pay for it," US President Donald Trump said in an interview with CBN News this month.

This coalition of Sunni states led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, along with Israel and the US, could work to counter the Brotherhood brand of Islamism globally -- by cutting off its funding and incitement on media platforms -- and this starts with Qatar.

The US has tremendous leverage over Qatar not only because of the base, but also because it could put pressure on the country through the

international financial banking system Washington controls.

Qatar and prominent financiers riding there back the Muslim Brotherhood movement, its Palestinian offshoot Hamas and allegedly also jihadi groups al-Qaida and Islamic State.

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, has served as the ideological gateway for more radical Islamist offshoots such as Islamic Jihad, al-Qaida and Islamic State, which strike out against regional governments and the West.

As John Hannah at FDD, a former official in the George W. Bush White House, stated at a conference in May: "It's no coincidence, Muslim Brotherhood has been the gateway drug for violent Islamists the world over."

However, all Islamist groups have the ultimate goal to strive for global power, they just go about it with varying degrees of violence and pragmatism. For example, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the former leader of Hamas Khaled Mashaal, and the head of the northern branch of Israel's Islamic Movement have all come out in support of the former head of al-Qaida, Osama bin-Laden. Sheikh Raed Salah, the leader of the Islamic Movement, called him a "martyr" and those who killed him "Satanic," according to the BBC.

The terrorist shooting attack on the Temple Mount by three Arab Israelis from the Islamic Movement hotbed of Umm al-Fahm earlier this month is the latest murderous Islamist strike in Israel, which triggered further deadly violence.

It is in Israel's interest to join the US-led international coalition of countries that want to stamp out violent Islamism at its source, and the next stop on this mission should be to force Qatar to give up terrorism support and propaganda advocating religious violence. (Jerusalem Post Aug 1)

A Stroll Down Zionist Boulevard By Shira Schreier

Fifty-one years before the establishment of the State of Israel, Binyamin Ze'ev (Theodor) Herzl (1860-1904) declared, "If I were to summarize the Basel Congress in one statement – which for reasons of caution I will not publicly state – it is this: in Basel I established the Jewish state. Were I to say this publicly today, the response would be laughter from all sides. Perhaps in five, maximum 50, years, everyone will acknowledge it."

In 1937, at the Zionist Congress in Zurich, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed, "Our right to the Land of Israel – the entire Land of Israel – is in effect and stands forever. Until the implementation of the complete and total redemption, we will not move from our historic right."

"I love my people and the Land of Israel; that is my credo, that is my life's work, and I have no need for anything else in the world," said Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940).

These, and 30 more citations of statements of Zionist leaders throughout the years, are prominently displayed in Hebrew and English on artistic wooden signs along the newly-inaugurated Zionist Boulevard, located in the midst of a picturesque pine forest in the Oz Ve'Gaon Nature Preserve in Gush Etzion. There are also nine wooden benches, enabling one to sit quietly, breathe in the crisp mountain air and contemplate the pastoral surroundings, with the option of scanning a bar code with one's phone to access Zionist songs and audio recordings.

Zionist Boulevard was inaugurated as part of the events marking the third anniversary of the establishment of Oz Ve'Gaon, the fiftieth anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, the liberation of Gush Etzion and the heart-land of Israel, and the 120th anniversary of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. A joint venture of the World Zionist Organization, the Zionist Council of Israel, the Jewish National Fund, the Gush Etzion Council and Women in Green, the event was attended by hundreds of people from all parts of the country, and culminated in a panel discussion addressing the challenges confronting Zionism in the coming decade.

Oz Ve'Gaon was established on the night of July 1, 2014, when it became known that the three boys who were abducted by Hamas terrorists 18 days earlier had been murdered. "Gaon" is a Hebrew acrostic of their names – Gil-ad, Eyal and Naftali.

Nadia Matar and Yehudit Katsover, co-heads of the Women in Green movement, with the encouragement of the Gush Etzion council, decided to create a Jewish presence in the forest near the Gush Etzion junction, as an immediate and appropriate Zionist response to this brutal act of terrorism. Driven by the sense of the fulfillment of a Zionist mission, they have worked tirelessly during the past three years to develop the site into the bustling, vibrant, impressive center of education, culture and tourism that it has become today.

More than 35,000 energetic and motivated youth, from both secular and religious schools, youth groups and pre-military academies have flocked to the site, getting their hands dirty while clearing away thorns and rocks, planting and building. Today, there are beautiful play-grounds, outdoor study niches, picnic tables, a camping site and large tents which can house up to 100 people in Oz Ve'Gaon. Activities include weekly lectures, Brit Milas, bar and bat mitzvas and sheva brachot celebrations, special holiday events, graduation ceremonies, barbecues, concerts, family gatherings, and much more.

"We want to offer a Zionist experience in Oz Ve'Gaon – not just a chance to plant trees – but an active spiritual and educational experience, so that the person who leaves here is not the same person who came," say Yehudit Katsover and Nadia Matar. "We want to provide the opportunity for individuals and groups from Israel and overseas, to come and work the land and connect to the land, while enriching their knowledge about Zionism, past, present and future."

The families of the three boys have been partners in the activities of Oz Ve'Gaon from the beginning. "We are grateful to you for your involvement and help," said Yehudit Katsover at the inauguration of Zionist Boulevard. "We thank you for the lofty spirit that you instilled in the nation during the search for the boys, when the heart of each and every one of us beat together in a common rhythm, uniting us as one people."

"There has never been a period for the Jewish People, since it left its land, when unity is as crucial for it as it is today. It is incumbent upon us to perform a significant and substantial action today, one that is not dependent on the spirit of an individual rather on the spirit of the entire people... No language other than the language of their ancestors will provide them with this unity. Only the Hebrew language will revitalize the Jewish People in its land."

Those words, emphasizing the need for unity among the nation, were spoken by Eliezer ben Yehuda (1858- 1922), and were echoed by the speakers at the third-anniversary event at Oz Ve'Gaon.

"It is my hope that not only in hours of crisis will we remember to unite as a people," said Yaakov Hagoel, vice chairman of the World Zionist Organization. "Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl dreamed of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. He dreamed and we are realizing this dream, here in Oz Ve'Gaon as well... Oz Ve'Gaon is a symbol of the unity of the Jewish People, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, and we must safeguard this united nation forever."

Racheli Fraenkel, mother of Naftali, described the scenes of unity that she witnessed during the period of the search for the boys as miraculous.

"None of the elders of the community could remember anything comparable since the Six Day War," she said, recalling a visit to the US when she saw how all the streams in Judaism gathered in one place to pray and demonstrate together.

Bat-Galim Shaer, mother of Gil-Ad, speaking at the inauguration of Zionist Boulevard, said, "Those before me have already mentioned Herzl who dreamed... to dream and to envision generates tremendous strength and power and is vital for a nation like ours... I dream of unity and a different, respectful kind of dialogue, not only during times of crisis and trouble, but as the dialogue conducted daily. One of the challenges of our generation is to do everything we can to fortify the connection between the Jews in Israel and the Jews in the Diaspora – we will all benefit and grow stronger from this connection."

Uri Yifrach, father of Eyal, added, "The story began not far from here. Searching. Searching for ourselves. Searching perhaps to begin to discover why we are here – what is the meaning of this nation – here in this land."

He read from something that Eyal had written on Yom Hazikaron, Israel's Remembrance Day:

"Go outside. Try. Breathe the air. Overcome. Fall. Get up. Fall again. A thousand times. If you fell a thousand times, it shows that you have the strength to get up... Yom Hazikaron. The question is asked: Why? Why do we need all this sadness? The answer is found in the question itself. One should not ask why [lama] but for what [le ma]. For what purpose? For the nation, for Am Yisrael, for the life that we create and sustain."

"Yes, exactly three years ago, I think we all asked ourselves not why but for what, for what purpose," Uri continued. "Yehudit and Nadia are teaching us the best lesson and we are very grateful for all the extensive activity taking place here in Oz Ve'Gaon. We are all more united because of it."

"I believe that there is no better way to sense the connection to the Land of Israel than to walk its length and breadth, to cross its valleys, ascend its mountain peaks, and meander on its paths," said Zionist leader Zev Vilnay (1900-1988).

Summer 2017. Come take a stroll down Zionist Boulevard. At Oz

VeGaon, the spirit of Zionism is alive and strong. Reconnect with your Zionist roots. Learn about the past and become a part of the future. Each and every one of us is a link in the chain. Be moved. Be inspired. Be transformed. "If you will it, it is no dream." (Jerusalem Post Aug 1)

Israel is at its Most and Least Integrated Moment in the Mideast

By Seth J. Frantzman

Prime minister David Ben-Gurion had a dim view of the Middle East and its people. Of Yemenite Jewry he wrote to IDF chief of staff Yigael Yadin in 1950, "It is two thousand years away from us, if not more. It is lacking in the most basic and rudimentary conceptions of civilization. Its attitude to children and women is most primitive." His view of the Arab and Muslim world was that it was primitive and savage and that Jews in Israel would be molded into a modern Eastern European-style state.

Seventy years later Israel has drifted from the fantasies of Ben-Gurion to become more a part of the Middle East. However, despite its attempts to integrate into the region, some of which have been successful, in some ways its leadership is the least integrated of any Israeli generation. After all, Ben-Gurion and others studied at Istanbul University, while Moshe Dayan and Ariel Sharon grew up alongside Arabs in the pre-state period. So why, after so many decades, does Israel have this janus face?

Part of the reason for Israel's internal contradiction of being a Middle Eastern country populated by Middle Eastern people which is uncomfortable in the Middle East has to do with its cultural elites and historiography. For some, Ben-Gurion's views have not changed much with time. Zvi Zameret in his *Melting Pot in Israel* parroted uncritically Ben-Gurion's view that Yemenites could be "helped to bridge a gap of thousands of years." He writes, "despite the different between them [Yemenites] and veteran Israelis, what was important was that the Yemenites should absorb general knowledge, and so on as well as what they could be taught about agricultural labor."

The view of Yemenites as foreign and Ben-Gurion as a "veteran Israeli" is a bit ironic, considering Ben-Gurion was born in Plonsk in the Polish part of the Russian empire in 1886 and came to Ottoman Palestine in 1906. There had been Yemenite Jews in the Land of Israel, working in agriculture even, long before he came. But the real story of the disdainful view of Middle Eastern peoples as being "a thousand years" behind European Jewish immigrants is due to the fact that the leadership of Israel in its early years was dominated by Labor Zionists born in Europe who were often imbued with a European supremacist ideology.

Their views were not so different than the views of British colonial officers in the Raj or whites in the US. For them it was a fact that Western civilization was not simply more advanced and superior, but civilizations of the Middle East were stereotyped as almost inhuman and animalistic. Arye Gelblum wrote in *Haaretz* in 1949 of Jews from Muslim countries: "Here we have an extremely primitive people. The level of their education borders upon total ignorance and even more serious is their total inability to comprehend anything spiritual." They "lack roots in Judaism" and have "primitive and wild instincts."

Gelblum was from Poland, born in 1912 and had come to British Mandate Palestine in 1925. Looking back at the disdain he and others had for people from the Middle East, one wonders why he came to Palestine? He could have stayed at home in "civilized" Poland. The caricatures many Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe had for Jews from the Middle East was similar to the caricature that Jews from Western Europe had for "ostjuden" or Jews from the east.

Their sense of superiority was manufactured from their own sense of inferiority in Europe. In Palestine they needed to set themselves apart, and even though their own education was relatively sparse compared to that of people in Berlin, New York or London, in Mandate Palestine they could pose as "civilized."

Bifurcating themselves from Middle Eastern Jews and the Middle East at large became a task of second aliya Zionists who began arriving after 1904. The concept of "Hebrew Labor," which entailed Jews hiring other Jews to work the land, was one of the missions of the 1904 generation's Labor Zionism. They wanted to separate the new Jewish community from the old, from the Jews of the Middle East and from the Arabs, to create a separate revolutionary society.

This had the effect of creating a kind of cordon sanitaire between their society, preserving its east European elements, and the Middle East. It was unfortunate because the older Jewish communities were much more integrated. The old Sephardic families in Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere such as Amzalak, Valero, Abulafia and many others were part of the Ottoman Empire and spoke its languages. However, to their credit some of

the second aliya Zionists did attend Istanbul University.

The next generation of Israeli leaders, such as Mordechai Maklef, Yigal Allon, Yigal Yadin, Moshe Dayan and later Ariel Sharon and Ehud Barak were born in the Middle East and some of them grew up at a time when British Mandate Palestine was far more Arab than it became after 1948. If one looks at the fighters who coalesced around Sharon's Unit 101 in the 1950s almost all the men were born in British Mandate Palestine. Except for Danny Matt, who was born in Germany, the others such as Meir Har-Zion, Assaf Simhoni, Aharon Davidi and Rafal Eitan were mostly born between 1920 and 1940. Their formative years were ones where Jews were a minority and the landscape was Arabic. They were Middle Eastern. Not the "primitives" that Ben-Gurion was so concerned about, but rather part of their environment.

It's no surprise that although some Arabic leaders may have loathed Dayan or Sharon, they tended to understand them quite well, and both Dayan and Sharon seemed to feel as at home in a Beduin tent or looking at the region through the eyes of the Kingdom of Jordan, as they felt in Tel Aviv. For better or worse, they had more in common with Hafez Assad or Gamal Abdel Nasser than they did with Jewish peddlers and pianists in Poland. These early Israeli soldiers and leaders also spoke Arabic. Some spoke Ottoman Turkish.

Now, fast forward to 2017 and look at the leadership of Israel's political parties. After Turkey condemned Israel's actions in Jerusalem recently, Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon reminded the Turks that "the days of the Ottoman Empire have passed." Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid went further, suggesting Israel support Kurds and recognize the Armenian genocide. But Israeli comments about Kurds often betray ignorance on the topic, confusing Kurdish politics in Iraq with Kurds in Turkey. This is because even though all of Israeli leaders today grew up in Israel, they didn't really grow up in the Middle East. Few of them have any knowledge of languages in the region, and most of them seem to generally feel uncomfortable around Arabs or other groups in the region. It's a deep cultural disconnect.

Commentators in Israel may talk about what Israel should or should not do about Jordan, but none of them seem like they'd like to go sit down with the king or anyone in the kingdom, the way former Israeli leaders did in secret decades ago. Israel's leaders show a lack of interest in how the Middle East functions and in its varying cultures. This spans the Left and the Right. The Left tends to speak in terms of divorcing Palestinians in order to "save" Israel's Jewish character as a nation-state. The Right tends to simply ignore the existence of Palestinians. But both disregard the need to feel comfortable with or even interested in the "other." Former Labor leader Isaac Herzog claimed "the rampant construction in all the settlements all the time will lead to replacing the Jewish majority state with an Arab majority state."

The discussion in Israel, from the Right to the Left, is primarily an internal one. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel has shared interests in Saudi Arabia, the UAE or Egypt, it isn't because he enjoys meeting with leaders from there, it's simply a statement of fact. One gets the feeling that previous generations of Israelis, with the exception of the cultural Eurocentric elites, felt more a part of the Middle East, more comfortable in it. That is ironic, since Israel was more isolated in the 1950s, surrounded by real Arab armies. Today Israel has peace with two Arab countries, and relationships with others, yet it is less integrated in the region in some ways.

Israel was always going to be a janus-faced country because of its nature. Founded primarily by Eastern European Jewish nationalists, it was a gathering place for Jews from the Middle East and has the food, music and culture of the region ingrained in it. Many of its cultural elites still see the region as "primitive" and their cultural leanings are toward Europe. It's no surprise some of them and their children emigrate to places like Berlin.

In the 1960s many Arab nationalists believed Israel was a colonial implant in the Middle East and would go the way of Algeria. They didn't understand that it was not colonial in foundation, but seeking to reconnect an indigenous people with their land. The problem the indigenous people have had is that some of them do not feel comfortable in the land.

Ben-Gurion thought the problem was an education system in need of modernizing "primitives." He was wrong. The problem was creating an education system that roots people in the Middle East and makes them feel a part of it and teaches them to respect and be interested in it. After all, Israelis are all supposed to learn Arabic in school, but few of them actually end up understanding it.

That in itself is a symbol of how it is more integrated, but also less integrated. (Jerusalem Post Jul 31)