

Epilogue

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As a newly arrived graduate student in the U.S., I was horrified by how Israel was attacked - unprovoked - by Syria and Egypt on Yom Kippur (October 1973), and anxiously followed how it turned a devastating disadvantage into a brilliant military victory, albeit at a heavy cost. For a few months I could barely concentrate on my studies realizing how close Israel was to destruction. Most of my attention was on understanding the Middle East conflict, making the case for Israel on and off campus and trying to understand how past events shape present realities and have future implications for Israel and the world. Debating paid Arab propagandists was like sending a boxing fan into an arena with Mike Tyson. Chances of winning the debate by beating them were slim to none, not because they were so much better but because they did not find it repulsive to use the big-lie technique, to distort reality and history or to resort to shameless accusations and threats. But you learn perspective, understand history and in some rare cases even win points if you put up a convincing argument to a crowd that is trying to be fair.

I remember meeting a Syrian student in early 1974. As awkward as it was to meet an enemy face-to-face shortly after the Yom Kippur War, we discussed the conflict in a civilized tone. I asked him what it would take to have peace between Israel and Syria. "We need the Golan Heights back," he said. "You had it before 1973 and before 1967 and you still went to war," I argued. But he insisted that if there was to be peace Syria must have the Golan back. So I asked: "If you have the Golan will there be peace?" His answer: "With Syria, yes; but now you will have to take care of my Palestinian brothers." Not surprised, I asked: "So where do you want us to go, to the Mediterranean Sea?" The Syrian: "That is your problem." I could not help responding that there was no reason to give him the Golan since he would lose it again anyway.

Another incident took place shortly after the signing of the Sinai Disengagement Accord between Egypt and Israel in March 1974. Invited to debate a paid Arab propagandist at a "United States Youth Council" (listed at the University of Minnesota Libraries under "Planning & Coordination Organizations") forum I heard him using statements such as: "You had better apply for an Egyptian passport because we are going to turn Israel into a parking lot." He then turned to German labor leaders who attended the session stating unabashedly that "Hitler did not finish the job but we will." I encountered his threats with a paper on the nature of the conflict and possible venues to bring about peace; I did not have to do much about the Nazi-like threats because the German guests were uncomfortable enough upon hearing it. After all, he missed that audience by a mere three decades. At the end of the session, realizing that I taped it he insisted on taking hold of the audio-cassette. I adamantly refused simply because I received permission in advance from the organizers to tape the session.

The host tried to mediate and as a gesture of good will I stated my willingness to listen to the tape and study it at home and then erase the cassette, to which the Egyptian said "I do not believe me because you are Jewish." He was willing to have this done only by the host. I then pointed out to the Egyptian that the host was Jewish as well, to which he had a ready-made answer: "but

he is an American." Reluctantly I gave the cassette to the host. It took a full year and numerous letters and phone calls before I finally got the cassette back with the Egyptian's voice erased. Ironically, they kept his voice in the Q&A section and only deleted his opening statements thus unintentionally and incompetently leaving enough damning evidence.

These episodes illustrated to me that the conflict in the Middle East (and those trying to mediate it) is about posturing, power positions and manipulations fraught with incompetence. It is about winner-takes-all, it is non-negotiable and it is not about "rights", "justice" or "valid legal claims." The only rule that applies is that no matter how often the Arabs lose, they will not recognize defeat. They will keep on adjusting the rules of the game to suit their goal, which is the destruction of Israel. They are like children losing a game of soccer and saying the score does not count, "let's start from the beginning."

Thirty years have passed since the Yom Kippur War. Each has added another mark to a state of affairs that is now approximately 120 years old and abounding in deadly statistics. Two key Arab countries have signed piece agreements with Israel, which are so cold and fragile they could easily lapse into another war. The 1993 Oslo Accord left the false impression that peace with the Palestinians was imminent. In June 2000 the scene of Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat "fighting" over who would have the honor of letting his counterpart in first at the door also left the impression the end of days had arrived and the region would finally be at peace.

Most did not realize how deluding that thought was. Many still have tried to give peace a chance even if they did not believe in it. Who can deny the mounting evidence? Scores of Israelis killed in bus and other terror bombings in the mid '90s along with shameless admissions by Palestinian leaders that Oslo was nothing but a Trojan Horse to deceive Israel and gain grounds but not really achieve peace with her.

Therefore, I consider the following as the most important markers in recent history: 1) the start of the latest wave of Arab terror attacks against Israel on 28 September 2000 and 2) just a year later, on 11 September 2001, the terror attack on America. None of these events "just happened." They were part of a calculated onslaught against Western civilization and should clearly be perceived as part of the same violent objection to and rejection of things not Arab or Muslim. The wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq are derivatives of 9-11. The puerile insistence on findings links between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein misses the point because such a link is irrelevant to the fight against terror and tyranny. There is no apparent link (yet) between al-Qaeda and Yasser Arafat but they represent the exact same evil, same threat, same corruption, and they emanate from the same source of intended harm to the West.

When the Palestinians started (again) violently attacking Israelis I was as alarmed as I had been in the tense 3-4 weeks prior to the 1967 war, in the aftermath of the Arab attack in 1973, during the war in Lebanon in 1982, and during the Iraqi SCUD attacks on Israel in 1991. It was a different war but with an identical objective that had the following bottom line of peace without Israel, namely: Destroy Israel. I was so deeply troubled by the violence because I saw it for what it was: a strategic decision to gain advantage through the use of force and terror. And I did not interpret "advantage" as gaining a somewhat larger percentage of territory but as the elimination of Israel. So as the violence continued I shared my concern with relatives, friends, policy makers,

public safety and security officials, and Middle East experts. Soon enough I was able to point out that Israel is the test-case the West should watch (and guard) carefully because what is done unto Israel is done unto the rest of the free world.

One intensive exchange was with a well-established scholar who wrote to me on 8 October 2000, barely ten days into the Arab violence: "Thanks for the note of genuine concern; nonetheless, perspective is needed, this is not Yom Kippur 27 years ago!" He then added that old adage from childhood, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." He is the one who did not (and still does not) have a perspective. When I disagreed with his assessment on the power of words (names) he retorted: "It is not 1993, because two Arab states have peace treaties with Israel and no matter how much Jordan or Egypt, Egyptians or Jordanians dislike Israel, the international community expects them to adhere to the treaties," and added that "the sky is not falling." When we followed this e-mail exchange with a phone conversation he was even blunter: "Cool it - this is not the Holocaust; it is a public disorder and the Israel police will handle it within two to three weeks." I told him then that it would last at least three years following the pattern of 1936-39. He argued that "In the 1936-1939 Arab rebellion in Palestine against the Zionist presence and British imperialism...this happened a lot..." He then asked (rhetorically) whether (violence) "is... an isolated incident or one of several still to come?"

Of course it was not an isolated incident and as we know many more came and are still coming as proven by the recent terror incident in Tel Aviv (as if we need this proof time and again). I expected him to know better and to not use loaded terms such as "rebellion" (it was not) and "Imperialism" (the British Empire was there but under a mandate from the League of Nations). Frankly I was discouraged that he considered the situation less than serious. It seemed as if he - the academic that he is - would have been more comfortable dealing with another holocaust - academically - after it happened than do anything to prevent it. Four days later on 12 October, adding insult to injury, he wrote to me: "This is ugliest I have seen ME since October 1973...and yet Israel's existential well being is not at stake." I vigorously disagreed then and I still do today. It is exactly Israel's existential well-being - its very existence - which was and is at stake. And with it the well being of the rest of the free world.

So when the expert turned out to be such a grave disappointment I started what later became the weekly e-Letter. First I sent out on a daily basis sources I thought were helpful to understand the predicament Israel was in and an analysis that offered understanding as well as support. I used sources that expressed what I thought or wanted to say and eventually the e-Letter evolved into writing a weekly column that relied on the sources in what could be described as a diary of weekly developments. It became a forceful calling and I felt very strongly this was something I had to do in order to try to make a difference. The helpful sources were first attached as files and later provided as links to the interested reader. However, the e-Letter also stood as an independent "position" for those who did not have the time to read the supporting documentation.

Within a few weeks the feedback I received was most supporting and encouraging. I was then asked to discuss the e-Letter on Israel Radio. Gradually the mailing list has grown with many subscribers forwarding the e-Letter to their lists literally encompassing North and South America, The British Isles, Europe, Israel, Australia and South Africa. And a year later the

conflict was thrown into center-stage when the terror against Israel succeeded in hitting the heart of the United States with the atrocious 9-11 terrorist suicide attacks.

Suddenly the Israeli "experience" with terrorism became a valuable commodity that provided a context to better understand the Arab and Muslim attacks against the West. Thus the anti-Israel, anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist sentiments were the same expression of the old anti-Semitism that Jews have experienced before they established their own state. But that sentiment has been paralleled by a virulent anti-Western stream of hatred that resembled and was inspired by Nazi propaganda and has surpassed it. Yet to date there is an annoying artificial distinction in the West between terrorism directed at it and terrorism directed at Israel. Without a doubt, the danger today of Islamist terrorism and extremism surpasses that of Nazism and Communism combined.

Eventually several websites have posted the weekly e-Letter thus reaching a wide readership. Some have estimated my readership as 400,000-strong. Even at a fraction of that number the circulation is beyond what I ever originally imagined or intended. The e-Letter has generated an intense interest and hence the need to cover weekly developments; it has placed expectations and a demand on my time that has been increasingly difficult to address without taking away from my other responsibilities.

It is hard to believe that almost four years have passed from the time this cursed violence erupted and engulfed us without an end in sight. Many of you were very kind with your comments and I have not received negative ones. Throughout this long period there were only two commentaries with which I deeply disagreed but respected the thoughtful way in which they were written; but the numerous comments and feedback were encouraging enough to keep me compiling and issuing the e-Letter week after week.

However, the time has arrived to end it. Not because the situation has improved or because the end of terror and evil is in sight. The opposite is the case. The recent damaging ruling by the "International Court of Justice" against Israel "advising" that Israel has no right to have a defensive fence proves the battle is not only against terrorists. Now it is also against "useful idiots" who shoot themselves and their own societies in the foot by applying conventions used for "conventional wars." Those terms are no longer applicable to urban terrorism that targets non-combatants and receives support and glorification from a wide Arab population base as well as sympathetic audiences and media world-wide.

The e-Letter was a one-person voluntary effort with no resources yet with plenty of spelling and syntax errors. It was rewarding to be able to make a difference, but after almost 45 months of writing it I can only do so much of more of the same with the resources at hand. I thank the loyal readers for providing sources and references, as well as new readers; for the valuable comments and suggestions; for the gracious feedback, and mostly for the encouragement from the many of you who found the e-Letter to be of value.

I am not very optimistic as far as the immediate future is concerned, yet I am convinced we will win. The question is who are "we" and at what cost will we win and how will we define victory? If history serves as a guide - and it should (whether World War II, the 2000-2004 terror in Israel

or the 9-11 atrocity), we will eventually do "the right thing" but at an enormous cost. More than 1,000 have been murdered in Israel with thousands more injured. Look at the enormous difficulties Israel is encountering when it is aggressively pursuing terrorists and when it passively builds a Security Fence. Examine what it took the U.S. to join World War II or the hard time the U.S. gets from its "allies" and even internally when it fights terrorism.

But we have no real choice other than to fight for our very lives, not merely our lifestyle. This is what so many experts fail to understand. Conversion to Islam or being beheaded by it because we are "infidels" is not a vague, remote possibility, but is a grave real danger. Nothing short of vanquishing the enemy will get us to victory, yet unfortunately that option will be reached only after repeated terror incidents that will one day fill the cup to a level that Israel will not tolerate and the U.S. and even Europe will not tolerate. Once the giant (U.S.) awakes there is no stopping it. Until then the West is engaged in a false debate about security and privacy and even around defining who the enemy is. Perhaps democracies are doomed to pay a greater cost for their survival than they really should. But after all, given a choice to live in a democracy or anything the terrorists aspire to have us ascribe to - the outcome is obvious.

The question is whether we can keep democracy alive and if it is necessary to pay so dearly for it when it can be obtained and maintained without such a heavy toll in human lives. Just think of the 50 million who died (and were murdered) in World War II, whose lives could have been saved had we sprung into action sooner. Neither Israel nor the West should be sacrificed to appease the atrocious and insatiable demands of the thugs who have chosen the path of terror and exploited a culture that glorifies murder and death. That is the message I was trying to make clear week after week.

There are plenty of good sources out there to rely on. One value I found in the modern electronic age is that we do not have to be limited to a single newspaper. Read several, verify, be inquisitive and critical, and become knowledgeable. That is the edge we need in this fight. I hope I made a humble contribution to it.

Thanks for reading.