

## ***Sitting at the Food Court***

So, what do you do while waiting for one of your kids to give birth? The Dad may pace back and forth, saying psalms, but the grandparents-to-be generally sit at the food court and eat. In our case, most of the food court observations occurred after Liel was born. Of course, we did not learn her name until her father, Netanel, was called to the Torah on the Thursday following her birth. Naturally, as our granddaughter, she is perfect in every way and beautiful.

As is the custom in Israel, Kaila spent a few days at the hospital “hotel” resting up and preparing to introduce the new baby to our 2-year-old grandchild, Noam. I am looking forward to an exciting and no doubt rousing greeting for the newborn when she arrives home to Be'er Ya'akov.

However, while sitting at the mini food court near the hospital, I could not help but to observe a scene fairly typical in Israel. The area was populated mostly by younger people. At a table just to my right were two young pretty Arab women. They were not wearing burkas, but rather, in the Israel style, had their heads covered. They were wearing jeans, sneakers and speaking amiably to one another. At the table next to them were two female soldiers in their green fatigue uniforms. The McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Shawarma place were all kosher. There was a notable absence of security or police. The food court was full of a majority Sephardic looking Jews, Ethiopians, Arabs, soldiers and the typical Israel variety of life. Notably, there was a safer and warmer feeling among the unintentional attendees at this non-event than one would find at a typical setting in America. No apartheid here.

Most Americans, who have not traveled repeatedly to Israel, would have been surprised by the scene. There are few places, maybe no places, in the Arab Middle East where women can go out with one another, unattended by men and in pants. In Iran there are still honor killings of women who cause their male handlers to be angry. For a woman to wear pants or go out alone with another woman is simply forbidden and dangerous. Not so in Israel.

It is an irony of distorted world politics that Arab women in Israel have more rights than Arab women anywhere in the Middle East. There are few Christians outside of Israel, having been driven out or killed by Arab rulers in the Middle East. Other minorities who thrive in Israel likewise are unwelcome and typically unheard of in the Arab Middle East outside of the Holy Land.

So why it is that scenes like the one at the mini-mall are unknown outside of Israel? The answer is that Jews, women, Christians and other minority groups simply are not permitted to exist or live as free people in the totalitarian, typically fascist regimes that occupy the Middle East. In Israel, the argument is always over who can prove that they are more supportive of a robust democracy? In the Arab Middle East, leaders vie to show who has greater control over the masses and who can stand up to the Christian Crusaders, clearly thought of as infidels, and the irritating monotheistic Jews. In essence, the Arab Middle East is an assortment of tribes whose basic appeal to their people rests upon how much power they can wield and who deserves benefit of the riches that come from the oil fields that dot the region. Democracy does not even

rise to the level of an annoying debate; it simply does not exist outside of the State of Israel.

This leads us to the inevitable question as to why the United States and the west in general support the dictator Muhammad Abbas who rules the Palestinian Authority, thanks to Israel's agreement, subsequent to the death of his predecessor dictator Yasser Arafat? The reason is exceedingly simple. The West would rather the dictator Abbas, than an even more terrorist group such as Hamas which rules Gaza and Hezbollah which rules Lebanon, large portions of Syria and which aligns itself with Iran. The enemy that we know is better than the enemy we could have.

Israel also would rather support Abbas and the Palestinian Authority dictatorship rather than deal with other stronger, more militaristic terrorist groups. However, none of them are any good for democracy, the Middle East or the non-Muslims minorities that live in this section of the world.

While the West, manipulated by an odd assortment of left and right wingers, continues to dump its verbal garbage on Israel, this tiny nation continues to grow, thrive and represent a beacon of decency throughout the world. Israel develops cures for disease, while much of the Arab Middle East looks for excuses to wage war.

Like many others, I am sick and tired of hearing what is wrong with Israel, while those who manipulate the verbal war against this country surround themselves with every vestige of hypocrisy known to man.

May the nation of Israel continue to live, thrive, grow and further continue its role as lighthouse of enlightenment to a dark region of the world.

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