

# 2024 Comments

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# January

03.01.24

Rabbi Boyden just published the following observation on a listserv that went out to Reform rabbis in North America. He agreed that I share it with you.

Before people criticise Israel for the way she is fighting in the Gaza Strip, they need to take into account that no army has ever had to face the challenges with which Zahal has had to contend in a war that is unique in the history of warfare.

Guerilla war is nothing new, but here our army is facing Hamas terrorists who use civilians as a shield. They operate out of hospitals and schools and UNRWA depots, and store their weapons and munitions in private homes and mosques. They even use ambulances to transfer their fighters and hostages from place to place.

It is also a war that is not only taking place above ground but also beneath it. Hamas has built hundreds of miles of tunnels and shafts, and numerous underground command centres to operate out of and to move their fighters around.

Our soldiers are not only hampered by an urban environment in which Hamas uses apartments for their snipers and to launch RPGs, but also have to take into account that they don't know the exact locations where the hostages are being held. The tragic killing of three of the hostages by our own forces only serves to illustrate the complexity of the situation.

If that weren't enough, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the south and Hezbollah in the north are launching rockets against Israel's civilian population every day and, were it not for the Iron Dome rocket defence system, we would be dealing with large numbers of civilian casualties on the home front. In addition, there are the ongoing attacks by terrorists on the West Bank and in Jerusalem.

No war is a picnic. There is considerable suffering both in Gaza and in Israel, but those who are so quick to criticise Israel have little idea of what we are facing.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.



Just a reminder about where we are. Best you consult a more detailed map of the region. If you have questions, ask me or sherlock them on the internet. Just be sure to consult reliable sources.

I think Marion shared this.



And those who are “hosted” have been kept in refugee camps since 1948 in order to foster hatred of Israel and provide expendable terrorists for the host countries.

## 10.01.24

While we are fighting a war of national survival, insidious forces within Israel (as around the world) continue to undermine democracy, social welfare and secularism. Rapacious capitalists, racist nationalists and medieval religionists are empowered and encouraged by populist autocrats as means to continue in power. The ignorance of the mobs hypnotised by these autocrats is frightening to behold.

Some time ago, I collected lectures, handouts and other materials I’d prepared when teaching about development at the International Institute of the Histadrut, and provided it online in a special site. Much of what I wrote then is still valid and applicable to our current struggles. To that is added more recent research and analyses. All of that is available in a newly formatted cloud archive, the link to which is below.

The material is organized in the same categories I used when teaching. Each link opens a folder containing pdf files. More items will be added as I scan the saved notes.



## 17.01.24

As much as I have tried to be objective in reporting and analysing events, I find that anger is colouring my perception of things. I am angry at the terrorists who are trying to exterminate us and I feel no regrets about the just punishments that they and their supporters must receive. I am angry at the neo fascists who are trying to destroy liberal democracy, and I feel no regrets about the just punishments that they and their supporters must receive. I am angry at the rich who deny others by keeping so much for themselves, and I feel no regrets about the just punishments that they and their supporters must receive.

In fact I am embarrassed to admit that I rejoice at the vision of a kind of Dante-esque Inferno in which Capitalists, Religious extremists, Fascists, and Expansionist Nationalists are suffering in exquisitely appropriate punishments, with of course a special place for those who publish and spread false and misleading news.

Just in case you forgot ...

### **4000 years ago**

Avraham travels from Babylon to Canaan according to the promises of YHVH

Genesis 15:18

And that day YHVH made a covenant with Abram, and said, To your descendants I will give this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

Deuteronomy 1,7

Turn and go; go to the mountain of the Amorites and throughout the neighborhood, in the plain, on the mountain, in the valley, in the south, on the coast of the sea, in the land of the Canaanites and in the Lebanon, to the great river, to the river Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go and take possession of the land which YHWH swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give to them and their posterity after them.

Deuteronomy 11:24

Every place where the plant of your foot will be yours: your border will extend from desert in Lebanon, and from the river Euphrates to the western sea. No one will stand against you.

Joshua 1:4

Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the great sea toward the setting sun.

Joshua 13.2

a very long list of named places and where we set foot

## **24.01.24**

There is still no question in my mind that the war to extirpate Hamas is just, but the cost must not be forgotten.

There is the dilemma of pursuing the war balanced against rescuing the hostages.

There is the daily toll of our military casualties.

Does the number of civilian victims of Hamas atrocities and the extensive destruction their attacks have produced balance the killing and destruction we have inflicted on the Gazan population, even if they are mostly vicious Jew haters?

How does the scale of morality weigh against a just war?

We find it personally satisfying to cry out in defense of democracy, but we rarely bother to examine that belief, or examine the character of the term. Just as luxury items and marketing strategies defy the operation of supply and demand, widespread ignorance and populism defy the functioning of democracy. Aristotle's criticism of mob rule is applicable to current conditions. When vast numbers of citizens are driven by tendentious untruths promulgated by populist autocrats, democratic decisions are made accordingly and there is no true expression of the people's will. The vast numbers of Israeli and American citizens duped by the likes of Trump and Bibi show that the current form of democracy is not working.

Some perspective is required when considering the South African accusation of apartheid. Let us not forget that the ANC was a terrorist organization, practicing necklessing on opponents. and that Israel supported the previous apartheid regime.



**Bring them home!**

In case you have forgotten. Here are some details about the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel during the historic period. Check the dates. My original research was done 35 years ago.

### **3000 years ago**

Jewish Kingdoms of David and Solomon, an entire Jewish society with minorities of non-Jews. The Great Temple was for all.

### **2800 years ago**

Two Jewish kingdoms: Israel was conquered in 722 BCE by Sargon of Assyria. Judea was conquered in 587 BCE by Nebhadrezar of Babylon. The Jewish leaders were exiled by the conquerors. The remaining populations were a mixture of a Jewish majority, non-Jewish minorities and some of the conquerors themselves.

### **Between 2600 and 2000 years ago**

Quasi-independent kingdom with a Jewish king under the tutelage of a Roman governor. It is the period of Jewish revolts against Rome, Masada and the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE. Essentially the same population mix as during the Jewish kingdoms, with the addition of returning Jewish exiles. Mithraism, Sadducees, Pharasies, Essenes, Samaritans, Nazarites (=> Christians).

This was the last even semi-independent Jewish state until 1948.

### **Between 1900 and 1400 years ago**

The Land of Israel had become a Roman province, in fact three provinces, all of them called Palestina. The population still has a Jewish majority, but was increasingly cosmopolitan, with many new minorities from around the empire.

### **Between 1400 and 1000 years ago**

Arabs arrive in the Land of Israel. Islam was founded in Arabia and quickly spread north and around the Mediterranean. Imperial boundaries faded after the conquest of the Arab zealots

Jews were still the majority, though Arab Muslims were added to minorities. There were also forced converts. Many current Palestinian may be their descendants. Subordinate position for non-Muslims in the Islamic society.

### **Between 900 and 700 years ago**

Period of conflict between European Christian Crusader and Muslims. Suzerainty passing back and forth between Christian kingdoms and Muslim caliphates. There was even intermittently a foreign Christian king of Jerusalem.

Jews were still the majority in a mixed population , with a few new Christian conquerors in their fortified castles.

## **Between 700 and 80 years ago**

All vestiges of the old Roman administrative boundaries are replaced by Ottoman regions in the Land of Israel. There is no longer anything called Palestina under Ottoman Turkish Muslim administration.

Gradually, the Jews became a minority as many more Muslims settled in the region under Ottoman rule. It is also the beginning of the modern Jewish nationalist movement, Zionism.

Self satisfaction leads to ceasing self criticism and examining assumed positions all the while conditions continue to change. In the dynamic of changing conditions constant re-evaluation is required. My feeling of justification in the war being waged against Hamas has limited my ongoing objective analysis of the situation. My anger at Hamas has limited my perception, and part of that is caused by government limitations being placed on the expressions of non support of the ongoing war. Self imposed censorship by the news media.

## **31.01.24**

I am overwhelmed. I watch aghast at the masses of people in support of power hungry amoral populist neo fascists like Bibi, Trump and Putin. I know ... more important, you know that capitalism is evil, yet you do nothing to change it. You know that religious zealots are at the root of many crises the world around. You know that nationalist particularism and expansionism has been and is now a cause of many of the same crises.

In the last week, several countries around the world have ceased funding UNRA because of its participation in the Hamas slaughter. There also seems to be increased international awareness of the UNRA schoolbooks that teach hatred of Jews and the destruction of Israel.

I am amazed at this sudden awareness, and the crocodile tears of the UN, as if they too suddenly discovered it. Teaching hatred to the children has been part of the curriculum for years, and it has been known.

I know the following statements to be true, and so does anyone of reasonable intelligence, free of prejudgments and willing to verify any assertions.

1. The Hamas terrorist organization attacked Israel, deliberately slaughtered thousands of civilians and carried off hundreds as hostages into Gaza.
2. The Hamas terrorist organization launched thousands of rockets onto Israeli towns and villages in a 175 km (100 miles) radius, causing more destruction and deaths.
3. Survivors of the initial attacks, as well as thousands of Israel civilians from towns and villages bordering Gaza have been displaced from their homes and temporarily resettled in accommodations farther away.
4. The declared intention of the Hamas terrorist organization is to erase Israel from the map and extend Muslim hegemony over the area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
5. The declared intention of the Hezbollah terrorist organization is to erase Israel from the map and extend Muslim hegemony over the area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
6. The declared intention of the PLO terrorist organization is to erase Israel from the map and extend Muslim hegemony over the area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
7. The declared intention of the Islamic Republic of Iran terrorist state is to erase Israel from the map and extend Muslim hegemony over the area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

8. The Hamas terrorist organization was elected democratically by the citizens of Gaza and reflects the opinions of the vast majority.

# February

## Measure of sharing

The kibbutz lifestyle is part of our family's life experience. In 1967, we came to the kibbutz, perhaps even more than to Israel. The collective economy and concomitant social structure were incalculably valuable in educating us about the reality of socialism, both its advantages and shortcomings. I am told that there are still some kibbutzim, more than just in name, still around, though many of them have privatized, having betrayed the original values and become capitalist associations of property owners.

In the traditional kibbutz, members worked together in various economic branches. Their joint earnings were pooled and redistributed to all the members according to need. The salaries of the few who worked outside were also added to the general treasury and they too received according to need. Family units had their own small apartments, but a strong group identity was developed by non-profit communal institutions like a dining hall, a library, a small grocery store, a club room, laundry, holiday observations and various other social activities.

A new urban form of collective has emerged in the meantime, and both Michelle and Lilach have had close contact with it. Michelle is in contact with Mish'ol and Lilach is a member of the Eretz collective.

New and different challenges face this type of cooperative society. Family units live in apartments in one or more buildings. They may have a communal project that provides some income, but most work at different jobs around the community. Income redistribution is complicated. Communal institutions, like a club room or a dining hall or a laundry are not impossible, but physically very difficult to establish. Nevertheless, many such societies have been established in Israel, and from what I read, also in some other locations around the world.

The Hebrew wiki is the most complete! [קיבוץ עירוני - ויקיפדיה](#)

[Urban kibbutz - Wikipedia](#)

[What I Learned at an "Urban Kibbutz" - Reform Judaism](#)

## March

בסיפור סבא אחד, ניסיתי לתאר בעיה שפתרתי במהלך ניהול המינימרקט הקיבוצי ללא מטרות רווח. בכלכלה אינפלציונית, איך מתמחרים סחורה כך שניתן יהיה להחליף את הפריט במלאי כשהחלפה עולה יותר? החלטתי לגבות את מחיר ההחלפה עבור הפריט. רואה החשבון בקיבוץ ראה בכך רווח. שוחחתי על זה עם זהר, ולא הצלחנו למצוא מונח מתאים. 'החלף' לא מתאים. הדיון הזכיר לי תופעה פוליגלוטית, ותיארתי אותה לזהר.

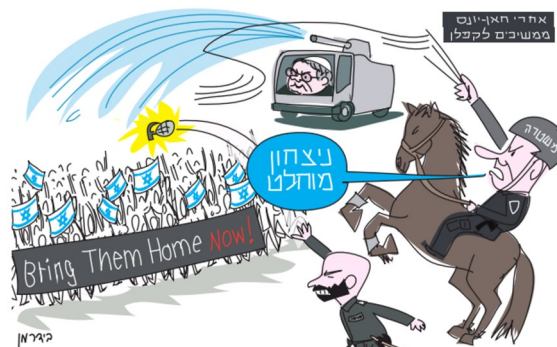
כשכותבים או מדברים, לפעמים לא מוצאים את המילה המתאימה. מהרהרים לרגע, והמילה צצה. ברור שהמוח מחפש אוטומטית במילון הפנימי של האדם, ומודיע כשהמילה נמצאת. הפעולה יותר מתוחכמת עבור פוליגלוטים, מכיוון שהחיפוש עובר במספר מילונים. לפעמים ה'משמעות' מתבטאת במילה בשפה אחרת. עבור רב-לשוני, התופעה הזאת מוכרת. לחד-לשוני, אולי קשה לדמיין. מה שבאמת מעניין הוא כאשר מחפשים מילה למשמעות מסוימת, בהנחה כמובן שמילה עבור המשמעות קיימת באחד המילונים המוחיים, אבל אף מילה לא מגיעה. כפי שוולטר היה יכול לומר: 'S'il n'existait pas un mot, il faudrait l'inventer'.

In a recent Sabba Story, I attempted to describe a problem I'd solved while running the kibbutz non profit minimarket. In an inflationary economy, how does one price a commodity such that the item can be replaced in stock when the replacement costs more? I decided to charge the replacement



price for the item. The kibbutz accountant correctly saw that as making a profit. I discussed this with Zohar, and we could not come up with an appropriate term. “Replace” does not do. The discussion reminded me of a polyglot phenomenon, and I described it to Zohar.

When writing or speaking, one sometimes cannot think of an appropriate word. One reflects for a moment, and the word occurs. Evidently, the brain automatically searches one’s internal dictionary, and announces when the word is found. This is more sophisticated for polyglots, because the search goes through a number of dictionaries. Sometimes the “meaning” is expressed by a word in a different language. If you are multilingual, you are familiar with this phenomenon. If you are not, it is probably hard to imagine. What is really interesting is when a word for a certain meaning is searched, assuming a word for it exists in one of your cerebral dictionaries, but no word is forthcoming. As Voltaire might have said: “S’il n’existait pas un mot, il faudrait l’inventer”.



In any argument, the reasonable person is always at a disadvantage to the aggressive ignorant adversary. The very act of trying to be objective and understand the other’s viewpoint is inevitably seen as weakness. This is all too obvious currently in the US with the ‘Trumpists’ touting all manner of irrational proclamations, often based on pure fiction. Attempts at reasonable discourse are ignored or rebuffed. Netanyahu exploits the war to maintain his own regime and delay judgements on his criminality. His many supporters choose to ignore this.

Similarly, our critics have conveniently chosen to ignore the Hamas savagery that plunged us all into this war. As a consequence, in the prolonged violence of the ensuing conflict, we have lost the moral high-ground. In my correspondence with family and friends abroad, I find it necessary repeatedly to explain the historical realities and moral justifications.

I am most frightened by the masses of people in the US and Israel who continue to be duped by the autocratic populist “leaders” of the extremist nationalist right. I have no doubt that many of these citizens honestly believe the rhetoric, and are ignorant of its being a manifestation of incipient classic fascism. Or, like Trump’s, their admiration of North Korean, Hungarian and Russian strongmen, reveals real fascist sentiments.

Pat and I are reading Rachel Maddow’s Prequel. It is very disturbing. We knew of Fascist elements in the US around WWII, but had no idea of its extent. Their history does much to explain the current strength of the extreme right neo fascists in the Trump camp. It’s not a new phenomenon. The underlying fascist sentiments and concomitant anti semitism have been there all along, awaiting a Fuehrer.

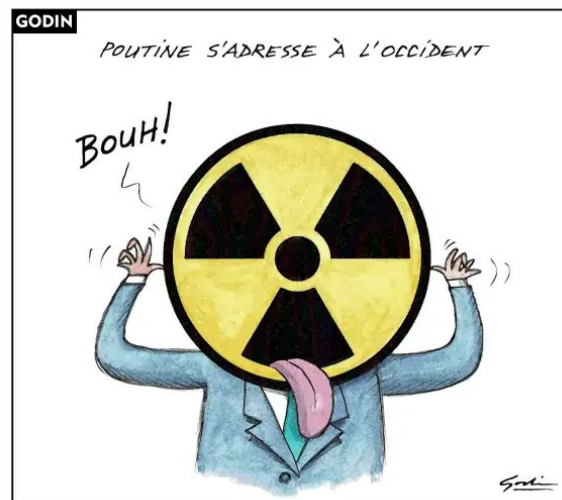
I recall coming home from school one day during the war, and discovering a German American Bund flier on the porch, urging German Americans to support the Fatherland and tell the American government to get out of Europe. I didn't really understand the significance at the time, but now I can see it as part of a very large propaganda effort by American Fascists.

The tragedy in Gaza is real. Thousands of people were slaughtered in Israel and have died in the ensuing war in Gaza. It is important that we not forget who initiated the conflict. It is also important that we be suspicious of tendentious statistics wherever they occur. This article in the reliable [France24](#) is a good example: [Hunger worsens in Gaza with no end to the war in sight](#). Note that the indicated source of all the statistics is Hamas. Without taking a blatant editorial stance, the paper is nevertheless clearly warning the observant reader that the numbers are questionable.

It's no longer "fighting to preserve democracy". It's "fighting to regain democracy".

Grandchildren are a special joy. We deprived our parents of that joy by leaving the States and settling in far away Israel. The Baranoffs came for frequent visits, but the Andersons never came. Their choice?

Le Devoir



Washington Post

