September 28, 1995 – Oslo II accord signed at the White House

The Jerusalem Report, October 19, 1995, Pg. 4 – “Over a year behind schedule, after a weeks’ round-the-clock talks, Foreign Minister Peres and PLO Chairman Arafat finally completed the Oslo II accord on September 24.

Under the deal, signed at the White House, on September 28, Israel will pull out of all West Bank cities in the next six months (with the exception of Hebron, where a small army presence will remain to safeguard settlers), and also hand civil control of 450 Palestinian town and villages to Arafat’s Palestinian Authority.

Early next year, the Palestinians are to hold elections for an 82-member governing council.

Within two months of the council’s inauguration, the PLO is obligated to excise anti-Israel clauses from its covenant.

Israel also agreed to the phased release of Palestinian prisoners, and to Palestinian control of West Bank holy places, with the exception of Hebron’s Cave of Makhpelah, Joseph’s tomb in Nablus and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem.”

During the signing ceremony Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin commented, “We are not retreating. We are not leaving. We are yielding – and we are doing so for the sake of peace.\(^1\)

“The agreement effectively ends Israel’s 28-year occupation of West Bank cities, though it technically leaves Israel with at least temporary control over three fourths of the territory.

No less critically, it makes territorial compromise between Israelis and West Band Arabs inevitable,”\(^2\)

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\(^1\) The Oregonian, Friday, September 29, 1995, Pg. 1

\(^2\) US News and World Report, October 9, 1995, Pg. 56
The peace process championed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin generated intense opposition in Israel.

Those opposing his policies condemned him for nearly two years prior to the assassination.

For example:


December, 1993: American pro-peace group Project Nisham receives death threats against Rabin, one reading: Kill Rabin, the murderer of the Jews.”

Sept, 1995: a curse placed on Rabin calls on the “angels of destruction to kill him.” The curses expiry date: early November.

October 5, 1995: Thousands demonstrate in Jerusalem against Oslo II, with effigies of Rabin in a Nazi SS uniform. Likud leader Netanyahu addresses the crown, which chants: “Rabin is a traitor.”
October 13, 1995: Itamar Ben-Gvir, of the outlawed Kach, put under house arrest for vandalizing Rabin’s Cadillac. “The same way we got to the hood ornament we can get to him,” he says.3

On October 21, 1995 The Jerusalem Post reported, “I am not afraid personally.” Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stressed last week regarding the possibility of violence against him by anti-government protesters. “I will not run away and they will not silence me.” Rabin directly blamed the Likud for what he labeled “right-wing violence.” The Likud, he said, provides the background and inspiration for those who would attack him and his ministers.4

On Saturday evening, November 4, 1995, there was a “Peace Now” rally at Tel Aviv’s Kikar Malchei Yisrael (King of Israel Square). It was … packed with 100,000 well-wishers of the Peace Process. Yitzhak Rabin was there with foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, and other Labor party leaders … . Rabin, in obvious pleasure with the size and mood of the crowd sang in a song, entitled “Song of Peace,” with a leading Israeli singer at the close of the event. He had never sung in public before, which is an indication of how good he felt.

Rabin left the platform and headed towards his motorcade. As he walked down the steps of the Tel Aviv Municipality building to enter his official car at 9:50 p.m., he was felled by the assailant who fired three shots at point blank range. His wife, Leah, was walking beside him, but was not hurt. However, one of his body guards was also hit. His bodyguards pushed Rabin into his car and rushed him to the nearby Ichilov Hospital, where he was immediately taken to surgery. Rabin was hit in his back and chest by two dum-dum bullets shot at point blank range.

At 11:15 p.m., he was pronounced dead by doctors who could not revive him.

When it became apparent that the assailant was Jewish, shock waves went through the Jewish world.

The confessed assassin is Yigal Amir, a 27-year-old law student from Bar Ilan University. Police said he had no criminal record and was known to be a supporter of right-wing politics. He did belong to the Jewish extremist organization Eyal - the acronym for Avenging Jewish Organization – which took credit for the assassination. Nevertheless Amir told interrogators that he acted alone and that he “received instructions from God to kill Prime Minister Rabin,”

3 The Jerusalem Report, November 30, 1995, Pg. 6
4 The Jerusalem Post International Edition, Week ending October 21, 1995, pg. 4
Amir also said he “did not regret his deed,” which he said was “planned for some time.” He confessed that he had tried to get close to Rabin on two other occasions. He was armed then, but failed in his attempts.

He further revealed that he had also planned to kill Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, and said, “If both Peres and Rabin had gone down the steps at the same time, I would not have hesitated to kill them both.

World leaders, including Arab leaders, sent immediate condolences. Notables from 86 nations came to Israel for the funeral … with 22 presidents and 25 prime ministers in attendance.

Both King Hussein of Jordan and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt attended and spoke at the funeral. Up to now they have both refused to come to Jerusalem.

On November 5, 1995 some 1 million people filed past Rabin’s coffin to pay their last respects. 5

Yet others in the Arab world celebrated the assassination. Reports from Syria and Lebanon reveal that those opposed to the peace process in the Arab world fired guns, artillery and anti-tank rockets into the air in celebration of Rabin’s death. Anti-aircraft fire lit up the night sky over several parts of Beirut which are inhabited by Moslem extremists, who immediately celebrated the news of Rabin’s death.

The new head of the Islamic Jihad group, Ramadan Abdullah, said of Rabin’s assassination, “I do not regret the death of the foremost head of terrorism in the world. What of it if the world loses one of its killer criminals?”6

Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat did not attend the funeral, after Palestinian and Israeli officials reportedly told him that his presence in Jerusalem would provoke security problems. 7

On November 8, 1995 Yitzhak Rabin’s confessed assassin (Yigal Amir) told a judge he had made a “cold hearted” decision to kill the prime minister to stop the peace process.

He told the judge that he drew his ideas from Halacha – the Jewish legal code.

“According to Halacha, you can kill the enemy. My whole life, I learned Halacha,” he said, “When you kill in war, it is an act that is allowed.”

5 The Jewish Review, November 15, 1995, Vol. 38, No. 5, Front page

6 Bridges For Peace, E-mail, Rabin Assassinated, 11/8/95

7 The Jewish Review, November 15, 1995, Vol. 38, No. 5, Front page
“I did this to stop the peace process,” he said. “We need to be cold-hearted.”

Did you act alone, (Judge) Arbel asked. “It was God,” Amir replied.

A grieving Leah Rabin blamed those who incited right-wingers for her husband’s death. “Incitement? Sure, there absolutely was incitement,” Rabin said in a television interview recorded before Yitzhak Rabin’s funeral.8

By week’s end, Israeli police had arrested eight suspects in connection with the killing. Still, militants from the right appeared uncowed by the clampdown. In one incident … two Jerusalem yeshiva students were sentenced to six days in jail for trying to desecrate Rabin’s grave. Both spate on it, and police say one appeared to be preparing to urinate on it.9

**Shimon Peres**

Career highlights of Shimon Peres, who was chosen acting prime minister by the Israeli Cabinet Nov. 5, 1995:

1923: Born in Poland

1934: Immigrated to Palestine; later educated at Harvard and New York universities

1974-77: Defense minister under Rabin

1984-86: Prime minister

1992-95: Foreign minister under Rabin

1994: Shared Nobel Peace Prize with Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for efforts toward Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation10


Ehud Barak, Israel’s interior minister, is a former chief of staff of Israel’s military. A Rabin protégé and Israel’s most decorated soldier, his is likely to be a prime player in any new Labor government.

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8 The Oregonian, Tuesday, November 7, 1995, Page A3,


February 25 – March 4, 1996: Islamic militants carry out four suicide bombings in Israel, Killing 63.¹²

March 28, 1996 – Yigal Amir sentenced to life imprisonment

April 11, 1996 – Israel launches “Operation Grapes of Wrath” against guerrillas in south Lebanon

Israel began a 16 day air and artillery campaign against guerrillas in south Lebanon.

With the Mideast peace talks at a standstill the Israeli-Lebanon border exploded anew.

Lebanon’s Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters sent a series of rockets into Israeli towns.

In retaliation Israel launched deep air attacks into Lebanon, hitting Hezbollah headquarters and reaching the outskirts of Beirut for the first time in 14 years.¹³

¹¹ The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
¹² Ibid.
¹³ U. S. News and World Report, April 22, 1996, page 18, World
Prime Minister Shimon Peres never clearly spelled out the objectives of the operation. However, the idea was clear: to use Israel’s overwhelming military and technological superiority to apply precise and selective force in Lebanon until Syria, the dominant power there was compelled to curb the guerrillas of Hezbollah, or the Party of God and return to the negotiating table. But the death of scores of Lebanese refugees at the U.N. base in Qana in southern Lebanon under an Israeli artillery barrage abruptly turned things upside down …Hezbollah remains intact.14

On Friday April 26, 1996 Israel, Syria and Lebanon agreed on a written set of understandings to stop 16 days of rocketing and shelling in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. The agreement, designed to protect civilians on both sides of the border, is unsigned, although simultaneous public announcements of it were made by agreement in Israel, Lebanon and Syria. Warren Christopher, who spent seven days shuttling between the parties, made the announcement in Israel standing next to Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who is in the midst of a fierce election campaign.15

April 24, 1996 – Palestinian Parliament-in-exile votes to revoke sections of charter calling for Israel’s destruction.16

For more than 31 years the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization called for Israel’s destruction. April 24, 1996 that fight officially ended. Without debate, the Palestinian parliament-in-exile voted 504-54 to revoke parts of the charter that call for armed struggle against Israel and the “liberation of Palestine.”

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres … said if the PLO did not strike the anti-Israel parts of the charter, he would postpone the opening of the final status talks negotiations in the peace process scheduled for May, 4.

The charter lost much of its force when Arafat signed the Oslo agreement on the White House lawn in September, 1993, ending decades of virtual war between the PLO and Israel. But Israel insisted the process would not be complete until the charter was amended.17

On April 25, 1996 Israel’s governing Labor Party dropped its historical opposition to the creation of the Palestinian state. The landmark action matched the Palestinian National Council’s equally monumental vote the day before to end its long-standing goal to obliterate Israel.

14 The Oregonian, Monday, April 22, 1996, Front Page
15 The Oregonian, Saturday, April 27, 1996, Front Page
16 The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
17 The Oregonian, Thursday, April 25, 1996, Page A3
The decisions, coming as fighting continues between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, speak volumes about the recent changes in the Middle East.

A few years ago, such a dramatic Israeli-Palestinian peace current would have been unthinkable while an active battle front existed between the Jewish state and Arab guerrillas.

The Palestinian council vote helps Peres in his campaign for Israel’s national elections May 29, demonstrating to the Israeli public that Arafat can be trusted and the peace process can produce dividends.

Peres called the vote “the greatest ideological change of this century.”

**May 5, 1996 – Negotiations open for the final stage of the Mideast Peace Talks**

TABA, Egypt – Israeli and Palestinian negotiators formally opened the last and most difficult stage of their search for a peace settlement, the “final status” talks that require them to resolve their bitterest differences within three years.

The session was timed to meet the deadline for the start of the final round of talks as set out in the Israeli-Palestinian agreements signed in September 1993 and September 1995. Those agreements declare that the final settlement must be reached by May, 1999.

One unspoken understanding was that real negotiations would not start until after the May 29 Israeli elections. It was clear to both sides that the talks’ shape would depend on whether Peres, the Israeli architect of the process, was re-elected.

The most intractable and the most important issues have been saved for last: the status of Jerusalem, the fate of about 3 million Palestinian refugees, the fate of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas, the final borders between the Israelis and the Palestinians, security arrangements and vital economic questions such as the sharing of water and trade.

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18 The Oregonian, Friday, April 26, 1996, Page A5

19 The Oregonian, Monday, May 6, 1996, Page A6
May 29, 1996 – Right-wing Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu narrowly defeats Peres in election become prime minister.²⁰

After Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination Peres moved forward as acting Prime Minister.

In the election polls he led Likud’s Benyamin Netanyahu by a whopping 30%.

Had he called for an immediate re-election, with the right still disgraced by the murder, he would surely have won.

The terror attacks of late February and early March shattered public confidence in the peace process and destroyed his lead.

At the onset of April’s Operation Grapes of Wrath in Lebanon, Peres led Netanyahu by 11 percent. After the army’s accidental bombardment of Kafir Kana left 100 Lebanese civilians dead, the lead shrank to 3.7 percent. By May 12, then momentum was with Netanyahu: by the 19th, Bibi was leading in the Jewish electorate by 4 percent.

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²⁰ The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
The TV debate between Peres and Netanyahu two night before the election is now viewed as the final nail in the Peres coffin. Peres didn’t want to debate Netanyahu. It was an encounter his gut instinct told him to duck. Bet he acceded to his aides’ opinion that staying home was a worse alternative. Tired and underprepared, he was comprehensively outperformed by a vigorous, focused opponent.21

Netanyahu decided to become prime minister 10 years ago when he was still Israeli ambassador to the U. N. in New York. At the funeral of his revered elder brother Yoni, killed in the famous Entebbe rescue of hijacked Israeli hostages in 1976, he has said the country had lost its next Ben-Gurion. Now, he was determined to fill that role. He cultivated rich American Jews who helped form what they dubbed his “political submarine:” of money and power, which would surface when the time was ripe. First he would use it as a launching pad to take over the party, and then the country.

The grand plan went ahead relatively smoothly until the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Netanyahu was blamed for helping to create the political climate that led to the killing, and his public standing plummeted.

But his battered political ambitions were restored first by Hamas suicide bombings, which reawakened Israeli skepticism over the peace process.

The election was decided by the large reservoir of Soviet immigrants.

Netanyahu’s trump card was Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident. As ambassador the U. N. in the mid 80s, Netanyahu had lobbied for Sharansky’s release from prison, and the two men later became firm friends. Netanyahu encouraged Sharansky to form his immigrant party, in the sure knowledge that it would help him in the decisive prime ministerial race. The silent partnership paid handsome dividends for both sides. Sharansky got seven Knesset seats and Netanyahu became prime minister.

Arthur Finkelstien, his main campaign adviser built up Natanyahu’s shaky leadership credibility.

Ten days before the elections, The Likud campaign people felt the tide had finally turned. Netanyahu went public with a survey showing him 1-2 percent ahead. The press thought he was bluffing to encourage his activists and overconfident. Labor campaign chiefs failed to heed the warning. Eyal Arad, Netanyahu’s chief campaign strategist said, “We didn’t win. They lost. They let us create the campaign agenda.”22

Netanyahu edged incumbent Labor Prime Minister Shimon Peres with 50.4 percent of the popular vote to 49.5 percent.

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21 The Jerusalem Report, June 27, 1996, Pg. 24-25
22 The Jerusalem Report, June 27, 1996, Pg. 14-17
In addition to directly election their prime minister of the first time, Israel’s nearly 4 million voters still selected party blocs, as before, to represent them in the Knesset, their parliament. The unanticipated result: the traditionally fractious 120-seat legislature will be even more divided than ever, thanks to strong showing s by smaller special-interest parties representing ultra-Orthodox Jews, Israeli Arabs and even Russian immigrants, not to mention the extreme right and left wings.

The electoral defeat is was especially bitter for Peres. The 73 year-old political-cum-statesman has served every Labor government since the day of Israel’s founding father David Ben-Gurion bur lost four elections as party leader. Perceived by many of his countrymen as not tough enough as a politician, romantic, all too often smitten with his own vision of a “New Middle East,” Peres now seems headed for retirement.23

June 23, 1996 – Arab summit

August 2, 1996 – Government angers Arabs by ending four-year freeze on settlement construction.24

September 4, 1996 – Netanyahu/Arafat meet.

September 24-27, 1996 – Protests and clashes break out in West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem after Israel opens tunnel near Muslim holy site, 58 Palestinians, 15 Israelis and three Egyptians killed25

October 1, 1996 – Netanyahu and Arafat hold talks at White House on how to end violence.26

November, 1996 – Har Homa approved

December 16, 1996 – Peace Talks/Pullout from Hebron resumes.

Israel and the Palestinians revived peace talks on December 16, 1996 regarding Israel’s long overdue pullout from Hebron, despite tension over Israel’s decision to pump more money into West Bank settlements.27

1997 – Modern Zionism movement 100 years old

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23 U.S. News and World Report, June 10, 1996, Pg. 45-49
24 The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
25 The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
26 The Oregonian, Wednesday, October 2, 1996, Page A3, Chronology
27 The Oregonian, Tuesday, December 17, 1996, Page A4
1997 was considered the year of Zionism’s centennial. Zionism was considered to be 100 years old. As we entered the centennial year, the Jewish community was (as usual) involved in a debate. The debate – is Zionism over – have we entered the post-Zionist era? Some said, “No.” Shlomo Aviner in a article entitled “These are the Pangs of Birth” argued that the answer was no.

Have we entered the era of post-Zionism? So argue many of those for whom the integrity of the Land of Israel is their most cherished goal, as they witness the current concessions and pullbacks.

The opposite, I’d argue, is the case: Zionism is at its very beginning. We are at the beginning of the redemption, or the middle, certainly not at its end of after it.28

Hanoch Marmari takes the opposite tack. In his article entitled “Life after Zionism” he writes:

Zionism has had two major stages, after which it will have fulfilled its mission. The first was creating an unquestionable territorial and demographic presence, and ended with the Arabs failure to destroy us in 1973, or perhaps with the settlement drives of the Shamir government. The second stage, now in progress, is achieving recognition and acceptance from our neighbors. In the post-Zionist world, after peace and the Law of Return (has ended), Israel will be a country like all other countries, and the great majority of its citizens will be Jews.29

Whatever your position, a major concern in 1997 was the apparent end of Aliyah. Let me share some comments from an article in The Jerusalem Report, July 24, 1997. David Horovitz and Vince Beiser make these comments:

(The) stream of Jews (from around the globe) to their homeland (Israel) is beginning to run dry. The centennial of Zionism, ironically, seems to be coinciding with the end of aliyah.

… almost 800,000 Jews (by 1997) from the former Soviet Union have made their homes in Israel within the past 10 years. But now that last major reservoir of “distressed” Jewry is emptying out. Over-all aliyah, four-fifths of it from the former Soviet Union, was down 17 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period in 1996, with a projected annual fall of some 30 percent.

To compensate for this decline, Israeli officials in the immigration business are looking to the West, and especially to the vast American

28 The Jerusalem Report, February 8, 1996, Page 54
29 The Jerusalem Report, February 8, 1996, Page 55
Jewish community, which, at 6 million, still outnumbers even Israel’s population.

Avraham Burg, head of the Jewish Agency, the quasi-government body charged with “ingathering the exiles” is confident that a massive injection of financial and staff resources can greatly boost immigration from the West in the next few years.

Burg has told The Jerusalem Report that he “definitely” foresees 50,000 Western Jews a year moving to Israel. Avigdor Lieberman, director general of the Prime Minister’s office, has even higher expectations. The “top priority” of the Netanyahu government, he said earlier this year, is to bring “3 million Jews to Israel, primarily from the Western countries.”

But staff within the Agency-World Zionist Organization derides such talk as absurd. The current rate of immigration from the United States barely tops an annual 2,000, despite the increased Americanization of Israeli life and the improving standard of living.

What’s more, massive Western aliyah coincides with the major crisis in Israeli-Diaspora relations over the planned legislation invalidating Reform and Conservative conversions performed in Israel. “The more Israel is perceived as a non-democratic country, with Khomeinist aspects, the only country in the West without religious freedom, the less attractive it’s going to be,” says Rabbi Uri Regev, head of the Reform movement’s Israel Religious Action Center.

(Avraham Burg) recognizes that most of the world’s “distressed” Jews have now been ingathered – with the last few years seeing immigrations from Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Kurdistan, among other places. He knows, too, that the great Soviet reservoir is slowly but surely drying up, with most of those Jews who wanted to come to Israel now having made the trip, and many of the rest – not just in the from the U.S.S.R., but throughout Eastern Europe – preferring to try to rebuild viable Jewish life in the post-Communist era.

Besides, getting Western Jews to come to Israel is only the first battle. The next one is keeping them here. Practical difficulties – getting a job, finding a home – mean many Western immigrants don’t stay in Israel for long. Of the relatively few North American Jews who do come here nowadays, notes Prof. Della Pergola, half go back within a few years. A similar “dropout” rate applies to Western European immigrants.

The writer A.B. Yehoshua also argues against the premature dumping of Zionism, although from a different perspective. “If Zionism only means
helping Jews who are in physical danger, then its role is completed,” he
says. “But Zionism is also supposed to help Jews find their Jewish
identity in a Jewish environment, and that task is far from over.”

Is Zionism dead – you define it and you be the judge. If you define Zionism, please define
it from a Biblical base.

January 15, 1997 – Agreement initialed: pullback from Hebron

February 14, 1997 – Israel’s worst military air disaster

SHAAR YESHUV, Israel – Two transport helicopters shuttling elite troops to Lebanon
collided Tuesday in fog and rain and crashed into a rural settlement, killing all 73 soldiers
aboard.

It was Israel’s worst military air disaster.

Despite extensive damage in Shaar Yeshuv, a communal settlement in the eastern Galilee,
there were no known injuries to anyone on the ground.

30 The Jerusalem Report, July 24, 1997, Pg. 12-15
(The) crash comes at a time when Israeli politicians are increasingly calling into question the wisdom of Israel’s policy in south Lebanon, some have urged that Israel withdraw its troops.

In 1985, Israel established the so-called security zone in southern Lebanon to guard northern towns from guerrilla attacks, while pulling its troops out of a larger area of Lebanon that it had occupied.

More than 200 soldiers have died in the security zone since then, mostly in clashes with the Iranian backed Hezbollah guerrillas.31

“God punished the Israelis and took revenge on them in the name of the oppressed of Lebanon and Palestine,” Hizballah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, on the helicopter collision.32

February 26, 1997 – Har Homa approved

March 7, 1997 – Cabinet approves 9% rollback/PA protests

March 13, 1997 – Seven Israeli schoolgirls massacred

NAHARAYIM, Jordan – A Jordanian soldier grabbed a comrade’s assault rifle and fired on Israeli junior high school girls on a field trip …

Seven girls were killed, and six were wounded.

Still shooting, the gunman chased the screaming students down a grassy river embankment while his fellow soldiers yelled “Madman, madman” before overpowering him.

The attack took place on a Jordan River island known as a symbol of Mideast peace.

(Jordanian King Hussein) later phoned (Prime Minister) Netanyahu, saying he wanted to visit the families of the slain children.

“I cannot offer enough condolences or express enough personal sorrows to the mothers, fathers and brothers of these children who fell today,” Hussein said on his return to Amman.

The shooting took place shortly after 11 a.m., when the students from the Feirst School, a modern Orthodox school in central Israel, arrived at the border post.

31 The Oregonian, Wednesday, February 5, 1997, Page A8
32 The Jerusalem Report, March 6, 1997, Page 10
The were visiting Naharayim, a man-made island that Israel returned to Jordan under the two nations’ 1994 peace treaty. It is a popular tourist spot for Israelis, and a sign at the entrance reads, “Island of Peace.”

The gunman lived nearby in the Jordanian town of South Shuna.

He had been sitting in his jeep when the school bus pulled up on a grassy hill and about 40 eighth-graders filed out to see the sweeping view of the river. Without warning, he grabbed an assault rifle from another soldier in the jeep and started shooting.33

March 18, 1997 – Har Homa declared a closed military area, building begins

March 21, 1997 – Tel Aviv blast

May 6, 1997 – PA gets tough on selling land

June 4, 1997 – Barak becomes the Labor Party head

JERUSALEM – A year after Israeli voters drove it from power, the Labor Party bid anew for the premiership … by anointing Ehud Barak, a tough minded general, as its standard bearer.

Barak, 55, held a comfortable lead in the balloting in the early morning hours for the job of leading his battered party to elections by 2000.

On his way to victory, he nudged aside former Prime Minister Shimon Peres …34

… Israel’s most decorated soldier (possesses) savvy and (self-confidence), … (he is) respected for his integrity and tell-it-like-it-is style … he embodies clarity and precision, traits that the Israeli public finds lacking in most politicians at a time of great domestic uncertainty.

He was born at the Mediterranean coastal Kibbutz Mishmar Hasharon in 1942 to Eastern European immigrants.

Barak held most senior positions in the Israeli Army, including chief of military intelligence and head of what Israeli soldiers call” the unit,” the elite Sayeret Matkal commando force.

33 The Oregonian, Friday, March 14, 1997, Front Page

34 The Oregonian, Wednesday, June 4, 1997, Page A11
He won the Distinguished Service Medal – Israel’s highest military honor – with four citations, two for operations that are still secret.

In 1972, he led a team of commandos, disguised as airport maintenance men, who stormed a Belgian airliner that had been hijacked to Israel.

Among the commandos at Barak’s side during the raid: Binyamin Netanyahu, now head of the opposition Likud bloc.
The next year, Barak donned a woman’s wig and slipped into Beirut, part of a commando team that gunned down three leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In 1988, he orchestrated the assassination in Tunis of the PLO’s top military strategist, Abu Jihad, considered by Israel to be the mastermind behind the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.35

July 29, 1997 – Peace talks resume

Jerusalem – Israelis and Palestinians, weary of months of sporadic violence and mutual recriminations, said they would return to the negotiating table … to resume peace talks. It was not clear why the two sides came together after a four-month impasse.

But the increased contact in recent weeks, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s opposition to a new Jewish housing project in east Jerusalem appears to have reduced tensions.

There was no indication the sides resolved key issues keeping them apart since March: the Palestinians’ demand for a halt to Israeli building in disputed territories and Israel’s demand for a renewal of intelligence-sharing to prevent attacks by militant Palestinians.

July 30, 1997 – Mahane Yehuda bombing

September 4, 1997 – Ben Yehuda Street bombing

September 26, 1997 – PA crackdown

September 29, 1997 – Peace talks resume

UNITED NATIONS – Israeli and Palestinian leaders revived their stalled peace process … They agreed to resume direct talks on implementing existing accords and start new bargaining to clear the way for negotiations about the final status of the land that both claim as their ancestral home.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright mediated the agreement between Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas. She said it “arrested the downward spiral” of relations in the Middle East.36

KAHN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — Israel and the Palestinians are preparing to pull up chairs at the peace table, but an uninvited guest is casting a long shadow — the radical Islamic group Hamas.

Even as the peace talks move toward resumption following a bitter six-month breakdown, one of Hamas’ founding members dismissed any hope for their success.

“There is no future for us in negotiations,” Abdel Aziz Rantisi said in an interview … at his walled villa outside the tumble-down Gaza Strip town of Khan Younis. “They will lead to nothing.”

Rantisi — out of jail and a spokesman for Hamas’ political wing — carefully disavowed any knowledge of attacks carried out by the group’s military arm.

But he said Hamas was prepared to “struggle by every means” against Israel.

Giving up “even one centimeter of land” including Israeli cities such as Tel Aviv and Jaffa, is unacceptable, said Rantisi, 50. “Everything in Palestine is ours.”

Peace can come only with the destruction of all Israeli settlements and the ceding of Jerusalem to the Palestinians, he said, clenching a fist for emphasis.37

October 8, 1997 – Netanyahu/Arafat meet

December 10, 1997 – Anti-witnessing bill

… former Minister of Telecommunications, Shas (Orthodox Religious) Knesset Member Raphael Pinchasi proposed to the Plenum38 that it consider the presentation of a bill which would forbid all forms of proselytizing in Israel, as well as conversion from any faith to another.

The subject was referred for further consideration to the Committee for Internal Affairs, which met … January 13.

The sum of its deliberations are as follows:

36 The Oregonian, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 1997, Front Page
37 The Oregonian, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 1997, Page A4
38 ple·num (plê¹nem, plèn¹em) noun plural ple·nums or ple·na (plê¹ne, plèn¹e) 1. An assembly or a meeting with all members present.
1) The Jewishness of the State of Israel is paramount to its democratic commitments. Freedom to convert from Judaism is a threat to Jewishness of the State.

2) Missionaries are repeatedly accused of using illicit means to procure promises of conversion; therefore restrictions must be imposed on their freedom to present their message.

3) If a bill in the spirit of the discussion was presented to the Committee, it would review it with favor.

4) The Committee will ask the Attorney General to advise it, in the course of its next meeting on the subject, as to which steps it should take and what form such a bill could and should take.

Eventually a bill came under discussion by the Knesset, by passing its preliminary reading on May 20, 1998. The terms of the proposed law forbid “illegal possession” of literature in which there is “any form of effort to persuade another to change his religion.” The proposed law further forbids the “printing or copying” of such literature. The proposal forbids distribution of the … information, tracts, books or “means” of dissemination information. The proposed law illegalizes any notice of an activity or literature in which an appeal is made for the recipients to alter their religious opinions. Finally, he proposal forbids “any form of effort to persuade another to change his religion” The penalty for breaking this law was set at three years imprisonment or a 50,000 shekel fine.

Such a bill, if made law, could render illegal almost all evangelical activity in Israel.

A protracted letter writing campaign from around the world caused the bill to stall in the Knesset. Being a private members bill, when Pinchasi did not return to the Knesset the bill died.

1998 – Israel is 50

In 1998 modern Israel turned 50 years old and the country has changed radically in that short period of time. Nothing highlights the massive changes than the shifts that have happened in Kibbutz life. Excerpts from an article in U.S. News and World Report, by Alan Cooperman. The title of the article is “A Socialists worst nightmare: Wealth.”

Kibbutz Gezer has a terrible problem. It may soon be rich.

Life on Gezer, like other kibbutzim, used to mean backbreaking labor and constant danger. Founded in 1945, it was attacked and almost completely destroyed by the Jordanian Army in Israel’s 1948 War of Independence. Twenty of its members died in the battle. Today, Gezer is a comfortable, middle-class community of 50 families who live in tidy cottages with red-tile roofs and flower gardens. And thanks to Israel’s booming real-estate

39 Messianic Action Committee, Anti-Freedom Report #43
40 Messianic Action Committee, Anti-Freedom Report #53
41 Baruch Maoz, Anti-Christian legislation - Report No. 4
market and suburban sprawl, Gezer’s 1,000 acres of cotton, winter wheat, olive groves, and cow pastures—centrally located between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem—are suddenly worth more than $100,000 an acre. The kibbutz is negotiating with a private developer to build and sell homes on about 75 acres. Then, it plans to subdivide more parcels, create a high-tech industrial park, and reap millions of dollars in profits.

“We’re like the Clampetts on the Beverly Hillbillies,” says the kibbutz’s in-house lawyer, Sheldon Shulman. “We’re getting a ton of money dumped on us, and we’re trying to decide what to do with it and how to keep it from ruining our commune.”

Only a tiny portion of Israelis have ever lived on a kibbutz—the kibbutz population today totals 2.4 percent of the country, half what it was in 1948. But Israel’s 275 communal settlements have long symbolized the pioneering spirit of the nation’s founders, with their utopian dedication to social justice and reclaiming the land.

But no one knows how long the kibbutzim can last as islands of spartan living and socialist ideology in a buoyantly capitalist society. As Israel makes peace with its neighbors, the heroic role of kibbutzim as the country’s first line of defense is receding. So is their political influence: 28 kibbutzniks held seats in Israel’s 120-member parliament in 1948; only seven (a record low) do today.

Yet nothing has threatened the kibbutzim so much as prosperity …

Now, many kibbutzim are contemplating an even sharper break with their egalitarian ideology by introducing “differential wages,” such as overtime pay or premiums for tough jobs. Others are undertaking “privatization”—giving members a larger monthly allowance but charging for meals, home repairs, and the like.

Kibbutzniks of an older generation are dismayed by the changes they see. “I don’t think there’s any idealism left in the world today, except for religious fanaticism,” says Saul Etzioni, 67.

The younger generation is eager. “If you ask me, the changes aren’t quick enough,” says Gili Rosner, 36, who runs Tzora’s profitable new wine and gourmet shop. “People want to work more and more in their own professions, and they want to prove they’re worth something, and they want to see a reward at the end of the day.”

Most of Gezer’s members want to use their real-estate profits to pay for pensions for their elderly and college tuitions for their children, and then to
bankroll more entrepreneurial ventures. “It’s a real shift in focus for this very idealistic, intelligent, educated, motivated, self-disciplined group of people,” says Shulman, Gezer’s attorney. “This socialist society is turning into an entrepreneurial engine that in five years if really going to surprise the Israeli economy.” An even bigger surprise will be if its egalitarian ethic can survive, too.  

Some statistics – then and now.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1998</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>1,173,900 – Jews 86%</td>
<td>5,759,400 – Jews 80.5%</td>
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<td>Military Tanks</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4,300</td>
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<td>Warplanes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4,488</td>
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<td>Active Armed Forces</td>
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<td>Private Cars</td>
<td>9,578</td>
<td>1,174,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Israelis</td>
<td>26.3% of total population</td>
<td>61.2% of total population</td>
</tr>
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</table>

February, 1998 – Pluralism fight rages

Another indicator of the changes and struggles that impact daily life in 50 year old Israel is the religious pluralism fight that rages.

It is a literal culture war. From the Shomron News Service, Thursday June 26, 1997:

Stop the Chareidim Demonstration – A planned demonstration scheduled to be held Saturday evening in Rabin Square, Tel Aviv, has caused an outcry by Orthodox and Non-Orthodox MKs and public officials. The Chukah L’Yisrael organization has taken full page advertisements in the newspapers and paid for distribution of billboards nationwide for the “Stop the Chareidim” demonstration. The ads read, “Stop the Chareidim! … They burn flags, insult the IDF, destroy our legal governmental system and take advantage of government funds. This cannot continue. This is our land.”

Another sore spot is the unwillingness of the Orthodox to recognize the legitimacy of the Reform and Conservative branches of Rabbinic Judaism. This is highlighted by the controversial conversion bill fight that began in 1997 and continued on into 1998. In April of 1997 the Knesset passed a first reading of the bill giving the Orthodox establishment sole authority over all conversions to Judaism in Israel. The Conservative

42 U.S. News and World Report, March 10, 1997, Page 41
and Reform branches were incensed because the action cast doubt on the legitimacy of their Jewishness.

A committee, the Ne’eman Committee was formed. It consisted of representatives from all branches of Judaism. The committee worked out a compromise consisting of a joint conversion institute. Israel’s Chief Rabbinate rejected the idea of working with non-Orthodox parties to create such an institute. In Israel, representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements said that with this ruling the rabbinical council had “declared war on the Reform and Conservative movements.”

From an article called “Another Brick in the Wall.”

Hard on the heels of the Reform and Conservative conversions battle, comes a bitter fight over religious councils. … Until now, the councils – which get government funds to build synagogues operate ritual baths, supervise kashrut and provide other religious services in their areas – have been the exclusive preserve of the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox establishments. But the law mandates that 45 percent of the members be appointed by political parties on the local city councils. … For the religious parties, the councils are a vital source of funds. They receive hundreds of millions of shekels annually, and they are loath to relinquish any part of their monopoly – especially to the non-Orthodox movements they view as heretic. (Shas Representative Shlomo) Benizri … insists that Reform and Conservative are not part of the Jewish religion at all but a “separate religion like Christianity and Islam.” … Reform leaders warn that the councils issue, like the conversion law, is another brick in the wall being erected between Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

October 26, 1998 – Wye River Memorandum signed

On October 15, 1998 a trilateral summit was hosted by President Bill Clinton of the United States at Wye River, Maryland for the purpose of moving the peace process forward between Israel and the Palestinians.

On October 19, 1998 59 Israelis were wounded when terrorists threw two grenades at a crowd outside Be’er Sheva’s central bus station … . The attack took place at 8:00am during the height of rush hour. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to continue the negotiations in Maryland despite the attack. … Speaking with Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat condemned the attack …

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45 The Jerusalem Report, May 29, 1997, Page. 22

46 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, Thursday October 15, 1998

Monday, October 26, 1998 – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat signed an agreement, called the Wye River Memorandum, on Friday during a White House ceremony hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton and with the participation of Jordan’s King Hussein.

The following is a summary of the text of the agreement:

1) transfer of territory and redeployments of IDF forces in two stages

2) a third redeployment committee will be established.

3) continuous combating of terrorism and its infrastructure

4) security arrangements

5) Palestinian collection of illegal weapons

6) ban incitement to violence

7) reduction in the Palestinian police force to the size specified in prior agreements

8) publicly nullify anti-Israel clauses in the PLO Charter

9) permission to build an airport, seaport, and industrial park in Gaza

48 The Jewish Review, November 1, 1998, Front Page
10) safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza

11) 12 week timetable.\(^{49}\)

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**NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS**

*Declaration of Principles*  
Washington, D.C. – September 13, 1993

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**STAGE I**  
Interim Self-Government Arrangements

- **GAZA-JERICHO AGREEMENT**  
  Signed: May 4, 1994  
  The withdrawal of Israeli administration and forces from Gaza and Jericho, and the transfer of powers and responsibilities to a Palestinian Authority.  
  The Agreement includes:

  - Security arrangements
  - Transfer of civil affairs
  - Legal framework
  - Economic framework
  - Education & culture
  - Health
  - Social welfare
  - Direct taxation
  - Tourism
  - Other spheres as agreed

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**TRANSFER OF POWERS**  
Signed: August 29, 1994  
The early transfer of powers and responsibilities in specified spheres, to those parts of the territories not included in the Gaza-Jericho Agreement. These spheres include:

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**INTERIM AGREEMENT**  
Signed: Sept 28, 1995  
A comprehensive agreement on the transfer of powers and responsibilities in the West Bank from Israel to an elected Palestinian Council, as follows:

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**STAGE II**  
Permanent Status

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**PERMANENT STATUS AGREEMENT**  
Agreement finalizing the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, as follows:

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**November, 1998** – Reform and Conservative Rabbis to sit on religious councils.

**November 18, 1998** – Knesset approves Wye

**November 20, 1998** – Redeployment begins

The redeployment of Israeli troops from the Jenin area of the West Bank began … after the Cabinet voted … to implement the first stage of the 12 week redeployment … \(^{50}\)

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\(^{49}\) Israeli Consulate New York, October 26, 1998

\(^{50}\) Israeli Consulate New York, November, 20, 1998
December 14, 1998 – Ultra-Orthodox attack Believers

JERUSALEM – A succession of attacks against Christians and Messianic Jews by ultra-orthodox mobs has prompted local church leaders to call for better government protection for Israel’s Christian community.

Charles Kopp, chairman of the United Christian Council in Israel (UCCI), demanded immediate action by Israeli authorities in late November to prevent ultra-orthodox mob violence against Christians and Messianic Jews. “The current situation in Israel cannot be allowed to continue,” he said.

In a November 28 incident in the Negev town of Beersheva, rumors were spread in synagogues that Messianic Jews planned to baptize Jewish children. A mob estimated by police to number 1,000 “haredim” (ultra-orthodox) Jews started to surround a Christian and Missionary Church rented by the local congregation of Messianic Jews for their Shabbat (Sabbath) gathering.

The 40 believers already inside the building could not get out, forcing police to evacuate them and provide protection from the crowd. Others who were still outside were blocked from entering. According to members of the congregation, they were pelted with stones, spit at and many of their cars damaged. Angry demonstrators also attempted to climb the wall surrounding the building.

Nata Aridan, a history professor at Ben-Gurion University, described the latest attack to the “Jerusalem Post” as reminiscent of anti-Semitic attacks in Eastern Europe. “I witnessed a pogrom,” he said. “There can be no other word for it.”

The siege lasted for about three hours, and the crowd only dispersed after being addressed by local rabbis …

(Previously) … the windows of a local Bible shop were smashed four times and the shop itself set afire once.

On November 11, another ultra-orthodox mob attacked the home of three Swiss Christian women in the conservative Mea Shearim neighborhood in Jerusalem, totally smashing their belongings. Only one of the three women was home at the time of the attack, and she had to be escorted to safety by police under a barrage of stones and bottles. Ultra-orthodox sources accused the women of missionizing, a claim they women denied.

The Israeli newspaper “Ha Aretz” reported on November 29 that an American couple in Kiryat Malachi was attacked recently by ultra-orthodox youths, who suspected the couple of missionary work. The couple held that they were only involved in humanitarian work among Ethiopian immigrants.
A member of a Nazareth congregation was also threatened recently, his front window smashed and silicone put into the door lock of their meeting hall according to Messianic Action Committee (MAC) chairman Paul Liberman.\textsuperscript{51}

In Tiberias, Yad La-achim, an ultra-orthodox anti-missionary organization, has denounced the Galilee Experience to the Ministry of Tourism, accusing (them) of illegal missionary activity. (They do) … present the Gospel to Israelis, but it is done totally above board and legally.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{1999 – Ultra-Orthodox attacks on Believers continue throughout 1999}

In March, 1999 assailants threw three firebombs at a house in Moshava Migdal near the Sea of Galilee, Police speculate that the reason for the attack is that member of the house belong to a Jewish messianic sect.\textsuperscript{53}

March, 1999: the Baptist Book Shop in Jerusalem was firebombed.\textsuperscript{54}

March, 1999: two incendiary bombs were thrown at the apartment of Yosef Shulam head to the messianic community Nativ Yah in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{55}

On the bright side, two incidents were encouraging.

1) In June, 1999 Yediot Aharonot reported that the leader of the attack on an apartment owned by Christians in Mea Sha’arim was sentenced to 18 months in prison. The judge ruled that the residents were attacked because of their faith.

2) August, 1999, the Messianic Action Committee was officially recognized as an Israeli not-for-profit organization. The MAC led the fight against the proposed laws meant to make Messianic Judaism illegal in Israel. Both of these bills failed to become law in the Land. The recognition means that the Israeli government now officially recognizes Messianic Judaism.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{51} Human Rights Without Frontiers, E-mail Newsletter, December 14, 1998
\textsuperscript{52} Eric Morey, Letter, Jan. 25, 1999
\textsuperscript{53} Frish, Felix, Freedom Report #59, March 9, 1999
\textsuperscript{54} Freedom Report #60, March 18, 1999
\textsuperscript{55} Freedom Report #61, March 29, 1999
\textsuperscript{56} Morey, Eric, Friends of the Galilee Experience Update #28, Page 2
February – Jordan’s King Hussein dies

Israeline, Monday February 8, 1999 – President Ezer Weizman headed an Israeli delegation of 21 dignitaries who joined world leaders in paying final homage to King Hussein of Jordan …

Ha’aretz reported that Weizman, upon hearing of the monarch’s death, depicted Hussein as one who was considered an enemy for many years but who “stepped towards peace at the right moment to become perhaps Israel’s best friend in the Middle East.”

… Israel Radio, KOL YISRAEL, reported that the Jewish National Fund has decided to plant a forest in Israel in memory of King Hussein. Israel’s stamp and medal agency announced that it will be issuing a commemorative medal to honor the King’s memory.

He was succeeded by Prince Abdullah.

In March Prime Minister Netanyahu began talks with Abdullah in Amman.57

Abdullah confirmed support for ties with Israel with the statement, “Peace is a strategic option for Jordan.”58

May, 1999 – Barak landslide


The margin of victory was 56% to 44%.59

The 57-year old Barak60 will be Israel’s 15th prime minister.

Ehud Barak began his first day as prime minister-elect in Jerusalem – visiting the Western Wall and laying a wreath on Yitzhak Rabin’s grave. … After putting a note in the Wall, he repeated his promise to be “prime minister for everyone, for all those who voted for me, and those who did not. For Sephardim and Ashkenazim, for Orthodox and

57 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, March 2, 1999
58 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, March 5, 1999
59 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, May 18, 1999
60 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, May 18, 1999
secular, for old-timers and new, for Jews and Arabs – I will be prime minister of all the people of Israel.”

The characteristics of the Knesset altered dramatically.

The biggest changes being a loss for Likud of 13 seats – down from 32 to 19.

On the other end the ultra-orthodox party Shas grew from 10 seats to 17, suddenly making it a major party on par with Likud.

AIPAC drops opposition to a Palestinian state

Reversing a long-standing policy during its 40th annual conference, the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee … dropped its opposition to a Palestinian state … The pro Israel lobbying group took action to (align) with a more mainstream position and promote (agreement) with Israeli leaders stance on this issue, noting that the Labor Party no longer opposes a Palestinian state and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon accepts its inevitability.

June – Clinton vetoes moving embassy to Israel

Hizbullah attacks continue

Barak to connect Gaza/Hebron

July – Barak restarts peace process

Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, July 19, 1999 – Prime Minister Ehud Barak called for breakthroughs on every front of the peace process within 15 months: he aspires for peace with Syria and Lebanon, and a final agreement with the Palestinians by October 2000 …

Sharm El Sheikh Memorandum

After weeks of tough negotiations and a weekend of brinkmanship, Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat signed a new West Bank land-for-security agreement … charting the course toward an historic final peace accord by September 2000. … Barak and Arafat signed the modified Wye Memorandum, agreeing on a formula to implement the accord signed almost a year ago by the previous

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61 Brotman Manny, MJMI Newsletter, June 1999, page 1
62 Eric Morey, Friends of the Galilee Experience Newsletter, Update #26
63 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, May 25, 1999
64 brink·man·ship (brîngk¹men-shîp) also brink·man·ship (brîngk¹m-) noun

The practice, especially in international politics, of seeking advantage by creating the impression that one is willing and able to push a highly dangerous situation to the limit rather than concede.
government… Under the new agreement, Israel and the Palestinians are to begin final-status talks immediately with the aim of reaching a statement of principles on final status in five months and final status by … September (2000). .. events are now supposed to proceed rapidly. Within days, the army is to redeploy from 7% of the West Bank, transferring it from Israeli control (Area C) to Palestinian civilian control (Area B) and release 200 Palestinian security prisoners. Two more withdrawals are to take place on November 15 (1999) and January 20 (2000), and another batch of approximately 150 more security prisoners is to be released on October 8 (1999).

During this time the Palestinians will not declare a state.

The southern “safe passage” route is to open October 1, while the construction of the Gaza seaport is to commence on the same day.

(Hamas) dismissed the accord as yet another sellout by Arafat … and reserved the right to resist Israeli occupation.65

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65 The Jerusalem Report, September 10, 1999, Page 1
September – Final Status talks resume

Israeli - Israeli Consulate New York, September 13, 1999 – On the sixth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo accord (Israel and the Palestinians officially) renewed final status negotiations .., at the Erez junction. … the timetable stipulated in the Sharm el Sheik agreement calls for a framework accord within five months and a treaty within a year, by September 13, 2000.

(T)he final status accord is intended to provide a solution to the three most difficult points of contention between Israelis and Palestinians: borders, refugees, and Jerusalem.

(At this point) the total area under PA civilian or civilian-security control is 36 percent of the West Bank, comprising approximately 5,500 square kilometers.

(S)upport among Palestinians for suicide attacks against Israel is waning and support for the peace process has been rising steadily according to the results of a Palestinian poll published on Sunday.

November – Population 6,000,000

December – Israel/Syria agree to resume peace talks

On December 8, 1999, President Clinton announced that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Syrian President Hafez Assad have agreed that the Israel-Syrian peace negotiations will be resumed from the point that they were halted since January 1996. The talks will be launched in Washington the week of December 12 with Prime Minister Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk a-Shara. 66

2000 – Israel/Syria peace talks resume/derail

By January the peace talks between Israel and Syria had come to a halt.

… former Prime Minister Barak repeatedly called upon Syria to return to the negotiating table, without preconditions.

The guidelines of the government established by Prime Minister Barak in July 1999 reiterate: "The Government will resume the negotiations with Syria with a view toward concluding a peace treaty therewith -- full peace that bolsters the security of Israel, grounded in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and on the existence of a normal relationship between two neighboring states, living side by side in peace. The peace treaty with Syria will be submitted for approval in a referendum."67

Ha’aretz reported the Israel and Syrian were so disillusioned with the derailed peace process that U.S. mediators have been working to summarize the principles of a final agreement before negotiations can restart. Washington believes the two sides are so disappointed that they will meet again only to finalize an agreement.68

A Syrian presence on the eastern bank of the Sea of Galilee is the chief stumbling block and Israeli-Syrian peace talks.69

**German apology**

In an historic speech to the Knesset delivered in German - the first time that language has been spoken from the rostrum of the Israeli parliament - German President Johannes Rau declared yesterday: “I bow my head in humility before those who were murdered, those who have no graves at which I could ask their forgiveness.”

Rau arrived in Israel in Tuesday for a four-day visit to Israel, his first as president of Germany, although he visited the country many times in the past.

Earlier in the day, Rau visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, escorted by the institution’s chairman, former Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss, a Holocaust survivor. The German president toured an exhibit of drawings and puppets made by children in Nazi death camps and laid a wreath.

**PLO-Vatican pact**

**Eichmann journals**

Adolf Eichmann’s diaries, written while he was on trial and later awaiting his death sentence, (were) opened to the public (on February 29, 2000) at the national archive at the same time that a copy (headed) for London to be presented as evidence in the case of historian David Irving’s libel suit against American professor Deborah Lipstadt.

Israel’s moral obligation to help defeat a lawsuit challenging the scope of the Holocaust outweighed strong misgivings about publishing the jail-house memoirs of the Nazi technocrat who organized the transport of millions of Jews to their death in the concentration camps, Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein said …

Irving says he does not deny that Jews were killed by Nazis, but challenges the number and manner of Jewish concentration camp deaths.

Israel hopes the memoirs will provide more proof of the systematic killing of Jews by the Nazis, as well as the scope of the genocide.

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69 International Herald Tribune, Monday, April 10, 2000
According to Rubinstein, Eichmann wrote that the killing of the Jews was the worst crime in the history of mankind. The Nazi leader also provided details on the workings of the death camps, as well as insight into decision-making in the Third Reich, Rubinstein said. Eichmann was executed by hanging in 1962.  

… the Eichmann journals were released under dramatic circumstances, their public presentation being recorded by half a dozen television film crews from leading world networks.

Describing his response to the use of the first gas chambers, at Lublin, Eichmann claims that he needed large quantities of cigarettes and red wine to steady his nerves. He adds that during this period he “didn’t take seriously” the idea of using gas for genocide, believing the plan would be canceled.

Despite its self-serving intents and deliberate deletions, the newly released journals provide an unprecedented window into Eichmann’s inner world, and thus provide clues important to fathoming there magnitude of his crimes. Awaiting the trial’s verdict in his prison cell, Eichmann professes that he is not an anti-Semite, and adds that his step-mother had Jewish relations and that he even once kissed a half-Jewish cousin.

He entitled the manuscript “Goedzen,” German for “False Gods” - a reference to his supposed subsequent disillusionment with the Nazis.

He said he felt compelled to give his own account “because I have seen hell, death, and the devil, because I had to watch the madness of destruction, because I was one of the many horses pulling the wagon and couldn’t escape left or right because of the will of the driver.”

However, in an interview with a Dutch fascist journalist five years before his capture, Eichmann expressed no such fondness for Jews, or remorse for the Holocaust. Rather, he said he regretted that the Nazis had not been tougher executioners and was sorry the Jews had managed to establish a state on their own, Israel.

The Steering Committee of the Multilateral Negotiations of the Middle East Peace Process, in its special Moscow session attended by Foreign Ministers agreed (February 1, 2000) to officially renew the Multilateral Track.

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The official activities of this track were halted three years ago, as a result of a decision taken by the Arab League. Israel was of the position that the Multilateral Talks constitute an integral part of the Madrid process, and fulfill an important role in the peace negotiations. The renewal of the track will enable the entire region to prepare the institutional infrastructure required for an era of regional cooperation.73

But an Arab League meeting in Beirut, held after Israeli bombing raids, culminated in a call to Arab states to delay a normalization processes with Israel, including the multilateral negotiations.74

**IDF ordered out of Lebanon**

Prime Minister Ehud Barak won unanimous cabinet backing … for his oft-repeated promise to end Israel’s long military presence in Lebanon by this summer.

The decision, read by cabinet secretary Isaac Herzog, reaffirms the government’s goal of reaching an agreement with Syria that would facilitate a withdrawal, but emphasizes that Israel is determined to bring its troops back to the international border by July, even without Syria’s blessing.

Barak vowed to the ministers that the Israel Defense Forces would be deployed along the international border with Lebanon by mid-year and added that “I don’t advise anyone to test our reaction once we’re deployed there.”75

The Arab League blasted Israel’s withdrawal plan.

In a joint statement, ministers of the 22 member league said they opposed a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and warned such a move by Israel could lead to war.

Their statement said the Arabs strongly condemned Israeli occupation, the recent air strikes and the “vicious” Israeli threats to destroy Lebanon. It defended the Lebanese guerrillas fighting in southern Lebanon, saying “the resistance is a result of the occupation and not its cause.”76

In other words, Israel is damned if they do and damned if they don’t. The obvious inconsistency of the Arab position reveals the self-serving nature, and hypocritical attitude toward Israel that they possess.

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73 www.mfa.gov.il, Multilateral Track Renewed at Moscow Meeting, Feb. 1, 2000
74 Ha’aretz Daily Newspaper–English Internet Edition, April 17, 2000
75 Ha’aretz Daily Newspaper–English Internet Edition, March 6, 2000
On April 5, 2000 An Israel Defense Forces official in the Northern Command confirmed that the IDF has begun making preparations for the withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

March 8, 2000 – High Court of Justice rules that giving state land to Jews is illegal. Ruling outrages Right-wing and religious factions in the Knesset.  

March 21, 2000 – Palestinian track reopens in D.C.

Working delegations from Israel and the Palestinian Authority began intensive talks on the final status agreement (March 22, 2000). The talks (were) held at Bolling air Force Base close to (Washington DC).

The assessment in Washington is not for a breakthrough in this talks, but rather that, because of the level of these talks and the great difficulty of the issues involved (final status, borders, Jerusalem, the settlements, refugees, and water), the discussions are likely to continue as a “preparatory” process for the tough decisions that the two sides will be asked to make.

March 21, 2000 – Pope John Paul II visits Israel

Pope John Paul II arrived … in Israel in a spiritual climax to his 22-year papacy. The pomp-filled ceremony was a vivid contrast to the previous visit by a pope in 1964 when Paul VI during a 12 hour stay kept his distance from Israeli leaders and never said the word Israel once.

Pope John Paul’s six-day visit fulfills the pontiff’s dream of visiting sites where Christ was born and died and caps his efforts to reconcile Jews and Catholics.

John Paul has insisted he has no political agenda and the Vatican has tried to delicately balance the visit with stops divided up between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Political sources in Jerusalem said they were satisfied with the Pope’s speeches … in his visit to the Palestinian Authority.

The pontiff’s remarks, these sources said, do not depart from the Vatican’s traditional position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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Minister Haim Ramon, who is coordinating the papal visit on behalf of the government, said the Pope’s comments on recognition of the Palestinian’s rights are consistent with Israeli policy.  

In regard to the Pope’s visit to Yad Vashem Ramon also commented, “The pope’s speech is an important milestone in the relations between Israel and the Catholic Church. Today marks a large stride in the process of reconciliation to which the pope has already greatly contributed.”

Prime Minister Barak’s assessment of the pope’s visit was summed up in these comments, “This was a historic visit which constituted a giant step forward toward reconciliation between Christianity and Judaism.” He added that the visit brought honor upon Israel.

March 21, 2000 – 6.1% of the West Bank Transferred to the PA

Israel handed over another 6.1% of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority as part of the final stage of the second withdrawal. The transfer went off without a hitch.

The territories involved include a large chunk of territory around Hebron, and slivers of areas near Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin. The area under PA control around Jericho was expanded …

After the third-stage redeployment of IDF troops scheduled for June, the Palestinian Authority will rule over 60 percent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank (around 1.7 million people) in 6.5% of the West bank. The June redeployment will add an additional 340 square kilometers to PA territory.

April 6, 2000 – Israelis, Palestinians Resume Negotiations in D.C.

Sunday, April 16, 2000--The second round of permanent status talks between Israeli and Palestinian Authority negotiating teams ended yesterday at the Bolling Air Force base outside of Washington, with the next round expected to take place in Israel.

The second round of the PA-Israel talks ended with little result.

April 10, 2000 – Aliyah Up 35% in 1999

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81 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, March 23, 2000
82 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, March 27, 2000
85 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, Friday, April 7, 2000
April 12, 2000 – U. S. Backs Lebanon Pullout Plan

The Clinton administration welcomed … Prime Minister Ehud Barak's plan to withdraw the Israel Defense Forces soldiers from southern Lebanon by July 2000. . . U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright praised the decision to withdraw and in response to criticism from Arab states said, "It is strange that a country is criticized for withdrawing from another country."86

Understandings reached at the summit in D.C.

1) Israel will insure the Palestinians get contiguous territory in the West Bank, in return for territories annexed to the state of Israel.

2) Barak will accelerate the talks on the Palestinian track, in an attempt to finalize a framework agreement by May and include the third pullback in it.

3) The United States will increase its involvement in the process, and American representatives will sit in on the talks between Israel and Palestinians, which will continue outside Washington.

4) Canada will lead an international effort to help meet Palestinian refugees. Israel will contribute money but will not take into any refugees.

5) Israel will withdraw from Lebanon to the line set by the United Nations in 1978, and will not leave any outpost or security fences on the Lebanese side of the border.

6) The United States will help muster international support for the implementation of U.N. Resolution 425 (regarding the withdrawal from Lebanon) and pressure Syria to prevent terrorism after the pullback.

7) The Syrian track will remain "on hold, waiting for developments." The United States is suspending its mediation efforts.

8) The United States will try to convince Russia to stop the flow of technology to Iran.

9) Israel and United States will continue consultations in attempts to solve the dispute over the sale of planes to China.87

86 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, Wednesday, April 12, 2000

87 Ha’aretz Daily Newspaper–English Internet Edition, Thursday, April 12, 2000
Prime Minister Ehud Barak told U.S. President Bill Clinton at a meeting in Washington ... that Israel will recognize an independent Palestinian state in a framework accord with the Palestinian authority.

Barak's promise to recognize a Palestinian state in a framework agreement was confirmed yesterday by political sources in Jerusalem. The source explained that Barak made such recognition dependent upon number of conditions: The Palestinian state must be demilitarized; Israel must be allowed to annex parts of the West Bank with settlement blocks; Jerusalem must retain its current municipal borders; and the Palestinian refugees may not return to Israel, so that Israel rejects historic or moral responsibility for solving the refugee issue.

Barak told Clinton that he is prepared to recognize a Palestinian state in an agreement, but that he opposes a unilateral Palestinian move for statehood. The prime minister added that he is willing to transfer parcels of land to insure the territorial contiguity of a Palestinian state.88

In addition, Prime Minister Ehud Barak told the Cabinet on Sunday, April 16, 2000 that he is willing to expedite the West Bank withdrawal plan for June as a confidence-building measure to the Palestinians... Officials in the Prime Minister's Office said the size of the withdrawal—the third under the Sharm El-Sheikh memorandum—would comprise approximately 3 percent of the West Bank.

Barak also reiterated his vision of a future Palestinian entity, saying that it would be contiguous and its citizens would have the right of free movement. He indicated it could include areas on the periphery of Jerusalem, such as Azzariya and Abu Dis.

On Monday April 17, 2000 Israel informed the United Nations of its decision to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon by July 2000, in accordance with U.N. Security Council resolution 425. . .89

Israel has tried to reinvigorate its peace talks with the Palestinians by stating publicly what almost everyone here has assumed for some time: peace means the creation of a Palestinian state.

Five government ministers, eschewing the government’s typically vague talk about the potential creation of the Palestinian "entity" on Israel's border, confirmed ... that if conditions were right, Israel would formally recognize the existence of a Palestinian state.90

89 Israeleline - Israeli Consulate New York, Monday, April 17, 2000
90 Ha’aretz Daily Newspaper–English Internet Edition, Tuesday, April 18, 2000
Hezbollah harassment has begun

Hezbollah fire aimed at IDF border bases is no accident. All the evidence suggests that the Katyusha fire yesterday was the start of a Hezbollah military campaign to harass the IDF as it withdraws from southern Lebanon. . . . It's reasonable to expect that the pullout will be conducted amid Hezbollah attacks, so that the IDF is made to appear as though is retreating under fire.91

May 1, 2000 – Permanent Status Talks Resume

Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the framework agreement on a permanent status have resumed in Eilat . . . The talks will focus on the third Israeli redeployment from the West Bank and will include discussions about Arab villages adjacent to a Jerusalem, including Abu Dis, Azzariya and Suwahara al-Sharqia. Prime Minister Ehud Barak said . . . that transferring these villages to the Palestinians will strengthen the Israeli capital, noting that the villages are already under Palestinian civilian control.

According to MA'ARIV, coalition partners national religious party and Yisrael B'Aliyah, intend to withdraw from the government if the villages are transferred to the full PA control.92

Speaking at the Knesset . . . Minister without portfolio Haim Ramon declared that, Azzariya, Abu Dis and Suwahara are not part of Jerusalem. He argued that a full transfer of full authority for these villages to the Palestinian Authority would it not create any essential change.

Ramon explained that the three Arab villages are currently under B status, Palestinian civilian authority with Israeli security control. The Barak government intends to change their status to A, full Palestinian control.

Ramon reiterated that the three villages slated for full Palestinian control are not part of Jerusalem: “This isn't Jerusalem. For, if this had been Jerusalem, we wouldn't have left, Abu Dis outside of Jerusalem's sovereign boundaries.”93

May 15, 2000--both the cabinet and Knesset voted ... to transfer three Arab villages on the outskirts of Jerusalem to fall Palestinian Authority control, prompting the national religious party to quit the government. . . Shas and Yisrael B'Aliyah ministers also voted against the plan, but did not say whether they would abandon the coalition.

92 Israeline - Israeli Consulate New York, May 1, 2000
The Jerusalem Post reported that the proposal passed by a vote of 16-6 and represented a good will measure to the Palestinians before the third and final West Bank redeployment.

Israel Radio, Kol Yisrael, reported that in a conversation with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Prime Minister Ehud Barak said that the decision will be implemented only after reviewing Sundays and Mondays violent protests in the West Bank and Gaza. 94

The Knesset vote was 56 to 48 with one abstention

In exchange for the good will gesture of relinquishing full control of the villages, Barak wants the PA to postpone talks on a further partial Israeli pullback in the territories in exchange for the PA agreeing to focus on a framework for a final peace treaty. 95

May 5, 2000 – Northern Border Violence Heats Up

May 9, 2000 – Population Numbers 6.3 Million

Israel's population on its fifty-second Independence Day is 6.3 million, compared to 6.076 million last year. Some 4.9 million citizens are Jews, and 1.1 million are Arabs.

When the state was founded, the total population numbered eight hundred six thousand.

Some 63 percent of the Jewish population was born in Israel, 95 percent after the state was founded.

According to data published ... by the Central Bureau of the statistics, about three million people are immigrants, one million of whom came in the 1990's from the former Soviet Union. Immigration rose in 1999, with more than six thousand immigrants arriving every month, compared to less than five thousand a month and 1998.

And 1999, 87 percent of the immigrants came from the former Soviet Union.

Of the 1.1 million Arabs living in Israel, 81 percent are Moslems, 10 percent Christians and 9 percent Druze.

May 15, 2000 – Naqba (catastrophe) Violence

Carefully orchestrated Palestinian protests spun out of control . . . and escalated into gun battles between Israeli troops and Palestinian police that left five Palestinians dead and more than 320 injured in the worst Israeli-Palestinian unrest in several years.

94 Israeliine - Israeli Consulate New York, May 15, 2000
The clashes - the first involving Palestinian police firing on Israeli soldiers since rioting in September 1996 over the opening of an Israeli-excavated tunnel in the old city of Jerusalem - were sparked by Palestinian protests marking the Naqba (Arabic for "catastrophe"), the word the Palestinians use to describe the establishment of the State of Israel 52 years ago May 15, 1948. Naqba Day was instituted in 1998. 5 people were killed in rioting May 15, 2000.

Enraged also by a lack of progress on the freeing of Palestinian security prisoners, Palestinians took to the streets throughout the West Bank and the Gaza strip in what began as protest marches is but then escalated into violence by the afternoon, particularly in Ramallah, Jenin and Nablus.

Across the Palestinian-held areas, thousands of Palestinians battled Israeli soldiers with rocks and fire bombs.

In Ramallah about four hundred Palestinians ... hurled stones and fire bombs at Israeli troops

Naqba protest marches were initially organized by several Palestinian factions, with Arafat's Fatah, movement taking the lead. Israeli officials suggested that Arafat had intended nothing more than a warning to Israel that delays in reaching a peace treaty are dangerous, and that the demonstrations had spun out of control.

(Prime Minister) Barak said he would not be deterred by the violence and would forge ahead with the peace talks. However, he said he would only hand over the three West Bank villages - Abu Dis, Azzariya and Suwahara- after the violence abates.

Relative calm returned to the West Bank (Tuesday) after Palestinian police began restraining demonstrators. Hundreds of Palestinians nonetheless clashed with Israeli soldiers, but unlike the rioting of Monday, there were no exchanges of fire, even though Israeli soldiers did fire metal-jacketed rubber-coated bullets at some flash points. Despite the relative calm, IDF sources say they expect at the very least a continuation of violent demonstrations in the coming days even though the climax of rioting marking Palestinian Naqba day and angry demands for prisoner releases is passed.

IDF sources say there were six Palestinians killed in the demonstrations...

A senior officer said that all the dead Palestinians were Palestinian security services personnel or Fatah activists who fired at Israelis. According to that source, “the PA's failure to prevent the use of arms raises serious questions.”

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Palestinian Authority and Fatah … activists and security forces personnel explaining to mostly young demonstrators said “Israel got the message and now it's important to prevent more bloodshed.” The political activists told the demonstrators that “thanks to you, the Israelis got the message and the prisoners are back on the agenda.”

Some one thousand six hundred and fifty Palestinians are still imprisoned by Israel.

May 16, 2000 – PA Arrests Israel’s Public Enemy Number One

Jerusalem - A Palestinian militant suspected of having masterminded some of the bloodiest terror attacks against Israel in recent years has been taken into custody by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, according to Israeli and Palestinian sources.

Mohammed Deif, widely regarded in Israel as a public enemy number one, was arrested or gave himself up this month in the Gaza strip, where he has been a fugitive since his alleged role in a spree of suicide bombings in early 1996.

Israeli officials say Mr. Deif, leader of the military wing of the Islamic Group Hamas, planned terrorist attacks that killed dozens of people.

His apprehension removes what has been a major source of friction and could lead to a reciprocal goodwill gesture by Israel . . .

It is also a staggering blow to Hamas, whose ability to execute major attacks against Israel has already suffered a series of setbacks in the last two years, not least because Palestinian security forces have arrested scores of the organizations rank and file activists.

Israel requested Mr. Deif's extradition last year, charging him with responsibility for suicide bombings on buses in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv that killed 47 Israelis and wounded 96.

May 23, 2000 – IDF Withdraws from Lebanon/SLA collapses

Israel's 18 year long military presence in Lebanon came to an end on Tuesday May 23, 2000 as the sudden collapse of the South Lebanon Army forced the IDF to conduct a hasty retreat from outposts throughout the security zone.

One after another South Lebanon Army outposts in Lebanon crumbled, and with them Israel's plan for a relatively organized IDF withdrawal from Lebanon.

99 Israeliine - Israeli Consulate New York, May 15, 2000
Hezbollah took control of the central part of the security zone and large parts of the Western zone, mostly without firing a shot.

It unfolded like this: last week Israel pulled out of three of its outposts in the 1,940 square kilometer (750 square mile) zone, handing them over to its proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army.

Then the SLA began to desert positions under fire from pro-Iranian guerrillas of Hezbollah, the party of God.

As hundreds of SLA men deserted, surrendered and fled, Hezbollah fighters advanced using crowds of Lebanese civilians as their cover.

In three days the militia had folded in two-thirds of the occupation zone, leaving the remaining Israeli troops in the zone – a few hundred at most – on their own.

United Nations officials must verify that Israel has returned over the borders that it invaded in 1978.

On Wednesday May 24, 2000, for the first time in many years, there was absolute quiet on the northern border. . .

The moment the last IDF soldiers crossed the border into Israel, Hezbollah put aside its weapons.

Though armed IDF and Hezbollah fighters were seeing each other for the first time at distances of 5 to 10 meters, there were no incidents.

Military intelligence believes that Hezbollah will initially refrain from launching terror attacks against Israel from the northern border.

In time, however, it expects the organization to begin sending Palestinian terrorists against Israel, with Syria's help.

On May 25, 2000 Beirut dispatched security forces to southern Lebanon for the first time as Israel announced it had completed its redeployment to the international border.

The Lebanese military presence included army, police, and intelligence forces.

United Nations peace keepers also took up positions in the south, backed by armored personnel carriers and a helicopter.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak called on Beirut to comply fully with U.N. Security Council resolution 425 and urged the Lebanese to establish their sovereignty over the south.
Barak said that in Israel's view, Lebanon and Syria will henceforth bear full responsibility for events in the South.

He repeated warnings about massive retaliation for any attacks on Israel's sovereignty, citizens, or soldiers.

The northern border remained quiet after four days of celebratory demonstrations by Hezbollah and Amal supporters and villagers along the fence separating Israel and Lebanon.

The Hezbollah and Syria were surprised by Israel's May withdrawal from Lebanon because the militant Islamic organization was preparing a massive military campaign against the IDF to coincide with a July withdrawal, military intelligence chief Amos Malka, told the can Knesset foreign affairs and security committee. . .

May 30, 2000 – Israel Accepted In UN Regional Group

The chief U.S. delegate to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke. . . hailed Israel's acceptance as a temporary member of a U.N. regional group, opening the way for the country's eventual election to U.N. bodies after being barred for more than 40 years.

"It is a historic step forward in the elimination of a huge injustice," Mr. Holbrooke said. "It just goes to show that the UN is emerging into a new, I hope, post-ideological phase of its existence, where issues are dealt with on their merits."

Israel, until its acceptance of as a full, temporary member of the West European and Others Group, was the only member barred from the UN's five regional groupings.

July, 2000 – Camp David Talks

Mideast peace talks between Israeli Prime Minster Ehud Barak, U.S. President Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat collapsed on July 26 after 2 weeks of negotiations. Both sides knew it was an all-or-nothing situation. “If the summit is a dead end there will be war.” A senior Israeli military official predicted

Robert Malley, Clinton staffer shared the reason why the President went to Camp David. “The reason why we went to Camp David was that we had every indication that by September the intifada was going to happen.”

Participants agree that Clinton did a masterful job of negotiation and possessed a “stunning” knowledge of Jerusalem. However, Arafat kept pulling out new demands and in the end, there wasn’t any version that Arafat was prepared to accept. Arafat made the decision to reject any all-embracing agreement. He was promised, orally, 96% of the West Bank. The offer included incredibly far-reaching proposals besides the forfeiture of the West Bank. Barak was willing to divide Jerusalem and allow Arafat to proclaim the capital of his independent state in Jerusalem. Palestinian control would have been extended over the Muslim and Christian Quarters of Jerusalem including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Palestinian control, but not sovereignty would have been granted over the Temple Mount. He never offered a counterproposal. This behavior incensed President Clinton

Upon his return to Gaza Arafat began speaking in inflammatory terms, in Arabic, about taking Jerusalem, while still talking peace in English. The Intifada was fueled by such rhetoric.
How the war began

www.jpost.com/International
October 4, 2002
The International Jerusalem Post

A chronology of Palestinian moves leading up to the outbreak of violence two years ago shows it was planned in advance and ignited over the Jerusalem issue.

By Khaled Abu Toameh

A few days after the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000, the Palestinian Authority’s monthly magazine, Al-Shuhada (“The Martyrs”), published the following letter on July 25: “From the negotiating delegations [At Camp David,] led by the commander and symbol, Abu Ammar (Yasser Arafat) to the brave Palestinian people, be prepared. The Battle for Jerusalem has begun.”

The letter appeared in the aftermath of reports emanating from Camp David suggesting that the summit had failed because of Arafat’s intransigence. According to PA sources, the letter was written by a senior Arafat adviser and approved by the PA chairman beforehand.

The letter was published in a magazine distributed only among PA security personnel. It did not appear in any of the daily newspapers published in Jerusalem or Ramallah. Hence the message Arafat was sending to his armed men was clear: “Be prepared for an all-out confrontation with Israel, because I refuse to accept Israeli and American dictates.”

As the Camp David summit was under way, Arafat’s Fatah organization, the biggest faction of the PLO, started training Palestinian teenagers for the upcoming violence in 40 training camps throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

PA-appointed imams in West Bank and Gaza Strip mosques began referring to Israel as “the Zionist enemy” and urged all Muslims to mobilize for the war against the “infidels.” In the words of one Gazan preacher, “All weapons must be aimed at the Jews, at the enemies of Allah, the cursed nation in the Koran, whom the Koran describes as monkeys and pigs, worshipers of the calf and idol worshipers.”

Other imams spoke of the need and duty to liberate Palestine from the Zionist aggressors. This time the talk was not only about liberating the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Now the demand was for Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon.

Israel was also being accused of distributing drugs among young Palestinian men and women in order to corrupt them and bring about the disintegration of Palestinian society. In addition to the drugs, the Israelis were also believed to be behind sexually-arousing
chewing gum found in Palestinian shops. The alleged goal: to turn Palestinian women into prostitutes.

As the tensions intensified, PA officials this time accused Israel of spreading “radioactive belts” that cause cancer.

An August 3 poll conducted by the independent Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research indicated that two-thirds of Palestinians supported a new intifada against Israel. This was the first time since the signing of the Oslo Accords that a majority of Palestinians said they supported violence against Israel.

**July 25, 2000 – UN Announces Completion of Israeli Withdrawal from Lebanon**

Israel completed its redeployment along the international border with Lebanon. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was expected to move in and fill the vacuum left by the IDF. 8,000 UN troops are expected to comprise this peacekeeping force. By the end of 2002 this force was expected to be reduced to 2,000. The UN confirmed Israel’s withdrawal in full to the border UN mapping experts set.

Hizbullah stated a commitment to continue perpetrating attacks on Israel. At the same time, the Lebanese government refused to deploy in the area, in violation of Security Council resolutions. In late July, the UN stated that no document has been found to support Lebanon’s claim to the Shaba Farms region of the border. The “redemption from Israeli occupation” of this territory is the official pretext for Hezbollah’s continuing attacks.

Regarding Hezbollah’s provocations along the border, the UN noted that during the month of April Hizbullah fired 28 rockets, 1,246 mortars, 152 antitank missiles, and 11 ground-to-air missiles at Israel. In contrast, Israel confined its responses to the areas from which Hizbullah is operating.

**September 28, 2000 – Likud Chairman Ariel Sharon Visits Temple Mount**

Ariel Sharon announced his plans to visit the Temple Mount on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, a few days in advance of the visit. Israeli intelligence gathering resources had been informed. They determined that Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount would not generate unrest or disturbances. Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami coordinated the visit with Jibril Rajoub, the head of the PA preventive
security forces. Rajoub told Ben-Ami that if Sharon did not enter the mosques there was no reason for concern. Sharon would state later that he never intended to enter Al Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock. Security considerations had been examined, with the conclusion that there was no reason to prevent the Likud Chairman from visiting the site. Mr. Sharon toured the Temple Mount surrounded by over 1,000 Israeli security troops.

**Al Aqsa Intifada begins**

Just after Sharon left the compound a demonstration ensued with 25 Israeli policemen and 4 Muslim rioters injured. In a frank admission, one Waqf official later described the rioters as “those who came here to cause trouble and not to pray.”

The demonstrations quickly spread to Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. IDF outposts and Israeli civilians came under attack from stone-throwing youths, armed “Tanzim,” and even PA security forces.

The US State Department blamed the violence on Sharon’s visit. The French government issued a statement condemning the visit as “a deliberate provocation.”

Sharon rejected the accusations stating, “The disturbances are part of an overall, premeditated campaign which began 10 days ago near Netzarim and spread from there to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.” Sharon asserted that any Israeli has the right to visit the Temple Mount. He publicly stated that any Arab could visit Yad VaShem, the Holocaust memorial without permission.

Israeli analysts felt that Palestinian extremists had been looking for any excuse to initiate hostilities over Al Aqsa. Yair Darwish, a Palestinian professional, stated that the Palestinian people were so frustrated by the failing peace talks that they were primed to explode. “Sharon was the match, but there was already gasoline poured all over the situation.” He stated.

The Mitchell Report of May 4, 2001 would state that its investigations determined that the riots did not break-out as a result of Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount.

The two sides seemed close to a cease-fire on Saturday when a tragic event ignited the flames even further. In Gaza on Saturday, a French TV crew filmed an Arab man and his frightened 12-year-old son, Rami Aldourah (Muhammed Al-Durrah), caught in a crossfire. They were huddling behind a small stone wall. The boy was hit and died in his father’s arms. The father was also wounded and in shock.
An initial IDF review of the footage concluded that the two were likely hit by IDF fire but noted that the Israeli forces could not directly see the pair. The IDF was returning fire on a Palestinian machine gun nest immediately behind them. A thorough IDF investigation, issued three weeks later and confirmed by a German TV crew, showed that the bullets that hit the boy came from the direction of Palestinian gunman who had attacked the Israeli guard post.

The tragedy inflamed the Palestinians but also Israeli Arabs, who took to the streets as well. There were riots in Jaffa, Haifa, and Nazareth. These internal riots stunned the Israeli police by their size and intensity.

Israeli sources claimed that Arafat met on Friday, the day before, at his Ramallah office with leaders of the Tanzim, the Fatah’s youth paramilitary group. The Tanzim are led by Marwan Barghuti.

Those present were given to understand by Arafat that there was a need to continue the disturbances in a way that would result in a significant number of fatalities among both Israelis and Palestinians.

At the same time, Arafat promised Prime Minister Ehud Barak that he would act in order to return calm to the streets.

**RETROSPECTIVE: The International Jerusalem Post, October 4, 2002**

More than a year later, on the first anniversary of the intifada, West Bank Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti gave an interview on October 22 to the London-based Arabic newspaper al-Sha’r al-Awsat in which he admitted that he had played a direct role in igniting the intifada.

He said: “I knew that the end of September was the last period [of time] before the explosion, but when Sharon reached al-Aksa Mosque, this was the most appropriate moment for the outbreak of the intifada… The night prior to Sharon’s visit, I participated in a panel on a local television station and I seized the opportunity to call on the public to go to al-Aksa Mosque in the morning, for it was not possible that Sharon would reach al-Haram al-Sharif [the Temple Mount] just so, and walk away peacefully. I finished and went to al-Aksa in the morning…. We tried to create clashes without success because of the differences of opinion that emerged with others in al-Aksa compound at the time…. After Sharon left, I remained for two hours in the presence of other people, we discussed the manner of response and how it was possible to react in all the cities and not just in Jerusalem. We contacted all [the Palestinian] factors.” …

Imad Faluji, the PA communications minister, admitted on October 11, 2001, that the violence had been planned in July, far in advance of Sharon’s “provocation.” He said:
“Whoever thinks that the intifada broke out because of the despised Sharon’s visit to Al-Aksa Mosque, is wrong, even if this visit was the straw that broke the back of the Palestinian people. This intifada was planned in advance, ever since President Arafat’s return from the Camp David negotiations, where he turned the table upside down on President Clinton. [Arafat] remained steadfast and challenged [Clinton]. He rejected the American terms and he did it in the heart of the US.” …

The intifada was actually the best thing that could have happened to Arafat. It came at the right time, because it turned the fury of the Palestinians away from the corrupt and inept regime that he had established in 1994. Moreover, the violence united Palestinian factions against the common enemy, Israel, and rallied the people behind Arafat’s leadership. In a sense, the intifada saved Arafat and his self-rule government because it directed the anger and frustration towards Israel instead of the PA.

Another reason why Arafat didn’t move quickly to end the violence in the first days of the intifada is the fact that he believed that it would enhance his position in any future peace negotiations. Arafat hoped to use the intifada, which he expected would last for a number of days or, at the most, a few weeks, to tell Israel and the world that this is one of the results of the breakdown of the peace talks. …

It is now clear that the past two years of violence were unleashed as part of a strategy to internationalize the conflict and force Israel into making further concessions. But the violent tactics spiraled out of control taking on a deadly momentum of their own. What remains to be seen is whether there is a way out.

**Tanzim**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*For the Lebanese Christian militia, see Al-Tanzim*

*Tanzim* (Arabic: تنظيم Tanẓīm, "Organization") is a militant faction of the Palestinian Fatah movement.

Overview

The Tanzim militia, founded in 1995 by Yasser Arafat and other Fatah leaders to counter Palestinian Islamism, is widely considered to be an armed offshoot of Fatah with its own leadership structure. The acknowledged head of the Tanzim is Marwan Barghouti, who is as of 2010, serving five consecutive life sentences in Israel for murder, and, according to some accounts, has a substantial following among the “rejectionist” camp which opposes the Interim Agreement (also called Oslo II or Taba) signed on 28 September 1995 with Israel.

The Tanzim is a grass roots organization that operates at the community level. By taking a hardline position against Israel, it has helped siphon Palestinian support from the Islamist groups to the Palestinian Authority and PLO leadership.
Tanzim came to prominence in the street fighting which marked the beginning of the second Palestinian Intifada. Its members tend to be younger than those of other Fatah factions, often having grown up in the post-Oslo era. Many Tanzim members have joined the al-Shaid Yasser Arafat Brigades (formerly the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades). Tanzim has also recruited female suicide bombers, including Andaleeb Takatka, a 20-year-old Bethlehem woman who detonated an explosive belt at a Jerusalem bus stop in April 2002, killing six Israeli civilians, and injuring sixty.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, in a detailed report on Palestinian Organizations, blames the Tanzim for many terror attacks, especially shooting at passing cars.

Charles Krauthammer called “drive-by shootings of Jewish motorists” a “specialty” of the Palestinian Authority’s Tanzim “guerrilla army.”

Media Bias Evident

On the day the Intifada broke out, Tuvia Grossman was riding a taxi to visit the Western Wall. He was unwittingly thrust into the international limelight -- and nearly killed in the process.

On September 30, 2000, The New York Times, Associated Press and other major media outlets published a photo of a young man -- bloodied and battered -- crouching beneath a club-wielding Israeli policeman. The caption identified him as a Palestinian victim of the recent riots -- with the clear implication that the Israeli soldier is the one who beat him. The victim's true identity was revealed when Dr. Aaron Grossman of Chicago sent the following letter to the Times:

Regarding your picture on page A5 of the Israeli soldier and the Palestinian on the Temple Mount -- that Palestinian is actually my son, Tuvia Grossman, a Jewish student from Chicago. He, and two of his friends, were pulled from their taxicab while traveling in Jerusalem, by a mob of Palestinian Arabs, and were severely beaten and stabbed.

That picture could not have been taken on the Temple Mount because there are no gas stations on the Temple Mount and certainly none with
Hebrew lettering, like the one clearly seen behind the Israeli soldier attempting to protect my son from the mob.

In response, the New York Times published a half-hearted correction which identified Tuvia Grossman as "an American student in Israel" -- not as a Jew who was beaten by Arabs. The "correction" also noted that "Mr. Grossman was wounded" in "Jerusalem's Old City." Although the beating actually occurred in the Arab neighborhood of Wadi al Joz, not in the Old City. In response to public outrage at the original error and the inadequate correction, The New York Times reprinted Tuvia Grossman's picture -- this time with the proper caption -- along with a full article detailing his near-lynching at the hands of Palestinians rioters.

October 12, 2000 – Two Israeli Reservists Lynched

Two IDF reserve soldiers, Cpl. Vadim Novesche and Sgt. Maj. Yosef Avrahami, took a wrong turn as they headed toward their military base at Bet El, near Ramallah. They were stopped at a PA roadblock. In the past, police have simply turned back Israeli soldiers who lost their way. Instead, the Palestinians arrested the Israelis at gunpoint and ordered to drive to the Ramallah police station.

After arriving at the station, word got out the Palestinian police was holding several Israeli soldiers. The rumor included the false information that they may be part of an undercover unit designed to hunt Palestinian fugitives. The men were not in uniform, but that is not unusual for reserve soldiers, who usually get their uniforms at the base.

The IDF got word of the problem and immediately contacted PA liaison officials, asking that the soldiers be urgently rescued. By then, an angry mob of more than 1,000 Palestinians had surrounded the police station. Palestinian witnesses say Police tried to hold back the crowd and that 15 PA officers were hurt in the melee. About a dozen men climbed into the police station through a window and a few minutes later, gunshots were heard. Two men then appeared at the window, sticking their bloody hands out.

Footage from the Italian Mediaset TV channel showed one of the soldiers dangling upside-down from a rope from a window. The body was dropped into the crowd below. The crowd then attacked the body and then dragged it through the streets. The second soldier was thrown out the door. The two bodies were later handed over to the army. That day
Israel used attack helicopters for the first time to attack Palestinian security installations. By the end of June, 15 Palestinian suspects had been arrested for involvement in the lynching. Aziz Salha, 20 years old, was in custody. He had been seen waving bloodied hands from the police station window.

Unfortunately, the brutality of the lynching surfaced in the midst of the Jerusalem police force in May. In May 7 a Jerusalem policemen including one officer were indicted for beating a man taken in by the army as a suspect in the Ramallah lynching. The policemen beat the prisoner because they thought he was the one filmed with blood on his hands.

In October, the Italian television station apologized to the PA for filming the lynching. The footage aired on several stations around the world. The PA had threatened the life of the Italian crewmembers.

October 16, 2000 – Sharm el-Sheikh Summit

US President Bill Clinton, Egyptian President Mubarak, Israeli Prime Minister Barak, and PA Chairman Yasser Arafat began an emergency summit meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh Egypt. The summit was contentious, 28-hour failure. Mr. Barak and Arafat never negotiated directly. They did shake hands and sit in a civil manner during the sessions and at meals. However, they negotiated through Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Clinton

Before the summit, Barak expressed strong doubts that Arafat was still interested in reaching a peace agreement.

He launched a wave of violence in the last few weeks when it was clear that there is on the table a possible framework agreement which reflects further flexibility of Israelis that eve in the past and he chose not to go for it.

The summit closed with a statement read by President Clinton announcing that both sides had agreed on two major items.

1) to end the violence

2) to set up an international fact-finding committee into the cause of the violence

Prime Minister Barak said that the true test of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference would be whether the violence ends.
The cease-fire was only one hour old and senior PA officials were leading several hundred chanting protesters on a march through Ramallah to protest the agreement. Marwan Barghouti was adamant that the Al Aqsa Intifada would continue. From there it only got worse. A protracted firefight broke out in the West Bank after Palestinian militants opened fire on Israeli settler families out on a Sukkoth holiday hike.

In June, 2001 Clinton blamed Arafat for the failure of the peace process. Clinton stated that three days prior to the end of his presidency Arafat called to say goodbye. “He told me I was a great man. I told him that I wasn’t, that I was a gigantic failure, and that it was his fault.” Clinton described Arafat as an aging leader who is incapable of making the right decision to commit himself to the peace process. Clinton later shared that at Camp David he told Arafat that by turning down the best peace deal he was ever going to get he was guaranteeing the election of hawkish Ariel Sharon.

The Youthful Face of the Intifada

The young men of the Tanzim are at the forefront of the Al Aqsa Intifada. Even as Palestinian officials accuse Israel of overreacting to peaceful protests, they are encouraging and facilitating youthful participation. Why? The televised site of 13, 14, and 15 year olds carried off the battlefield bloodied and unconscious is a powerful public relations weapon.

Arafat called for renewed resistance by the young activists. Often the children go straight from school to the site of a demonstration. In Ramallah a man raced toward a line of Israeli soldiers shouting “Allah Akhbar,” – God is great – while holding in front of him a boy about 2 years old. The child’s head was wrapped in the green Hamas Kerchief inscribed, “There is no god but Allah.”

According to traditional Islamic belief a shaheed – a martyr for the faith will receive 72 virgins as wives in heaven. There is a mystical belief that Allah favors the martyr. Women are not excluded from this action

The PA’s leading official newspaper is Al-Hayat Al-Jadeehah. The Editor-in-Chief wrote a signed editorial denouncing as “corrupt and disgusting” anyone who counsels self-preservation to Palestinian youths, including their own fathers.

This situation is very disturbing to Israeli soldiers. Sgt. Hilel Gubenko, himself only 19 stated:

“You kind of feel frustrated when children are throwing rocks.” “You don’t want to shoot them, but people hiding behind them are shooting at you.”
Speaking to an Egyptian newspaper the Arafat appointed Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine, Sheik Ikrima Sabri, stated:

Question: “What do you feel when you pray (for the soul of the martyrs)?

Sabri: “I feel the martyr is lucky because the angels usher him to his wedding in heaven.” I feel the earth moves under the occupier’s feet.”

Question: “Is it different when the martyr is a child?”

Sabri: “Yes, it is. It’s hard to express it in words. There is no doubt that a child (martyr) suggests that the new generation will carry on the mission with determination. The younger the martyr—the greater and the more I respect him.”

“I talked to a young man (who) said: ‘I want to marry the back-eyed (beautiful) women of heaven.’ The next day he became a martyr. I am sure his mother was filled with joy about his heavenly marriage. Such a son must have such a mother.’

In May, 2001 The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement denouncing the Palestinians for using their children as human shields. The statement was initiated by a group of 200 doctors call “Doctors Against Child Sacrifice. This tragedy of hatred was emphasized during mid-2002 when the photo of a baby-bomber was discovered in the home of a suspected terrorist. A toddler was photographed in a mock suicide bombers uniform, complete with sticks of explosives and the traditional martyrs red headband. The family stated that the photograph was a “joke” a “prank.”

The photograph emphasized how pervasively the Palestinians are training their children to hate Israel and Israelis. The Shaheed, the Martyr has become a prominent role model for young men in Palestinian society. Palestinian Labor Minister Ghassa n Khatib stated that the IDF distributed the picture to “tell the world that the Palestinians are teaching their children how to hate Israel and how to act against Israel and I just want to say this is correct.” A Palestinian journalist in Hebron said that this kind of photograph was common because many of their children imitate the adults. Other Palestinian officials dismissed the photo as a propaganda trick
Palestinian schoolbooks are likewise geared to fan the flames of hatred. Israel examined 23 schoolbooks intended for children in first and second grade as well as fifth and sixth grade. The books delegitimize Israel and claim that the Palestinians have first rights to the territory. They claim that “Arab Canaanites” were in the land before the Jews and therefore Zionistic claims to the land are a lie.

In addition to the heavenly rewards promised the martyrs, there is also financial compensation. Iraq offers $25,000 to the families of terrorists. Saudi Arabia awards families of terrorists $5,000 each. Finally, according to Israeli sources Palestinian terrorist recruiters visit terminally ill patients, in cancer wards, and offers money to their families as well.

Probably the most hypocritical position is that taken by Yasser Arafat’s wife. Arafat’s wife, Suha al-Taweel has publicly endorsed suicide bombings. In an interview with the London-based, Saudi-owned Al Majalla magazine Mrs. Arafat said if she had a son, she would consider it an honor to sacrifice him for the Palestinian cause. “Would you expect me and my children to be less patriotic and more eager to live than my countrymen and their father and leader who is seeking martyrdom.” Mrs. Arafat lives in Paris and Switzerland with her daughter, she has no son.
November, 2000 – Israel Targets Terrorists

In November, Israeli helicopter gunships successfully attacked Hussein Abayat, a senior leader of the Tanzim militia that has spearheaded the current Intifada. His death was the first assassination of a senior member of Fatah, Arafat’s political organization. Hussein al-Sheikh, one of the leaders of the movement stated, “We in Fatah consider ourselves in a state of war with Israel.

The U. S. has consistently condemned Israel’s targeting of terrorists. Lt. General Shaul Mofaz defended the policy in July of 2001 by stating, “What would you do if 40 suicide attacks were carried out against your country?”

November 12, 2000 – Leah Rabin Dies At 72

Leah Rabin, widow of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin died of cancer. She was buried in Mt. Hertzl Military cemetery in Jerusalem, next to her husband.

November 26, 2000 – International Inquiry into the Intifada Starts

One of the results of the Sharm al-sheikh summit was the agreement to set up a committee into the violence. The international committee of inquiry into the Al Aqsa Intifada began its work in New York. Former U.S. Senator, George Mitchell is the chairman of the fact-finding group.

2001

February 6, 2001 – Ariel Sharon Elected Israel’s Prime Minister

Ariel Sharon was elected Israel’s eleventh Prime Minister in a landslide vote over Labor candidate Ehud Barak. Ariel Sharon is very nationalist in outlook. He was a former General and Defense Minister. In his swearing in ceremony, he stated that he was prepared for peace but would insist on a reduction in violence before resuming negotiations. He took the oath of office with his hand on a Hebrew Old Testament, a first for an Israeli Prime Minister. His aides said the gesture symbolically reaffirmed the Jewish connection to the Holy Land.

In March, he asserted his goal to increase Aliyah. His goal by 2020 most of the Jewish nation should be gathered in the State of Israel.
**Knesset Returns to the Parliamentary System**

The 1996 electoral system that consisted of separate ballots for Prime Minister and for a party in the government was repealed on March 7, 2001.

**European Union to Monitor PA Funds**

EU representatives stated that they plan to closely monitor funds transferred to the PA in order to insure that they do not end up in Yasser Arafat’s pockets. The concern about financial abuse was well founded. On May 5, 2002, Israel released a 91-page report titled “Arafat File.” The report demonstrated that Yasser Arafat and top PA officials were directly involved in financing terror attacks. Money provided to the PA by donor states such as the EU and USA was allocated to finance terror and incitement. Tens of millions of dollars were used to pay terrorists. On June 7, 2002, the Kuwaiti Al-Watan Daily newspaper published the fact that they had received documents from private sources and called the transfer a “theft.” The documents show that Yasser Arafat deposited in his name 5.1 million dollars into a personal account for personal expenses and the upkeep of his family. His wife and daughter live in Paris and in Switzerland.

**March 29, 2001 – IDF Opens Offensive Against Force 17**

Three successful terrorist bombing attacks struck Israel late in March. Following the wave of terrorism that has struck Israel, the government convened an emergency security cabinet meeting. During the meeting, it was decided to undertake a consistent, protracted campaign against terrorists, their accomplices, and their commanders. No longer would Israel move just in relation to incidents. PM Sharon stated, “The days of restraint are over.”

IDF helicopter gunships attacked five targets of Force 17, Yasser Arafat’s presidential guard. Force 17 targets hit – one in Ramallah, and four Gaza. The attacks were driven by neither punishment nor revenge, but by the right of Israel to self-defense. The attacks were PM Sharon’s first military response since he took office 3 weeks earlier. Haztofeh, an Israeli right-wing newspaper commented:

> Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was elected in order to put a stop to the shedding of Israeli citizen’s blood, which his predecessor failed to do. No benefit will accrue to Israel for showing restraint because the Arab world sees this as weakness.”

**Force 17**

([http://www.ict.org.il](http://www.ict.org.il))


Force 17 was formed in the early 1970’s by senior Al-Fatah officers, shortly after the PLO’s expulsion from Jordan. There are a variety of different explanations of how the
unit got its name. One version claims that the numbers 1,7 were the last digits of the private phone number of the unit’s first commander. According to another version, the name derives from the location of the unit’s office in Beirut: 17 Faqahani street.

Force 17 has been involved in terrorism since the early 1980’s, and has carried out attacks against both Israeli and rival Palestinian targets in the Middle East and Europe.

As a result of the Oslo Agreements between Israel and the PLO, Force 17 was to have been merged into the PA security forces. In reality, Arafat kept the unit apart from the official Palestinian forces, and today it acts under his authority alone.

History

Originally intended as a personal security force for Yasser Arafat and other PLO leaders, Force 17 eventually became one of the PLO’s elite units and functioned in various areas of operational activities under the direct guidance of Arafat. Among the unit’s functions was gathering intelligence, and the perpetration of terror attacks against Israeli targets in the 1980’s. It also served Arafat as a combat unit during Israel’s “Peace for Galilee” operation in Lebanon.

In August 1982, as a result of the Israeli attack on its headquarters, Force 17 along with the other PLO forces, left Lebanon for Tunisia. There, the unit set up shop near the central PLO headquarters.

Force 17 and the Oslo agreements

As a part of the Oslo Agreements, Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) agreed to establish the General Security Service (GSS), officially known as the Palestinian Directorate of Police Force. The GSS is an umbrella organization nominally responsible for coordinating and maintaining most of the Palestinian Security bodies and services; it includes not only police but also intelligence organizations. The 1994 Cairo Agreement’s determined that the GSS would be the highest and only security authority in the Palestinian Authority.

Despite this, Arafat created two additional forces, outside the control of the GSS, and subject to the authority of the PA chairman alone. These forces are the Special Security Force (SSF) and Al-Amn Al-Ri’asah (Presidential security) unit. As part of the reorganization of the Palestinian security forces, Force 17 was merged with the Presidential Security unit, commanded by Faisal Abu Sharah.

Presidential Security force is a high-quality security paramilitary unit, estimated at 3,000 members, a majority of whom were once members of Force 17. The unit is responsible for Arafat’s personal security and operates under his direction, although, as originally defined in Oslo II, the unit was to have been part of the GSS. The protection of the chairman, as well as other political personalities and important installations, is the main
objective of al-Amn al-Ri’asah, but in addition it handles counter-terrorism and is responsible for arresting opposition activists and suspects of collaboration with Israel.

Two subsidiary bodies of al-Amn al-Ri’asah are the Intelligence Unit, whose main mission is information gathering about the activities of the opposition movements and other domestic threats, and the Presidential Guard, Arafat’s most loyal and trusted inner circle. This unit provides the tight security around him, with the aim of preventing any assassination attempts. Although officially, Force 17 disbanded when Arafat returned to Gaza, the background of most of the officers in al-Amn al-Ri’asah leads most Palestinians to refer to this branch simply as Force 17.

**Force 17 and the El-Aqsa Intifada**

From the first days of the al-Aqsa Intifada, Force 17 had an active role in carrying out terrorist activities against Israel. While hiding behind the title of the Presidential Security, senior officers of the apparatus were involved in a number of terror operations:

1. On 19 October 2000 an explosive destroyed the Force 17 camp in Bethlehem. Palestinian officials at the time attributed the blast to a “gas leak,” however, the incident bears all of the hallmarks of a “work accident,” in preparation of an explosive device.

2. On 28 January 2001 the IDF captured six members of Force 17, who were believed responsible for the shooting deaths of at least seven Israelis in the Ramallah area, including Binyamin Kahane and his wife.

3. On 13 February 2001, Masoud Ayad, a senior officer (Lt. Colonel) in Force 17 was killed by IDF helicopters in Gaza. IDF spokesman claimed that Ayad was involved in mortar attacks against IDF positions and Israeli settlements in Gaza strip, and was believed to have operated in cooperation with the Hizb’allah.

**May 14, 2001 – Israel Independence Day**

Israel celebrated its 53rd Independence Day in 2001. Israel’s Jewish population of 5.2 million comprises 38 percent of the world Jewish population. On Independence Day 2001, Israel had 6.2 million residents – eight times more than the population of the country in 1948. In the previous year the population grew by 152,000.

On August 14, 2001 Foreign Minister Peres stated that there were 4.2 million Arabs west of the Jordan River. 6.2 million total population less 5.2 million Jews equals 1 million Israeli Arabs. 4.2 million Palestinian Arabs minus 1 million Israeli Arabs equals 3.2 million Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza.
April 24, 2001 – Kinneret Hits Lowest Level Ever

On April 24, 2001 the lake was at the “Red Line” -213 meters below the normal level. If the water drops three more meters to -216 Israel’s water supply would be endangered and the lake could suffer irreparable ecological damage. At present, water can only be supplied from natural resources that have become seriously depleted after three consecutive winters of drought.

May 4, 2001 – Mitchell Report Issued

The Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee – also known as the Mitchell committee issued its report regarding the cause of the Al Aqsa Intifada on May 4, 2001. The report concluded that the violence was caused by two factors:

1) Divergent Expectations

The Government of Israel expects that the Oslo process will proceed in a nonviolent atmosphere consistent with the agreements between the parties. The PLO expected faster implementation of the Oslo accords

2) Divergent Perspectives

Each side views the other as acting in bad faith and claims that the other side has failed to comply with the agreements. The basic recommendations of the report are

1) Cessation of Violence

2) Resumption of Security Cooperation

3) Rebuild Confidence by

   a) PA must take all measures necessary to stop terrorist operations

   b) PA must arrest and jail all terrorists operating within its jurisdiction

   c) GOI must freeze all settlement construction

   d) Both sides must implement a cooling off period

   e) Both side must reduce tensions and prevent violent demonstrations

   f) Both sides must discipline their actions and responses

   g) Both sides must foster understanding and tolerance and abstain from incitement
h) Both sides must minimize the economic and social impact of the violence
i) Both sides must respect the holy places
j) No international protection force unless both sides support it

4) Resume Negotiations

The Palestinians accepted the report and declared that they wanted to use it as a basis to reconvene the American led Sharm el-Sheikh talks. In addition, they stated that they were ready for an immediate cease-fire based on the principles laid down by the report. Israel, likewise gave the OK to the Mitchell Report with two reservations 1) the demand for an absolute settlement freeze and 2) its criticism of IDF operations. The United States endorsed the report and urged both sides to cease violence immediately as a first step toward restoring trust.

In response, on May 23, 2001 Ariel Sharon halted all IDF pre-emptive strikes against the PA and will maintain the cease-fire except in cases of genuine danger to human life. He urged the PA also agree to an immediate cease fire. The PA continued to carry out acts of terrorism and violence with greater intensity. From May 23, when the Israeli cease-fire was ordered, until May 29 – one week – there were 96 terrorist attacks.

Ariel Sharon presented to the PA and immediate implementation plan of the Mitchell committee recommendations. The GOI warned the PA that if terrorist attacks continue they would cast aside the policy of restraint that has been exercised for one week. The Israeli plan included a detailed timetable for the steps recommended into the Mitchell report. As the plan progressed Israel would start implementing existing Oslo 2 and Wye accords. Israel would also carry out the “third phase withdrawal” mandated by the interim accords. That withdrawal had not been carried out because of the failure of the Camp David Summit. In exchange, the PA would arrest terrorists, collect illegal firearms, and end incitement.

Eleven days after the unilateral cease-fire called by Israel a terrorist blew himself up among the crowd waiting to enter the Dolphinarium Night club in Tel Aviv. 18 young people were killed and 120 injured. It was the worst attack in five years.

Israel declared that its cease-fire was no longer in effect and that the army would enter Palestinian Area A if and when it deemed necessary. However, Israel held back any military action following a declaration by Yasser Arafat that he would do his utmost to bring about a cease-fire with Israel.

However, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other paramilitary organizations declared they would ignore the cease-fire and continue to attack Israel. In addition, Arafat rejected Israeli demands to re-arrest Islamic terrorists.
The day after the attack Israeli mobs attacked Hassen Bek Mosque and an Arab owned bakery in Tel Aviv. In response, Arabs in Jaffa hurled rocks onto Israeli traffic on Yefet Street in Jaffa.

The Minister of Arab Affairs expressed sorrow that sectors of the Israeli populace had turned on Israeli Arabs. He added that Israeli Arabs condemn the attacks and are in the same boat as the rest of the citizens of Israel. The city of Tel Aviv decided to pay for the repairs to Mosque.

June 6, 2001 – CIA Director George Tenet Sent to Middle East

With the “cease-fire” more or less holding President Bush sent CIA Director George Tenet to the region to mediate a round of security talks. The focus of Director Tenet’s visit will be the unwillingness of the PA to arrest terrorists. The GOI has given the PA a list of 34 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists it wants arrested. The PA retorted that “The arrest of Palestinian activists (note not “terrorists”) is “unequivocally unacceptable.”

Israel had already begun to implement the settlement freeze by not approving and additional construction in the settlements and by ordering the IDF to dismantle all new outposts set up by settlers. However, the PA said that the freeze formula worked out with the American government was a “trick.”

On June 12, 2001, Prime Minister Sharon accepted the cease-fire security plan put forward by CIA Director Tenet. Yasser Arafat gave reluctant approval to the Tenet plan only after Director Tenet threatened to leave the region.

However, violence and terrorism continued.

July 18, 2001 – First Mortar Shells Fall on Jerusalem.

Early in May 2001 a Lebanese boat carrying a massive arms shipment to Gaza was apprehended. Crewmembers admitted that they had made two successful deliveries earlier. IDF sources told reporters that the probability was high that there were mortars in Palestinian hands in the West Bank as well as Gaza. As early as May mortar fire was already coming from Palestinian controlled areas of the Gaza Strip. Mostly unnoticed and largely unmentioned by the rest of the world was the fact that the IDF was undertaking raids into PA territory in response to the mortar fire. On July 18, 2001, the IDF concern proved well founded. The first mortar shells fell on Jerusalem.

August 1, 2001 – Israel Strikes Against Hamas

Israel took its program of targeted killings directly to Hamas when it killed two prominent Hamas leaders in Nablus. Jamal Mansour and Jamal Salim died when an Israeli helicopter gunship sent two rockets into their third floor office. They were the most senior activists
killed by Israel in the past 10 months and ardent proponents of suicide bombing attacks on Israel. The spiritual leader of Hamas Sheikh Ahmed Yassin promised revenge.

Israel was heavily criticized by the United States and replied that the government of Israel has an obligation to protect its citizens and is operating in self-defense. Since the PA allows the suicide bombers to operate freely in its territory Israel has no choice but to strike them before they act.

Five days later, in an unprecedented move Israel published its list of terrorists including the seven most wanted men. Israel has repeatedly requested that the PA arrest these specific terrorists. An Israeli radio commentator commented on the list, “If the Palestinian Authority does not round them up, it’s clear what their fate will be.” The PA rejected Israel’s demand to arrest the seven most wanted terrorists.

By August 12, 2001 the PA has released from detention three Hamas terrorists involved in the Tel Aviv Dolphinarium attack as well as other attacks. The PA security services refrained from questioning the three, held them under lax supervision and under comfortable circumstances, and finally released them.

August 27, 2001 – Israel Strikes Against PFLP

Israeli helicopters fired rockets at a building in PA ruled Ramallah killing the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The victim, Abu Ali Mustafa was the highest-ranking PA official killed by Israel in the past 11 months. He was one of the top five figures in the PLO. Israel defended her actions on the basis of self-defense. The PFLP was responsible for dozens of terrorist attacks against Israelis. Mustafa was involved in preparing additional terrorist attacks against Israel. Mustafa had returned to Palestinian Territories from exile in 1999. Israel had allowed him to return on the condition he renounce terrorist activity and embrace the peace process. The PA guaranteed they would restrain his activities. The United States sharply condemned Israel for Mustafa’s death.

September 10, 2001 – First Israeli Arab Suicide Bomber

September 11, 2001 – Islamic Terrorists Attack New York and Washington DC

Israel observed a national day of mourning in solidarity with the US after the deadly terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In contrast, approximately 4,000 thousand Palestinians took to the streets in Nablus to celebrate the attacks. Realizing that the celebrations would shock the world PA police quelled the celebrations and confiscated video tape
of the cameramen who filmed it. Yasser Arafat’s Tanzim militiamen threatened the life of a Palestinian cameraman for the Associated Press. They told him if the footage was shown he would die. The Foreign Press Association sharply criticized the PA for suppressing the videotape of Palestinian celebrations in Nablus. Celebrations by Hamas members occurred in Gaza City, Ramallah, and Jericho.

Conspiracy theories in the Arab world say Israel was behind the attack. Various rumors ran wild.

1) 4,000 Jews who worked at the Trade Center were mysteriously absent Sept 11th.

In response to that rumor, here is the experience of Mark Sokolow. He was working on the 38th floor of the South Tower. His office was evacuated and he escaped unharmed before the second plane hit the north tower. Nobody told him to stay home from work that day. He was conspicuously present. On January 27, 2002 he and his wife Rina and their daughters were shopping in Jerusalem and suffered minor injuries from a nearby suicide bomber.

In contrast, September11news.com reported that not a single Saudi lost their life in the Trade Center towers. Ironically we know that a number of the hijackers were Saudis.

2) 5 Jews were arrested after being spotted videotaping the attack and dancing in celebration

3) The Al Watan-Qatar newspaper named Ariel Sharon as the brains behind the attack.

4) The Gulf News, a daily newspaper in the United Arab Emirates, reported Salim Abu Sultan, a Palestinian diplomat stating:.

I can smell Israeli fingers behind this. The scope of the attack was beyond the capability of Arabs … Only Israelis have the ability to do such things

5) Many Muslims blamed Israel’s spy agency, The Mossad.

On September 18, 2001, yielding to diplomatic pressure, Arafat ordered his forces to halt all violence directed at Israeli targets. Israel responded by halting military strikes, withdrawing several tank positions, and halting the targeted killings of terrorists. The PA stated that they were working hard to make the truce stick. Hamas stated that they would be willing to suspend attacks inside Israel unless provoked. The Israelis were skeptical about Arafat’s intentions. Spokesman Dore Gold stated, “In the past, his cease fires have had a shelf life of roughly one week.” However, by September 24, a mere six days after Arafat had ordered his cease fire 99 terrorists attacks had occurred.
November 11, 2001 – President Bush Addresses UN

President Bush outlined his vision of a Palestinian state before the UN General Assembly and called for an end to the violence.

However, he would not meet with Yasser Arafat.

October 17, 2001 – Cabinet Minister Rehavam Ze’evi Assassinated

The PFLP claimed responsibility for the assassination of the Minister of Tourism. It was the first assassination of a cabinet minister in the states 53-year history. They said it was in retaliation for Israel’s assassination of PFLP leader Abu Ali Mustafa. Ze’evi was one of the most controversial figures in the Knesset. He advocated a policy of “transfer” – the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and the PA territories (PA territories = 3 million Arabs).

Senior police officials uncovered the identities of the terrorists and those who sent them. The names were given to the PA. Israel held Yasser Arafat responsible and demanded the extradition of those responsible. If the PA fails to do so, Israel will consider it a “terrorist entity” and retaliate appropriately.

Despite the Oslo accords not a single Palestinian terrorist has ever been extradited to Israel. The PA condemned the assassination. Israel said words were not enough. Prime Minister Sharon gave Arafat one week – to the end of the Jewish period of mourning – to crack down on militants. The PA responded that they don’t take orders from Israel. The PA rejected the demand for extradition, calling it blackmail, but stated that they were hunting the killers. When the ultimatum period ran out Israel stated that it would operate on the principle of self-defense and enter PA territory to apprehend terrorists and stop terrorist activities. Israel does not intend to remain in PA territory but will remain if counter terrorism action is not taken by the PA.

Israel is willing to negotiate on the basis of the Mitchell report only when the PA

1) stops terrorism and incitement,

2) arrests terrorists, outlaws terrorist organizations, and

3) Extradites the killers of cabinet member Rechavam Ze’evi

November 26, 2001 – General Zinni Arrives in Israel

Retired US Marine General Anthony Zinni arrived in Israel in an attempt to mediate a cease-fire. He unsuccessfully attempted to prod Mr. Arafat into initiating a meaningful crackdown against Hamas and Islamic Jihad. General Zinni gave Arafat a list of 30 Palestinian extremists to arrest. The PA picked up only 12. Of the 12 only a few were
placed under real arrest. After three fruitless weeks, General Zinni was recalled, because the Palestinian terror attacks continued unabated.

December 13, 2001 – Israel Severs Ties to Ararat, Calls Him Irrelevant

In an emergency meeting, following a deadly terror attack near the Emmanuel settlement, the cabinet declared PA Chairman Arafat “no longer relevant.” The cabinet approved military operations against the terror infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza. Yasser Arafat will not be harmed and every effort will be taken to avoid injury to Palestinian civilians. Water, food, electricity, and fuel would continue to be supplied. Israel feels that the Oslo Accords are still in effect but the Arafat is not fulfilling the terms of the agreements to fight terror. Accordingly, Israeli tanks stationed themselves 200 hundred yards from Arafat’s HQ in Ramallah effectively trapping him in the facility. The IDF also toppled the Voice of Palestine radio antenna. The PA called Israel’s actions a “declaration of war against the PA.” Israel has never declared war on the Palestinian people. Its actions have always been based on self-defense. Israel is fed up because this is the ninth cease-fire initiative embraced by Mr. Arafat that has failed.

US President Bush bluntly assailed Arafat for failing to end the violence. This was a distinct change. Up to this point President Bush called for both sides to end the violence. Now the focus of responsibility was shifted squarely onto the shoulders of Arafat. In response Yasser Arafat called for a complete cessation of armed attacks and military activities. His remarks were aimed at Islamic Jihad and the PFLP. Arafat stated that he had reached an agreement with HAMAS to suspend suicide and mortar attacks.

Israel, who wants results, not words found that nothing had changed. Statistics revealed that attacks had only dropped from 18 per day to 11 per day. Accordingly, Israel kept Arafat penned up in his Ramallah office – refusing to allow him to attend Christmas Eve services in Bethlehem. Few Arab leaders offered him support. Israel stated that his confinement would end if he became a constructive partner for peace. Israel still insisted that he must arrest the assassins of Rehavam Zeevi

December 31, 2001 – Most Difficult Year Ever

As 2001 drew to a close, the Israeli Police determined that it had been the most difficult year with regard to security since Israel had become a state in 1948. Minister of Foreign affairs, Shimon Peres would also comment that 2001 was the most trying time Israel has had to face since its statehood 53 years ago. In addition, immigration statistics were down as well. Aliyah had dropped by nearly 28% in 2001. The drop in immigration was attributed to the economic situation and the security situation. Despite the drop 43,477 made Aliyah in 2001.
January, 2002 – “Karine A” Palestinian Freighter Captured

Israeli commandos seized the PA owned freighter “Karine A” capturing 50 tons of weapons destined for the PA. The ship is owned by the PA and commanded by a PA Naval officer. The weapons valued at 15 million dollars included long-range missiles, mortars, mines, and advanced explosives. The PA is not permitted to have these weapons under the peace accords they have signed with Israel. The captain of the ship Omar Akawi admitted that the arms were headed for the PA. He was told to deliver the arms off the coast of Gaza.

Secretary of State Colin Powell called Yasser Arafat and demanded an urgent and full explanation. Vice-President Cheney stated that it was clear that Arafat or people very close to him were involved in the arms-smuggling attempt. Caught red-handed the PA denied any involvement. Yasser Arafat’s own words on February 1, 2002, one month after the intercept:

We have no connection to the weapons ship. It’s all a PR trick by the Israeli Mossad (secret service). In the storehouse, I have enough weapons, much more than was on that ship.

Israel Continues to Confine Arafat to His Ramallah Headquarters

Israel has imposed a travel ban upon Yasser Arafat until he arrests the killers of Israeli Cabinet Minister Rehavam Zeevi. Cabinet Minister Zeevi was assassinated in the Fall of 2001. The first hints of the US severing ties with Arafat surfaced with the disclosure that
the Bush administration is considering sanctions against the PA. Arafat ordered the arrest of the PFLP leader Ahmed Saadat in connection with the killing of cabinet member Ze’evi. The PFLP claimed responsibility for Ze’evi’s assassination. The PFLP reacted with the threat to kill Palestinian security chiefs unless he was released. They claimed that Arafat had buckled in to Israeli and American dictates.

**January 20, 2002 – First Woman Suicide Bomber**

A 28-year-old Palestinian medic Wafa Idrees was the first woman to ever carry out a suicide mission. Her mother called her a “hero” and a “martyr.” It is forbidden under Islamic law for a woman to commit suicide for any reason. She was not religious and did not pray.

The attack set new security standards for Israel. Every Palestinian, man woman, or child is now a potential suspect. While Islamic theology promises extravagant rewards to male martyrs, it is not so clear what promises are made to women suicide bombers.

Merit, June 5, 2002 reported that the two female suicide bombers to date were both divorced, shunned by their families felt that their lives were over anyway. They were recruited as a way of bringing “honor” to themselves after disgracing their families.

**February 3, 2002 – Northern Border grows warmer**

Israeli Foreign Peres asserted that Iran has supplied Hezbollah militants in Lebanon with 8,000 missiles that could hit Israeli cities. He warned Lebanon that Israel would not tolerate missile attacks from Lebanese territory.

**February 7, 2002 – Qassam – 2 Missiles Seized and Launched**

The IDF seized eight Qassam-2 missiles on a truck traveling from Nablus to Jenin. The missiles have a range of 6-7 miles and are capable of hitting Israel’s densely populated coast. If they were used it would be a dramatic escalation of the violence.

On February 10, 2002, Palestinians launched Qassam-2 missiles on Israel. This is the first such launch of such rockets at Israeli targets. The rockets landed on Kibbutz Saad and Moshav Shuva without causing injury of damage. Subsequent operations by the IDF were taken to prevent Qassam-2’s from hitting Israel. On February 17, 2002, two more upgraded Qassam-2’s landed in Kfar Aza without injury.
February 14, 2002 – Ambulances/Medical Vehicles Used by Terrorists

Terrorists are making more and more use of ambulances and medical vehicles. They are working on the premise that these vehicles do not undergo thorough examinations when passing through IDF checkpoints. The first woman bomber, Wafa Idris, apparently was transported in this manner using a Red Crescent ambulance. She was a medical secretary for the Palestinian Red Crescent. Ambulance drivers, because they have had relatively easy movement around the West Bank have served as messengers for Hamas. Accordingly, Israel tightened up security checks on all medical vehicles. An April 1, 2002 a Red Crescent ambulance was found carrying a bomb. The bomb was hidden underneath a gurney where a sick Palestinian child was lying. It was removed from the ambulance and detonated in the presence of representatives of the International Red Cross. The driver confessed that he tried to smuggle the bomb in and that it was not the first time an ambulance had been used to transfer terrorist or bombs. For example: at the end of June 2002 IDF soldiers stopped 2 Palestinian ambulances for a routine check and found 27 people packed inside them. 10 of those men were suspected of involvement in shooting or bomb attacks. The use of ambulances in this manner is a direct violation of the Geneva Convention.

February 14, 2002 – Under Pressure Arafat Draws a Gun

Reports have circulated that PA Chairman Arafat lashed out against the head of PA preventive security, Jibril Rajoub. Rajoub is considered the second most powerful figure in the PA, commanding a force of 4,000 Palestinian plainclothesman and uniformed agents. He is also seen as the likely successor to Arafat. Arafat is reported to have been reacting to reports that Rajoub’s forces failed to resist a mob that overran the PA prison in Hebron, releasing 17 Islamic militants. Arafat had ordered the militants jailed at the request of the United States. Apparently Arafat demanded to know why Rajoub’s men had permitted the prisoner release.

Rajoub became angry and blamed the incident on the absence of any clear policy from Arafat. Rajoub is not willing to act and take risks that are not clearly spelled out in writing and authorized by Arafat. Arafat avoids documenting his instructions.

Subsequent events are hazy. One report says that Arafat through a screaming fit at Rajoub, accused him of plotting to oust Arafat, cursed him, threatened him, punched him, or slapped him across the face. Most say that Arafat pulled his pistol on the security chief and, shaking with rage, may have dropped it. The details were impossible to confirm.

Some intelligence officials claim that the story was a fabrication, intended for the benefit of the US. It was designed to prove his dedication to curbing violence. However, if the report is substantially accurate it indicates that there are serious cracks into the PA and that Arafat is losing his grip on control. In addition, the story indicates that Rajoub may be positioned to succeed Arafat. Rajoub’s dismissal in July indicates that the event may be factual.
March 11, 2002 – Israel Lifts Arafat’s Detention

Yasser Arafat met a key Israeli demand after 3 months of defiant resistance. Palestinian police arrested all five terrorists wanted for the assassination of Israeli Cabinet Minister Rehavam Zeevi. He will be free to travel in PA areas but will have to ask permission to travel abroad.

March 13, 2002 – UN Security Council Endorses Palestinian State

The UN Security Council passed a resolution endorsing the creation of a Palestinian State for the first time and called for an immediate cease-fire. The United States introduced the resolution, which was approved by 14 of the 15 members. Syrian abstained. The Palestinian’s welcomed the resolution.

Israel stated if such a state was demilitarized, created through negotiations, and would live at peace with its neighbors, Israel would accept it. Minister of Foreign Affairs Peres stated that:

Israel is a party to the desire to achieve an immediate cease-fire through the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet plans, in order to pave the way toward a renewal of the peace process and a return to the negotiating table

March 28, 2002 – Passover 2002 – Suicide Bomber Kills 22 In Netanya

A 25-year-old Palestinian terrorist aligned with Hamas walked into the dining room of the Park Hotel in Netanya where 250 guests were beginning their Passover Seder and donated himself, he was disguised as a woman and slipped by guards. The blast led to the deaths of 29 people and injured 140. The attack became known as the Passover Massacre.

The next day Arafat announced that he is ready to work toward an immediate cease-fire. He said he was willing to unconditionally implement the Tenet Plan and Mitchell report and then went on to say:

Unfortunately, there are some aggressive preparations by the Israelis do a wide military operation against our civilians … targeting our people and our Palestinian Authority.

Four Hamas operatives were arrested for orchestrating the Passover Massacre. On April 4, 2003 they were sentenced by a military court to 29 life sentences. One life sentence for every life they took.
March 29, 2002 – Operation Protective Wall (Defensive Shield)

On March 29, Prime Minister Sharon announced an “extensive operational activity against Palestinian terrorism” had commenced. The action was named “Operation Protective Wall.” It also became known as “Operation Defensive Shield.” Its goals were to crack down on terror, destroy terrorist infrastructure, confiscate weapons, and arrest fugitives. It extended from March 28, 2002 until April 19, 2002.

The IDF cornered a defiant Arafat in his Ramallah compound, blasted their way inside and began a room by room search using small arms fire and stun grenades. The operation yielded documents that directly linked Arafat to Palestinian suicide bombings. Control of the entire compound was seized except for the floor of the building where Arafat lives. The Army was instructed to isolate him but not to take over his offices.

Arafat used the opportunity to grant interviews with Arabic-language television stations. He stated that he wanted to become a martyr.

During the operation, over 500 Palestinian men were detained for identification and questioning. Large stores of weapons and arms were discovered in Arafat's compound and in Ramallah. These weapons were being held by the PA in direct violation of all agreements made with Israel. 10 terrorists on Israel’s most wanted list were arrested during the operation in Ramallah.

The next week Operation Protective Wall was widened with IDF movements into Kalkilya, Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, and Bethlehem. During the entire operation, 4,258 Palestinians were detained and 396 wanted suspects arrested. Prime Minister Sharon addressed the nation and said Israel:

… is at war on terror … We must fight against this terrorism, fight with no compromise, pull up these wild plants by the roots, smash their infrastructure, because there is no compromise with terrorism. This terrorism is used, directed and initiated by one man: Yasser Arafat.

Arafat remained confined to his windowless office with Israel supplying food, medicine, and water to Arafat and the people confined with him. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres stated that Israel had to achieve the goals that Arafat was supposed to accomplish. Palestinian leaders said that Operation Protective Wall was simply a pretext to kill Arafat. PA leaders even claimed that the IDF was planning to storm Arafat’s HQ in an attempt to snatch the wanted men and possibly send Arafat into exile.

U S envoy Anthony Zinni met with Arafat in his Ramallah office. Arafat told Zinni that he supported the Tenet plan. However, Arafat has agreed to the Tenet plan time and time again but has never implemented it. Arafat’s pattern is to never make a major decision unless under extreme pressure.
On April 14, 2002, Sharon announced that the IDF would not lift the siege on Arafat until he handed over three of the alleged killers of Cabinet Member Zeevi. After 34 days of confinement the siege was lifted when Arafat agreed to a US compromise for ending the confinement. Under the agreement, six terrorists, including the convicted killers of cabinet minister Zeevi will be jailed in Jericho under American and British supervision. Israel stated that the assassins are with Arafat in the compound.

After leaving his compound, Arafat toured the areas hit by Operation Defensive Shield. It is notable that Arafat visited the Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jenin. During the Operation 48 terrorists died in Jenin, so members of Islamic Jihad were angry with Arafat. They stated that he did not do enough to defend them and that they made sacrifices for the Palestinian cause while the PA did not.

Two weeks after the terrorists were jailed in Jericho, the Palestinian High Court ordered the release of the leader of the PFLP. Israel was livid and promised to bring justice to him if he was released. Subsequently the PA overruled the High Court and kept the PFLP commander behind bars because of “Israeli threats.” Operation Protective Wall is one element providing the necessary pressure for change.

On April 5, Israeli forces killed the mastermind of the Passover Massacre. The leader, Qais Odwan, headed the military wiling of Hamas in Northern Samaria.

On April 15, 2002, the IDF captured Marwan Barghouti, the Tanzim commander in the West Bank. He was considered the natural successor to Arafat. Israel holds him responsible for Al-Aqsa Intifada and for attacks against Israelis. The IDF initially thought he was hiding in Arafat's Ramallah compound. After seizing the compound, the Israelis discovered he was on the run. Eventually they tracked him down to a building close to Arafat's headquarters. The IDF surrounded that building and Barghouti surrendered without a fight. Under interrogation, Barghouti admitted to IDF forces that he directed terrorist attacks in which scores of Israelis were killed. He also revealed how he allocated the needed funds to the terror cells and purchased necessary weapons.

The arrest of Barghouti, other top level Fatah activist and 100’s of rank and file Fatah activists produced information directly linking Arafat and terrorism. Their statements are supported by a vast number of documents seized from PA offices. For example: those requiring financial support needed to have their request authorized by Arafat. Also the names of potential Tanzim activists were submitted to Barghouti who took them to Arafat for approval

April 2, 2002 – The Bethlehem Siege

On April 2, 2002 Israeli tanks and troops rolled into Bethlehem as part of Operation Protective Wall. In response some 200 Palestinians, many of them armed, stormed into the famous Church of the Nativity. The Israeli army besieged them for 39 days. This
standoff between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants at this well-known holy site captured the world’s attention. Entering the compound is an old practice of Palestinian militants because they know that the IDF is under orders not to harm holy places. Places of worship are offered special protection in accordance with international law. This action by the terrorists is a direct violation of the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols.

Israel demanded that the militants either surrender and be tried in an Israeli military court or be expelled from the country forever. The siege was prolonged as various European countries refused to accept the terrorists. Eventually 13 militants were exiled to Cyprus and 26 sent to the Gaza Strip. Residents of Bethlehem were relieved stating that these men had imposed a two-year reign of terror in the city that included rape, extortion, and executions.

April 3, 2002 – Jenin Refugee Camp Invaded, Israel Accused of Massacre

On April 3, 2002 Israeli tanks rolled into Jenin as part of Operation Defensive Shield. They encountered stiff resistance in this bastion of terrorism and breeding ground for suicide bombers. Many of the militants were associated with Islamic Jihad.
The IDF encountered booby-trapped buildings and alleyways. A very typical situation the soldiers encountered would be to approach a three-story building. The door and the first floor would be blanketed with booby traps. On the second floor the soldiers would find a couple of civilian families, around 12 people who were effectively barricaded in by the booby-traps. On the third floor would be around five terrorists who would be shooting down on the soldiers.

Palestinian media began producing allegations concerning IDF interference with sick, wounded, and dead, systematic destruction of houses, and a massacre in Jenin. In contrast, the IDF continued its policy of providing humanitarian aid as well as food, water, and medicines to civilians in the West Bank and Gaza.

On April 12, 2002 the United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell stated that Israel has a right to defend herself:

We have responded to terrorism, we know that Israel has a right to respond to terrorism

On the seventh day of the operation a platoon of Israeli soldiers from the 5th Brigade were ambushed in a plaza. Almost the entire platoon was wiped out during the two-hour fight with 13 killed and 6 wounded.

This ambush proved to the IDF that the militants holed up in the surrounding buildings could only be extracted with a great loss of life. From that moment on they changed their tactics. Foot patrols and house-to-house searches were discontinued. Instead, armored bulldozers were brought in and used to crush any home believed to be the source of enemy fire.

The incursion lasted until April 19, 2002 when Israeli forces completed their withdrawal from Jenin. President Bush praised Prime Minister Sharon for meeting the timetable for withdrawal that he had set.

Arafat’s lack of desire to halt terrorism was highlighted by the fact that the Israeli government had presented US peace envoy Anthony Zinni with a list of 33 most wanted terrorists in December 2001 – four months earlier. The list was subsequently given, by Zinni, to the Palestinians. These men were not arrested or detained. As a result, five of Israel’s most wanted terrorists were arrested during Operation Defensive Shield and three had been killed. Israel stated the about 70 Palestinians, mostly gunmen were killed in Jenin.
On April 15, 2002, the initial Palestinian claim was that Israel had perpetrated a massacre with hundreds killed including many civilians. On April 30, the Palestinians had claimed that 3,000 had been killed. In order to substantiate the claim Palestinians began adding bodies to the mass grave that contained the bodies of 26 people who were killed during the incursion. The removed the bodies from a local cemetery. The IDF also caught a staged burial on film. A drone filmed a group of Palestinians carrying a body on a stretcher. The burial was being filmed by a cameraman. The stretcher-bearers stumbled and the body fell to the ground, got up and returned to the stretcher. After a second fall the corpse walked off in a huff.

On May 1, 2002, an American human rights group, Physicians for Human Rights, released a report stating that the evidence did not point to a massacre. The death toll was finally determined to be, seven civilians and 48 terrorists – 55 Palestinians -- while Israel suffered 29 dead and 127 wounded.

The UN did investigate the Jenin operation in response to false Palestinian propaganda regarding Israel’s alleged massacre. In August the resulting Secretary General’s report overwhelmingly negated the Palestinian fabrication. The report specifically refutes the claim made by a senior Palestinian Authority official alleging the massacre of 500 civilians. The UN report stated that no more than 52 people died in Jenin, most of them armed individuals.

A Question of Blood


Dan Gordon is a former sergeant in the IDF, the author of five books, and a screen writer. He was in Jenin on April 16, and was told a story by Dr. David Zangen, chief medical officer of the Israeli paratroop unit that bore the brunt of the fighting in Jenin. Dr. Zangen said that the IDF not only worked to keep the Palestinian hospital opened, they offered the Palestinians blood for their wounded. The Palestinians refused because it was Jewish blood!!

The Israelis, who could not have been faulted for saying, “You don’t like it, do without….” instead flew in 2,000 units of blood from Jordan via helicopters. In addition, they saw to it that 40 units of blood from the Mukasad Hospital in East Jerusalem went to the hospital in Ramallah and that 70 units got the hospital in Tul Karem. And on top of that they facilitated the delivery of 1,800 units of anti-coagulants that had come from Morocco.

This information was later confirmed by Col. Arik Gordin (reserves) of the IDF Office of Military Spokesman, who supplied the exact number of units and the names of the hospitals to which they were delivered.
Dan Gordon concludes thus:

So the question to ponder… is how do you negotiate with a hatred so great that it will refuse to accept your blood, even to save its own people’s lives? How does an international community vilify a nation that offers its own blood to its enemies, while its own soldiers lie dying, and that, when faced with race hatred that brands their blood unfit, diverts military flights to bring blood more suitable to the taste of those who would destroy them?

**Arafat Weakened, Promotes PA “Reform”**

Yasser Arafat and the PA, badly weakened from Operation Defensive Shield came under pressure from the international community to reform. Moderate Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia began to see Arafat as the problem, not the solution and are pressing for reform. Arafat us also faced unprecedented domestic criticism. Operation Defensive Shield caused additional economic hardship for the Palestinian Arabs. Dissatisfaction with Arafat became more and more visible.

Early in July a significant demonstration occurred. The demonstration involved approximately 10,000 Palestinians. They demonstrated in Gaza, blaming the PA for the disastrous economic situation rather than Israel. At one point about 4,000 began marching toward Arafat’s offices, but were stopped by the PA police.

More and more PA officials began talking about “lost opportunities,” a “normal life,” and “a desire to change direction.” Fatah demanded that he appoint a Prime Minister to handle the day-to-day affairs of state. Arafat would remain the symbol of the Palestinian cause but would no longer be the only one calling the shots.

Accordingly, on Nakba Day 2002, he called for sweeping reforms in his government and for new elections. The new elections were scheduled for mid-January 2003. His government reforms were less than sweeping. Arafat trimmed his cabinet from 32 ministers to 21. Two significant changes occurred. Arafat stepped down as interior minister. He appointed a new interior minister who will oversee Palestinian security forces, removing Jibril Rajoub from that position.

A behind the scenes power struggle between Jibril Rajoub and Mohammed Dahlan the Gaza security chief appeared. A supporter of Rajoub’s rival was beaten by five masked men outside his Ramallah house. Arafat’s dismissal of Rajoub through the PA into turmoil. Rajoub’s 4,000-armed men refused to accept Rajoub’s...
replacement. In addition, Palestinian Police Chief Ghazi al-Jabali in Gaza has decided to run against him in the January election. The fact that a senior Palestinian is willing to run against him is another indicator that Arafat’s hold on power is slipping.

April 17, 2002 – Israel’s 54th Independence Day

Current population – 6.5 million – eight times larger than in 1948

Jewish Population – 81% – 5.2 million

Arab population – 19% – 1.2 million

2.9 million immigrants have come since 1948

Israel accounts for 37% of the worldwide Jewish population (US largest at 40%)

June 17, 2002 – 34th Zionist Congress, Jerusalem

As the 34th Zionist Congress gathered a poll indicates that the majority of Palestinians favor the destruction of the State of Israel. 51% said that the result of the conflict should be “liberating all of historic Palestine.” 71% supported terrorist attacks against civilians. 48% supported attacks inside Israel.

Israel Begins Building Security Fence

Israel decided to build a 217-mile fence designed to shield it from suicide bombers. Arafat rejected the fence calling it “fascist,” and “apartheid.” The fence is meant to provide security, not form a border. It will consist of fences, walls, ditches, patrol roads, and electronic surveillance devices. It will cost 200 million dollars and is expected to be completed in less than a year. The United States also criticized the decision.

Immediately the fence came under attack by gunmen, south of Afula. There was no damage or casualties and construction was only temporarily halted. An additional 30-mile long electronic fence is also going up. This fence will protect three sides of Jerusalem with the aim of keeping suicide bombers out of the city.
However, in the years to come the value of the Security Fence has been clearly demonstrated:

Israeli government sources have stated that since the barrier has been built, Israeli security has improved with regard to suicide bombings. According to statistics published by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Security Agency, from the beginning of the Second Intifada until the construction of the "first continuous segment" of the barrier in July 2003, 73 Palestinian suicide bombings were carried out from the West Bank, killing 293 Israelis and injuring over 1,900. However, between August 2003 and the end of 2006, only 12 attacks were carried out based in the West Bank, killing 64 Israelis and wounding 445. The trend continued into 2007 and 2008 as well. The number of fatalities due to terror attacks have continued to exhibit a steady decline since 2002, from 452 in 2002 to 9 in 2010.

**June 24, 2002 – Operation Determined Path**

In mid June, a wave of suicide attacks killed 30 Israelis. In response, Israel launched a new operation dubbed “Determined Path.” Coordinated with operation “Determined Path” came a significant change in Israeli strategy. Israel will now respond to acts of terror by capturing PA territory. The territory will be held as long as terror continues and more will lead to Israel taking more territory.

The change was not without criticism. A long-term re-occupation of territory means Israel becomes responsible for everything from health to sewage. Such a responsibility would pose an incredible burden upon Israel.

Yasser Arafat fruitlessly called for an end to terror attacks and asked that President Bush implement the end of the Madrid conference. The remarks were not made on TV or radio and so had limited exposure. Backtracking again, Arafat also announced that he was willing to accept the Dec 2000, Camp David, Clinton Peace Plan in which 95% of the West Bank was offered to the PA. In addition, the PA announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held in mid-January 2003.

Instead of a warm welcome for his “turn about” President Bush urged the Palestinians to replace Yasser Arafat and adopt a practicing democracy leading to an independent state in three years. President Bush’s statement was flatly rejected by Palestinian leadership. Yasser Arafat even denied that he was the man in question.

The Arab world reacted with official silences from governments and expressions of outrage from Arab media.

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July 2002 – Founder of Hamas’ Military Wing Assassinated

An Israeli warplane fired a missile that flattened a Gaza City apartment building killing Salah Shehadeh the founder and top commander of the Hamas Military wing. The wing known as the Izzadine al Qassem has carried out the largest number of suicide attacks against Israelis of the Al Aqsa Intifada. Israeli security forces describe Shehadeh as a deeply religious man, a fervent supporter of suicide bombings, and a possible successor to Ahmed Yassin. The attack also killed 14 other Palestinians including many children. Israel does all it can to avoid civilian casualties as evidenced by the fact that this was the first such incident with such a high toll in 22 months of fighting. In contrast to Palestinian attitudes the Israeli army immediately opened an investigation to find out what went wrong. The operation was approved only after intelligence information indicated that no civilians were in the area.

September 2002 – Israel is Winning the Al Aqsa Intifada

By September 2002 the momentum of the Al Aqsa Intifada had turned in Israel’s favor. The intended effect of the intifada was to demoralize the nation. However, it had done quite the opposite. The nation was experiencing a sense of resolve and unity the likes of which it had not experienced in decades. In contrast the Palestinians own violence was causing them to suffer, lose ground, and have doubts for three reasons:

1. Palestinian Impoverishment.

Huge economic losses have been suffered with unemployment variously estimated between 40-70 percent.

2. Palestinian Depression

The violence ended normal life in the West Bank and Gaza. Hospitals are closed, transportation barely moves, schools are shut. Life has ground to a halt.

3. Palestinian Recruitment Woes

Israeli terrorism countermeasures are effective. Less and less people are being recruited as suicide bombers. Terrorism is not working. It takes a toll on the Palestinians without having its intended effect on Israel.

Support for Yasser Arafat has fallen to a record low – only 34% support him. Former supporters hold him responsible for the state of chaos and corruption found in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Arafat’s biggest blow came when the Palestinian Cabinet resigned, refusing to endorse Arafat’s cabinet as inefficient and corrupt. Jibril Rajoub, the fired security chief was particularly vocal with his criticisms. Severe criticism focused on Arafat’s personal wealth – estimated a 1.3 billion. Israeli sources state that in July Arafat
transferred 5 million to his wife in Paris. The funds were provided by Saudia Arabia for assistance to the Palestinian people. Other leading Palestinians have transferred tens of millions to private bank accounts abroad as fears grow that the PA would collapse. The second ranking PA official Abu Mazen channeled 70 million in PA funds to European banks through his brother. Reports of these transfers have been reported in Arabic newspapers as well.

However, after a 6-week lull in homicide bombings – a tribute to the effective Israeli countermeasures two terrorists struck in Northern Israel and Tel Aviv. In response the Israeli army besieged Arafat’s compound in Ramallah once again and destroyed every building except the one housing Arafat himself. The army demanded the arrest of 19 men sheltered by the compound. After 11 days President Bush demanded an end to the siege in order to gain support for US plans to invade Iraq. Israel agreed and lifted the siege.

Analysts stated that Israel’s strategy to isolate Arafat backfired. The siege sparked pro-Arafat demonstrations and revived his image as the symbol of Palestinian suffering and resistance.

November 2002 – Pastor Bob Morris of HaDavar Messianic Ministries spends three weeks in Israel volunteering with the IDF Medical Corps. The world’s media takes no notice.

November 2002 – Abba Eban Dies

2003


February 2003 – Ilan Ramon, Israel’s First Astronaut, Killed In Space Shuttle Disaster

SHUTTLE CONSPIRACY THEORIES SWAMP THE INTERNET, Middle East Ministries, 3/3/03

The Ha’Aretz Hebrew daily reports that “anti-Semitic elements have been using the Internet to spread rumors that the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster was caused by a ‘secret Jewish-Israeli conspiracy.’”

According to the smear campaign, Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon joined the Columbia team as part of a secret attempt to gather intelligence information about Iraq and the shuttle accident was staged by Israel and America to distract attention from the events in the Middle East.
A document released by the Anti-Defamation League states that “Holocaust deniers on the Net are making much of the fact that Ramon was the son of Holocaust survivors and singled out his presence on the mission as ‘evidence’ of Jewish or Israel complicity in the disaster, suggesting his death was an intentional bid to gain sympathy for the Jewish state.”

“Shuttle conspiracy theories have surfaced in chat rooms, bulletin boards, e-mail messages and on Web sites frequented by extremists and anti-Semites, the ADL says.”

**Israel Preparing For Potential Attack From Iraq With Weapons of Mass Destruction**

The Iraq War was an armed conflict in Iraq that consisted of two phases. The first was an invasion of Iraq starting on 20 March 2003 by an invasion force led by the United States. During the run-up to the war President Saddam Hussein threatened to attack Israel if forces invaded his country. Israel responded by preparing the local population for an attack using chemical or biological weapons.

**U.S. and Allies Preparing a “Road Map for Peace”**

The Roadmap for peace or road map for peace was a plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict proposed by the Quartet on the Middle East: the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations. The principles of the plan, originally drafted by U.S. Foreign Service Officer Donald Blome, were first outlined by U.S. President George W. Bush in a speech on 24 June 2002, in which he called for an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace. A draft version from the Bush administration was published as early as 14 November 2002. The final text was released on 30 April 2003. The process reached a deadlock early in phase I and the plan was never implemented.

**March 10, 2003**

Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) is appointed the new Palestinian prime minister.

**March 19, 2003**

U.S.-led war against Iraq commences.

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103 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_War#Preparations_for_Iraq_war
105 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
April 14, 2003

Israeli emissaries submit 14 reservations to the proposed Roadmap.

April 30, 2003

The road map is officially delivered to Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas.

May 1, 2003

Allied military operations in Iraq end.

May 17, 2003

Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas hold first summit meeting.

May 19, 2003

The first Palestinian Islamic Jihad female suicide bomber blows herself up at a shopping mall in Afula, killing three people and injuring dozens of others.

May 23, 2003

After White House officials acknowledge Israel’s concerns about the road map in a statement, Ariel Sharon officially accepts it.

May 25, 2003

Israeli Cabinet approves road map.

May 26, 2003 – Israeli Premier Defends Approval of Plan for Palestinian State

The New York Times, Jerusalem, May 26, 2003 – In the face of withering criticism from his own right-wing party, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon staunchly defended his support for the latest Mideast peace effort today, declaring that “ruling three and a half million Palestinians cannot go on indefinitely.”

* * *

Mr. Sharon and the Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, are expected to meet this week, probably on Wednesday, diplomats said. And the two leaders are expected to join President Bush for a summit meeting somewhere in the region, probably next week.

Mr. Sharon asserted on Sunday that Israel had no real option but to accept the measures outlined in the peace plan. After a stormy session, the cabinet voted 12 to 7 in favor of it,
with 4 abstentions – the first time that any Israeli government approved the principle of a future Palestinian state.

* * *

According to a poll published today in Yediot Ahronot, a leading daily, 56 percent of Israelis believe that the country should support the road map, compared with 34 percent who are opposed.

However, when asked if the peace plan would lead to a comprehensive Mideast agreement, 51 percent thought it would not, and only 43 percent thought it would.

June 3, 2003

President Bush meets with Arab leaders in Egypt. He says Israel “must deal with the settlements” and make sure there is a contiguous Palestinian state. Arab leaders endorse the road map and agree to crack down on terrorism and its sources of funding.

June 4, 2003

President Bush meets in Aqaba, Jordan, with Ariel Sharon, Mahmoud Abbas and Jordan’s King Abdullah. Abbas calls for an end to the Palestinian “armed intifada” and Sharon says that he understands the Palestinians’ need for “territorial continuity” in the West Bank. Bush names John Wolf as a new Middle East envoy, charged with monitoring implementation of the road map.

July 5, 2003

Hezbollah fires 26 anti-aircraft missiles into northern Israel, but there are no casualties.

July 20, 2003

Hezbollah snipers fire on an Israeli outpost near Shtula, killing two Israeli soldiers.

July 22, 2003

Hezbollah fires anti-aircraft shells as Israeli jets flying over southern Lebanon. Two Israelis in the nearby town of Shlomi are wounded.

July 29, 2003

Ariel Sharon meets with President Bush at the White House. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad suspend attacks against Israel for three months, while Fatah declares a six month truce.
August 6, 2003

Israel releases 339 Palestinian prisoners.

August 8, 2003

Hezbollah militants fire rockets and mortars at three Israeli military positions in Cheeba Farms. Israeli retaliates with airstrikes against suspected Hezbollah positions in the disputed area and Lebanon.

August 10, 2003

Haviv Dadon, 16, of Shlomi, was struck in the chest and killed by shrapnel from an antiaircraft shell fired by Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon. Four others are wounded. It is the first killing of an Israeli civilian since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon three years earlier.

September 6, 2003

Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) resigns as Palestinian prime minister.

September 7, 2003

Ahmed Qureia (Abu Alaa) is named Palestinian prime minister.

October 12, 2003

The Geneva Initiative, also known as the Geneva Accord, is a draft Permanent Status Agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on previous official negotiations, international resolutions, the Quartet Roadmap, the Clinton Parameters, and the Arab Peace Initiative. The document, was finished on 12 October 2003. …

The main concepts included in the Geneva Accord include:

A mutual Israeli-Palestinian declaration of an end to the conflict and future claims.

Mutual recognition of both nations and their right to an independent state.

Almost complete Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, with a limited number of settlement blocs on the basis of a 1:1 land swap.
A comprehensive solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees based on the Clinton Parameters (2000); of which the main component will be compensation and a return to an independent Palestinian State.

Jewish Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and Arab Jerusalem as Palestine’s capital with Jewish areas under Israeli sovereignty and Arab areas under Palestinian sovereignty.

A non-militarized Palestinian state and detailed security arrangements.  

October 23, 2003

News From Jerusalem, israel today [mailing@israeltoday.co.il]

The Israeli army has drawn up a plan to implement the Cabinet’s decision to “remove” Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, according to a report in the English language daily “Jerusalem Post.” “We have presented plans showing the risks and the chances of the operation itself, including the options to remove him alive or not,” the paper quoted a senior military source as saying. “The government has to make a decision to allow the army to act. The army is ready.” The army would not comment on the report. Palestinian officials said if Arafat is removed, it would kill the “peace process” and lead to anarchy in the territories.

November 30, 2003

News From Jerusalem, israel today [mailing@israeltoday.co.il]

Four key Palestinian negotiators of a symbolic peace agreement have decided not to attend the signing ceremony tomorrow in Switzerland--a blow to the Israeli architects of the deal, led by ultra-dove and Oslo architect Yossi Beilin. Their absence clearly undermines the “Geneva Accord,” which calls for Israel to give up all of Judea, Samaria and Gaza and hand the Temple Mount over to the Palestinians. In exchange, the Palestinians would give up the so-called “right of return” of millions of refugees and their descendants to their former homes in Israel.

But the Geneva Accord has run into strong opposition on the militant Palestinian street, and Yasser Arafat refused to endorse the deal in writing. Gunmen even fired shots at the Ramallah home of the chief Palestinian negotiator Yasser Abed Rabbo, who is also a Cabinet minister. Hence, the four Palestinian negotiators dropped out. . . .

December 1, 2003

Geneva Accords signed, outlining a draft of permanent status agreements. The Geneva Accord did not pave the way for a formal peace agreement.

December 18, 2003

Sharon announces intent of unilateral disengagement.

2004

January 5, 2004

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon addresses the central committee of the Likud Party to affirm his “Disengagement Plan” for unilateral withdrawal, which he announced in December 2003 at the Herzliya Conference. Sharon informs the committee that, as Prime Minister of Israel, and head of the Likud party, he plans on going forth with his plan even if the Central Committee refuses to go along with him.

January 30, 2004

Israel exchanges over 400 prisoners and the remains of close to 60 Lebanese with Hezbollah, for a captured soldier and the remains of 3 other soldiers.

February 13, 2004

The White House declares that unilateral disengagement from Gaza may help ease tensions between the two parties, but that a final settlement must be reached through negotiations.

March 22, 2004

The IDF kills Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.

Israel assassinated the “spiritual” leader of the Islamic terrorist group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, as he emerged from a mosque this morning in Gaza City. Israeli helicopters fired three missiles at the wheelchair bound Yassin, killing him, his son and several body guards. … The Attack send some 200,000 Palestinians onto the streets for the funeral, and they chanted slogans calling for revenge. “Words cannot describe the emotion of anger and hate inside our hearts,” said Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

The killing of Yassin was condemned across the world – in Arab states, Europe and by the UN. … America, which has been leading the war of terror, did not criticize Israel. “Let’s remember that Hamas is a terrorist organization and that Sheikh Yassin has himself, personally, we believe, been involved in terrorist planning,” said National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice.108

107 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
108 Israel Today, March 22, 2004
Since the beginning of the Oslo War in September 2000, Hamas has perpetrated 425 terrorist attacks of various types, killing a total of 277 Israelis and wounding 2,076 civilians and soldiers.

The decision to kill Yassin at the earliest opportunity was made six days ago, two days after a double Hamas attack in the Ashdod port that killed ten Israelis. … At a meeting of top Israeli defense and political leaders, it was decided to embark on a full-scale campaign to wipe our terrorism in Gaza, with both religious and political terrorist leaders in the crosshairs.¹⁰⁹

**March 24, 2004**

**Abd al-Aziz Rantissi** chosen as new leader of Hamas.

He was one of the 6 founders of Hamas in September 1987, along with Ahmed Yassin.¹¹⁰

**March 25, 2004**

U.S. vetoes Security Council Resolution condemning Israel for killing Ahmad Yassin.

**April 14, 2004**

President Bush commends Israeli Prime Minister Sharon's withdrawal plan and recognizes that territorial modifications will be made to include large settlement blocks.

**April 17, 2004**

Israeli security forces kill Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, the co-founder of Hamas and successor to Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.

Rantisi took part in establishing the terrorist policy of the organization and also served as its main spokesperson. He played a key and active role in inciting to carry out terror attacks.¹¹¹

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¹⁰⁹ Arutz-7 News, March 22, 2004
¹¹⁰ Gamla, April 18, 2004
¹¹¹ ibid
April 18, 2004

Israeli Army Radio reports that following the assassination of Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Mahmoud Zahar becomes the leader of Hamas. Hamas did not publicly announce Rantisi’s successor out of fear that Israel would target him.

April 19, 2004

Israel gives the U.S. written commitment to dismantle illegal settlements.

May 19, 2004

Marwan Barghouti convicted of murder for his involvement in three terrorist attacks in Israel that killed five people. He was acquitted for 33 other murders due to a lack of evidence of his direct involvement in those crimes.

June 6, 2004

Israel’s cabinet approves a compromise disengagement plan whereby Israel would evacuate all 21 settlements in Gaza Strip and 4 settlements in the northern West Bank.

June 14, 2004 – Rude Shocks form Cultured Folks

The Jerusalem Report, June 14, 2004, David Margolis

Increasingly, decent people on the Left seem either to disdain Israel or to view its disappearance as a necessary step toward a perfected world . . .

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This international plague – the increasingly unthinking assumption that Israel is, at best, all wrong – has infected even the nominally Zionist Jewish Left . . .

***

Pundits provide reasons for this: ignorance of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict; Israel’s association with “colonialist” America; Prime Minister Sharon’s connection to Sabra and Shatilla and now to the “evil” Bush; Israel’s defective public relations and Palestinian success in portraying themselves as victims; and a well-oiled Arab anti-Israel propaganda campaign, to name a few.

All true – yet somehow none of that fully explains why thoughtful friends in San Francisco have become partisans of the Palestinian cause, let alone why Portuguese Nobel Prize novelist José Saramago compared Israel’s treatment of Palestinians to “Auschwitz” and anti-fascist Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis called Jews “the root of evil” – decent folks, all of them, and I mean it.
My friends are cultured and tolerant people with whom I share a wide range of political and “lifestyle” opinions, yet they seem unmoved that part of the Palestinian design remains the destruction of Israel.

So I fish for explanations where politics mixes with the metaphysical. Does the Jews’ near-miraculous national rebirth and homecoming insult the Left’s religion of universalism by suggesting, once again, the Jews’ uniqueness?

Or is the Left’s rancor merely an expression of the antagonism toward Jews that seems built into the world’s foundation, as if God himself put it there? My friends are not anti-Semites, to be sure, but I wonder if they might be like canaries in a mine, unaware as they fall before the daily vapors.

And beyond both politics and metaphysics, how shall I cope personally as my good friends become also my enemies?

June 18, 2004

The Second Intifada is over and Israel has won is the opinion of columnist Charles Krauthammer, after 4 years, over 1,000 deaths, and thousands of others maimed.

June 30, 2004

Israeli High Court upholds Israel's right to build security fence, but makes slight modifications on its route.

July 9, 2004

The International Court of Justice issues non-binding advisory opinion that Israel's security barrier violates international law.

Israel was outraged by the ruling, saying the World Court ignored the issue of Palestinian suicide bombers. …Israel said the barrier will remain in place to keep bombers out of the country.

The Palestinians welcomed the decision as “historic.” This is an excellent decision,” said Yasser Arafat.112

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112 Israel Today, July 9, 2004
In February Israel felt that approximately 30 countries, including the European Union and
the United States, felt that The Hague did not have the authority to rule on the legality of
its security barrier.\textsuperscript{113}

Israel’s case for the barrier is simple: it’s necessary to keep suicide bombers out of the
country.\textsuperscript{114}

An absolute halt in terrorist activities has been noticed in the West Bank areas where the
fence has been constructed... infiltrations into Israeli territory had emanated from areas
where the fence had not yet been completed. Israeli cities that had been a target have been
quite since the fence has been erected.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{October 13, 2004 – Sanhedrin reconvened}

A unique ceremony - probably only the second of its kind in the past 1,600 years - is
taking place in Tiberias today: The launching of a Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish-legal
tribunal in the Land of Israel.

The Sanhedrin, a religious assembly that convened in one of the Holy Temple chambers
in Jerusalem, comprised 71 sages and existed during the Tannaitic period, from several
decades before the Common Era until roughly 425 C.E. Details of today's ceremony are
still sketchy, but the organizers' announced their intention to convene 71 rabbis who have
received special rabbinic ordination as specified by Maimonides.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{October 25, 2004 – Doctor’s arrive to treat Arafat}

Israel has given permission to a team of doctors from Tunisia to fly to Ramallah to treat
Yasser Arafat, who has been suffering from gallstones, an intestinal infection, high fever
and vomiting. The doctors entered the Mukata compound on Saturday night where Arafat
has been confined for over two-and-a-half years. Arafat’s health has recently been on the
decline and Egyptian doctors have reportedly already been at Arafat’s side since last
week. Although his aids deny he is seriously ill, the emergency call indicates that he is
suffering from more than a common flu and according to some reports, Arafat, who also
suffers from Parkinson’s disease, may have to fly abroad for surgery.

\textbf{October 27, 2004 – Ariel Sharon’s pullout plan wins resounding victory in
the Knesset}

The Knesset voted 67-45 with 7 abstentions to approve the plan.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Israel Today, February 1, 2004
\item[114] Israel Today, February 23, 2004
\item[115] Israel Today, February 24, 2004
\item[117] Middle East Ministries, October 29, 2004
\end{footnotes}
November 11, 2004 – Arafat dies

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat’s health continued to deteriorate. On October 28 Egyptian, Tunisian, and Jordanian doctors were treating him. He was falling in and out of consciousness. On October 29, he was flown from Jordan to Paris, France for emergency medical treatment.

Senior Palestinian officials began to plan for a change in leadership.¹¹⁸

On November 11, 2004 Yasser Arafat slipped into his final coma and died in Paris.¹¹⁹ The cause of death is undetermined.¹²⁰

Mahmoud Abbas is elected to succeed Arafat as Chairman of the PLO.¹²¹ He is buried in Ramallah on November 12, 2004. Palestinian terror groups accused Israel of poisoning Arafat and vow revenge.¹²²

2005¹²³

January 9, 2005

Palestinian Authority election; Mahmoud Abbas chosen as President.

January 24, 2005 – First ever commemoration of the Holocaust by the U.N.¹²⁴

February 8, 2005

Summit at Sharm el-Sheikh attended by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Jordan's King Abdullah during which Sharon and Abbas declare an end to violence. Jordan proposes deploying Palestinian soldiers (Badr Bigade) to the northern part of the West Bank. Israel approves the offer, though the plan is never put into effect. Jordan also deploys ambassador to Israel.

February 9, 2005 – Reestablished Sanhedrin convenes to discuss the Temple Mount¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ ibid
¹¹⁹ Israel Today, November 4, 2004
¹²⁰ Arutz Sheva Nov. 8, 2004
¹²¹ Israel Today, November 11, 2004
¹²² Israel Today, November 12, 2004
¹²³ http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
¹²⁴ Arutz Sheva News, Monday, January 24, 2005
February 16, 2005

Knesset approves the Disengagement Implementation Law to compensate Jews who will be evacuated as a result of the disengagement plan.

March 16, 2005

Israel transfers control of Jericho to the Palestinians.

March 17, 2005

Multiple Palestinian groups agree to informal truce until end of year.

March 20, 2005

It is reported that Israel's defense minister approved the building of 3,500 new housing units between the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and East Jerusalem, in the E-1 corridor.

March 21, 2005

Israel transfers control of Tulkarem to the PA.

May 26, 2005

In a meeting with Abbas, Bush declares that changes to the 1949 armistice line must be mutually agreed upon. Abbas claims that the PA is willing to work with Israel to help plan the disengagement from Gaza.

June 29, 2005

More than 20 mortars are fired from across the border. Cpl. Uzi Peretz of the Golani Brigade is killed and four soldiers wounded, including the unit’s doctor. Fire was exchanged and helicopters and planes attacked five Hezbollah outposts in the Reches Ramim area.

July 12, 2005

A Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide bombing kills 5 in Netanya. Israel responds by reentering Tulkarem and Hamas increases rocket attacks in the South.

August 15, 2005

125 Arutz-7 News: Wednesday, February 9, 2005
Israeli soldiers begin to give notices to settlers in Gaza that they must evacuate their homes within 48 hours or they will be forcibly removed. Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz announces that Israel intends to hold onto the main settlement block in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

**August 17, 2005**

Forcible evacuation of Jews in Gaza begins.
August 22, 2005

Disengagement from the Gaza Strip completed.

August 23, 2005

Disengagement from four settlements in northern Samaria completed.

August 29, 2005

Sharon declares that there will be no more disengagements, that future territorial concessions will be handled in accordance with the Roadmap, and reiterated that the large settlement blocks would remain in Israel.

September 20, 2005

Last army units leave settlements of Ganim and Kadim in northern Samaria.

THE GAZA HANDOVER

PASTOR BOB MORRIS, DIRECTOR HaDavar MESSIANIC MINISTRIES

Recently, from 1991 to the present, the United States and Israeli governments have been accused of ungodly decision making from those who espouse fervent Religious Zionist and Christian Zionist theology. These two governments are criticized for the philosophy of giving up land for peace. The latest accusations stem from the recent Hurricane Katrina natural disaster and the turnover of the Gaza strip settlements to the Palestinian Authority in August and September 2005. However, these accusations are unwarranted because they ignore pertinent Biblical and historical facts.

A. Possession of the Land is contingent on obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (Lev. 26:13ff; Deut. 28:15ff) and the Land Covenant (Deut. 29-30). The Mosaic Covenant continues to be God’s administering covenant for those Jewish people who have not entered into the New Covenant. The Land Covenant, a subset of the unconditional and eternal Abrahamic Covenant, will not be fully realized until the institution of the Messianic Kingdom.

B. We, the Jewish people, are currently not obedient to the Mosaic Covenant or the Land Covenant. Ninety percent of the Jewish people today are atheistic or agnostic. Those 10% who are religious follow the traditions of the rabbis rather than the written Word of God. Only one percent or less of the Jewish community today trusts in Jesus as Messiah and Savior.
C. The Jewish people are promised the entire western arm of the Fertile Crescent, from the Euphrates River to the River of Egypt and from the eastern wilderness to the Mediterranean Sea (Gen. 15:19-21; Isa. 11:14, 27:12-13; Obad. 19; Mic. 7:14; Zech. 9:10; Psm. 72:8; Josh. 1:1-4; Deut. 1:7, 11:24). See map. Note: neither the wilderness of Sinai nor the wilderness of Arabia are part of the Land of Israel.

D. We, the Jewish people, have never possessed all of the Promised Land and we do not do so today. Please note that the modern State of Israel only comprises a small portion of the entire Promised Land. A graph diagramming Jewish possession of the Land clearly shows a constant expansion and contraction of territory depending on obedience over time. We will not possess 100% of the Promised Land until the Messianic Kingdom. The Gaza Handover is simply an experience of contraction like those that have occurred in the past. Please see the graph entitled “Possession of the Land” following point “F.” The Gaza Handover is considered as part of the “Peace Process” column. Note that percentages are approximate.

E. While both the Mosaic Covenant and the Land Covenant promise restoration after a world wide dispersion, the restoration of Israel comes in two stages. A study of the prophets indicates that there will be two world-wide regatherings. The first will be a regathering in unbelief in preparation for the judgment of the Tribulation period, the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (Ezk. 20:33-38; Zeph 2:1 2).

The second world-wide regathering will be in faith in preparation for the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (Isa. 11:11). This regathering occurs after the Tribulation has been brought to its conclusion.

The modern State of Israel is the fulfillment of the first of these two world-wide regatherings. The seven year Tribulation period and the three and one-half year Tribulation Diaspora (Zech. 13:8; Matt. 24:15 21; Rev. 12:6, 14) will follow. The major mistake Religious Zionism and fervent Christian Zionism make is to misunderstand the purpose of the modern State of Israel. Today is not the day of the Final Regathering. The Messianic Kingdom is not on the horizon, the Tribulation is.

F. In particular, the Gaza Strip is known in the Bible as the Land of the Philistines and the Philistine Plain. Isaiah 11:14 and Obadiah 19 tells us that we will not occupy the Gaza Strip permanently, if at all, until the Messianic Kingdom. Both of these verses are found in the context of the Kingdom. Note: if we already possess the Gaza Strip
prior to the Messianic Kingdom, there will be no need to “swoop down” upon it and possess it.

G. A major prophecy supposedly supporting the fervent Zionist viewpoint is Joel 3:2. However, the context of Joel 3:2 is the judgment of all the nations at the end of the Tribulation period in the Valley of Jehoshaphat to the east of Jerusalem. Joel 3:2 cannot be used to justify a hurricane that came upon the United States during the current age.
H. In regard to the curses of the Mosaic Covenant, we must remember the principle taught by the book of Habakkuk: God will use nations that are more ungodly than Israel to discipline Israel. Could God be using the Palestinian Authority to discipline His people? It appears that this could very well be the case.

I. On that note, let us not forget the Jonah principle either. Jonah learned that God even loves Israel’s most vicious enemies and desires their physical and spiritual salvation. Our response to the Book of Jonah should be to pray for Muslim missions and the salvation of the Palestinian people.

The Gaza Handover is in accord with Biblical data. It will be temporary, and Gaza will eventually be occupied by the Jewish people in accord with the eternal and unconditional Abrahamic Covenant / Land Covenant. However, that awaits the institution of the Messianic Kingdom when all Jewish people are believers in Jesus (Rom. 11:25-27).

However it works out, the disengagement is preparing the stage for the next major prophetic event -- the Russian coalition’s invasion of Israel (Ezek. 38-39). Keep your eye on Russia. Wait and see how God brings this event to pass.

Hurricane Katrina bears no relation to the disengagement as fervent Jewish and Christian Zionists will claim. They hold up Genesis 12:3 (And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse) and say something like this, “Because the USA pressured or supported Israel giving up territory, God is punishing the USA.” Ridiculous! The USA is Israel's only friend in the world today (to the tune of, I believe, some $3 billion per year in foreign aide) and has been the most hospitable haven for the Jewish people in the history of the current world-wide Diaspora. The fervent Zionist position can best be described using a term I first heard from Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, “newspaper exegesis” (taking the headlines and force fitting them into scripture). By the way, I have yet to see fervent Christian Zionists catalog a list of blessings the USA received for support of Israel starting with President Harry Truman’s recognition of the State of Israel in 1948. Neither have I seen a list of disasters that have come upon Israel’s true enemies, the Arab nations and their allies in Europe and around the world. Why doesn’t God punish the true enemies of Israel? What is (are) the disaster(s) that God brought upon Syria, Israel’s most implacable foe, or other Arab nations or Russia for their support of the disengagement? Why are fervent Zionists so one-sided against the United States?

Hurricane Katrina and similar disasters supposedly chronicled by fervent Christian Zionists are self-fulfilling prophecies. Anyone can say, “Expect something bad to happen,” and it will. Why? Because local wars, world wars and natural disasters are simply the characteristics of the age we live in (Matt. 24:6-7). They happen every year.

In addition, please consider, in regard to natural disasters, that God sends His rain on the just and unjust alike (Matt. 5:45). We should be prepared to accept good as well as adversity from God’s hand (Job 2:10) because God, indeed, does bring calamity according to His sovereign will (Amos 3:6; Isa. 45:6-7). Suffering is a form of testing that
refines the faith of the believer (Isa. 48:10). Calamity comes upon us all because we are sinful human beings living in a sin broken world (Luke 13:1-5). More could be said, but this is enough. There is more to natural disasters than support for Israel. If the USA supported Israel 100%, do you think that we would be spared natural disasters?

In my opinion, this supposed “Biblical Exegesis” blaming Hurricane Katrina on “supposed” US pressure to deprive Israel of her rightful land is simply a pious sounding way to place the blame for the calamities of this world on Israel and the Jewish people. It comes in the back door and sounds good, but it boils down to blaming Israel. Israel becomes a curse to the USA.

Does the Land of Israel belong to the Jewish people? Yes, absolutely, based on the Abrahamic Covenant! Does the modern State of Israel have every right to exist? Yes, absolutely, based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Will the Jewish people possess all of the Promised Land during the Messianic Kingdom? Yes, absolutely, based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Is the Gaza Handover or the creation of a Palestinian State temporary? Of course it is, based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Is God sovereignly in charge of all that happens in the Middle East? Yes, absolutely. Is possession of the Promised Land guaranteed today? No, based on the Mosaic Covenant. We Jews are in the Diaspora today because of our disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

I would suggest that fervent Jewish and Christian Zionists spend more time studying the scriptures, particularly the prophets, than in studying the newspaper. Falling into the blame game will not help the Jewish people or further God’s kingdom. What will help the Jewish people is fervent prayer for the peace of Jerusalem (Psm. 122:6). What will help the Jewish people is fervent prayer in line with God’s will (Matt. 6:10). What will help the Jewish people is to take the Gospel to them as our highest evangelistic priority (Rom. 1:16). What will help the Jewish people are practical expressions of love and support that avoids the blame game and that challenges us to spiritual righteousness.

A highly recommended resource for further study is Footsteps of Messiah by Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. You can obtain this book through HaDavar Messianic Ministries or Ariel Ministries.

September 25, 2005

Hamas announces intent to halt operations in Gaza.

September 27, 2005

Hamas kidnaps and kills a settler in the West Bank.

October 20, 2005

Bush urges Abbas to stand up to armed gangs and bring an end to violence.
October 26, 2005

Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide bomber kills 6 in Hadera. Israel responds by ruling out talks with PA until violence quells.

November 15, 2005

Agreement on movement and access from the Gaza Strip to Israel reached.

November 21, 2005

Sharon asserts he is no longer willing to deal with Likud rebels, so he resigns from the party and creates a new centrist party, Kadima. Asks President Katzav to dissolve Parliament and schedule an early election.

An attempt to kidnap an IDF soldier was foiled when paratroopers patrolling near Rajar village discerned a Hezbollah unit approaching. Private David Markovitz opened fire, killing all four. In a heavy attack of mortars and Katyusha rockets that ensued, nine soldiers and two civilians were injured.

November 25, 2005

Rafah border crossing reopened.

December 5, 2005

Palestinian Islamic Jihad kills 5 in Netanya, Israel retaliates by barring Palestinians from entering Israel for a week.

December 24, 2005

500 Orthodox Jews break in to a Messianic service in Beersheva, Israel and attack the Jewish believers. The Messianic Congregation if Arad is similarly harassed.126

December 27, 2005

A branch of a Palestinian organization connected to al-Qaeda fires six Katyushas, damaging a house in Kiryat Shmona and a house in Metulla. In response, the IAF attacks a training base of the Popular Front, south of Beirut.

126 Letter, Lura Beckford, lura_eddie@hotmail.com
December 28, 2005

Responding to rockets fired from Lebanon to northern Israel, Israeli jets attack a terrorist base south of Beirut.

2006

January 4, 2006

Prime Minister Sharon suffers severe stroke and falls into a coma. Ehud Olmert assumes role of Acting Prime Minister and acting Chairman of Kadima.

January 19, 2006

Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide bombing in Tel Aviv wounds 30.

January 25, 2006

Hamas wins majority in PA general elections. The US, Israel and several European countries cut off aid to the Palestinians as the Islamist movement rejects Israel's right to exist.

January 30, 2006

Quartet calls on Hamas to renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept all prior agreements.

February 21, 2006

Ismail Haniyah sworn in as Palestinian Prime Minister.

March 28, 2006

Kadima party wins Israeli elections and Ehud Olmert becomes Prime Minister. Voter turnout was the lowest ever (63.2%).

March 30, 2006

The Al-Aqsa martyrs brigade claims responsibility for a suicide bombing in the West Bank killing four. Hamas reacts by applauding their efforts.

127 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
March 31, 2006

In an interview with the British press, Hamas head Ismail Haniyah calls for an end of requests to recognize Israel's right to exist.

April 9, 2006

Israeli security cabinet recommends severing ties with PA.

April 17, 2006

Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide bombing in Tel Aviv kills 11. Hamas applauds efforts while Fatah denounces it.

April 26, 2006

Abbas calls for an international peace conference.

May 4, 2006

New Israeli government takes office. It vows to strive to shape the permanent borders of the State of Israel as a democratic Jewish state with a Jewish majority.

May 10, 2006

Imprisoned Hamas, Fatah, and other officials draft a National Accord Document calling for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, a right of return of all refugees, and the release of all prisoners. Abbas accepts, Hamas rejects because of its implied recognition of Israel.

May 21, 2006

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni meets Abbas at the World Economic Forum in Egypt. Abbas asserts that "permanent" arrangements are impossible without resolving the main issues of conflict - security, borders, Jerusalem, and refugees. Abbas also claims Israeli unilateralism will increase violence and put an end to the two-state solution. Haniya says his government will maintain a cease fire for many years if Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders.

May 23, 2006

Olmert meets President Bush at the White House. Bush and Olmert reiterate their commitment to a two state solution.
May 27, 2006

An IDF soldier is wounded when Katyushas were fired at an army base at Mt. Meron in the upper Galilee.

May 28, 2006

Palestinian rockets hit deep into northern Israel. Israel responds by striking terrorist bases in Lebanon.

June 10, 2006

Hamas ends 16 month long truce as cross border violence escalates near Gaza.

June 25, 2006

Hamas, Popular Resistance Committees, and Army of Islam militants attacked Israeli forces in Israel, killing two Israeli soldiers, wounding four and kidnapping Cpl. Gilad Shalit. The terrorists had reached Israel through a tunnel from Gaza and demanded the release of an estimated 400 prisoners, mostly women and minors.

June 27, 2006

After diplomatic efforts to secure the release of kidnapped soldier are unsuccessful, IDF begins major operation in Gaza to rescue Shalit, deter future Hamas attacks, and weaken the Hamas government.

June 28, 2006

Palestinian factions agree on a revised National Accord Document (Prisoner's Document), which states that the PLO and the President of the PA will be responsible for negotiations with Israel to create a state on territories occupied by Israel in 1967. The Popular Resistance Committees announce they had kidnapped a young West Bank settler and would kill him if Israel did not stop the Gaza Operation. (Three alleged perpetrators of this attack were arrested on July 4 in Ramallah) Israeli jets fly over Syrian President Bashar Assad's summer residence in Latakia as a warning to stop supporting terrorism.

June 29, 2006

Kidnapped West Bank settler's body found. Israeli forces arrest 64 Hamas cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and other officials in the West Bank and Jerusalem.
July 2, 2006

A Hamas rocket hits Israeli port city of Ashkelon, hitting near a vacant school. This is the farthest north a Palestinian rocket has ever struck. The Israeli government approved prolonged activities against Hamas, institutions and infrastructures used by terrorist organizations, and rocket launching squads in Gaza. Israeli operations in Gaza were expanded.

July 12, 2006 – Second Lebanon War

Hezbollah kidnaps two Israeli soldiers (Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev) and kills three Israeli soldiers in Israeli territory, sparking the Second Lebanon War. Hezbollah demands the release of three Lebanese and other Arab prisoners in exchange for the return of Goldwasser, Regev, and Shalit. Prime Minister Olmert declares Hezbollah's attack an act of war.

2006 Lebanon War (summer 2006) - Began as a military operation in response to the abduction of two Israeli reserve soldiers by the Hezbollah. The operation gradually strengthened, to become a wider confrontation. The
principal participants were Hezbollah paramilitary forces and the Israeli military. The conflict started on 12 July 2006 and continued until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire went into effect on 14 August 2006, though it formally ended on 8 September 2006, when Israel lifted its naval blockade of Lebanon. The war resulted in the pacification of southern Lebanon and in the weakness of the Hezbollah (which suffered serious casualties but managed to survive the Israeli onslaught).\textsuperscript{128}

**July 16, 2006**

The G-8 blames Hezbollah and Hamas for the destabilization of the region and calls upon them to halt their attacks. G-8 also calls upon Israel to “be mindful of the strategic and humanitarian consequences of its actions.” Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and several Gulf States blame Hezbollah for the war.

**July 17, 2006**

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert issues calls on Hezbollah to return the kidnapped soldiers, cease terrorist attacks, and allow Lebanese troops to deploy along the border.

**August 8, 2006**

The Lebanese Government offers to deploy 15,000 troops to the Israel-Lebanon border in exchange for complete Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

**August 11, 2006**

The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 1701 calling for an end to hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

**August 14, 2006**

Israel and Hezbollah agree to United Nations ceasefire. The Lebanese Defense Minister declares that Lebanon has no intention of disarming Hezbollah (as required by UNSC Resolution 1701).

**August 19, 2006**

Israeli forces raid Hezbollah stronghold in southern Lebanon. After continued Hezbollah violations of the ceasefire agreement.

\textsuperscript{128} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Israel
August 25, 2006

Iran is developing nuclear weapons capability. Israel starts preparing for possible conflict.129

September 21, 2006

Abbas informs the United Nations General Assembly that all future Palestinian governments will comply with previously signed agreements.

September 30, 2006

Last Israeli soldier withdraws from Lebanon

October 31 – November 8, 2006

Israeli forces enter the northern Gaza town of Beit Chanun in an effort to prevent rocket fire to Israel.

The government appoints a commission of inquiry, chaired by retired judge Eliyahu Winograd, to investigate and draw lessons from the war in Lebanon.

November 13, 2006

Prime Minister Olmert meets with President Bush.

Following talks between Hamas and Fatah, both sides agree to form a unity government.

November 25, 2006

Palestinians and Israelis agree to ceasefire in Gaza.

November 27, 2006

Olmert expresses willingness to implement Roadmap and urges Palestinians to uphold the principles outlined by the Quartet.

November 28, 2006

United States National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley reiterates Olmert's point that an agreement between Israel and Syria cannot be reached until Syria stops supporting terrorism.

129 Arutz Sheva News August 25, 2006, article 3
December 6, 2006

Iraq Study Group’s Report is released, making the recommendation that Israel transfer the entire Golan Heights to Syria to help stabilize the region.

December 8, 2006

Hamas head Ismail Haniyah travels to Iran and publically declares that Hamas will never recognize Israel's right to exist.

December 16, 2006

Abbas calls for new elections as a solution to the ongoing crisis.

December 23, 2006

Olmert promises to give PA $100 million in tax revenue for humanitarian purposes.

2007

January 14, 2007

Abbas rejects Olmert's offer at establishing preliminary borders for a future Palestinian state out of fear that such borders would become permanent.

January 17, 2007

Chief of Staff Dan Halutz and Defense Minister Amir Peretz resign following criticism of their role in the Lebanon War. Olmert holds on to his office.

January 29, 2007

Palestinian Islamic Jihad claims responsibility for suicide bombing in Eilat which killed three Israeli’s.

January 30, 2007

Fatah and Hamas reach a ceasefire agreement mediated by Egypt after a series of clashes that led to the death of 32 Palestinians. Both sides welcome a Saudi initiative to meet in Mecca.

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130 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
February 2, 2007

Quartet calls on PA unity government to revert to its commitments as outlined in the Roadmap.

February 8, 2007

Palestinian Unity Agreement in Mecca. Hamas and Fatah agree to share power, based on vaguely worded agreement. Hamas officials reiterate that they will never recognize Israel. US and Israel insist that the new government must recognize right of Israel to exist, disarm terrorist groups and agree to end violence.

February 9, 2007

The Quartet welcomes the role of Saudi Arabia in reaching the agreement to form a Palestinian National Unity government but later reaffirms that it must obey international demands to recognize Israel, renounce violence and abide by previous peace agreements.

February 15, 2007

Ismail Haniyah and his cabinet resign. Haniyah is re-appointed by Abbas and begins the process of forming a new Palestinian unity government.

February 19, 2007

Secretary Rice meets with Olmert and Abbas in Jerusalem to discuss the Mecca Accord.

March 15, 2007

Palestinian unity government formed.

March 28-29, 2007

Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia. Reiterates adherence, without changes, to the Arab Peace Initiative and direct negotiations on all tracks.

April 30, 2007

The Inquiry Commission into the military campaign held in Lebanon in summer 2006, headed by former Justice Dr. Eliyahu Winograd, submitted to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense an interim report relating to the time from the IDF’s exit from Lebanon to the soldiers’ abduction on July 12, 2006 and to the time between July 12 and July 17, when the decision to move into war was taken.
June 13, 2007

The Knesset elected Shimon Peres to serve as the Ninth President of Israel, after Moshe Katsaz resigned amid impending charges of sexual harassment of female subordinates.

June 15, 2007

Hamas forces attack Fatah in Gaza and drive them out of the Gaza strip in brutal attacks. President Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the unity government, but Prime Minister Haniyeh insists that the government is still in power. A summit in Sharm El Sheikh attended by Egypt, Jordan and Palestinians pledges support to the Abbas government, but Egypt calls for reunification with Hamas.

June 17, 2007

President Abbas forms a new Palestinian emergency cabinet to replace the unity government which he dissolved after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. Abbas selected Salam Fayyad as the new Palestinian prime minister.

June 18, 2007

Former prime minister Ehud Barak was sworn in as Israel's defense minister. Barak received a vote of approval from parliament to replace Amir Peretz, who lost to Barak in last week's Labour Party leadership election.

The U.S. lifts its embargo on the Palestinian government in an effort to boost the strength of President Abbas and his Fatah party's struggle against Hamas.

June 19, 2007

Prime Minister Olmert and President Bush meet in Washington to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

June 24, 2007

Israel transfers hundreds of millions of dollars to Abbas' emergency government in the West Bank.
June 25, 2007

Olmert, Abbas, Egyptian President Mubarak, and Jordanian King Abdullah II meet in at Sharm al-Shayk, Egypt.

June 25, 2007

Israeli human rights group, B’Tselem calls on Hamas to release Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier who was kidnapped one year ago today.

June 26, 2007

Olmert, Abbas, and special envoys from the European Union, Russia, the United Nations, and the United States meet today in Jerusalem at the U.S. Consulate.

June 27, 2007

The Quartet (Russia, the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations) names Tony Blair as its new Middle East envoy.

July 1, 2007

Olmert transfers $118 million to the PA.

July 15, 2007 – Israelite priests hold first gathering since Temple era

Jews belonging to the Tribe of Levi, and particularly the Kohen clan, came together for a mass gathering in Jerusalem on Sunday. It was the first large-scale gathering of Biblically-mandated Israelite priests since the time of the Second Temple.

The gathering included lectures and seminars on the history and future of the Temple, and culminated with all of the participants declaring the priestly blessing over Israel from the Western Wall.

Genetic research over the past several decades has succeeded in isolating a particular DNA signature shared by all members of the Tribe of Levi, making the reinstitution of Israel's priestly caste a relatively simple endeavor once the Temple is rebuilt.131

July 16, 2007

President Bush calls for a Middle East peace conference in the Fall to be led by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and to include Palestinians, Israelis and regional neighbors who support creation of a Palestinian state, as well as new aid measures to support the

West Bank-based government of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

July 20, 2007

Israel releases 256 prisoners, grants clemency to 178 members of Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, and scales back its troop operations aimed at other militants in the West Bank.

July 25, 2007

The Arab League sends its first formal delegation to Israel to officially present the Arab League peace offer that would see full recognition of Israel in exchange for withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the creation of a Palestinian state. The deal was first offered in 2002.

July 27, 2007

Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad presents his government's program. It seeks to establish a Palestinian state on all lands occupied by Israel in 1967 with Jerusalem as its capital and a just solution for Palestinian refugees.

August 6, 2007

Olmert and Abbas meet in pre-conference discussions.

September 6, 2007 – Operation Orchard

Operation Orchard was an Israeli airstrike on a nuclear reactor in the Deir ez-Zor region of Syria carried out just after midnight (local time) on September 6, 2007. The White House and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) later confirmed that American intelligence had also indicated the site was a nuclear facility with a military purpose, though Syria denies this.

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According to news reports, the raid was carried out by Israeli Air Force (IAF) 69 Squadron F-15Is, F-16Is, and an ELINT aircraft; as many as eight aircraft participated and at least four of these crossed into Syrian airspace. The fighters were equipped with AGM-65 Maverick missiles, 500 lb bombs, and external fuel tanks. One report stated that a team of elite Israeli Shaldag special-forces commandos arrived at the site the day before so that they could highlight the target with laser designators, while a later report identified Sayeret Matkal special-forces commandos as involved.132

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October 9, 2007

Syria refuses to attend after Israel declines to put issue of Golan Heights as topic of discussion at the upcoming conference.

November 6, 2007

Conference set for last week of November. It is expected to produce a joint declaration to pave the way for negotiations on core issues, including Jerusalem and the refugees.

November 12, 2007

The United States promises Syria that the issue of the Golan Heights will be brought to the agenda of the upcoming regional peace conference.

November 27, 2007 – Annapolis Conference

The Annapolis Conference was a Middle East peace conference held on 27 November 2007, at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, United States. The conference aimed to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and implement the "Roadmap for peace". The conference ended with the issuing of a joint statement from all parties. After the Annapolis Conference, the negotiations were continued.

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A joint understanding, read by US president George Bush, stated that "In furtherance of the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security" the parties agreed to “immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty, resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements". A steering committee would meet from 12 December 2007, followed by biweekly negotiations between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert.
The parties also committed to immediately implement their respective obligations under the Roadmap for peace and to continue the implementation of it until they had reached a peace treaty, to be concluded before the end of 2008.\textsuperscript{133}

**December 12, 2007**

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators begin formal talks to launch the U.S.-brokered peace process initiated at the Annapolis Conference.

**2008\textsuperscript{134}**

**January 3, 2008**

Palestinian militants fire a Katyusha rocket with longer range than usual from Gaza into northern Ashkelon.

**January 17, 2008**

In an effort to pressure Hamas to stop rocket fire at Israel, Defense Minister Ehud Barak orders the closing of border crossings from Israel into Gaza.

**January 23, 2008**

Tens of thousands of Palestinians pour into Egypt from Gaza after Hamas militants blow holes into a border wall.

**January 24, 2008**

Approximately 700 Palestinian security forces go to Jordan to begin U.S. training for a new gendarmerie that is projected to eventually be 50,000 strong.

**February 3, 2008**

Egypt refuses to cede control of border to Hamas and reseals the damaged border crossing.

**February 4, 2008**

Hamas military wing carries out a suicide bombing in the Israeli town Dimona, killing one and injuring 23.

\textsuperscript{133} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annapolis_Conference

\textsuperscript{134} http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/time2000s.html#2003
February 12, 2008

Hezbollah terror chief Imad Mugniyeh is assassinated in Damascus.

March 6, 2008

Eight yeshiva students are shot dead by an Arab resident of East Jerusalem in a terror attack at the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva.

March 20, 2008 – Ami Ortiz injured, Messianic Jews harassed

On March 20th, 2008, 15-year-old Ami Ortiz stayed home from school. It was Purim – a Jewish festival in which holiday baskets are sent to friends and acquaintances to commemorate the Jews’ thwarting of Haman’s evil plot as recorded in the book of Esther in the Bible. To Ami’s delight, someone left a holiday package on the Ortiz family’s doorstep. When young Ami opened the package, it exploded in his face, filled his body with hundreds of pieces of shrapnel and left him in critical condition. Ami’s father, David, is a pastor of a Messianic community in the town of Ariel. Apparently, this was not an attempt to injure a fifteen year old boy, but rather an attempt to murder a minister of the gospel in Israel.

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Since then, two churches in Jerusalem have been attacked by arsonists and burned, a Pastor’s car in Beit Shaen has been firebombed, a Messianic baker’s business has been denied the Kashrut license only because she is a Messianic believer, jobs have been lost and visas and citizenship denied because of faith in Yeshua.

Fliers, showing pictures of Messianic leaders and congregational members have been circulated in every major city and many smaller settlements in Israel. These fliers contain a message to the public to be aware of missionaries who are trying to steal the souls of Jews, and who masquerade as Jews but are not. Names and addresses have been published under the pictures, which is against the law. In Ariel, the fliers were posted in every bus stop from Tel Aviv to Ariel, a distance of 45 kilometers. We do not know if the perpetrators of the bombing in the Ortiz home were the ones who published these fliers, but at the very least, the fliers incited and helped them to identify the family and their address.

Press and media coverage have continued extensively on the Ami Ortiz case. These have not only continued to lift up the name of Yeshua in Israel, but have also continued to put pressure on the authorities to being justice to the case. In May of 2009, the FBI officially became involved in the case, because David and Leah are dual American and Israeli
citizens. Their help with the Shin Bet moved the investigation forward quickly until Jack Teitel was arrested on Oct. 7, 2009.135

**Sunday, April 06, 2008 – Jewish group to slaughter lamb in Passover sacrifice rehearsal**

A Bible-adherent Jewish group on Sunday ritually slaughtered a young lamb in what is called a "rehearsal" for the renewal of the Passover sacrifice once the Jerusalem temple is rebuilt.

The Temple Movement won approval to carry out the practice sacrifice from Israel's High Court on Friday after animal rights groups asserted that the lamb would be put through inhumane suffering.

In its legal response, the Temple Movement explained that the slaughter would be carried out according to Biblical standards, which is the same method used to slaughter lambs at kosher slaughterhouses around the country.

The sacrifice and accompanying religious ceremonies were performed at a prominent yeshiva overlooking Jerusalem's Temple Mount, which is still occupied by several Muslim shrines.136

**April 9, 2008**

Palestinian gunmen kill two Israeli civilian employees at the Nahal Oz fuel depot which pumps fuel into Gaza.

**April 16, 2008**

Hamas ambushes and kills three Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip and fires more than 20 rockets into Southern Israel.

**April 19, 2008**

A suicide car bombing and mortar ambush carried out by Hamas' military wing at Kerem Shalom crossing injures 13 Israeli soldiers. Israel retaliates with three airstrikes, killing seven Hamas militants.

**April 25, 2008**

Five Palestinian groups claim responsibility for killing two Israeli security guards in Tulkarem in the West Bank.

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135 http://www.amiortiz.com/the-story
May 14, 2008

As President Bush arrives in Israel to celebrate its 60th anniversary, a rocket landed on a shopping mall in Ashkelon, wounding 30. Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committees both claimed responsibility.

May 31, 2008

Hezbollah returned the remains of five Israeli soldiers killed in the summer war of 2006. Israel released an Israeli of Lebanese descent who had been convicted of spying for Hezbollah.

June 4, 2008

President Mahmoud Abbas calls on Hamas to join a "national and comprehensive dialogue" and offered early presidential and parliamentary elections if the talks succeeded.

June 19, 2008

Egypt-brokered temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas goes into effect.

June 24, 2008

Palestinian Islamic Jihad breaks temporary truce and fires three rockets into Israel after Israeli troops killed a Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader in Nablus.

July 08, 2008 – Jewish priests fitted for service in future Jerusalem Temple

Confident that Israel's Temple to the Almighty will be rebuilt atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount in the very near future, the Temple Institute this month began fitting Jews from the Biblical priestly tribe for their holy garments.

The Bible describes a very specific set of garments to be worn by members of the priestly tribe when they are serving in the Temple. This month's fitting was the first time since the destruction of the Second Temple over 2,000 years ago that potential Jewish priests had been measured for such garments.

Following the fitting, each potential future priest was presented with a set of garments matching the Biblical description. When the Temple is rebuilt, a fresh set of garments will need to be made for each priest, as they can only be used in the Temple.

The Temple Institute has for decades been involved in preparing the various garments, instruments and other items needed to dedicate what is known as the Third Temple. Most
Jews and Christians believe the Third Temple will be built atop the Temple Mount - today occupied by Islamic mosques - prior the coming of Messiah and the establishment of his direct reign over the earth.\textsuperscript{137}

**July 27, 2008 – New Israeli regulations could cripple Christian ministries**

Israel’s Ministry of Interior has decided to reinstate an old regulation that is threatening to cripple, if not shut down, several Christian ministries by limiting the time volunteers can spend serving in Israel to 27 months.

The ruling was as sudden as it was drastic. The effects began to be felt earlier this month when three volunteers from Christian Friends of Israel, assuming their visas would be renewed at the Interior Ministry under the previous five-year agreement, were instead told they had two weeks to pack up and leave the country.\textsuperscript{138}

**August 25, 2008**

Israel releases 199 Palestinian security prisoners in a gesture of goodwill to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

**September 23, 2008 – Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks at the UN.**

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2008, Ahmadinejad stated that Zionists are criminals and murderers, are "acquisitive" and "deceitful," and dominate global finance despite their "minuscule" number. He further stated that “It is deeply disastrous to witness that some presidential nominees have to visit these people [Zionists], take part in their gatherings and swear their allegiance and commitment to their interests in order to win financial or media support. These nations are spending their dignity and resources on the crimes and threats of the Zionist network against their will.” Ahmadinejad stated the “Zionist regime” was on the path to collapse and that the "underhanded actions of the Zionists" as among the causes of the recent unrest in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. In a subsequent interview with the Los Angeles Times, Ahmadinejad stated that "The [Zionist] regime resembles an airplane that has lost its engine and is kind of going down. And no one can help it," he said. “This will benefit everyone.”\textsuperscript{139}

**October 22, 2008**

Israel and the PA reach an agreement to deploy about 550 U.S.-trained Palestinian police to Hebron.

\textsuperscript{137} http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/16549/Default.aspx?archive=article_title
\textsuperscript{138} http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/16734/Default.aspx?archive=article_title
\textsuperscript{139} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmoud_Ahmadinejad_and_Israel#2008_UN_General_Assembly_address
October 26, 2008

Foreign Minister, and Olmert's replacement as leader of the Kadima party, Tzipi Livni announces that she was unable to form a new coalition government, thereby triggering early elections in Israel on February 10, 2009.

November 4, 2008

Democrat Barack Obama decisively wins the United States Presidential election with 78% of the Jewish vote.

November 26, 2008

Muslim terrorists attack a Chabad House in Mumbai, India in a series of coordinated attacks on India’s largest city and financial capital, killing at least 173 people and injuring over 300.

December 18, 2008

Egypt-brokered "State of Calm" agreement between Israel and Hamas officially ends.

December 27, 2008-January 16, 2009 – Israeli Defense Forces launch Operation Cast Lead to halt Hamas rocket fire on Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Israel's Operation Cast Lead comes after three years of suffering thousands of daily Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel's southern cities.

Since the start of the operation, Hamas has increased their number of attacks and has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. Hamas is firing an average of 80 rockets into Israel each day. Rockets were fired into Ashdod and Ashkelon and, for the first time, Grad rockets have been hitting Beersheba. It is clear that Hamas widened their rocket range in response to the incursion in Gaza.

Due to Hamas's endless and widespread barrage of rockets on Israeli towns, the IDF Home Front Command has expanded their security precautions to all towns within a 19-mile radius of Gaza.

Schools in Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beersheba and other southern cities are closed as Hamas continues purposely firing rockets into civilian centers including multiple kindergartens in all major cities. Since the Israeli airstrike began, four Israelis have been killed and over 176 were wounded while hundreds are being treated for shock. Israel's southern citizens
have been forced to move into bomb shelters as their community's schools, buildings and roads are destroyed in front of their eyes.

In two weeks, Hamas has fired 500 rockets into Israel's southern cities. Many of these have been the more deadly Grad katyusha rockets. On January 6 a three-month old girl was wounded from a Grad rocket that was fired into Gedara. On January 8 four people were wounded as a mortar shells were fired at the Eshkol region.

Early Thursday morning, January 8, Palestinian terrorists fired multiple rockets into Nahariya, an Israeli city on the border of Lebanon. One of the rockets hit a retirement home and two were wounded. Three rockets were fired again from Lebanon on January 14 into Kiryat Shmona. Israel is holding the Lebanese government responsible as it is Lebanon's job to prevent all attempted rocket attacks on Israel.

Syria is also involving itself in the conflict: On Sunday, January 11, Syrian citizens fired shots at IDF troops and civilian workers who were repairing a fence along the border. Israel has filed a complaint with UNIFIL and is still investigating the incident.

On January 11-12, the volume of Hamas rockets decreased but their firing range has widened. On January 12, 30 rockets were fired into the South as opposed to the usual average of 80 rockets per day. For the first time, a Hamas-fired Kassam rocket was able to reach the Kiryat Gat area.140

The Gaza War, also known as Operation Cast Lead (𫗧אנס תרס"ך יצוקה) and Gaza Massacre (מגזרה غزة) or the Battle of al-Furqan [the criterion] (ميعركة الفرقان) was a three-week armed conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Palestinian militants that began on 27 December 2008 and ended on 18 January 2009 in a unilateral ceasefire.

Israel's stated goal was to stop rocket fire into Israel and weapons smuggling into the Gaza strip. After the beginning of the conflict, Palestinian groups continued firing rockets in response to what they characterized as "massacres". Israeli forces attacked police stations, military targets including weapons caches and suspected rocket firing teams, as well as political and administrative institutions in the opening assault, striking in the densely populated cities of Gaza, Khan Yunis and Rafah.

140 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/Gazaincursion.html
According to Human Rights Watch, during the Gaza War, rocket attacks placed up to 800,000 people within range of attack.

An Israeli ground invasion began on January 3. Infantry commanders were given an unprecedented level of access to coordinate with air, naval, artillery, intelligence, and combat engineering units during this second phase. Various new technologies and hardware were also introduced. On January 5, the IDF began operating in the densely populated urban centers of Gaza. During the last week of the offensive (from 12 January), Israel mostly hit targets it had damaged before and struck Palestinian rocket-launching units. Hamas intensified its rocket and mortar attacks against civilian targets in southern Israel, reaching the major cities of Beersheba and Ashdod for the first time during the conflict. Israeli politicians ultimately decided against striking deeper within Gaza amid concerns of higher casualties on both sides and rising international criticism. The conflict ended on January 18, when Israel first declared a unilateral ceasefire, followed by Hamas' announcing a one-week ceasefire twelve hours later. Israel completed its withdrawal on January 21.\footnote{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Cast_Lead}
2009

January 17, 2009

Israel declares ceasefire to end Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. Hamas rejects Israel's call for a ceasefire, but its leadership announces their own ceasefire 12 hours later.
January 18, 2009

Israeli government opens an emergency clinic at the Erez Crossing in an effort to provide humanitarian assistance and medical care to the Palestinian civilian population of Gaza.

January 22, 2009

George Mitchell is named special envoy to the Middle East by President Obama.

January 27, 2009

Palestinian Arab militants detonate a bomb at the Kissufim crossing, killing one Israeli soldier and wounding three.

February 10, 2009

Elections for the 18th Knesset are held.

March 5, 2009

A Palestinian Arab resident of east Jerusalem attacks an Israeli police car and a bus on the Menachem Begin Expressway in Jerusalem using a bulldozer, injuring two police officers before being shot to death.

March 15, 2009

Two Israeli police officers are killed in a shooting attack near Massua in the northern Jordan Valley.

March 31, 2009

Benjamin Netanyahu sworn in as Israeli prime minister and head of new coalition government.

April 2, 2009

A 13 year old Israeli is killed by a local Palestinian Arab in the Jewish settlement of Bat Ayin. A 7 year old Israeli is also injured and treated for serious wounds. Islamic Jihad and Imad Mughniyeh claim responsibility for the attack.

April 3, 2009

United Nations establishes a fact-finding mission on the Gaza war, headed by Richard Goldstone, an international jurist from South Africa.
May 9, 2009

An Israeli resident of Ashdod is kidnapped and killed by three West Bank Palestinians near Gan Yavne.

May 18, 2009

PM Netanyahu and President Obama meet at the White House.

June 4, 2009

President Obama calls for a "new beginning between the United States and Muslims" in a historic speech in Cairo.

June 14, 2009

PM Netanyahu's speech at the Begin-Sadat Center. For the first time, Netanyahu endorses the principle of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

June 16, 2009

10 Palestinian Arab gunmen belonging to an al-Qaida-cell launch an attack at the Karni crossing using horses strapped with explosives. Four terrorists and the horses are killed in the ensuing firefight with the IDF. No IDF soldiers were wounded.

August 1, 2009

Two are killed and at least 15 are wounded at a shooting at Bar-Noar, the Tel Aviv branch of the Israeli GLBT Association. Police rule out the possibility that shooting was a terror attack.

September 15, 2009

Goldstone releases his report, accusing both Israel and Hamas of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity during the Gaza war.

September 22, 2009

White House hosts a trilateral meeting with PM Netanyahu and PA President Abbas.

September 30, 2009

Israel announces it will release twenty female Palestinian detainees and prisoners in exchange for a video proving Gilad Shalit was still alive.
November 3, 2009

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passes a resolution denouncing the Goldstone report as "irredeemably biased and unworthy of further consideration or legitimacy."

November 25, 2009

PM Netanyahu announces Israel will impose a 10-month freeze on construction in West Bank settlements in a bid to restart stalled peace talks with the Palestinians.

December 24, 2009

Rabbi Meir Avshalom of Shavei Shomron is killed in a drive-by shooting near his home.

2010

January, 2010

Two airstrikes against weapons tunnels used to smuggle rockets and militants attempting to fire mortars into Israeli are carried out by the Israeli Air Force, killing 3 migrants and wounding another 7. The migrants were members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine.

February 10, 2010 – Tapuah junction stabbing

A Palestinian Authority police officer stabs an Israeli soldier to death.

February 24, 2010 – Murder of Neta Sorek

Israeli woman is stabbed to death by Palestinian terrorists.

March 15, 2010 – Rebuilt Hurva Synagogue Dedicated

The Hurva Synagogue, (Hebrew: בית הכנסת החרבה, translit: Beit ha-Knesset ha-Hurba, lit. "The Ruin Synagogue"), also known as Hurvat Rabbi Yehudah he-Hasid ("Ruin of Rabbi Judah the Pious"), is a historic synagogue located in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem.

142 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Israeli%E2%80%93Palestinian_conflict
The synagogue was founded in the early 18th century by followers of Judah ha-Hasid, but it was destroyed by Muslims a few years later in 1721. The plot lay in ruins for over 140 years and became known as the Ruin, or Hurva. In 1864, the Perushim rebuilt the synagogue, and although officially named the Beis Yaakov Synagogue, it retained its name as the Hurva. It became Jerusalem's main Ashkenazic synagogue, until it too was deliberately destroyed after the withdrawal of the Israeli forces by the Arab Legion during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

After Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967, a number of plans were submitted for the design of a new building. After years of deliberation and indecision, a commemorative arch was erected instead at the site in 1977, itself becoming a prominent landmark of the Jewish Quarter. The plan to rebuild the synagogue in its 19th-century style received approval by the Israeli Government in 2000, and the newly rebuilt synagogue was dedicated on March 15, 2010. The company involved with its reconstruction believes that restoring the synagogue to its former glory will once again allow it to serve as a centre for World Jewry.  

May 31, 2010: Gaza flotilla raid.

On the morning of May 31, 2010, IDF naval forces intercepted six ships attempting to break the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip.

After numerous warnings issued by Israel prior to the action, the Navy requested for the ships to redirect toward Ashdod where they could unload their material which would then be transferred via land crossing to Gaza after undergoing proper security inspections.

When the vessels refused to alter their course, teams of elite naval commandos were tasked with overtracking the ships. During the boarding of the lead ship, the Mavi Marmara, demonstrators onboard attacked the IDF personnel with live fire, light weaponry, knives and clubs. Additionally, two weapons were grabbed from an IDF soldier and used against him.

As a result of the violence, seven soldiers were wounded and nine Turkish "activist" were killed.

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143 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurva_Synagogue
144 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society__Culture/flotillatoc.html
August 31, 2010

Hamas terrorists shoot dead four Israeli civilians near Kiryat Arba, including a pregnant woman.[80][133]
September 2, 2010


December 18, 2010 – Murder of Kristine Luken.

American woman is stabbed to death by Palestinian terrorists. Another woman is severely injured.

2011

March 11, 2011 – Itamar massacre

Two Palestinians infiltrate the town of Itamar and murder five members of the Fogel family in their beds. Among the victims are three young children, including an infant.

March 23, 2011

2011 Jerusalem bus stop bombing. Hamas bombs a bus station in Jerusalem and kills 1 civilian. 39 injured.
April 7, 2011

Hamas school bus attack. Hamas militants bomb an Israeli school bus and kill a teenager.

August 18, 2011

2011 southern Israel cross-border attacks. Egyptian and Palestinian militants attack southern Israel and kill 8 Israelis, including 6 civilians. 40 injured. 5 Egyptian soldiers are also killed.

September, 2011

Palestine Authority moves a resolution in UN for recognition of Palestine statehood, calling it a 'Palestine Spring'.

October 18, 2011 – Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange

The Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange (Hebrew: עסקת שליט‎; Arabic: صفقة شاليط‎) followed an agreement between Israel and Hamas to release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for 1,027 prisoners – mainly Palestinians and Arab-Israelis, though among the prisoners released there was also a Ukrainian prisoner, a Jordanian prisoner, and a Syrian prisoner. 280 of these were sentenced to life in prison for planning and perpetrating various terror attacks against Israeli targets. Hamas military leader Ahmed Jabari was quoted in the Saudi Arabian newspaper Al-Hayat as confirming that the prisoners released as part of the deal were collectively responsible for the killing of 569 Israeli civilians. The agreement came five years and four months after Palestinian militants captured Shalit in southern Israel along the Gaza border.

The deal, brokered by German and Egyptian mediators and coordinated by Bundesnachrichtendienst agent Gerhard Conrad, was signed in Egypt on 11 October 2011. Its first phase was executed on 18 October 2011, with Israel releasing 477 Palestinian prisoners and Hamas transferring Shalit to Cairo. In the second phase, which took place during December 2011, another 550 prisoners were released.

The agreement is the largest prisoner exchange agreement Israel has ever made, given that as part of the agreement Israel agreed to release 1,027 prisoners for one captured Israeli soldier – the highest price Israel has ever paid for a single soldier. Gilad Shalit was also the first captured Israeli soldier to be released alive in 26 years.145

145 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilad_Shalit_prisoner_exchange
November, 2011

Palestine wins membership of UNESCO while UN vote on statehood is put off amid no support from France and UK while US had threatened to veto it.

2012

January 1, 2012

Gaza fires two white-phosphorus-containing mortars into the area governed by the Eshkol Regional Council. The shells landed in an open field and caused no injuries or damage. A complaint about the white phosphorus was subsequently sent to the UN by Israel.


Gaza militants launch over 300 rockets, Grad missiles, and mortar shells into southern Israel, wounding 23 Israeli civilians. Israel retaliates with air strikes on Gazan weapons storage facilities, rocket launching sites, weapon manufacturing facilities, training bases, posts, tunnels and terror operatives, killing 22 militants. 4 Palestinian civilians die during the clashes, though some of their deaths were found to be unrelated to Israeli actions.

March 30, 2012

It was revealed that the Civil Administration, a unit of the IDF, has over the years covertly earmarked 10% of the West Bank for further settlement.

September 21, 2012

September 2012 Egypt-Israel border attack. Militants open fire on Israeli soldiers and civilian workers. 1 soldier is killed.

November 14-21, 2012 – Operation Pillar of Defense

The Israeli Air Force kills Ahmed Jabari, second-in-command of the military wing of Hamas. Israel strikes 1500 sites in Gaza, including rocket launch pads, weapon depots, government facilities and apartment blocks. Gaza officials said 133 Palestinians had been killed in the conflict of whom 79 were militants, 53 civilians and 1 was a policeman and estimated that 840 Palestinians were wounded. Hamas fires over 1,456 rockets at southern Israel, killing 6, including a pregnant woman, and injuring hundreds. Rockets are fired at Jerusalem for the first time and at Tel Aviv for the first time since the first Gulf War. A bus is bombed in Tel Aviv on November 21,
wounding 28 civilians. Israel retaliates by bombing hundreds of military sites in the Gaza Strip.

As Hamas' military commander since 2002 (some authorities state second in command), Jabari was responsible for the planning and execution of countless acts of terrorism against Israelis.

In 1996, he was involved in bombings that killed 59 Israeli citizens; in 1998, he helped execute a terror attack on a school bus in Kfar Darom that killed two Israeli children and, in 2006, Jabari organized a terror squad that infiltrated southern Israel, killed three IDF soldiers and kidnapped Gilad Shalit.

Following his involvement in the October 2011 prisoner exchange with Israel, Jabari became the de-facto leader of Hamas and Israel attempted to work with him behind the scenes to bring calm to the region. Instead, Jabari remained committed to the Hamas agenda of destroying Israel and ordered or permitted a new barrage of rockets to be fired at Israel.

What are Israel's Objectives for Operation Pillar of Defense?

Like other nations, Israel maintains its right to self-defense against threats to its civilian population. According to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, the IDF has four main goals for the current operation: A) To strengthen Israel's military deterrence over the Gaza Strip; B) to inflict serious damage to Hamas' rocket launching network; C) to deliver a painful blow to Hamas and any other terror organization operating in Gaza; and D) to minimize damage to the Israeli home front. Israeli spokesman Mark Regev said "we will act until we can achieve peace and quiet for those Israeli citizens who deserve to live in peace and quiet."
Thousands of reserve troops have been mobilized, but Israelis do not want to initiate a ground operation in Gaza, and have done everything possible to avoid one. The magnitude of the danger to millions of Israelis, however, may leave Israel with no other choice. Israel has said that the operation will end when Hamas stops its rocket fire.\(^{146}\)

**November 29, 2012**

United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19, upgrading Palestine to non-member observer state status in the United Nations, was adopted by the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, the date of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the 65th anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 181(II) on the Future Government of Palestine. Vote: For: 138; Abs.: 41 Against: 9.

Following the successful passage of the 2012 United Nations status resolution which changed Palestine's status at the UN to that of observer state, on 3 January 2013, Abbas signed a presidential decree 1/2013 officially changing the name of the 'Palestinian Authority' to the 'State of Palestine'.\(^{147}\)

**November 30, 2012**

In response to the UN approving the Palestinian UN bid for non-member observer state status, the Israeli government inner cabinet announced that it approves the building of housing units in the E1 area, connecting Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim.

**2012 – Summary**

An annual survey by Shin Bet or Israel Security Agency (ISA) concluded that in 2012, the number of terrorist attacks in the West Bank rose from 320 in 2011 to 578 in 2012, but it was accompanied by a decrease in the number of fatalities. During that same year, 282 attacks were carried out in Jerusalem, compared to 191 in 2011. The increase in attacks is due in part to a 68% rise of attacks using molotov cocktails. However, the number of attacks involving firearms and explosives also grew by 42% – 37 compared to 26 in 2011.

**2013**

**April 1, 2013 – Natural Gas begins to Flow from “Tamar”**

Four years after drilling began in the Tamar offshore field, some 80 km off the Haifa shore, natural gas began flowing Saturday evening from the offshore platforms to Ashdod.

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\(^{146}\) [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/89_amudanan.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/89_amudanan.html)

The gas field's developers, and politicians, hailed this as "a historical day."

The gas is now flowing through pipes to a production rig off the Ashdod shore, and will begin to flow to the onshore storage facility on Sunday.

Use of the natural gas discovered in the Mediterranean Sea in the last few years is expected to assist the Israeli energy market and reduce electricity costs.

Development of the offshore field, which included 5 drilling projects and the laying of two 150-kilometer-long pipelines at sea cost 3.2 billion shekels.

Yitzchak Teshuva, CEO of Delek, said Saturday: "The vision has turned into a reality. Today, we are again emerging from slaver to freedom; from dependence upon foreign energy sources to independence with natural Israeli gas. This is a huge accomplishment for the Israeli market and the beginning of a new era."148

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Saturday night, "This is an important day for the economy of Israel. On the holiday of freedom, we are taking an important step toward independence in the field of energy."

Energy and Water Minister Silvan Shalom called the day "Israel's energy-related Independence Day."

April 14, 2013 – Govt: Israel's Population Grew Tenfold Since 1948

Just in time for Yom Ha'atzma'ut, the Central Bureau of Statistics released data on Israel's population. On the state's 65th anniversary, Israel had over 8 million residents, a nearly ten-fold increase over the number that lived here in 1948.

A total of 8,018,000 people live in the State of Israel on Independence Day 2013, the CBS said. When the state was established on the fifth of the Hebrew month of Iyar in 1948, that number was a mere 806,000. Today, there are 6,042,000 Jews (75% of the country's population) living in Israel today, along with 1,658,000 Muslim and Christian Arabs (20.7% of the population). The country also has an additional 318,000 (4%) residents classified as “other,” including non-Arab Christians and members of other religions.

Israel's population grew by 138,000 since last Yom Ha'atzma'ut, a growth rate of 1.8%. In 2011, it was announced that over 70% of the Jewish population were born in Israel, with more than half second-generation Israelis. In 1948, only 35% were “native Sabras.”

The rise of the metropolitan area has been another important development in Israel over the past decades, the CBS said. In 1948, only one city – Tel Aviv-Jaffa – had more than 100,000 residents. Today, there are six cities with more than 200,000 residents, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa, Rishon Lezion, Ashdod, and Petah Tikvah.149

June 4, 2013 – South African lawmaker: Israel NOT an apartheid state

Reverend Dr. Kenneth Meshoe, an outspoken member of the South Africa Parliament, recently expressed ongoing frustration with accusations that Israel is an apartheid state, calling such claims an insult to what his own nation went through.

Earlier this year, Dr. Meshoe visited San Francisco just around the time that American universities, especially in California, were swarming with anti-Israel propagandists whose new favorite ploy is to label Israel as a practitioner of apartheid against the Arabs of the region.

"As a black South African who lived under apartheid ... in my view, Israel cannot be compared to apartheid in South Africa," Meshoe wrote in the San Francisco Examiner. "Those who make the accusation expose their ignorance of what apartheid really is."

Meshoe explained that under South African apartheid, which was "a legal system of segregation and oppression based on skin color," black people such as himself could not vote, freely travel, or hold high government positions. Furthermore, they were subjected to segregation everywhere from public restrooms to schools to hospitals.
"In my numerous visits to Israel, I did not see any of the above," stated Meshoe. "Black, brown and white Jews and the Arab minority mingle freely in all public places, universities, restaurants, voting stations and public transportation. All people have the right to vote. The Arab minority has political parties, serves in the Israeli parliament (Knesset) and holds positions in government ministries, the police force and the security services. In hospitals, Palestinian patients lie in beds next to Israeli Jews, and doctors and nurses are as likely to be Israeli Arabs as Jews. ...None of the above was legally permissible in apartheid South Africa!"

In short, Dr. Meshoe, who heads the African Christian Democratic Party, said it was "slanderous and deceptive" to make such accusations against Israel as doing so "trivializes the word apartheid, minimizing and belittling the magnitude of the racism and suffering endured by South Africans of color."

In conclusion, he wrote that "Israel is a model of democracy, inclusion and pluralism that can be emulated by many nations, particularly in the Middle East."

It was not the first time Dr. Meshoe had spoken out on this issue. At an international gathering of legislators in Budapest on October 31, 2011, he similarly called those who accuse Israel of apartheid of being "ignorant" at best, and purposely deceitful at worst.150

October 18, 2013 – Hamas Admits Being Behind 'Terror Tunnel'

The so-called “military wing” of Gaza's ruling Hamas terror group, the Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, has admitted that it masterminded the "terror tunnel" that was discovered leading from Gaza into an Israeli kibbutz.

The group has admitted that the tunnel was meant to kidnap Israeli soldiers, reports AFP. ***

Israeli officials last Sunday revealed that IDF soldiers had uncovered a tunnel running from Gaza and extending for 2.5 kilometers (over 1.5 miles) into Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha.

Several days after the discovery of this tunnel, Israeli security forces discovered a second one, believed to have been dug during last November's "Pillar of Defense" counterterrorism operation.

Daily newspaper Yediot Ahronot wrote on Friday that Israel had known for over a year about the terror tunnel that Hamas was digging into its territory, but let Hamas leaders continue to pour resources into it.

"Sometimes, as part of the war of minds, [Israel] lets them invest money, wrack their brains, waste human resources, and only towards the end of the digging, does it hold up a stop sign," the paper's defense correspondent Alex Fishman wrote.

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"This money should have gone to infrastructure, education and health projects."

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