IN THE FACE OF TERRORISM

By Boris Shusteff

At the beginning of the century Israel's future first Chief Rabbi, Rav Abraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook wrote, "Human reason, even at its most sublime, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of ***Eretz Yisrael***; it cannot stir the depth of love for the land that is dormant within our people." On August 20, 1998, when only five hundred days remained till the end of the century, his grandson, Rav Shlomo Ra'anan was brutally murdered in Hebron by an Arab terrorist.He was murdered because he loved his land and wanted to live in the oldest Jewish city on earth. He, like Kook before him, using Martin Buber's words, "demonstrated the uniqueness and eternity of the relationship between the Jewish people and their land."

Terror has hit the Jewish state again. Another world is lost. Another Jew is murdered. Wasn't the Jewish people the first to reject human sacrifice? **So why, then, day after day, do we keep offering human lives on the altar to Yasser Arafat and his murderers?**

The Israelis like to follow America's example. They mimic American songs, American fashions, American fast food. Though not everything America does should be copied, there is something in America's words and deeds that Israel must heed. Israel should learn from America how to care for her own interests. America's bombing of terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan and the subsequent explanations given by American officials should become Israel's guidance in relations with Arafat and his terrorists.

American President Bill Clinton, explaining the necessity of the American military attack against Saudi terrorist Osama bin Ladin's bases in Afghanistan, quoted Bin Ladin himself, who had said, "We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians. They're all targets." It will not hurt for the Israelis to recall that their "peace partner" Yasser Arafat used almost the same words in an interview with Oriana Fallaci in March 1972. When boasting that "it's almost always we who set off bombs in Tel Aviv, in Jerusalem, in Eilat," he was told that that involves civilian casualties. Arafat replied, "Because, civilians or military, they are all equally guilty of wanting to destroy our people. This inevitably hits civilians, but civilians are the first accomplices of the gang that rules Israel."

Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement that, after the Ra'anan murder "he contacted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, demanding that Palestinian security forces arrest the assailant," is more than shameful. He would be advised to repeat the words of General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, that we "must not tolerate such acts, nor accept those nations who would aid or harbor terrorists. We owe it to our citizens. to do all that we can to prevent terrorist actions and to bring those responsible for spreading hate and death to justice."

Israel has a unique opportunity to literally follow Madeline Albright's appeal, who said, on August 20, "Today, the United States is asking every nation to stand publicly against those who perpetrate, finance or otherwise support terrorism. We're asking governments to join us in taking the actions necessary to deter and defeat terrorist acts." Israel can take these actions. It is Arafat and his cohorts that "perpetrate, finance or otherwise support terrorism." Therefore Israel must stop all contact with Arafat and his cronies. She must request from the Palestinian Authority (PA) the return of all the weapons that were transferred to it as a result of the suicidal Oslo agreement. If this request is not honored, the IDF must reenter the territories over which it had relinquished control to the PA and retrieve the weapons by force. Israel must prove with her deeds, as Madeline Albright put it, "that we will not be intimidated and that when our national interests are threatened,. we will respond unilaterally."

To say today that Israel's national interests are threatened is, of course, a gross understatement. The Jewish state's existence itself is in mortal danger. Any additional retreat will place more territory under Arafat's control where he will be able to create his terrorist state. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, Fatah and scores of other murderous groups will feel extremely comfortable in this oasis of terrorism which is even now ready to be established.

Albright said in her appeal that "no country should harbor terrorists. Those are the international rules. And any country. that harbors terrorists opens itself up to the problems that have now been faced by Afghanistan and Sudan." So much more should be said about an attempt to create such a country. It is many times easier to prevent such a country from coming into existence than to fight against it when it is armed to the teeth.

General Shelton said that the American military strike was necessary because, "these bases provide refuge for terrorists, house the infrastructure for their funding. and are used to train terrorists in the tactics and weapons of . terrorism." So what kind of excuses can be found against retaking the territories that provide refuge for Palestinian terrorists, those that house the infrastructure for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, that are used to train terrorists, and where hatred against Israel and the Jews is nourished among kindergartners?

It is General Shelton and not the "right wing" Israeli Prime-Minister who demanded that "the international community must not. accept those nations who would aid or harbor terrorists. We owe it to our citizens and to the citizens of all law-abiding nations to do all that we can to prevent terrorist actions and to bring those responsible for spreading hate and death to justice." Shelton's description is applicable verbatim to the situation that exists between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. If the international community must not accept those nations, it is even more urgent that it prevent these nations from being created. It is preposterous to reward the Palestinian Arabs with a second state "for spreading hate and death."

American Secretary of Defense William Cohen said that "the only motivation driving" American action "was absolute obligation to protect the American people from terrorist activities." How dare the Jewish state run away from its absolute obligation to protect the Jewish people from arch-terrorist Arafat and his PLO? Israel must learn the bitter lesson taught to America. There was a time when the United States wanted to see Osama bin Ladin as her ally. Fighting against former Soviet Union in Afghanistan bin Ladin did not shun away from America's help. It took too long for the biggest democracy in the world to realize that bin Ladin's hatred towards it was not calmed by America's money and weapons transferred to him. It did not happen overnight that bin Ladin vowed "to send Americans home in coffins." His extremist position was well known before, but political considerations took precedence.

Osama bin Ladin's safe haven is far away from the American continent. Nevertheless, America feels threatened by his actions. Israel's situation is a thousand times more precarious. Yasser Arafat and PLO are here, in the closest possible proximity. The second Palestinian-state-ready-to-be breathes in the face of the Jewish state preparing together with its Arab brethren to suffocate Israel. Enough appeasement and self-humiliation. It is impossible to jump over the rift in several jumps. Netanyahu stated on August 20, 1998 "that we are committed to the Oslo Accords with all their faults." He also said that the gaps between Israel and PA "have been reduced." It is hard to believe that he, the follower of Zeev Jabotinsky, does not know that the creation of the second Palestinian state is a herald of the imminent demise of the Jewish state.

Enough! Enough deceiving ourselves. The Arab’s political position is very clear cut. It is deeply rooted in Islam, and demands the expulsion of Jews and Christians from Arab lands. The Jewish supporters of the second Palestinian state should stop pleasing themselves with the thought that the Jewish state in the 1967 borders is acceptable to the Arabs. **There is no Israel on Arab mental [or printed] maps.** To them, all of ***Eretz Yisrael*** is Arabia. That means that the gap between Israel and the Arabs is the Jewish state itself. The only way to make this gap smaller is to make Israel smaller, i.e. to surrender more land of ***Eretz Yisrael*** to the Palestinian Arabs. This is the only logical way to interpret Netanyahu’s words. His political equilibrium deserves to be respected but it cannot last forever. Sooner or later in order to preserve the Jewish state he will need to act.

Using Albright’s words we can say that "inaction would be an invitation to further horror." Perhaps Netanyahu believes that the agreement he intended to sign will not end up in redeployment of the IDF in Yesha since the PA will not fulfill their part of the obligations. However this position is fraught with insurmountable danger. **Every day that Israel gives the impression that she is ready to part with even a single inch of her land she raises Arab expectations to get rid of the Jewish state altogether. Every day that passes without Israel declaring to the world that she spreads her sovereignty to all the lands of Yesha brings the Jewish state closer to disaster. If Israel wants to survive, she must reject the idea of the second Palestinian state once and for all**. [8/22/98]

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