

MINYAN MONTHLY

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The following article appeared in The Outlook, Santa Monica, September 18, 1991.

ISRAEL, NOT SYRIA IS OUR FRIEND By Joel E. Rembaum

For more than four decades, the United States has had only one true friend in the Middle East, only one nation in that volatile region that has shared America's ideals of democracy, freedom and peace.

That nation is Israel.

And yet, as the convening of a long-awaited Middle East Peace conference approaches, the president of the United States has seen fit to exert tremendous pressure on Israel by mandating a four-month delay in the American government's consideration of Israel's request for loan guarantees.

This amounts to the addition of a new condition to the negotiations leading up to the peace conference, a condition that is slanted in favor of Arab interests and against those of America's tried-and-true friend, Israel.

It is common knowledge

that the president is intent on using the loan guarantee as a lever to coerce Israel to declare a freeze on the development of new settlements in the administered territories. And yet, as Tom Friedman and William Safire have noted, Secretary of State James Baker, in three months of negotiations, succeeded in getting the Arab states to agree not to press the settlement issue as a precondition for entering into peace negotiations with Israel.

All parties agreed that the settlements deserve to be discussed--at the peace conference. All parties except for President Bush.

There seems to be serious inconsistency in the president's attitude toward the countries of the Middle East. If, as the president has stated, the cooperation demonstrated by America's allies during the Persian Gulf War has been the catalyst for the peace conference, then it is appropriate to consider how the president has dealt with those allies in the months following the war.

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o He canceled \$7 billion of Egypt's indebtedness to the United States as a token of gratitude for Egypt's token participation in the war.

o He looked the other way when Syria stepped in and took control of Lebanon.

o He looked with favor on the Saudi's \$2 billion grant to Syria, and again looked the other way when Syria spent that money on Scud missiles and other sophisticated weaponry and not for peaceful purposes.

o He has yet to make a public statement condemning Syria's refusal to join a regional water conference because Israel has been invited to participate.

It appears as if, in the president's eyes, America's trusted ally in the Middle East is Syria.

President Bush made an egregious error once before in trying to coddle a vicious dictator and induce him to become a friend of America. That dictator's name is Saddam Hussein.

Why is the president now trying the same tack with an even more dangerous tyrant? The reason President Hafez al-Assad of Syria is coming to the peace conference is because he needs America's help. Why does President Bush not use that need for American assistance as a lever to squeeze additional concessions out of Assad?

Instead, President Bush is threatening to veto congressional approval of loan guarantees that Israel needs for the humanitarian purpose of building housing to absorb the hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants that continue to arrive.

Israel is the country upon which Scud missiles fell during the gulf war, and in a gesture of cooperation with the United States, Israel did not retaliate against Iraq.

Israel is not asking for a loan from the United States. The request is for guarantees from the United States that will enable Israel to turn to commercial banks in the United States and Europe to arrange long-term loans with reasonable interest rates.

Israel will not cost the American taxpayer one penny. Israel will borrow \$2 billion a year for five years. Israeli government leaders have already stated that they would not use this money to build settlements in the territories.

\$2 billion for Syrian strategic weapons: Approved. \$2 billion for Israeli housing construction: Denied.

President Bush, who is your real partner for peace in the Middle East?

Who is your real friend in need?

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SHANA TOVA



MIINYAN MONTHLY

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Cheshvan 5752

SUKKOT I HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED

--Michelle Krotinger Wolf

The first sukkah I remember was a collective effort at the Reform Synagogue where I grew up. Shortly after Yom Kippur, all the "daddies" would gather together, hammer and saw in hand, and engage in a few hours of male bonding, culminating in a stout, hut-like structure which looked like it belonged in a Pier 1 Imports store. All the school children were instructed to bring in fruit to hang inside it, and before the holiday had ended, at least one poor hapless soul was invariably struck on the head by a heavy, blackened banana.

I didn't even realize that individual families could build their very own sukkah until many years later when I moved to Los Angeles to study at HUC. At the time, I lived in the bottom floor of a 3-bedroom duplex with another HUC student and with a UJ student as well. Because we had room for a sukkah in our spacious backyard, it was decided that a group of rabbinic students would

come and build the sukkah and that we would all take turns using it for the various meals. A slight complication set in when half of the group came down with food poisoning from rancid cholent eaten during a break-the-fast potluck.

The next sukkah in my life was a study in ingenuity. Not wanting to spend money on lumber, nails and such, my roommates and I helped our upstairs owner build a make-shift sukkah out of old Indian-print sheets left over from college, Sparkletts water bottles, and rotting sheets of compressed wood. If ever a structure was temporary, this was it.

This year was the first that either Aron or I would be able to have a sukkah in the yard of a home we owned, and we looked forward to doing so with great anticipation. Aron pored over various "pre-packaged" sukkah kits and rejected them as too expensive and too rickety. I concurred, saying we needed a "really big sukkah."

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BERESHIT -- 5752
--Leon Rogson

Our new year began with a bang. On the domestic front we had the spectacle of the Thomas nomination, and on the foreign front, the upcoming Madrid Peace Conference between Israel and the Arabs. I'd like to say a few words about the first event, and express my wish that the conference leads to a permanent peace that is just to Israel.

The Thomas nomination deeply distressed me. Senator Biden, and his entire committee are to be roundly condemned for the way they dealt with both the original information and the leak. I hope that the people who leaked the story are found and fired.

Nevertheless, even if the story had not been leaked, how could such compelling evidence as was brought out by Ms. Hill have been completely ignored by our legislators? Is there not enough intelligence within the Senate to deal with sensitive issues? How do they manage to guard our interests (or do they?).

I work for an Aerospace company and often meet with Public officials (from NASA, the Air Force, or people representing these public organizations). These officials are not even permitted to take a cup of coffee from me without paying for it. The reason is that government regulations seek to eliminate not just undue influence, graft and corruption, but even the remotest resemblance to these evils. If lunch is prepared by my company, a fair price must be charged to the officials. That is the law.

We probably don't have more influential public officials than those sitting in the Supreme Court. To hold petty officials to the rules of conduct I described while allowing potential members of the Supreme Court to be eligible to the

Court unless proven guilty beyond doubt is incredible. Our President will, in all probability, be in office another four years and will appoint one or more additional Justices. Was there no one as qualified as Judge Thomas to replace him until he was exonerated in a judicial rather than a circus atmosphere?

I feel a great disservice has been done to our country in this matter. Whether Judge Thomas is guilty or innocent, the charges and the character of his accusers should have been sufficient to derail his nomination until a thorough, non partisan, and judicial investigation was completed.

I hope politics, narrow political gains, and short term goals do not cloud our government during the rest of the year, and in particular during the crucial peace talks that lie ahead.

(Sukkot--continued from page one)

Well, between taking care of our new baby, flying to Catalina for a wedding and catching colds, the sukkah was not completed until Hol Hamo'ed, and our "schach" was a bit on the lean side. But, it was a delight to see the three side panels made of 12 foot two-by-fours rigidly standing up against the house in the face of stiff winds and even a little rain. The \$7 sheets from Target flapped gently against the Rosh Hashannah cards as we breakfasted al fresco, counting the snails making their way to the lulav.

Best of all was the gentle probing by a curious non-Jewish neighbor, "I see you've been doing a little building -- maybe something for your little baby?" he asked.

"Not exactly," I replied. "Let's just say it's got a lot of history behind it."

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TREASURER'S COLUMN

--Norman H. Green

Thank you to Nathan J. Krotinger for a contribution in appreciation for an aliyah on the occasion of a Mi Shebeirach shortly after the birth of his granddaughter, Rachel Leah, daughter of Michelle and Aron Wolf. Mazel Tov.

Thanks also to the following people who have already redeemed their Simchas Torah pledges.

Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence E. Harris
 Ronnie & Hilda Cohen
 Elliot Dorff
 Ann & Elliot Sturman
 Annette Lawrence

By the Way, Annette indicated that her contribution actually represented one-sixth of a collective pledge by six people who shared one line at the Simchas Torah service. Partners, let's hear from you.

As of October 15, the Minyan's general fund is \$1,925.66.

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