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claim” to the land, but then is not the Arab claim also based on history and mutual living on the land for generations?

### Remembering The Lessons Of History

To a Jew who has learned the history of the destruction of the Temples, and the rabbinic sources illuminating that history, particularly the notion that *sinat hinam*, baseless hatred among Jews, caused the destruction (cf, *Yoma* 9b, *Gittin* 55b-56a), it is traumatic to witness the spread of Jewish fanaticism and internecine strife. Both to the historians and the rabbis, just such fanatic behavior was the ultimate cause of the destruction, not the external forces. The possibility of civil war among Jews is more of a threat to Israel’s existence than all the Arab plots in the world. I want Israel to be pluralistic and strongly defend itself against extremist internal forces.

What are the facts concerning the settlements? The actual number of Jews living in the West Bank is not agreed upon, but it hovers between 120-140,000. The overwhelming majority of these live in a few densely populated areas, which will stay under Israeli sovereignty, even after a permanent agreement. The “problem of settlements” apply to about 30,000 Jews in sporadic settlements throughout the West Bank. If the settlers are really interested in peace, they should present suggestions to resolve their problems. Israel has peace with Egypt, peace with Jordan, and is pursuing peace with Syria. It makes absolutely no sense to have peace with all of our neighbors surrounding us, and not with those Arabs living in closest proximity to Israel!

### Wherein Lies Immorality?

Another claim of the settlers, and the organizations which are protesting the government’s actions, is that they are merely using the tools of civil disobedience, protesting an immoral law. A law is immoral if it violates some basic attribute of justice. But in this case, there is no injustice being perpetrated against the settlers. Rather, the settlers are the ones who themselves are advocating rule over others, which, without consent of the governed, is immoral. The government has not in any way implied that settlers would be removed against their wills, or hurt in any way by the agreements reached with the Palestinians. Indeed, the government has always maintained that it will safeguard the rights and civil status of the settlers in the territories, even though that promise makes the negotiations more difficult. What injustice is done!? This is pure civil disruption in order to further a political viewpoint which denies the injustices done to the Arab population because their were denied self-rule.

What do the settlers suggest to do? They are putting forth no plans of action. They are acting as if there is no problem with returning to Israel military rule all of the Palestinian people. That rule is immoral, not against the Palestinians alone, but first and foremost against our own young Jewish men and women who have to grow up and spend most of their adult lives as “rulers” of others who do not agree to their rule. Is this their solution?

Making peace is difficult, but it is the only moral and Jewish way to proceed. □

## Can a leopard change its spots?

**Shlomo Riskin**

Why would a Rabbi who always considered himself a “liberal”, who made *aliyah* to the “West Bank” Judean city of Efrat largely because it was considered within the national consensus and had been initially approved by the Labor Government and who was always an outspoken critic of “occupation” and a vocal defender of Palestinian civil rights, suddenly become so opposed to the “Oslo II” phase of the “Peace Process” that he gets arrested for demonstrating on “Dagan Hill” and activates a hunger strike of 34 MKs, army generals and Rabbis in front of the Prime Minister’s office?

### Security Issue

Unquestionably I yearn for peace not only because it is a supreme Jewish value, a name of the Almighty God Himself, and the goal of our Messianic aspirations but also because my son is now serving in an elite army unit up North and I have already lost four beloved students to the ravages of war. I likewise believe in and have written about the halakhic possibility of surrendering land for peace—as long as the result will be *pikuakh nefesh*, the saving of human lives. Hence I should be one of the defenders of Oslo and not one of its activist detractors. And the truth is that had I seen even the slightest degree of genuine peace emerging from the Declaration of Principles (signed in Washington, September 13, 1993), I would certainly be a Rabin supporter.

Unfortunately the exact opposite is the case. Despite the fact that we handed over Jericho and Gaza in accordance with our commitment:

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► The Palestinian Charter vowing our destruction has still not been revoked.

► Terrorism has only increased, with more than 150 Israelis—within and without the Green Line—having been murdered since Oslo I.

► Hamas and Islamic Jihad members continue to walk about Gaza with arms (at least 2,000 but as many as 40,000 according to several sources) despite Arafat's commitment to disarm them by May 11.

► Gaza and Jericho has become safe havens for terrorists, to such an extent that the present Chief of Staff Shachak declared that if the IDF leaves the Arab cities, we will be even more vulnerable to terrorist attacks (*Ha'aretz* Friday Aug. 25). For this reason, past Chief of Staff, Ehud Barak, refused to ratify Oslo II at a Cabinet meeting the first week of August, and his predecessor, Dan Shomron, is vocally opposed to Oslo II and is an active member of the Third Way opposition political movement.

► Arafat continues to preach in Arabic calling for Jihad and praising the suicide bombers. He compares his agreement with Israel to the Koreish treaty entered into by Mohammed—which was nullified as soon as Islam had the upper hand. He constantly refers to the stages plan which he first disclosed in 1974: first remove Israelis from the West Bank, then from Jerusalem and finally from Tel Aviv (cassettes translated by Dan Shifan and authenticated even by Arafat himself).

► Arafat takes the smallest of steps in pursuing Hamas terrorists, having been asked seven times by Israel to extradite known murderers of Israelis who have found asylum in Gaza and Jericho—and has constantly refused to do so.

## Right Of Minority

The agreement known as Oslo II provides for the IDF pull-out from seven cities and the establishment of a Palestinian Police force in Palestinian villages throughout Judea, Samaria and Gaza with the obvious concurrent security dangers. It also stipulates that "the powers and responsibilities relating to territory (in area C—the 'government lands' between and surrounding the various settlements in Judea and Samaria) be *transferred gradually* to Palestinian jurisdiction that will cover the West Bank and Gaza Strip territory". This means that any kind of territorial contiguity uniting the various settlements with each other and joining the vast majority of the settlements to the State of Israel becomes an impossibility.

The only possible result of such a coding of lands is that virtually all of the settlements of Judea, Samaria and Gaza—160,000 Israeli citizens, and if we include East

Jerusalem beyond the "Green Line" another 150,000—become isolated islands within a great sea of a Palestinian authority or, more likely, a Palestinian state. Unfortunately, this necessitates the steady demise of these cities, towns and villages over the next number of years.

Tragically, the Israeli government is keeping this reality a secret. During the past two years there has been virtually no contact between the Prime Minister and the various settler communities; instead of communication, there has only been denigration and delegitimation—whereby we have been called "propellers and parasites, a burden and drain on the security forces of the State". Indeed, the Prime Minister publicly stated on at least two occasions that he takes responsibility for the security of 97% of the citizenry of Israel—excluding the 3% settler community. Is it any wonder that the media describes the Israeli victim of a terrorist attack as a "citizen" if he lives within the Green Line, and as a *mitnachel* (settler) if he lives beyond the Green Line?

Now it must be remembered that the overwhelming majority of "settlers" came at the urging and instigation of the various governments of Israel. Indeed, Yitzhak Rabin himself, then Minister of Defense, came to my former synagogue, the Lincoln Square Synagogue, in 1981, and gave an impassioned plea for the majority of the congregation to join their Rav and emigrate to Efrat, Israel. Does the government of Israel not have a fundamental responsibility to protect all of its citizens, wherever they may be living? Are we to be kept in a psychological limbo, merely because we heeded the patriotic call of Zion to "build and be built by the land"?

What kind of Israeli and universal outcry would legitimately accompany the threat of uprooting innocent Arabs from their land and their homes? Does not the specter of uprooting innocent Israelis from their land and their homes—even if they be Yuppie Israelis—run counter to the fundamental guarantee of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which a democratic society owes its citizenry?

## Democracy On The Line

Perhaps the most serious flaw in the present government is its almost cynical disregard for proper democratic procedure. Democracy includes adhering to the will of the majority and protecting the rights of the minority. According to two different opinion polls reported by *Maariv* the first week of August (*before* the terrorist attack on the Ramat Eshkol, Jerusalem bus), more than 70% of the Israeli population opposes the ratification of Oslo II unless there first be taken a national referendum. After all, we are dealing with fateful changes in the map

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and security of the State of Israel—changes such as recognizing the PLO, setting the stage for a PLO state and relinquishing territories to a much greater extent than had been suggested by the Allon Plan. It is only logical to demand that such far-reaching steps require a consensus of national agreement. Not only does this government—which today depends largely on Arab votes for a parliamentary majority—refuse to hear of early elections or a referendum; this government even refused to bring Oslo II for a vote in Knesset. Absurdly enough, the PLO did understand the necessity of bringing Oslo II before its Plenum!

As I write these lines, thousands of Israelis from all walks of life and ideology have visited 34 of us—MKs, IDF leaders and rabbis—on a hunger strike outside of the Prime Minister's office as an expression of our opposition to Oslo II. The Government has done everything to prevent visitors to our tent, and the Minister of Environment has even declared our strike illegal. In this and in many other ways, the people of Israel are demonstrating their anger against a government which refuses to take the voice of its citizenry—concerning life-and-death, to-be-or-not-to-be issues—with the seriousness it deserves. Only a government by the people and for the people deserves to survive. □

## Not what you say, but how you say it

David Raab

We American Jews have a tendency to view particular developments in Israel through the prism of our American experience. As knowledgeable as many of us may be, because we do not actually live there, we often cannot fully appreciate the differences in values, lifestyles, political structure, inter-group relations, and other facets of Israeli life that lead to the dynamics and behaviors that we observe. We thus often oversimplify, mischaracterize, miscategorize and overreact to what we see.

Thus, when we comment on—and certainly when we criticize—certain actions, we must do so with a degree of reticence and circumspection, seeking to be constructive rather than combative. This is especially true when we address issues fundamental to the nature of the Jewish State. And it is even more so, when we discuss the role

of religion in the State, when we sometimes treat Israelis as abstract objects who ought to live like this or live like that and try to impose our belief structure on them. If we really would like to have an impact on the religious character of Israel, we must do so from within, not from without, by face-to-face dialogue and example, not through analyses and debate in English-language publications in America.

It is within this spirit that we, here, must approach the recent ruling by a group of prominent Israeli rabbis calling on soldiers to refuse to obey orders to redeploy during the upcoming implementation of the Interim Agreement with the PLO. Although the episode might now have been eclipsed by more recent events, it is important to analyze it carefully as it touches on unresolved, underlying systemic issues regarding the proper role of religion and religious leaders in the Israeli political debate. These issues are likely to resurface not only in the context of the peace process—possibly under even more exacerbating circumstances—but as the nation begins to focus increasingly on definitional issues regarding the nature of Israel than on existential ones as it has in the last 50 years.

### The Propriety Of Rabbinic Rulings

I believe that the rabbis had every right to rule as they did. These rabbis are Zionists who support the State of Israel and who understand the importance of security and military service, as well as the full import of disobeying orders. They have served their country and believe that they are continuing to do so. They made an informed ruling with an understanding of the full ramifications. They are certainly entitled to rule as they see fit in the halakhic and moral domains.

Furthermore, conscientious objection is not a new concept in Israel. Indeed, there were tens of conscientious objectors during the Lebanon action in 1983 with at least one current government minister reportedly calling for such objection. A call to *shev v'al ta'aseh* [inaction] cannot be deemed treason. (At the same time, the objector must be prepared to suffer the full consequence of his inaction.)

### Halakhah Has Primacy

As an Orthodox Jew, I also believe that halakhah has primacy over military orders, especially in a Jewish state. For if our own army does not accommodate halakhah, what exactly is it that we are fighting for? Fortunately, between the accommodations that the Israel Defense Forces does make and that the halakhah itself does provide, observant Jews are able to serve fully and with

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