



On The Mark – What Israel Means to Me

*By Dr. Mark Meirowitz
Professor, State University of New York
(SUNY) Maritime College*

Israel is everywhere. It is in our minds and in our hearts. An example - in a mystery book unrelated to Israel, *The Hollow Girl* by Reed Farrel Coleman, the main character, Private Investigator Moe Prager is offered a trip by a friend to any destination after solving the case. His answer, "Israel". The reason, says Moe, "It's about time."

So, to my mind, it's about time to assess what Israel means to us and why we must cherish it and be thankful for its existence.

My parents and grandmother were in Auschwitz. My father's entire family was annihilated in Auschwitz. Just think of what might have been had a State of Israel existed at the time of the Shoah for them and the other victims of Hitler's genocide.

In re-reading Arthur Morse's seminal book, *While Six Million Died*, it was apparent that the leaders of the world, for the most part, did not focus on the suffering of the Jewish people. Indeed, many of these world leaders even took steps to prevent the news of the Shoah from reaching the press and the American public. Imagine if there had been a State of Israel offering refuge and speaking up for the Jewish people.

I recently saw a photo of a young Israeli soldier with her grandparent, a survivor of the Shoah. How poignant to see Jews

defending themselves and their homeland after the death and destruction inflicted on our people not so very long ago. Hitler's program was to wipe all Jews off the face of the earth. Indeed, he was in process of building a museum with Jewish artifacts in Prague which he hoped would show what the Jewish people were all about after he had destroyed them all (a "Museum to an Extinct Race"). Instead, Hitler did not succeed and the State of Israel was born!

The State of Israel has been the target of ceaseless efforts to undermine it, even to destroy it. Iran's leaders intend, they say, to wipe Israel off the map. Leaders of Arab countries over many years in the past announced their intention to push the residents of Israel into the sea.

Is the meaning of this verse hard to follow? - "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will be Free". The American Jewish Committee has the following to say about this: "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free" is a common call-to-arms for pro-Palestinian activists. It calls for the establishment of a State of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, erasing the State of Israel and its people. It is also a rallying cry for terrorist groups and their sympathizers, from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to Hamas, which called for Israel's destruction in its original governing charter in 1988"

Detractors of Israel have called the

creation of the State of Israel the "Nakba", *The Times of Israel* states that Palestinians call Israel's 1948 founding the Nakba, an Arabic word for catastrophe.

Jews are not permitted to pray on the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, and are, at certain times, even prohibited from entering the Temple Mount.

The United Nations and its related institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR), have an obsession with condemning Israel while avoiding criticism of outright human rights violators around the world. Guess who is a member of the UNHCR? - human rights star performers like Cuba, the Russian Federation and Venezuela. The UN even passed a resolution condemning Zionism as Racism (the resolution was eventually repealed by the UN General Assembly). The number of resolutions passed against Israel in the UN and its affiliated agencies is too numerous to list.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) opened an investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes even though Israel is not a party to the ICC's Rome Statute, and the status of Palestine as a State is not settled. The ICC prosecutor stated in her report that "having assessed submissions from states, international organizations and other stakeholders, the Chamber was otherwise unanimous in its view that Palestine is a State Party to the Rome Statute". Unanimous - on a complex (and unresolved) issue in international law!

Then there is the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement which aims to destroy Israel through economic action. Those who have supported the BDS effort to undermine the Jewish State include Ben and Jerry's and, most recently, the *Harvard Crimson* in an editorial. Alan

Dershowitz recently commented in a letter to the *Harvard Crimson* about the editorial supporting BDS that "[w]ere this editorial submitted as a course paper, it would deserve a grade of C- - with grade inflation. Not for its points of view, but for its lack of honesty and selective presentation and omission of facts". For example, Dershowitz states that the editorial "mentions Palestinians who have been killed by Israeli soldiers, but omits the many Israeli children, women who have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists, or that many of the Palestinians were killed while perpetuating terrorism".

Then there is advocacy for a One-State solution that would lead to the complete elimination of the Jewish State. And on and on.

Israel is the lightning rod of the world. Israel lives in a rough and tough neighborhood. Its existence is literally on the line daily.

Yet, imagine a world without Israel - a Middle East without Israel to provide stability. Imagine a world without Israel with its amazing technological advances and contributions to science and health and so much more. It is not an accident that the reports on COVID-19 one hears routinely on the news reports usually include a reference to the data from Israel. Israel's institutions of higher learning are among the best in the world.

How to deal with all this - be proud of Israel! Stand tall and realize that in this vast world there exists this speck on the map called Israel which is a Jewish State. Hold your heads high with love and admiration for the one place in the world where every Jew is welcome to come, no questions asked. And - Go to the Parade and Salute Israel on May 22nd!