

# DAVID & GOLIATH

The explosive inside story of media bias  
in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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# CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction . . . . .                         | 1   |
| 1. The Photo That Started It All . . . . .     | 11  |
| 2. David & Goliath . . . . .                   | 33  |
| 3. One Man’s Terrorist . . . . .               | 73  |
| 4. “Massacre” in Jenin . . . . .               | 107 |
| 5. The CNN Shift . . . . .                     | 131 |
| 6. Intimidation? What Intimidation?! . . . . . | 151 |
| 7. Fauxtography: Lebanon and Beyond . . . . .  | 195 |
| 8. Driving the Wedge . . . . .                 | 231 |
| 9. Gaza War & “Excessive Force” . . . . .      | 269 |
| 10. The Right to Security . . . . .            | 305 |
| 11. The Right to Exist . . . . .               | 355 |
| Epilogue: The Peace Process . . . . .          | 419 |
| Photos . . . . .                               | 433 |
| Acknowledgments . . . . .                      | 457 |
| Disclaimers . . . . .                          | 461 |
| Index . . . . .                                | 463 |

# — 8 —

## DRIVING THE WEDGE

*Two Jewish men are sitting on a park bench. One is reading a newspaper with a headline proclaiming: “Jews Exert World Dominance.” The other looks at him disapprovingly and says, “Why are you reading that trash?”*

*The first man replies: “Most newspapers are filled with depressing reports of problems in Israel, anti-Semitism, and all kinds of troubles facing the Jewish people. This paper, on the other hand, gives me the good feeling that Jews have all the money and power and control the world!”*

“Jews control the world” is an ancient canard; its 21<sup>st</sup> century version is the idea that “agent Israel” and its politically powerful allies influence the U.S. government to engage in policies that contradict America’s best interests. Taki Theodoracopulos, a columnist for Britain’s *Spectator* for over 30 years, charged that “the way to Uncle Sam’s heart runs through Tel Aviv.”<sup>1</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* quoted one U.S. politician referring to Capitol Hill as “the little Knesset,”<sup>2</sup> while another described it as “Israel’s occupied territory.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, *Time* magazine published this alarmist headline: “The Pro-Israel Lobby’s Plan to Storm Congress.”<sup>4</sup>

The result of this contention – that Israel controls the superpower America – effectively drives a wedge between the U.S. and Israel. And that’s no small matter. Healthy American-Israeli relations are crucial to Israel’s survival, because in the face of anti-Israel attacks – whether in the form of U.N. condemnations or media outrage – the United States serves as a buffer to blunt that criticism. Thus by undermining the relationship between Israel and the U.S. – its most important and powerful ally – Israel loses a key advocate in support of its security actions, and ultimately weakens its ability to thrive and survive.

The myth that Israel exerts a highly-disproportionate influence has been floating around the diplomatic backwaters for years, but no one could have predicted the wave of publicity that surrounded the 2007 publication of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. This tome by Professors Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer not only casts Israel as a subversive foreign policy influence, but argues that America’s support for Israel is the root cause of global instability and Islamic animosity. Their theory: “Israel gets a free hand with the Palestinians, and the United States does most of the fighting, dying, rebuilding and paying.”<sup>5</sup>

With its conspiratorial tone and flavor, *The Israel Lobby* comes across as an updated *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the minutes of fictitious “secret meetings” in which Jewish leaders conspire to rule the world. Not surprisingly, *The Israel Lobby* has been applauded by radical Islamic groups and racists like David Duke, who praised the authors for “validating every major point I have been making.”<sup>6</sup>

But the biggest boost came from the mainstream media, which elevated *The Israel Lobby* to cover-story status – discussed ad nauseam in newspapers, magazines and talk shows. Which makes one wonder: If the all-powerful “Israel Lobby” controls the media, how does that explain the media’s universal coverage of *The Israel Lobby*?<sup>7</sup>

One way *The Israel Lobby* assailed Israel’s legitimacy was the contention that the American invasion of Iraq was really “Israel’s war.” As described in the *New York Times*: “A cadre of pro-Zionist zealots... has long schemed to make the Middle East safer for Israel by uprooting the hostile

regime of Saddam Hussein. They have finally succeeded, the theory goes, in pushing their agenda up to the desk of a gullible president."<sup>8</sup>

What, pray tell, might have been Israel's reason for favoring an attack on Iraq? Perhaps it was delayed revenge for the dozens of unprovoked Scud missiles that Saddam launched against Israel during the 1991 Gulf War. Or maybe the Iraq war was a diversion enabling Israel to "implement its long-cherished dream of expelling all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza" – a baseless theory that appeared in one of America's largest "mainstream" newspapers, the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>9</sup>

With popular support for the war wavering, CNN and others reported Congressman Jim Moran's declaration that there would have been no invasion "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq."<sup>10</sup> And in a *New York Times* op-ed, Tony Judt described how "prominent Israeli leaders and their American supporters pressed very hard for the invasion of Iraq."<sup>11</sup>

All this sounds eerily similar to the 1930s, when Charles Lindbergh publicly blamed the Jews for pushing America into a "pointless war" with Germany.<sup>12</sup>

Walt, Mearsheimer and their media compatriots could not have been more wrong. In the months leading up to the Iraq war, Israeli leaders specifically discouraged the U.S. from attacking, fearing (quite correctly, it turns out) that American troops would get bogged down in Iraq and the U.S. would never move on to dealing with the far more critical threat of Iran. Indeed, the *Washington Post* reported in 2002 how "Israeli officials are redoubling efforts to warn the Bush administration that Iran poses a greater threat than the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein."<sup>13</sup> In other words, it wasn't Israel that persuaded the American administration of the war's necessity, but rather the opposite: the U.S. enlisted Israel by arguing that American forces would be better positioned to deal with Iran once it had disposed of Saddam.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of the reality, mainstream journalists continue to claim that Israel has America in its pocket. Georgie Ann Geyer's syndicated column – printed in the *Chicago Tribune*, *San Diego Union-Tribune* and

other American dailies – quoted the Israeli prime minister as telling his cabinet: “Don’t worry about American objections to our actions, I control America.”<sup>15</sup> When challenged to back up the quote, Geyer attributed its source to “anonymous individuals.” That didn’t quite meet journalistic standards, and Geyer was forced to admit that the “quote” originated in a press release from a pro-Hamas group, Islamic Association for Palestine – and was pure fabrication.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that media paranoia sees a sinister pro-Israel lobby lurking in every corner. When Jewish boxer Dmitriy Salita arrived in England to fight for the world welterweight title, London’s *Sunday Times* wrote that Salita is “ready for the opportunity of his life, buoyed by the good wishes of the New York fight crowd, the Jewish lobby and all those touched by his struggle and his quiet, serious demeanour.”<sup>17</sup>

When the U.S. Congress voted to tighten sanctions against Iran, Anne Flaherty of Associated Press reported that “nervousness about Tehran’s intentions in the region” is “a sentiment fueled by the pro-Israeli lobby whose influence reaches across party lines.”<sup>18</sup> Even as Congress was voicing legitimate concerns about the Iranian threat to America, AP editorialized it as the narrow worry of the “pro-Israeli lobby.”<sup>19</sup>

In 2011, Bibi Netanyahu’s address to a joint session of Congress received nearly three dozen standing ovations. Yet the *New York Times* maligned the huge bipartisan support as due – not to American officials sharing Netanyahu’s vision – but rather because of a powerful Jewish lobby controlling them: “With elections coming up next year, lawmakers appeared eager to demonstrate their support for Israel as part of an effort to secure backing from one of American politics’ most powerful constituencies, American Jews.”<sup>20</sup>

This absurd upending of the truth reminds me of the time that Charlie Chaplain entered a Charlie Chaplain look-alike contest – and failed even to make the finals.<sup>21</sup>

## **Weapons and Aid**

Here’s a current events question: When American and Israeli leaders

got into a spat regarding construction in Jerusalem, who called it an “enjoyable new experience to be able to look on as the Israelis argued with their most important ally”?

1. Khaled Mashal – Chairman of Hamas
2. Hasan Nasrallah – Secretary General of Hezbollah
3. Jeremy Bowen – Mideast Editor of BBC
4. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – President of Iran
5. Amr Moussa – Secretary General of the Arab League

The answer may (or may not) surprise you. The one who derives such satisfaction from U.S.-Israeli tensions is BBC’s Mideast Editor, Jeremy Bowen.<sup>22</sup>

When it comes to driving a wedge between the U.S. and Israel, a perennial media favorite is the incident of the *USS Liberty*, an American surveillance ship that operated off the coast of Gaza during the 1967 Six Day War. In the heat of battle, Israel misidentified the *Liberty* as an Egyptian warship and attacked, leaving 34 crewmen dead. When the tragic error was discovered, Israel immediately informed the Americans, apologized and paid compensation to the victims’ families.<sup>23</sup> No diplomatic riff ensued. Indeed, the United States – fearing that a Soviet plane had attacked – was actually relieved to discover that the incident involved its ally Israel.<sup>24</sup>

Yet for over 40 years, Israel’s detractors have exploited this episode to portray Israel as an enemy that intentionally kills Americans. Never mind the fact that 10 official U.S. inquiries concluded that the *Liberty* strike was an accident. Conspiratorial rantings that the attack was “deliberate” promise far better ratings, which the media regularly regurgitates<sup>25</sup> every few years with the publication of yet another anti-Israel tome – under titles such as *How the Bombing of the USS Liberty Nearly Caused World War III*.<sup>26</sup> Within one week of the release of *Body of Secrets*, an exposé on U.S. spy activity, author James Bamford was given a forum to slander Israel for the *Liberty* incident on National Public Radio,<sup>27</sup> Salon.com<sup>28</sup> and CNN<sup>29</sup> – propelling his screed to number four on the *New York Times*’ Best Sellers list.<sup>30</sup>

Could one imagine the sensationalistic smear of an “Apollo moon landing hoax” being glorified this way in the mainstream American media? Yet slowly but surely, anti-Israel canards are used to chip away at the core of American support for Israel – further isolating Israel in the international community.

Another method the media uses to undermine the U.S.-Israel relationship is to repeatedly emphasize the use of American weaponry in Israeli security measures, the implication being that Israel is abusing American aid. Muslim leader Al-Haaj Ghazi Khankan declared on ABC News that “U.S.-made F-16s and helicopters that shoot rockets are being used by the Israelis to kill more Palestinians.”<sup>31</sup> Eric Margolis of the *Toronto Sun* wrote of how “the F-16’s, helicopter gunships, and self-propelled heavy artillery raining death on Gaza come from the US courtesy of [the] American taxpayer.”<sup>32</sup> A *New York Times* report on a search for terror suspects noted the seemingly unnecessary detail that “Israeli forces [were] brandishing American-made M-16 rifles,” and described an air raid where “Israel used an American-made F-16 warplane.”<sup>33</sup> And in an obvious attempt to outrage Americans, Reuters snidely reported that the U.S. “gives Israel about \$2 billion a year in weaponry used to kill Palestinians.”<sup>34</sup>

Another penchant of the media is to overstate the scope of U.S. foreign aid to Israel, in an attempt to portray Israel as a burdensome drain on the American economy. One article in the *Christian Science Monitor* claimed that Uncle Sam has spent twice as much money backing Israel – “in its drawn-out, violent dispute with the Palestinians” – than the hundreds of billions of dollars America spent fighting in Vietnam.<sup>35</sup>

The *Monitor* arrived at these stratospheric figures by including U.S. foreign aid to Egypt (cited as \$117 billion) and Jordan (\$22 billion) as “part of the total package of support for Israel.” The *Monitor* also tagged Israel with the bill for rising oil prices (cost: \$450 billion), and a U.S. economic recession (cost: \$420 billion). On top of this, claimed the *Monitor*, support for Israel has somehow cost America the loss of 195,000 jobs. Even private charitable donations aren’t spared the *Monitor’s* poison pen; they too constitute a “net drain” on the American economy.

Just to cover its bases, the *Monitor* “balanced” these overblown claims with one lukewarm sentence: “Many Americans would probably say it is money well spent to support a beleaguered [sic] democracy of some strategic interest.”

“A beleaguered democracy of some strategic interest”? That line put me over the edge and I fired off an email communiqué to my subscribers.<sup>36</sup> Consider the facts: Israel is America’s most trusted and reliable ally in the Middle East, the sole democracy in a region dominated by authoritarian and military regimes. The New York-based organization Freedom House notes that while the trend toward democracy is growing in most regions of the world, these prospects remain bleakest in the Middle East – where Israel is the only country ranked as “free.”<sup>37</sup> The U.S. spends untold billions disseminating the ideals of democracy around the world; in Israel, these values come gratis – what has been called “a strategic bonanza for the United States at bargain prices.”<sup>38</sup>

These shared values gain expression at the United Nations, where America and Israel vote in concert 88 percent of the time; by contrast, other Mideast “allies” like Egypt and Saudi Arabia vote with the U.S. 7 percent and 8 percent of the time, respectively. In fact, U.S. State Department figures show that Israel votes with the United States not only more than any Arab or Islamic country, but also more than any other country in the world – outpacing major U.S. allies like Great Britain, France and Canada.<sup>39</sup>

Yet despite Israel’s loyalty and support, the media continues to push the idea of cutting aid to Israel, as expressed in a readers’ poll on the homepage of Toronto’s *Globe and Mail* which offered a simple “yes” or “no” vote: “Should all financial and political aid to Israel be cut off until a just peace with the Palestinians is in place?”<sup>40</sup> And in the *New York Times*, the ever-critical Roger Cohen flatly observed: “It does not make sense for America to bankroll Israeli policies that undermine U.S. strategic objectives.”<sup>41</sup>

On C-Span, former CIA staffer Michael Scheuer advocated violence against Jews – suggesting that one way to “dissuade” terrorists from attacking the United States is to “persuade them to focus their anger” on Israel instead. On cue, C-Span then broadcast a call from a viewer who

rained invective on Israel for having “jewed us into Iraq.” C-SPAN host Bill Scanlan made no effort to upbraid the caller, but rather calmly asked Scheuer for “any comments.” This was Scheuer’s entrée to let it all out:

One of the big things we have not been able to discuss for the past 30 years is the Israelis. Whether we want to be involved in fighting Israel’s wars in the future is something that Americans should be able to talk about... They may want to see their kids killed in Iraq or Yemen or somewhere else to defend Israel. But the question is: We need to talk about it.

Ultimately Israel is a country that is of no particular worth to the United States. Strategically, they have no resources we need. Their manpower is minimal. Their association with us is a negative for the United States. Now that’s a fact..<sup>42</sup>

So despite the fact that Israel is America’s most stable ally in an otherwise unstable region, Israel as a “strategic negative” remains a popular media notion. The *New York Times* profiled an article by Anthony H. Cordesman entitled, “Israel as a Strategic Liability?,”<sup>43</sup> and a headline on MSNBC.com ominously proposed: “Israel Turning Into a ‘Burden’ on U.S.?”<sup>44</sup>

### **America in the Arab World**

If journalists are so interested in how much value America gets for its dollars, they might want to explore what “strategic value” is derived from America’s \$2 billion annual aid to Egypt. The government-sponsored Egyptian media is filled with loathing of America; the editor of *Al-Akhabar* wrote that America “has become a synonym for oppression and for abnegation of justice.”<sup>45</sup> Writing in the same Egyptian government daily, columnist Mahmoud Abd Al-Mun’im Murad denounced America as an enemy whose primary goal is to impose “hegemony on the world, primarily on the Middle East and the Arab world,”<sup>46</sup> and suggested that American

landmarks like the Statue of Liberty “must be destroyed.”<sup>47</sup>

Exactly how much U.S. aid money is *that* worth?

This type of America-bashing is rife throughout the Arab world. The Saudi government daily, *Al-Riyadh*, has called for the establishment of an international court to examine America’s “war crimes, plundering, coups, what American intelligence did with the drug barons, the policy of abductions and murder, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the claims still pending regarding the black slave trade, and the deliberate annihilation of the Indians.”<sup>48</sup> That’s quite a mouthful given that the United States, through oil imports, pours about \$10 billion annually into Saudi coffers, while supplying the Saudis with some of the world’s most advanced weaponry including F-15 combat planes, M1A2 battle tanks and the Patriot air defense system.<sup>49</sup>

Here’s what the U.S. gets back in return: Fifteen of the September 11 hijackers were Saudi nationals, and the Council on Foreign Relations reported that “for years, individuals and charities based in Saudi Arabia have been the most important source of funds for al-Qaeda; and for years, Saudi officials have turned a blind eye to this problem.”<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, as the media exaggerates the gap between American and Israeli interests, it downplays the much larger gulf between American and Palestinian interests. When Palestinian leaders spoke of “the shedding of Palestinian blood, thanks to the blind military machine and international protection,”<sup>51</sup> an Associated Press report deleted the rest of the tirade – an anti-American slur about “influential and hegemonistic powers in the international community” – thus guaranteeing that such Palestinian hate speech never reached U.S. newspapers.<sup>52</sup>

Remember when Palestinians danced in the streets and handed out candies to celebrate the September 11 attacks?<sup>53</sup> That sentiment is reflected in public opinion polls showing that 65 percent of Palestinians support al-Qaeda actions against America and Europe,<sup>54</sup> and a 2009 Pew Research Center survey that showed unwavering Palestinian support for Osama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.<sup>55</sup>

On the anniversary of 9-11, the Palestinian Authority daily, *Al-Hayat*

*Al-Jadida*, published a cartoon of a smiling bin Laden, making the “V” for victory sign with two fingers in the shape of the burning Twin Towers.<sup>56</sup> On Palestinian Authority TV, former Palestinian cabinet minister Abu Ali Shahin blessed al-Qaeda with success, saying: “We are fighting the Americans and hate the Americans more than you.”<sup>57</sup> PA legislator Nahed Munir Alrayis has threatened “suicide attacks against the United States,” while former Hamas chief Abdel Azziz al-Rantissi (mercifully terminated by Israel) proudly declared that “America declared war on God... and God declared war on America.”<sup>58</sup>

In 2011, in a direct affront to American honor, Palestinians celebrating the U.N. statehood bid paraded with posters depicting President Obama as an ape.<sup>59</sup> When American officials made a celebratory visit to the West Bank in honor of Palestinians who graduated from American-funded education programs, Palestinian protesters blocked their vehicle, spewed English-language expletives, and hurled shoes – a deeply insulting gesture in Arab culture.<sup>60</sup> Adli Sadeq, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Palestinian Authority, wrote that the U.S. President is “the head of the snake of the American oppression,” and opined that “America is sinking deeper and deeper in a putrid swamp, and will extricate itself from it only as a defeated, stinking loser.”<sup>61</sup> Imagine the media outcry if an Israeli government official had even made a whiff of such a suggestion.

Yet despite the anti-Americanism that pervades Palestinian society, Western readers still open their newspaper to find headlines like: “Bush Unveils Security Aid for Palestinian Ally.”<sup>62</sup> Are these the same “Palestinian allies” who regularly burn the American flag at political rallies? The same “Palestinian allies” who murdered the U.S. ambassador to Sudan?<sup>63</sup> The same “Palestinian allies” who threatened to “mercilessly strike” American targets after the U.S. vetoed a United Nations resolution condemning Israel?<sup>64</sup> The same “Palestinian allies” who sponsor sermons like this from Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa mosque:

Iraq and Baghdad are being subjected to a savage attack by the most arrogant, cruelest and strongest country in the world today

– the U.S.... The U.S. came [to the Middle East] under the pretext that it is fighting evil and spreading democracy and freedom. But everyone knows that the U.S. heads the list of evildoers in the world. There is no place left against whose citizens the U.S. has not fought, and it has already murdered millions.<sup>65</sup>

Was any of this reported in your local media? Of course not. Doing so would shatter the narrative of Palestinian underdogs deserving of sympathy.

Worse than ignoring this blatant anti-Americanism, the media proactively covers it up. When Palestinians blew up a U.S. diplomatic convoy in Gaza – en route to interview Palestinian students for scholarships at American universities, killing three Americans – the *Washington Post* quoted a Palestinian condemnation of “this ugly crime targeting American observers as they were on a mission for security and peace.”<sup>66</sup> Yet while this “remorse and conciliation” was fed to the Western media, the official Palestinian Authority newspaper was singing a different tune: “Perhaps American citizens are so naive to believe the Israeli accusations against us, but... we know that the crime against the American citizens is an Israeli plot masterminded by the minds in the Mossad.”<sup>67</sup>

In another cover-up, the *Los Angeles Times* printed the lies of a Palestinian spokesman that “ Hamas has never supported attacks on Westerners, as even our harshest critics will concede.”<sup>68</sup> The *Times* let this go to print despite the fact that – since “renouncing violence” in the Oslo Accords of 1993 – Palestinians have murdered more than 50 American citizens in terror attacks.<sup>69</sup>

When Hamas leader Khaled Mashal appeared on the *Charlie Rose Show*, he put on a moderate face for the Western audience: “We don’t have a problem whatsoever with the United States or with American interests.”<sup>70</sup> Rose did not challenge Mashal’s supposed love of America, ignoring his previous harsh statements such as: “Our battle is with two sides, one of them is the strongest power in the world, the United States, and the second is the strongest power in the region [Israel]... By God we will defeat

both the United States and Israel.”<sup>71</sup>

The United States gives hundreds of millions of dollars annually in foreign aid to the Palestinian Authority. So how was this money spent? For starters, there’s the \$22 million annual allowance to Yasser Arafat’s widow, Suha, guaranteed for lifetime.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, according to senior Palestinian security officer Abu Yousuf, American-run programs to train Palestinian security forces have been instrumental in the “success” of terror attacks: “I do not think that the operations of the Palestinian resistance would have been so successful, and would have killed more than one thousand Israelis since 2000, and defeated the Israelis in Gaza without these [American] trainings.”<sup>73</sup>

If the media wants to criticize how U.S. aid is being spent, it is picking the wrong target.

### **Terror Risk**

Another way the media tries to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Israel is to contend that the relationship places Americans at increased risk for terror. Islamic radicals, the theory goes, are targeting America because their hatred of Israel is so deep that it extends to include Israel’s friends. The message: If America wants to be safe, stop supporting Israel.

It’s an old trick. Just as Jews were blamed for poisoning water wells during the Black Plague in Medieval Europe, so too when al-Qaeda attacked the United States, several reporters were quick to pin the blame on Israel. At noon on September 11, Peter Jennings of *ABC News* declared that “the hatred of the United States as a patron of Israel, whether you’re from Afghanistan, or whether you’re from Iran, Iraq, or inside the Palestinian territories is so intense at some levels, and has become more intense in recent months, that nobody will be, very many people will not be surprised at this attack today...”<sup>74</sup>

Jennings ignored the fact that years earlier, Osama bin Laden declared war on the United States when American troops were posted on Saudi soil during the Gulf War. Bin Laden denounced the “occupation” of the Arab Holy Land by “American crusader forces,” which he described as “the

latest and greatest aggression” against the Islamic world. Israel was barely a footnote in the rambling 11,000-word fatwa.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, more than their hatred of Israel (the Little Satan), Islamists hate America (the Big Satan) for embodying the Western political and cultural “infidel” system that radical Islam so violently opposes.

Instead, Jennings ignored all this and was more interested in pursuing the line that Israel is the source of America’s problems. Just hours after 3,000 Americans had been murdered, Jennings welcomed as his guest Palestinian spokesliar Hanan Ashrawi. (Viewers were surely unaware that Ashrawi was Jennings’ girlfriend back in the 1970s, when she was a graduate student and he was the head of ABC’s bureau in Beirut.)<sup>76</sup> As all of America sat riveted, Jennings gave Ashrawi a platform to claim that the al-Qaeda attack was due to America’s “very direct role in the politics and the realities” of the Mideast, particularly its “blind support for Israel.” Ashrawi then launched into a tirade about Palestinians being killed “by missiles fired from Apache helicopters, gunships, fired from F-16s. They all have ‘made in the USA’ on them.”

Just to be sure that viewers internalized the message that America’s relationship with Israel is the cause of Arab hatred, Jennings echoed back to Ashrawi: “I think – is the point you’re making – that Palestinians hold the United States as accountable for that as they do Israel?”<sup>77</sup>

Jennings’ report was, in the words of *Washington Post* television critic Tom Shales, “a nauseating display.”<sup>78</sup>

If it is true that terrorism against the U.S. stems largely from the American-Israeli alliance, how does that explain the motive for Islamic terror against Spain, Bali, India, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Beslan, Indonesia, Pakistan and other countries not closely aligned with Israel and even openly hostile to it?

Jennings was not alone in blaming 9-11 on America’s relationship with Israel. *Time* magazine’s Tony Karon surmised that al-Qaeda’s “motivation to launch a spectacular attack would have grown exponentially over the past year as anti-American feeling surged on the Arab streets in response [to] U.S. support for Israel...”<sup>79</sup> As if al-Qaeda would hammer its swords

into ploughshares and bin Laden would return to the family construction business if only America would abandon its alliance with Israel.<sup>80</sup>

Some media outlets went a step further and suggested that Israel actually *perpetrated* the 9-11 attacks. Even after bin Laden had claimed responsibility, the *New York Times* quoted Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Los Angeles: “If we’re going to look at suspects, we should look to the groups that benefit the most from these kinds of incidents, and I think we should put the state of Israel on the suspect list...”<sup>81</sup> *Newsweek*, meanwhile, quoted Major General Hamid Gul, former head of Pakistan’s intelligence service: “I can’t say for sure who was behind it, but it’s the Israelis who are creating so much misery in the world.”<sup>82</sup>

These outrageous smears are eerily reminiscent of those found in the vilest Arabic press. Hezbollah’s TV network, al-Manar, reported that on 9-11 more than 4,000 Jews did not show up for work at the World Trade Center – alleging that Israel’s intelligence service, the Mossad, had advance warning of the attacks and were likely responsible for carrying them out.<sup>83</sup> And in what can only be called a backhanded compliment, Palestinian diplomat Salim Abu Sultan told the *Gulf News*, a daily in the United Arab Emirates: “I can smell Israeli fingers behind this. The scope of the attack was beyond the capability of Arabs... Only the Israelis have the ability to do such things.”<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, Sheikh Muhammad Gemeaha of the Islamic Cultural Center in Manhattan cited “proof that Jews were the [9-11] terrorists because only they had the capability to neutralize the automatic pilot, command the control tower, erase the black boxes and infiltrate the White House and Pentagon.”<sup>85</sup> In reporting the sheik’s inflammatory remarks, the *New York Times* tried to turn Gemeaha into a moderate, citing his sermons “calling for peace, healing and love among people of all religions.”<sup>86</sup>

After exhausting the supply of Muslim slander against Israel, the Western media simply made up their own. The *Washington Post* reported that two Israeli employees of the instant-messaging firm Odigo “received text messages warning of an attack on the World Trade Center two hours

before terrorists crashed planes into the New York landmarks.”<sup>87</sup> This was followed by a Fox News allegation that Israeli intelligence officials failed to share what they knew about September 11 with their American counterparts prior to the attacks.<sup>88</sup>

Pat Buchanan published the claim that the Israeli Mossad blew up the World Trade Center with planted explosives, and used remote control devices to fly the planes into the towers to cover it all up. He also has claimed that Israel stole a nuclear bomb from the U.S. and plans to explode it in an American city to cover up a plot to commit genocide against the Palestinians.<sup>89</sup> The rantings of an extremist wacko? Maybe, yet Buchanan continues to regularly appear as a political commentator on *The McLaughlin Group* and on MSNBC.

Amidst all these stories of Israel causing terror, where are the reports about Israel as the vanguard in the battle *against* Islamic terror? Doesn't Israel regularly provide the U.S. with key intelligence information, bona fide testing of defensive weapons, and frontline defense against radical Muslim regimes bent on causing catastrophic harm – what Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen, America's highest-ranking officer, termed “extraordinary value” that is “absolutely critical” to U.S. national security?<sup>90</sup> Has everyone forgotten how Israel's 1981 strike that destroyed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor prevented Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear weapons, a move that – despite widespread condemnation at the time – was acknowledged 10 years later as a necessary precondition to the success of Operation Desert Storm? In other words, if Iraq had been a nuclear power in 1991, the U.S. would have been hard pressed to eject Hussein's army from Kuwait and block his regime from monopolizing oil supplies in the Persian Gulf.<sup>91</sup> How much money and how many lives did *that* end up saving America?<sup>92</sup>

Yet the media continues to scare Americans into thinking that support for Israel translates into increased terror. Under the headline, “Israeli Settlements Threaten World Security,” Tribune Media Services (a conglomeration of the Los Angeles Times Syndicate and the Chicago Tribune Syndicate) stated: “It is clear that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict stands

at the center of what motivates so much terrorism against the United States.”<sup>93</sup> *Toronto Sun* columnist Eric Margolis drew a direct correlation between Israeli actions and terror against Americans, suggesting that 9-11 had been “payback” for Israeli security operations – and that “the next attack on the US or its citizens abroad will likely be labeled, ‘Gaza’.”<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, the Western media has the propensity to blame Israel for every problem in the Arab world. During the Arab Spring, when 60 protesters were killed in Tunisian riots, the *New York Times* suggested a primary cause was “Israeli intransigence.” Only 18 paragraphs down did the *Times* mention the true reason for the protests: “rising food prices, corruption, unemployment” and government repression.<sup>95</sup>

To test the theory that Israel threatens world stability, let’s imagine for a moment that Israel did not exist. Would that change the basic story line in the Middle East?

During the Arab Spring, would hundreds of thousands of Arabs have refrained from protesting in the streets of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Libya? Would Iraq have decided not to invade Kuwait in 1990, and not have used chemical weapons against its own Kurdish population? Would Saudi Arabia stop exporting its Wahhabi model of Islam, with its rejectionist view of non-Muslim “infidels” across the globe? Would the danger posed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt magically disappear? Would Shiites and Sunnis, who have been at each other’s throats for more than a millennium, spontaneously make peace? Would Iraq and Iran have chosen not to pursue an eight-year war that cost more than a million lives? Would the Sudanese government have stopped its collusion with the Arab Janjaweed militias to end the genocide and displacement in Darfur? Would sectarian groups in Iraq suddenly put aside their internal struggles? Would the Taliban have not blown up ancient Buddha statues? Would radical Islamic movements in the Balkans, Algeria and Chechnya all suddenly become moderate? Would the desperate poverty and widespread illiteracy that afflicts the Arab world quickly disappear? Would women, non-Muslims and other minority groups finally enjoy equal rights in Arab countries, free of government

persecution? Would the proportionately miniscule Arab contributions to technology and medicine suddenly be reversed? Would al-Qaeda not have attacked the U.S. on September 11, and would Islamists not have bombed Bali, London and Madrid?<sup>96</sup>

Of course not. Yet the media clings to their mythical “linkage theory.” Two days after the 2005 terrorist bombings in London, Tony Blair gave a high-profile interview on BBC Radio mentioning that “some of the critical issues in the Middle East” need to be “dealt with and sorted out.”<sup>97</sup> Although Blair never identified any specific issues, Associated Press went ahead and “quoted” Blair as saying that the critical Mideast issue is “easing the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.”<sup>98</sup> Blair never linked Israel with the London attacks; that was purely an AP fabrication revealing its own biased view.<sup>99</sup>

When it comes to linkage, the media’s thickest smokescreen is reserved for the illusion that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would somehow magically make Iran’s nuclear and hegemonic ambitions evaporate into thin air. It’s a theory termed by Jimmy Carter as a “linkage fact” (“Without doubt, the path to peace in the Middle East goes through Jerusalem”)<sup>100</sup> and posited on the pages of the *Washington Post*<sup>101</sup> and the *New York Times*.<sup>102</sup>

The 2011 WikiLeaks totally shattered the false logic of linkage. Diplomatic memos showed that for years, Arab states have regarded the threat from Iran as their highest priority (“obsessed with Iran,” says the *New York Times*) and pleaded with the United States to take military action. Saudi King Abdullah “frequently exhorted the US to attack Iran to put an end to its nuclear weapons program” (to “cut off the head of the snake”).<sup>103</sup> The King of Bahrain warned that Iran’s nuclear program “must be stopped,” while the United Arab Emirates defense chief declared: “Ahmadinejad is Hitler.”<sup>104</sup> None of the Arab leaders conditioned their opposition to Iran on settling the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Ironically, the memos show Israel keeping its cool, while the Arabs are the ones (justifiably) freaking out.<sup>105</sup>

So in the end, what was all the hullabaloo about “warmongering Israel single-handedly endangering geopolitical stability”? And what was

behind the media mantra that solving the Palestinian issue is essential to broad Arab support in confronting Iran? Was it naiveté? An analytical error? Or a malicious attempt to pressure Israel.<sup>106</sup>

And so it goes, with the media claiming that a change in Israeli policy would solve every global challenge from climate change to the common cold. Writing in Australia's *The Age*, Michael Backman declared: "We have paid for Israel's failure with bombs on London public transport, bombs in bars in Bali, and even the loss of the World Trade Centre towers in New York... [Israel] is at the nub of these events."<sup>107</sup>

### Christian Wedge

One of the strongest bastions of support for Israel is the evangelical Christian community, which holds strong pro-Israel political views and donates untold millions of dollars toward pro-Israel causes.<sup>108</sup> Fundamentalist Christians act in accord with the prophetic imperative – "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent; for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet" (Isaiah 62:1) – taking seriously the biblical promise that God will make a great nation of Abraham<sup>109</sup> and that the Holy Land belongs to the Jews as an everlasting possession.<sup>110</sup>

And so, for those seeking to weaken support for Israel, a primary tactic is to drive a wedge between the Jewish state and the pro-Israel Christian community. At times, the media creates an impression that Israel is out to destroy the very cradle of Christian civilization. When Israel prepared to build a wall to protect worshippers at Rachel's Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem, Reuters published this headline: "Israel to Split Christ's Birthplace with Barrier."<sup>111</sup> Reuters made it sound as though Israel was plowing a bulldozer straight through the Church of the Nativity. To emphasize its (false) point, Reuters repeated the word "Christ" or "Christian" in each of the article's first four sentences – even though Rachel's Tomb has no historical connection to "Christ's birthplace" and is miles from the church.

Far from practicing anti-Christian policies, Israel is the *only* country in the Middle East where the Christian population has increased since

1948 – having risen by more than 400 percent,<sup>112</sup> and continues to rise every year.<sup>113</sup> By contrast, the rest of the Middle East – Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Syria – is characterized by widespread “de-Christianization.” Turkey, regarded as a moderate Islamic state, has seen its Christian population decline 100-fold in the last century.<sup>114</sup> In Saudi Arabia, the practice of Christianity is plain illegal.<sup>115</sup> Yet this did not stop *Time* magazine reporter Andrew Lee Butters from using Pope Benedict’s 2009 visit to Israel to foment the lie that “the creation of Israel has been a disaster for Christians in the Middle East.”<sup>116</sup>

If anything has been a disaster for Christians, it is the rise of Muslim fundamentalism. In the West Bank town of Kalkilya, the local YMCA was destroyed,<sup>117</sup> and Palestinian gunmen blew up the YMCA library in the Gaza Strip; two guards were kidnapped, the offices were looted and all 8,000 books were destroyed.<sup>118</sup> When four masked gunmen tried to abduct a church employee in Gaza, a local Christian leader lamented how the incident is “aimed at sending a message to all the Christians here that we must leave. Radical Islamic groups are waging a campaign to get rid of us and no one seems to care.”<sup>119</sup>

In 2005, hundreds of Muslims screaming *Allahu Akbar* carried out a pogrom against Christians in the West Bank city of Taibe – setting dozens of homes and businesses on fire, looting valuables, and destroying Christian icons.<sup>120</sup> Palestinian gunmen destroyed a Christian television station based in Bethlehem<sup>121</sup> and the *Boston Globe* reported “a rampage of Palestinian Muslims against Christian shops and churches in Ramallah.”<sup>122</sup> In 2009, Muslims desecrated two Christian cemeteries in a West Bank village near Ramallah, desecrating 70 graves and decapitating a statue of the Virgin Mary.<sup>123</sup>

Did any of this get reported in your local newspaper?

In 2007, the manager of Gaza’s only Christian bookstore was kidnapped and murdered – shot in the head and stabbed multiple times.<sup>124</sup> The slaying garnered a one-paragraph mention in the *Washington Post’s* “World in Brief” section.<sup>125</sup> Imagine if a Muslim activist had been found shot and stabbed on an Israeli street after receiving death threats for “missionary

work.” A one-paragraph news brief? Don’t bet on it.<sup>126</sup>

It comes as no surprise that following the Hamas takeover in 2006, the Christian population of Gaza fell by 64 percent – from 5,000 to less than 1,800 in 2010.<sup>127</sup> Yet in noting this demographic trend, the *New York Times* made no mention of Palestinian-led violence and intimidation; instead the *Times* cited a Palestinian official expressing his disingenuous hope “to keep the presence of the Christians alive and well.”<sup>128</sup>

In the city of Bethlehem, the literal birthplace of Christianity, the Christian population began to drastically decline in 1995, the very year the Palestinian Authority assumed administrative control. The PA unilaterally annexed an additional 30,000 Muslims to Bethlehem and then redistricted the municipal boundaries – ensuring a Muslim majority in any future elections.<sup>129</sup> In order to further freeze Christians out of the Palestinian political process, a 2007 Palestinian summit was intentionally held in Mecca, a city where Christians (and all non-Muslims, for that matter) are barred by law.<sup>130</sup>

Under Palestinian control, the de-Christianization of Bethlehem has been ruthless. A Greek Orthodox monastery next to the Church of the Nativity was confiscated and converted into the PA president’s official Bethlehem residence.<sup>131</sup> Bethlehem Christians have been forced to shut down businesses after failing to pay “protection money” to local Muslims.<sup>132</sup> This campaign took another nasty turn in 2006 when Bethlehem City Council member Hassan El-Masalmeh publicly advocated a discriminatory “dhimmi tax” on non-Muslim residents.<sup>133</sup> Not surprisingly, Christians in Bethlehem and neighboring Beit Jala are fleeing in large numbers; after once comprising 60-70 percent of the city’s population, they have now dwindled to 15 percent.<sup>134</sup>

Yet the media continues to censure Israel for Bethlehem’s woes. A Reuters “news” report squarely placed the “blame [on] Israel for the shrinking community” – an editorialization unsupported by any survey, study or citation.<sup>135</sup> *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper attributed the steep decline of Bethlehem’s Christian population to Israel’s very existence: “Adding to the gloom is more evidence of a dwindling Christian presence

in the town. The exodus of Christians began with the establishment of the State of Israel."<sup>136</sup> And in an article entitled, "Israeli Settlements Squeezing Out Christians and Muslims," the *Irish Times* – Ireland's newspaper of record – claimed that Israel's humanitarian policy of granting travel permits to West Bank Christians is actually an evil scheme "designed to cause animosities" between Muslim and Christian groups.<sup>137</sup>

Not surprisingly, much of this Christian-Israel "wedge" begins in the Palestinian media, where a common – and insidious – theme is to compare the situation of Palestinians today to the persecution of Jesus. The official Palestinian daily, *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, described how "the suffering of the first Palestinian – the Messiah – started with the Last Supper."<sup>138</sup> Palestinian TV reported that "Jesus was the first Palestinian martyr... no one denies that."<sup>139</sup> When Israel reduced power to Gaza, a Jordanian cartoon depicted a Palestinian being crucified on an electricity pole.<sup>140</sup> And on the television talk show *Good Morning Jerusalem*, a Palestinian artist displayed a painting of Jesus flanked by two Israeli soldiers, explaining that "our struggle today against [Israel] is an eternal one. It can be said that it started 2,000 years ago and continues until today..."<sup>141</sup>

Palestinians cleverly present themselves as the heirs to the legacy of Christ, playing off the millennia-old hatred of Jews for rejecting Jesus. The Palestinian newspaper *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* described Nazareth as "the city in which the Jews murdered the first of its Palestinian sons,"<sup>142</sup> and called Jesus "the first Palestinian martyr for Allah."<sup>143</sup> This ignores the basic facts of history: Given that the region under discussion was not called "Palestine" until years after Jesus' lifetime, and Islam itself only came into existence centuries later, Jesus could never have been a "Palestinian martyr for Allah."

And though this imagery begins in the Palestinian press, before long Western journalists are latching on as well. *Aftonbladet*, the most widely circulated newspaper in Sweden, headlined an editorial: "The Crucifixion of Arafat."<sup>144</sup> The Italian daily *La Stampa* ran a front-page cartoon showing an Israeli tank emblazoned with a Jewish star, pointing a large gun at baby Jesus in a manger, as the infant pleads, "Surely they don't want to kill me

again, do they?"<sup>145</sup>

The media presents this as part of the same ongoing struggle: just as the Jews opposed Jesus, so too Israel is hostile toward the Palestinians. For Christians, this imagery is as negative and as visceral as it gets.

At Christmas time, the media makes a special effort to strain Christian-Israel relations. Portraying Israel as the grinch, BBC's Orla Guerlin delivered a bleak report from Nazareth entitled, "How the Israelis Stole Christmas."<sup>146</sup> The London *Independent*, meanwhile, wrote about an Arab woman who claims she was stopped at a checkpoint on her way to deliver a baby; the article compares her plight to "the birth pains" of Mary Magdalene, a "Palestinian refugee in Bethlehem."<sup>147</sup> Savor the irony of Mary – a Jew who lived years before the term "Palestine" ever came to describe the region – being revised as a "Palestinian refugee."

In the run-up to Easter, Reuters described "hardships" experienced by Christians wanting to celebrate at holy sites in Jerusalem. Under the headline, "In Holy Land, Easter Not What it Was," Reuters reported that Israel had issued 10,000 entry permits to Palestinian Christians, and then noted that "as a result, there has been a big drop in local participation in Easter week ceremonies."<sup>148</sup>

Readers got the distinct impression that Israel is hindering the celebration of Christian holidays. Yet media monitors dug into microfilm archives to reveal the truth of whether Easter participation has dropped under Israeli rule. News reports from the era when Jerusalem was under Jordanian control (1948-1967) show a total of 5,000 pilgrims in Jerusalem for Easter festivities<sup>149</sup> – half the number of permits that Israel allotted to Palestinians alone. Similarly, when Jerusalem was under British control (1917-1948), only a few thousand pilgrims would come every year.<sup>150</sup> Things were even worse during the pre-1917 Ottoman era, when Easter services in Jerusalem would often turn violent. So despite the fact that Easter participation has increased significantly under Israeli rule, Reuters could not resist ascribing anti-Christian motives to Israel.<sup>151</sup>

The media loves to go this route, no matter how remote and ludicrous. In 2002, when a group of 128 armed Palestinians invaded Bethlehem's

Church of the Nativity – stealing gold objects from the monks and urinating on the church floor<sup>152</sup> – the media still found a way to blame the Jews. Writing in the *PostGlobal* blog produced jointly by *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*, journalist Lamis Andoni fallaciously claimed that the Church of the Nativity was “bombed by the Israeli army” during the siege in Bethlehem.<sup>153</sup> And in describing the event on ABC’s *Nightline*, reporter Jim Wooten spoke of Israel’s prime minister as “the hated architect of Israeli expansion” and “the devil incarnate.”<sup>154</sup> Within a few years, the Palestinian takeover of the church had been all but erased from history; in 2007, *National Geographic*’s 6,000-word exploration of events in Bethlehem made zero mention of that appalling episode.<sup>155</sup>

Adding their own brand of libel, McClatchy Newspapers – publisher of 32 dailies in the U.S. – squarely blamed Israel for all of Bethlehem’s woes: “Gone is the olivewood stable shielding the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In its place, looming over the angelic family, are an Israeli watchtower and three towering sections of an adjoining wall... [Bethlehem] remains largely isolated from the outside world by Israel’s 25-foot-tall concrete walls, part of Israel’s separation barrier.”<sup>156</sup>

Is Bethlehem really surrounded by a wall? Israel built a wire fence in the area where northern Bethlehem interfaces with Jerusalem and added only a small segment of concrete wall – facing a major Israeli roadway – to prevent gunmen from shooting at Israeli motorists.<sup>157</sup> Yet the media makes this out to be a direct attack on the heart of Christianity.

All this “news” about Israel being “anti-Christian” is more than just harmless chatter. In 2004, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved a resolution calling for “phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel,” such as Motorola and Citigroup.<sup>158</sup> And in 2008, the United Methodist Church debated whether to pull its holdings in Caterpillar, which provides the Israel Defense Forces with bulldozers.<sup>159</sup> (The United Church of Christ and the Church of England have held similar discussions.)<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile, the *Christian Science Monitor* added fuel to the fire with an online poll asking: “Should US-based churches boycott certain companies doing business with Israel?”<sup>161</sup>

Israel is a vanguard of religious freedom in a region where Christians are widely persecuted and treated as second class. As Monsignor Robert Stern, secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, acknowledged: Christians “feel a lot of social pressure living in an Islamic world. A lot of them are in politically very uncertain circumstances – where they’re at risk.”<sup>162</sup>

Yet reading your local newspaper, you’d be forgiven for thinking that Israel is the Mideast’s worst offender. It’s all part of the media’s efforts to drive a wedge between Israel and the Christian community, further demonizing Israel and eroding its support in the West.

### **The Deep Bond**

Despite the media’s audacious efforts to influence the American public otherwise, opinion polls consistently exhibit overwhelming support for Israel. A 2011 CNN poll showed that 82 percent of Americans view Israel as an ally and/or friend of the United States; only Great Britain received higher marks.<sup>163</sup>

What is at the root of this longstanding and durable support? It surely isn’t grounded in energy policy or a quest for diplomatic popularity. Nor, as the conspiracy-minded critics have claimed, is it because a “Zionist lobby” has hijacked U.S. foreign policy to manipulate Washington into serving Israel’s ends.<sup>164</sup>

Back in the 1980s when I had the privilege of working for Congressman Jack Kemp, I wrote position papers on the American-Israeli relationship, identifying core reasons for this deep bond. Israel stands as a beacon of Western-style democracy amidst a sea of totalitarian Arab states. Diplomatic disasters – such as the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran (until then America’s most important ally in the Persian Gulf) and more recently, the chaos of the Arab Spring with U.S. allies like Mubarak in Egypt being supplanted in part by the radical Muslim Brotherhood – have highlighted America’s need for reliable Mideast allies. Indeed, Israel has proven an island of stability, giving America the security of knowing that a change in leadership will not cause a shift in allegiance.

Further, Israel's location at the strategic crossroads of North Africa and Southwest Asia – a junction of paramount American interests – means that the U.S. can minimize its military deployments in this vital area. U.S. Navy ships routinely dock in Haifa; Air Force planes refuel at Israeli bases; \$800 million of U.S. arms and medical equipment are pre-positioned in Israel. (In the Persian Gulf, by contrast, the absence of a dependable and sturdy ally like Israel has impelled the United States to commit hundreds of thousands of troops and trillions of dollars.) Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig's observation 30 years ago still resonates today: "Israel is the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk, does not carry even one American soldier, and is located in a critical region for American national security."<sup>165</sup>

Beyond this, Israel stands on the frontline of the war against terror, providing America with advanced intelligence and security know-how.<sup>166</sup> In the assessment of Maj. Gen. George J. Keegan Jr., former head of U.S. Air Force intelligence, America's military defense capability "owes more to the Israeli intelligence input than it does to any single source of intelligence," the worth of which, he estimates, exceeds "five CIAs."<sup>167</sup> It is for this reason that many have urged that U.S. assistance to Israel be classified not as foreign aid, but as an American "defense expenditure."

Americans also identify with Israel's immigrant- and refugee-based culture, and a pioneering spirit that is mindful of what America must have been like in its earliest days. Israel's War of Independence was won by a motley crew of Holocaust survivors and kibbutz farmers who used even broomsticks for weapons; America's War of Independence was won by frontier farmers who grabbed the muskets off their walls, using weapons better suited to hunting rabbits than to fighting the mighty British Army.

These scrappy beginnings bred an entrepreneurial ideal that has today made the U.S. and Israel the two countries with the largest number of startup companies in the world. Incredibly, the tiny nation of Israel – population 7 million – is at the forefront of cutting-edge technologies in the fields of medicine, agriculture, communications, software and sustainable energies, boasting the largest number of NASDAQ-listed companies

outside of North America.<sup>168</sup>

Yet in the final analysis, these reasons do not fully account for the depth of the U.S.-Israel connection. At its root, I believe that Americans identify so closely with Israel because Jewish history and the Hebrew Bible resonate with the American experience. The pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 – Puritan refugees escaping religious persecution in Europe – viewed their emigration as a virtual re-enactment of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. The Pilgrims considered Britain as modern-day Egypt, with King Charles in the role of Pharaoh. The tumultuous Atlantic Ocean was the Red Sea, America was the Promised Land, and the goal was to build a new Jerusalem.<sup>169</sup> As expressed by John Winthrop, the first Governor of Massachusetts: “God has entered into a Covenant with those who are on their way to wilderness in America, just as he had entered into Covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai.”<sup>170</sup>

Thus the story of Moses became the story of America.

America’s first institutions of higher learning, including Harvard and Princeton, made Bible study and Hebrew part of the required curriculum.<sup>171</sup> The Founding Fathers would later suggest that Hebrew be designated as America’s official language.<sup>172</sup> When designing the Great Seal of the United States, Benjamin Franklin proposed an image of the Israelites fleeing the tyranny of Egypt across the Red Sea. Thomas Jefferson suggested the Jews in the wilderness, guided by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.<sup>173</sup>

As America expanded westward, the popular code-word became “Manifest Destiny,” expressing the belief that the United States was destined, even divinely ordained, to expand across the North American continent.<sup>174</sup>

Beyond this, the teachings of the Jewish Bible have formed America’s ideological foundation. The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia – America’s premier symbol of freedom – carries an inscription from Leviticus 25:10: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land and unto all the inhabitants thereof.” John Locke, the author the first draft of the constitution of the Carolinas, considered the 613 Laws of Moses to be the ideal legal foundation

for America.<sup>175</sup> The opening lines of the Declaration of Independence – “We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights” – marks the first time in history that Jewish ethics were legally enshrined into the laws of a non-Jewish nation.<sup>176</sup>

These biblical values have taken deep root. In the words of historian Paul Johnson, to the Jews “we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of human person; of the individual conscience and so a personal redemption; of collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind.”<sup>177</sup> President Calvin Coolidge affirmed that “the Hebraic mortars cemented the foundations of American democracy,”<sup>178</sup> and President Franklin D. Roosevelt articulated in a 1935 radio address: “We cannot read the history of our rise and development as a nation, without reckoning the place the Bible has occupied.”<sup>179</sup>

No wonder that there are towns across America named Zion, Jerusalem, Jericho, Mount Sinai and more than a dozen “Bethlehems.” By the same token, Washington and Lincoln streets are a feature of modern Israel. Alone in the Middle East, Israel hosts memorials for John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr, September 11, and two exact replicas of the Liberty Bell.

Nor should it be a surprise that U.S. Presidents as far back as John Adams and Abraham Lincoln backed the “noble dream” of a re-created independent Jewish state in the Holy Land.<sup>180</sup>

In this sense, the American-Israel relationship transcends any ephemeral political, military or economic considerations. It is rooted in a shared belief that “freedom with responsibility” is the cornerstone of human exceptionalism. Americans recognize that Israel is an eternal guardian of these divine values, which the Jewish prophets brought to the world and which the United States fights valiantly to uphold. Thus, on the deepest level, pro-Israel sentiment stems from the belief that Israel is an American value, part of the American soul.

This has forged a relationship so profound and enduring that even media manipulations have been unable to drive a wedge.

Not that they don't try. In July 2010, just hours prior to an important White House meeting between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, the *New York Times* published a major 4,800-word story, highlighting how U.S. tax laws have helped Israelis receive funding from American donors.<sup>181</sup> The article contained no "new information" and had no "timely" news aspect, yet the *Times* – in a cleverly-timed effort to create a new bone of contention between Obama and Netanyahu – gave it prominent page-one coverage above the fold.

A year later, when Netanyahu flew to Washington for talks with U.S. leaders, the media was positioned to sway public opinion either for or against his policies. The *New York Times* made its position clear: "Israelis See Netanyahu Trip as Diplomatic Failure."<sup>182</sup> Yet when real Israelis were asked their opinion, the headline in *Haaretz* (ironically the *Times'* Israel partner) declared: "Netanyahu's Popularity Soaring Following Washington Trip."<sup>183</sup> *Globes*, Israel's leading business periodical, confirmed that "according to all opinion polls," support for Netanyahu "is soaring to heights it hasn't known for years."<sup>184</sup> The *New York Times'* declaration of "diplomatic failure" flew in the face of reality – yet reflected what the *Times* apparently hoped to be true.

Journalists have tried other low-handed tactics to undermine the U.S.-Israel bond. During the first months of Obama's presidency, he enjoyed a 60 percent favorable rating among Israelis. Then, after an intense dispute over Israeli construction in Jerusalem, Obama's popularity in Israel took a huge drop. The reason? According to Ethan Bronner of the *New York Times*, it had nothing to do with politics. Appearing on MSNBC's *Hardball*, Bronner explained that Obama's low popularity among Israelis was due to "racism." For viewers who may have missed it, host Chris Matthews helpfully added: "Because they see it as a black man."<sup>185</sup>

What a horrific distortion of the truth. Obviously, Obama was just as much "a black man" during his period of huge popularity in Israel; the drop in support was a purely political, not racial, issue.

The “Israel is racist” fantasy was echoed by *New York Times*’ columnist Roger Cohen, who wrote that an Israeli cartoon which depicted “Obama cooking Netanyahu in a pot” was not a symbol of an Israeli politician in hot water, but rather the image of “a black man cooking a white man over an open fire.”<sup>186</sup> Genuine policy differences may exist, but why is the media shamefacedly interjecting racist hatred where none exists?

Of course nobody bothered to consider the fact that “racist” Israel has granted asylum to black Muslims fleeing the war in Sudan.<sup>187</sup> Or that “racist” Israel airlifted tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews – marking the only time in history that blacks have been systematically moved to another country in freedom rather than in chains.<sup>188</sup>

And yet, Peter Jennings told viewers of *World News Tonight* about Palestinian “artists” who’d created a model of the Statue of Liberty with the torch pointed downward – in order to “symbolize,” Jennings helpfully explained, “how the U.S. was inverting its own values by supporting Israel.”<sup>189</sup>

Ironically, this media bias against Israel may actually strengthen support from Americans who, deep down, recognize that Israel – surrounded by Arab enemies, vilified in international forums, and badgered by the Media Goliath – is an underdog in the truest sense of the word.

## Notes

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5. Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007.
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  9. Fred Donner, *Chicago Tribune*, March 10, 2003.
  10. Ted Barrett, "Lawmaker Under Fire for Saying Jews Support Iraq War," CNN.com, March 12, 2003.
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  176. In 1655, New Haven legislators adopted a legal code of 79 statutes, half of which contained biblical references, virtually all from the Hebrew Bible. The Plymouth Colony had a similar code, as did the Massachusetts Assembly, whose 1641 "Capital Laws of New England" was based almost entirely on Mosaic law. (Spiro, *Crash Course in Jewish History*.)
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