

Zionism and the Safeguard of the Jewish Homeland

By Ari Bussel

Throughout the early 1930's, Tsvi Madow was in a youth group in Poland called Betar, the Alliance of Revisionists Zionists. His membership card states in several languages, including Hebrew, Yiddish and English:

The aim of Zionism is the gradual transformation of Palestine (Transjordan included) into a Jewish State.

The Hebrew sentence reads "The aim of Zionism is to build the Hebrew State in the Land of Israel, on both sides of the Jordan River."

The Shrinking Land of Israel

Today, as we celebrate Israel's 59 years of existence, the country seems to be shrinking, its strength eroding. The reduction in numbers is not in population terms. Israel now has more than five million Jews out of a total population of 7.15 million people. Rather, geographically, Israel is being cut to pieces. Gush Katif was added to the Gaza Strip. Since Prime Minister Arik Sharon suffered a stroke, any plan he may have had has been forever lost. General Sharon would not have been afraid of a fight, and definitely had the courage and the foresight to have thought through a move that would end with a stronger Israel, with a

deterrent strengthened not weakened.

Thirty some years ago, I went on a school trip to Judea and Samaria. In addition to the teachers, several parents joined us. Less than twenty years ago, I, an officer in the IDF, was not able to go alone into Judea and Samaria. I had to travel with another officer, we had to follow protocol lest we find ourselves dead. Judea and Samaria, the "soft belly"



of Israel. The day is not far when Israelis may not be able to walk freely and safely in the streets of Jerusalem, a united city, or the "Arab village of Haifa," for fear for their safety.

Syria warns that the Golan Heights must be returned, else they she will resort to military force. The palestinians long call every part of Israel an "occupied territory." Nazareth, Tiberius, Haifa, Jerusalem, Jaffe—all occupied. If left to the Arabs, Israel would shrink to non-being.

Indeed, their maps usually do not show a place called ISRAEL.

The Gaza War – Israel's Demise?

The palestinians first gained the right to bear arms, then fortified the Gaza Strip, and now openly say they can bombard Israel continuously for a period

prevail since it fights for its survival, in its defense. It fights to allow people to live in peace, men and women alike, Jews and non-Jews equal under the law. A just war cannot be lost. Our history as a Jewish People proves it.

A Healthy Core, a Rotten Envelope

In 2007, Israel has shrunk geographically, its military might suffered an enormous loss during the Second Lebanon War this past summer, its leadership fails in the most basic of requirements ("leading" by setting a personal example and "leading" by having the foresight to bring us into a better future), and it continues to behave with an outer arrogance and lack of will. People have left Israel, to find their luck elsewhere. The dichotomy between the very rich and the very poor seems to widen. Are we witnessing a free fall, Israel's at the verge of a mighty slope to self destruction?

As long as the core is not rotten, only the outer peel, Israel will survive. It will prevail since it believes in God, the same God of Avraham, Itzhak and Yaakov. For some six thousand years, Israel's guidance has not changed. Today, religious and non-religious Israelis alike have this tradition embedded in them, carrying forward, an inseparable part of their being. The Israel Defense Forces, the People's Army, is based on values that unite us, a common denominator for all. Israel is one large family, all connected, with a shared history and an equally powerful future.

During Passover, we celebrated the journey from slavery to freedom. We then commemorated the six million who perished in the Holocaust, when a systematic plan to eradicate the Jewish People from the face of the earth was instituted by one of the most "cultured" and advanced countries of the time. From Shoah to rebuilding and deliverance, from being on the brink of extinction to the creation of the State of Israel, the Jewish Homeland.

During the day leading to Israel's Independence Day, we mourn the 22,305 men and women who gave their lives in the 59 years the country has existed, 223 Israelis this past year alone, of whom 119 were soldiers who fell in the Second War of Lebanon. From a day of remembrance we emerge even more convinced in the right of our way, in the beauty that is Israel, now entering its 60th year.

We must never forget the fallen, for they gave their lives for what we so easily take for granted. Each moment of pride, each fraction of happiness is mixed with their memories. Inseparable, ironclad union for all eternity. It seems that our history, our present and our future are all intermingled, all laid down for us at the beginning of all times by a design for all eternity. And until the end of days, we are guided by a set of values, by a belief if God, that makes us unique of all other people.

The End-of-Days

Will Israel be able to sustain 100,000 dead? 500,000 wounded? Is Israel ready for the end-of-days? Will one be reading this article toward the end of the current century, asking herself: Did they not see

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To MOSHE BARZILAY

OUR CONDOLENCES TO YOU
AND YOUR FAMILY
ON THE RECENT PASSING OF YOUR FATHER

EZRA BARZILAY

MAY HIS SOUL BE BOUND UP IN THE BOND
OF ETERNAL LIFE

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU
MAY GOD CONSOLE YOU AMONG THE OTHER
MOURNERS OF ZION AND JERUSALEM

WITH OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY,
YOUR LOVING FAMILY: THE SHEPHERS, ISRAEL – JEWISH LIFE,
SHALOM L.A. AND LIFE ALERT

Emancipation proclamations

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Where does the need to get divorced come from?

"There were many reasons that the dream was shattered. I matured, and often what suits you when you're 20 isn't what works for you when you're 30. I looked at myself at age 28; I was young and in a place where I wasn't happy. I realized that these days 40 is the new 30, I have enough years to enjoy myself, so why settle at such a young age?"

Today's young generation is more in tune with itself, she claims. "We're more aware of our needs. It's a generation that thinks it deserves things, deserves to be happy, not just in relationships but in general. There are negatives aspects to this but also positive ones, because we care about ourselves. If in the past couples wouldn't get divorced, because of children or parents or what the neighbors would say, today there isn't a problem declaring that my personal happiness is most important, and if I'm not happy, my child won't be either."

How did those around you react to the move you made?

"People my age understand me. Sometimes men who hit on me, who are single and younger than I am, are deterred by the fact that I'm a divorced mother. And there are self-righteous older people who ask, 'Are you sure you tried hard enough? Maybe you gave up too easily?' I don't think I gave up easily; we started going to couples therapy

three months after the wedding."

Tal Raz, 35, a saleswoman and mother of a 3-year-old daughter, also from Tel Aviv, left her home two years ago. "Our generation's point of view is different from that of our parents," she explains. "They hid behind the need to make a living and survive, and we're more independent and educated, and expect other things from life. It's important for us to have sharing, friendship, interest and good communication."

Raz, as she puts it, preferred to "reshuffle the deck." "When you grow up with parents as role models, who go through crises," she says, "it creates an urge to get divorced. When you see your parents having stayed together despite having something that can hardly be called a relationship, it doesn't make you feel like being in that situation, reliving that. I didn't want my daughter to grow up and internalize a bad pattern of relationships."

Do you still believe in marriage?

"I wouldn't want to remarry, but I'd want to be in a relationship, a better and more conscious one. The point that my parents reached after 30 years of marriage, I reached after three years, because in our time everything moves faster. So now to find a new partner I have a better filter, because I can automatically eliminate anyone who doesn't want children and a family. This doesn't stress me, but it does leave me with fewer possibilities. Sometimes people say 'Wow, what courage,' but when you're there it

feels like it's inevitable. The real courage is to look at things and admit that you're not in the place you deserve to be."

No longer a must

"Let's stop a minute," declares Ayelet Skolnik. "We've gotten a little carried away here. I'm not saying that you can't get divorced, but you have to think hard beforehand whether to do so."

Skolnik, 38, from Tel Aviv, is herself divorced since a young age. She works in coaching, after 11 years in the advertising field. She grew up in an Orthodox home, got married when she was 21, and divorced after three years, without children.

"After I got divorced, I was very interested in exploring and understanding how it happened," she says. She immediately puts a halt to young divorcees' glee. "When people come to consult with me, I tend to steer them away from divorce, and it's strange because I allowed myself the luxury of getting up and leaving. But these days, there is an unbearable lightness about getting divorced. There is an illusion that the world outside is big and wide. Men often flatter women, and flirt with them, a little at the office, a little here and there. But let's see what happens the day they're no longer married. It's easiest to flirt with someone who's inaccessible. Supposedly we live in a world with much freedom of choice, but the problem is that this freedom leads to paraly-

sis, to lack of choice."

Here Skolnik reaches her main point. Today, she says, you don't even need to get married: "Sex and financial independence are within reach, living with a partner without being married is permissible, and children no longer hold a marriage together because people also get divorced after they have children. Also, in our culture these days there's a tendency not to commit to anything for life. Not to an apartment, not to a job, we change a car every three years, clothes every season, is there anything you can commit to for the rest of your life? Marriage has remained the only domain in our society that is still perceived as a decision you make for the rest of your life. Even in 'Sex and the City,' all four women ended up in a steady relationship."

"Intelligent, rational, self-aware people at a reasonable age, 27 or 28, sometimes after living together, decide to get married after all. So if you already went ahead and made the decision and got married, then apparently you had profound reasons for doing so. In my opinion, deciding to get married is deciding to give up on the freedom of choice. What's important is to learn to interact with your partner, to reconnect to the roots of what led you to the altar. Maybe what we should be asking is not why people get divorced, but why they get married in the first place."

Welcome to Hell

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Hamas is becoming Fatah

Last Tuesday was a relatively quiet day, compared to the last few weeks in Gaza: Unknown assailants attacked and seriously injured a resident of Khan Yunis, hitting him over the head with a blunt instrument, and armed gunmen shot at the car of Majdi Ara-beed, head of the Voice of Freedom radio station in Gaza, but there were no casualties. Two years and three months ago, Ara-beed was very seriously wounded by shots from an Israel Defense Forces unit operating in the Gaza Strip while he was filming a report together with Channel 10 correspondent Shlomi Eldar. He recovered and went back to work. But in recent days he has once again become a target – this time of Palestinian armed men. It is not clear whether

they are from one of the Islamic movements or one of the rival clans.

"There is no law in Gaza," he says. "No one talks anymore about negotiations or about freeing prisoners. They are all busy with the question of who killed whom and how. The police are afraid of the gunmen because if they try to arrest them, they will immediately be depicted as collaborating with Israel. In addition, the competition between the various forces of Fatah and Hamas has become destructive from their point of view, and their image is negative. Everyone stores up weapons at home to defend themselves. Even if the state prosecutor publishes an arrest order against a resident of Gaza, who is able to arrest him if he and his family are armed?"

Ara-beed claims that the responsibility lies with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's Hamas government, which is not able to function. Some analysts in Gaza believe that

Hamas' decision to fire Qassam rockets at Israel on Independence Day was an attempt to make the Palestinian public forget the movement's failure to restore order in the streets of the Strip. It seems as if Hamas is trying to remind the Palestinian public once again of its "good old" image as a terrorist organization that fights Israel fearlessly. But the chaos in Gaza has also had an effect on its ranks.

"They have become like us," one Fatah activist says. "They fight over everything: money, positions, ranks, who will be director general and who will be captain in the offices and the security mechanisms that they are responsible for. There is no longer one leader who decides everything. The authority of Khaled Meshal, the head of the political bureau, has been badly eroded since the Mecca agreement. Their message to the Palestinian people is not uniform; all of a sudden, they sound like a supermarket

of different ideas, just like Fatah was at one stage: [Hamas co-founder] Mahmoud al-Zahar speaks about destroying Israel, while Haniyeh broadcasts a moderate message. The military wing does whatever it wants."

Israel doesn't need to take comfort in these remarks. In the reality that is Gaza, where economic hardship screams out, there are quite a few Palestinians who wish to send Qassam rockets at its northern neighbor – and not necessarily for ideological reasons. The head of a unit of launchers gets \$5,000 from the organization that sends him on his mission for releasing a salvo of rockets – an enormous sum in Gazan terms. The members of the unit receive several hundred dollars. The economic temptation is immense. It is less important to those launching the rockets whether the target is actually hit. That may be important only to those who wish to see the IDF return as an occupier to Gaza.

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the signs? It was all over the news every day. Israel and the world were told in no uncertain terms what might happen, and this was not posturing. Where was the leadership? What was it doing in the years that led to that catastrophic point? Was everyone asleep, their guards down?

A leader of Betar, the youth movement to whom Tsvi belonged in Poland of the 1930's, was Menachem Begin, who later founded the Herut Party in Israel. In Begin's words (in a rough translation from the Hebrew):

"The homeland is a historical and geographic continuum. He, who does not recognize our right to the entire homeland, does not recognize our right to any part of its totality either. And we, based on our rightful and eternal right, will not give up. We will carry the vision of a full and complete freedom, we will carry the vision of a complete redemption. And we will make it happen. In due time

...When did we not stand alone? Why did we win? Thanks to our belief in the justice of our cause, and thanks to a simple change. We decided not to place our trust in the defense of `all humanity`, nor to request the `generosity of the Arabs.` Smoke will rise, the darkest smoke of the fires, if we fail to take our destiny in our hands, if we fail to believe in the justice of our cause, and if we do not surround that justice with renewed Hebrew force. (Menachem Begin, former Israeli PM, 1977-83)

we will make it happen."

In a speech some thirty years ago this month Begin said:

We never placed our faith in physical force. We believed in justice. ...When did we not stand alone? Why did we win? Thanks to our belief in the justice of our

cause, and thanks to a simple change. We decided not to place our trust in the defense of `all humanity`, nor to request the `generosity of the Arabs.` Smoke will rise, the darkest smoke of the fires, if we fail to take our destiny in our hands, if we fail to believe in the justice of our

cause, and if we do not surround that justice with renewed Hebrew force. "

On this 59th birthday of the State of Israel, let us rejoice in Israel's existence. Israel is not separate from its Biblical and historical origins, and the People of Israel will survive.

We only need to wake up, assess the current threats and react – and do so before it is too late.

The writer was born on Israel's 18th Birthday. 18 years ago, he took a leave of absence from Stanford University and left to Israel to serve in the IDF. Bussel served as an officer in General Headquarters during the First Persian Gulf War.