

From Memorials to Independence

On the English calendar, April 19th marks Yom HaZikaron, Israel Memorial Day. The day after, April 20th, is Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel Independence Day. It is no accident that memorial is followed by independence.

The modern, free, independent, democratic State of Israel celebrates its 70th Anniversary this month. That comes a day after the State remembers those who were slain in the Jewish fight for survival.

In 1948, Israel was attacked by all of its Arab neighbors. The British, who had left the Holy Land, conveniently turned over their weapons to the Arab armies. The fact that Israel survived at all, losing much of the territory granted to it by the newly minted United Nations, is a miracle in itself.

At the end of World War I, the Muslim Ottoman Turks were driven from their empire in the Middle East. The West, led by the British, decided to divide up land which they were granted by the League of Nations mandate based upon friendships with tribal leaders. The minority Alawites in the northeast territory were granted domination over a new country called "Syria." The tribe, loyal to the British in what is now Saudi Arabia, was granted that territory. The Jewish people were supposed to be given their ancient homeland in what today is Israel, including Judea and Samaria, and modern Jordan. While the British, backed by the Americans, kept their promises to everyone else, the land of Israel was chipped away. First, Jordan was given to the minority Hashemites. After that double-cross, Israel at least had the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean. The United Nations did away with that promise by further reducing the tiny area given to the Jews into Palestine Arab and Jewish land. After that knife in the back to the Jewish people, the Palestinian Arabs had two countries, Jordan and land provided on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

At no time did the world respect any of the agreements that were made with the Jewish people. Even though the Jews, in what is currently Israel in the Middle East, fought bravely for the British, the great island colonial power could not see its way clear to deliver on a promise made to the future Israelis.

Since 1948, the Arab world has waged an unrelenting war against the Jewish people and Israel which has evolved from conventional military action to terrorism and propaganda. There are those who claim that the Arabs have won the propaganda war against Israel, both on U.S. college campuses among the left wing and with their right-wing dictator friends in the Third World. Europe, meanwhile, stands idly by, afraid to stand up for what is honorable, more worried about its oil supply than the future integrity of its own national borders.

Opinion writers throughout the world have scratched their heads trying to understand this strange conjunction between the left wing in the United States and Europe in alliance with right-wing dictators in the Arab world. Why is it that the United Nations is controlled by so-called “non-aligned” nations which in turn are monopolized by Arab governments? The answer is so simple, and sufficiently embarrassing, that we frequently avoid speaking the truth. Anti-Semitism has been called the world’s oldest disease. It has existed since Biblical times when Abraham was accused of stealing well water, even though he offered the most choice lands to his neighbors. King Ramesses II in Egypt, who enslaved the Jews, claimed that he did so to prevent them from aligning themselves with Egypt’s arch enemies, the Hyksos, Asian invaders from the East. The beat goes on, and the Romans alone may have killed as many as 580,000 Jews at the time that Jesus lived. Had the Roman genocide against the Jewish people not occurred, there would be 100 million or more Jews in the world today, perhaps as many as 500 million, rather than the 12-18 million Jews worldwide who exist today.

The independence of Israel from foreign powers since 1948 is indeed a cause for great celebration. It has brought to the Middle East the only democracy that part of the world has ever known. Walking the streets of any Israeli city from Jerusalem to Eilat, Jaffa or Haifa is a potpourri of different colors, races, religions and lifestyles. Israel is in fact an oasis, an island of decency in a sea of hatred and nationalist disintegration.

Why is it then, does a professed liberal like Bernie Sanders crawl into the same ditch as President al-Assad, the genocidal leader of Syria, to denounce Israel when Israel defends itself from Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian terrorists on the West Bank of the Jordan River or Hezbollah in Lebanon? What does this distorted, sad, and out-of-touch politician have in common with the dictators of the Middle East? The answer is deceptively sad and simple: Bernie Sanders and Bashar al-Assad believe that might and numbers are more just than ideas and actual conduct. The fact that the Arabs may have a great number of people, tremendous wealth and can intimidate great nations like the United States is not a reason to support their criminal efforts to dominate the Middle East, and the world community.

Israel is far from perfect, of course, but it is one of the best things going in an increasingly shrinking number of democratic free nations. Every day, Israeli citizens put their lives on the line to keep alive a tiny outpost of morality in the Middle East. Even those Jews in Israel who are not religious understand the power of the Book and its ethical message. While Middle Eastern Arabs sacrifice their own children on the altar of hatred, the Jews of Israel pray day and night, three times a day in prayers, for peace and the coming of the Messiah.

May this year’s Memorial be followed by an Independence Day in Israel filled with hope, vision, and a lack of Arab violence. By supporting Israel, we give proof to the power of our own democracy and the wishes of our Founders for a lawful society premised on divine principles of diversity not demagoguery. Happy Birthday, Israel!

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