

Grieving for Gaza

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

As we grieve for Israeli victims of Hamas's October 7 raid into Israel, and for Israeli soldiers killed in fighting Hamas, and for Palestinians caught in the crossfire and starved by Hamas, and for the devastation in Israel and Gaza – let's not forget a key cause of the ongoing disaster: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's 2005 "disengagement" from Gaza and the attendant expulsion of "Gush Katif" settlers from Gaza. What a whopping strategic mistake!

The wrong and wrenching Israeli disengagement – twenty years ago this week – inspired the October 7 massacre. It not only gave Hamas the opportunity to seize control of Gaza and dig attack tunnels and arm itself to the hilt, but it gave Hamas the motivation and confidence that it could crush Israel.

The fact that the supposed Israeli strongman, General Sharon, fled lock-stock-and-barrel from Gaza in the face of Palestinian terrorism and brutally crushed the Israeli "settler" sector, strengthened extremists in Palestinian society and led to collapse of Israeli deterrence.

Sharon's argument – that after leaving Gaza Israel would enjoy overwhelming backing from the world to decisively crush "residual" Palestinian terrorism from Gaza – turned out to be utter nonsense. Until recently, the world never truly supported Israeli military action against the jihadist Palestinian state that emerged in Gaza. And even today many world leaders refuse to recognize the obvious existential threats that any Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza would pose to Israel for the foreseeable future

The bottom line is that those who understood in real time that the Israeli disengagement was bound to be a disaster for Israelis and Palestinians alike – were right. The resilient Right knew that the ravaging of Gush Katif was a deathblow to Zionism and to Israeli security. The levelheaded Left knew that unilateral withdrawal would boost the worst elements in Palestinian society.

If all this was so painfully obvious, why did Sharon obtain real-time support from so many Israelis? The answer I think is that the disengagement initiative was a trenchant exhibition of bleak and vengeful impulses in Israeli politics. It was not really or mainly about peace with the Palestinians (which Sharon certainly did not

believe in), but, alas, about the crushing of Religious Zionism.

Reflect upon this story from miserable August 2005. This happened several days after the violent ejection of Israelis from the magnificent towns of Gush Katif and the ransacking by Palestinians of the spectacular farms and greenhouses that Israel purposefully left behind for Palestinian benefit. I hosted in Israel a group of 14 Canadian newspaper editors. The group met its peers at all Israeli newspapers, including the then-editor-in-chief of *Haaretz*, David Landau.

Mr. Landau was an English gentleman, and to me, always a good colleague. While we were poles apart ideologically, I appreciated his advice and even his support. I knew that my Canadian guests would find him fascinating. But this time, Landau's radical creed got the better of him, and he proceeded to give a lesson in raw Israeli politics to the unsuspecting Canadians.

"You undoubtedly want to know what I think about the disengagement from Gaza," he told the Canucks. "I'll tell you: I think that it was the most important and uplifting thing that has happened in this country in decades! It gives me great hope for the future. I am delighted by the disengagement. But *not* for the reasons you imagine," Landau asserted with a smirk on his face.

"You Canadians probably think that the withdrawal is a fine thing because it ends the Israeli occupation of Gaza," Landau said, toying with the visitors. "But that's not it," he proclaimed, gesticulating with his hand in a dismissive motion. "That's not what makes the disengagement important."

"And you Canadians probably think that the withdrawal is a good thing because the Palestinians now will be able to build a thriving state in Gaza, and show Israel and the world that they can live in peace alongside Israel. But that's not it," Landau again proclaimed, again waving his hand dismissively. "That's not what makes the disengagement important."

"And you probably think that I think the withdrawal is a very good thing because my sons will no longer have to do army duty patrolling the alleyways of Khan Yunis and Jabalya," said Landau. But that's not it," he proclaimed, his hands flicking furiously and derisively. "That's not what makes the disengagement important. In fact, that's really not important at all."

Here Landau turned red in the face. He began banging on the table and bellowing

at full volume. "I'll let you in on a secret: a dirty little secret known only to true Israeli insiders!" he said.

Now screaming: "The reason why the disengagement is so important; the reason why it is so historic a move; the reason why it makes Ariel Sharon into such a great hero; the reason why it fills me with hope for the future - is because we *crushed* Religious Zionism!" Landau barked.

Shocked silence in the room. And then boom, crash, whack - Landau pounded on the table some more. "We *crushed* the Religious Zionist rabbis and settlers! We *destroyed* their Gush Katif towns, and we *smashed* their political power! We *decimated* the Religious Zionist lock-hold on Israeli politics. And now, now, now... Now there may be, finally, true hope for peace!"

Landau then wiped away the saliva that was literally oozing from his mouth. He had completed this bloody baring of his soul.

The Canadian visitors sat dumbfounded. They had come seeking understanding of Israel's strategic environment and of Israel's diplomatic horizons. Instead, they were treated to an acerbic exhibition of the vindictive compulsions that course through Israeli politics.

EVER SINCE THEN, it has been clear to me that a very deep and central motivation of the Left's enthusiasm for the Gaza disengagement indeed was evisceration of the settlement movement and the disembowelment of the Religious Zionist community that largely stands behind it.

This ugly truism was borne out at conferences in 2015 marking the tenth anniversary of the disengagement, held at the Israel Democracy Institute and the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

None of Sharon's aides who spoke at these conferences - Dov Weissglass, Yisrael Maimon, Amos Yaron and others - could cobble together a convincing diplomatic rationale for the expulsion; any logic that stood the test of time. Nor did they express any remorse, despite the obviously catastrophic security consequences of the unilateral withdrawal.

Intellectual figures like A.B. Yehoshua and Fania Oz-Sulzberger were no better. No regrets, no political repentance, no recalibration of their ragged strategic

worldview.

“The settlers are just a bunch of fanatic right-wing crybabies,” the foul-mouth Israeli media personality Yaron London roared. “So they had to move a few kilometers away, so what? I moved 16 times in my lifetime and never demanded compensation from anyone!”

Then London let the cruel cat out of the bag. “We had to get out from under your strangling grip,” he told former National Religious Party MK and Gush Katif resident Zvi Hendel, with whom he shared a stage. “The domination of Israeli politics and policy by messianic settler forces was much too overwhelming. So we clobbered you, and I am not sorry.”

David Landau could not have said it better. His successor at *Haaretz*, current editor-in-chief Aluf Benn, this week wrote similarly with disdain about the “massive compensation and valuable real estate” that Gush Katif “evacuees” supposedly received. (Not true.) He would like to see a repeat of the disengagement in the West Bank. Ugh.

The morals of the story are clear: Be very skeptical of fallacies about free Palestinians living in peace alongside Israel (unless Israel maintains full control of the entire security envelope) and beware the ruthless resentments in Israel politics. Israel must rebuff international pressures to rush into risky diplomatic gambits, and Israelis must refrain from ruinous internal reprisals.

Published in The Jerusalem Post, on August 8, 2025.

Hypocrisy ‘uber alles’

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Callousness and double standards are the reasons why Israelis increasingly dismiss Western pressures.

Israel's Superpower Mindset

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Get used to a revamped strategic situation anchored by a very strong Israel.

Summer reading list: Thought-provoking essays on Jews, the Israel-Hamas War, and Iran

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Here is a summer reading roundup of 17 recent deep-think articles on a range of issues: the Gaza and Iran wars, US-Israel relations, global antisemitism, Israeli society, and more.

The victories of Operation Rising Lion prove God protects his chosen people

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Warplanes of the State of Israel flew close to 400 sorties over Iran with 600 aerial refueling connections during Operation Rising Lion. Not a single jet faltered or fumbled along the way, none had technical difficulties, not a single jet was hit by

enemy fire, and not a single pilot was injured or fell into enemy hands.

Is that enormously impressive or outright miraculous?

IAF attack and surveillance drones flew an additional 1,100 sorties into Iran, and only eight drones were lost in the campaign. Together, the jets and drones successfully struck over 900 targets in Iran with 4,300 munitions, including nine nuclear sites, six airports and airbases (including Mashad Airport in eastern Iran which is 2,400 kilometers away from Israel), and 35 missile and air defense production facilities.

All the strikes were executed flawlessly, and not a single Iranian defensive system or guard force managed to interdict these operations.

IDF commandos and Mossad agents operated inside Iran or from bases just across Iran's borders, launching UAVs and secret weapon systems to neutralize Iranian abilities and target Iranian military and intelligence leaders. Not a single Iranian defensive system or guard force discovered these Israeli boots-on-the-ground in real time nor managed to interfere with these operations. All undercover Israeli soldiers and agents returned home to Israel safely.

In classic military assessment, such flawless performance and perfect results are statistically impossible. Unheard of. Unprecedented. Hard to believe.

So again, I ask, is this (merely) wildly impressive or wholly miraculous?

Over 14 days, Israel was able to neatly demolish 80 Iranian surface-to-air missile systems, 70 radars, 15 Iranian warplanes, 200 of Iran's estimated 400 missile launchers, and 800 to 1,000 of Iran's estimated 2,000 ballistic missiles. In both quantity and speed of execution, this exceeded IDF planning and expectations, and again, not a single Iranian defensive system managed to interdict these operations.

Israel also assassinated 30 senior Iranian military and IRGC officers, hundreds of Basij personnel, and 11 top scientists who were key knowledge-holders in Iran's nuclear enrichment and weaponization colossus.

All this, of course, demonstrates deep intelligence penetration and matchless Israeli military planning, enormous professionalism, and supreme heroism. But given the improbabilities of it all, given the absoluteness of the accomplishment, given the power of the punch – might it also necessarily point to support from a Supreme Hand in the heavens?

NOW CONSIDER Iran's attacks on Israel. On June 12, the night before the war, at the cabinet meeting convened to approve Operation Rising Lion, the IDF estimated that between 400 to 800 Israeli civilians could be killed in Iranian missile assaults. According to some reports, Israeli leaders were warned that if the war extended beyond two weeks and Iran was able to fire all its 2,000+ missiles into Israel including the two-ton versions, the death toll could rise to 4,000 Israelis.

In the end, Iran managed to fire about 600 missiles at Israel in 18 barrages, but

87% were intercepted by Israeli and other defensive systems. Another 1,200 Iranian drones were launched into Israel, but 99% were downed by defensive systems.

In cold military terms, such high interception rates of enemy missiles and drones are almost statistically impossible. Certainly unparalleled. Successful beyond belief.

So, is this just fantastically impressive or also spectacularly miraculous?

Unfortunately, 50 missiles and one drone broke through Israeli defenses, killing 29 Israelis, wounding 3,500 more, destroying 2,300 homes in 240 buildings, and leaving 16,000 Israeli civilians homeless. All Israelis suffered through more than 600 enemy attack alerts (more than 12,000 alarms across the county in all), sleep deprivation, economic and social dislocation, and plenty of trauma. Enemy missile fire struck a central military base, a key Israeli oil refinery, and one of the country's top scientific research institutions.

But given how bad it could have been, how much worse it was expected to be, how devastating an enemy nuclear strike on Israel might have been, God forbid – it is hard to shake the feeling that the heavens were in on the protection plan for Israel, too.

In short, the statistics are totally triumphant, miraculously so. They are not logical unless you calculate something lofty and exalted beyond the mundane math.

THE MASTERFUL Israeli assault on Iran has restored Israel's deterrent power and blessedly improved its strategic situation, especially after the failures of October 7, 2023. More importantly, Israel's victories in Operation Rising Lion will perhaps point to something grander than the natural order, driving the way to spiritual conclusions.

By this I mean that maybe the miracles bestowed upon Israel in the recent war will assist people to perceive Providence at work. Perhaps the supernatural victories will lead citizens of the world to ponder the Jewish People and the State of Israel as repositories of eternal truths and as generators of moral purpose.

After all, if you permit that Israel's victories are not just impressive, but Divine, everything changes. As one ditty going around the internet this week (hazily attributed to Allister Heath of the Daily Telegraph) declares: "Once you admit that Israel's survival is Divine, your moral compass has to reset. Your (secular) assumptions about history, power, and justice collapse. If the ancient, hated nation of Israel is somehow still chosen, protected, and thriving – then maybe God isn't a myth after all."

Again, given the threats arrayed against Israel, and given Israel's wondrous recent victories, can one deny the stark, palpable intervention of God, alongside Israel's own prowess?

Can the genocidal gutter-chant "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" hold out against the defiant demonstration of Providential Power on behalf of the

State of Israel? I do not think it can.

THE LATE Lord Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks taught that the chronicles of humanity are nothing less than a drama of redemption, in which the fate of nations reflects their loyalty (or otherwise) to covenant with God. For Jews in particular, he argued, this imposes tremendous responsibility to do things right because they are reputationally associated with the Creator; they are mandated to create “Kiddush Hashem” – a sanctification of God’s name in the world.

Non-Jews have also understood Jewish history this way. Sacks quotes the Russian Marxist thinker Nikolai Berdayev (*The Meaning of History*, 1936), who late in life came to the conclusion that the script of Jewish history bears the mark of God’s hand.

“The survival [of Jews] is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history,” Berdayev wrote. “The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions, and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.”

I think that Rising Lion indeed is a “peculiar and fateful” moment in history, a moment for spiritual introspection, not just strategic recalculation.

The victories of Rising Lion, categorically impressive and exceptionally miraculous, ought to point beyond themselves to something grander than the natural order – to the attentive hand of God in our world. Published in *The Jerusalem Post*, July 6, 2025.

Veni, vidi, vici

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Veni, vidi, vici – I came, I saw, I conquered. This famous military pronouncement can certainly be applied to Israel’s Operation Rising Lion. But how can it be that the Israeli military and political leadership that so craftily planned the offensive that struck at Iran and Hezbollah could have collapsed so stunningly before the much smaller and weaker Hamas army in Gaza?

Waking up the Western world

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

In countering Iran, Israel is this generation's great generator of moral purpose and strategic clarity.

Truly 'monstrous' sanctions on Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Stop throwing pernicious pieties about concocted "settler violence" in Israel's face as it fights for its life.

Israel braces for long wars of attrition

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Why has the US under President Donald Trump failed to broker an end to the Russia-Ukraine war, an end to the Hamas war against Israel and the hostage crisis, an end to Houthi assaults on Israel, and an end to the Iranian nuclear bomb program?

Because Trump and his team have the wrong paradigm in mind. They approach everything with a pragmatist, transactional perspective. They see everything

through dispassionate business eyeglasses. They think that America's enemies do the same.

Worse still, Trump thinks that the weighty economic power of America and the force of his own HUGE personality will bend adversaries to his will.

But what if America's challengers are motivated by deeper, darker purposes? What if Russia, Iran, Hamas, and the Houthis (and even the Chinese) are driven by ideological ambitions that go far beyond the calculations of economic and other cold-neutral self-interest? What if these actors are prepared for decades of war against the West, and specifically against Israel, no matter what "great deals" Trump offers them?

The latest example of such American miscalculation is the reported Trump administration proposal to shoehorn Iran's program for enrichment of uranium to atomic-bomb levels into some wacky offshore consortium of Middle East countries including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Turkey alongside the US. This would somehow dilute or restrict Iran's near-bomb-ready nuclear colossus.

But of course, Iranian dictator Ayatollah Khamenei defiantly has rejected this idea, for ideological reasons. "National independence means that the Iranian nation stands on its own feet; it means not waiting for a green or red light from others," he declared.

Iran's resolve to forge its own path without foreign interference "defines its sovereignty," he said. "We can" is a revolutionary principle taught by Imam Khomeini, he bellowed. He proceeded to call US proposals rude, insolent, arrogant, destructive, and "deviating from the motivations and sacrifices rooted in our people's faith."

Khamenei ranted on about Zionist "crimes," with the usual formulas about Israel as a cancer in the Middle East that must and will be eliminated by Iran, and he insisted that Iran is developing all means to do so. "By definite divine decree, the Zionist regime is collapsing. God willing, the day [of its demise] is not far off."

In short, no pragmatic deal offered by the US to Iran nor any further Western sanctions against it are going to knock the Islamic Republic off its radical path, even if it bends a bit to mollify Trump for a bit. Ingrained ideological commitment for the long-term trumps short term accommodations to Trump.

The algorithm by which America and Israel's adversaries operate is attrition; long wars of attrition, informed by an ethos of sacrifice and eschatological visions of zealous, crushing victory.

AFTER OCTOBER 7, all Israeli leaders and most of the Israeli public recognize this; that the set of rules by which the worst actors in the Middle East operate are ideological, attritional, genocidal; not accommodational or transactional.

For example, Israelis understand that beyond whatever temporary accords might unfortunately be necessary to obtain the release of a few more Israeli hostages held criminally and viciously by Hamas, there are no long-term accommodations with Hamas. It must be rooted out from Gaza, Judea, and Samaria - and this means a decade (or more) of bloody warfare at varying degrees of intensity.

It means "managing the conflict" through the determined use of force in a proactive, preemptive, and persistent manner. It means no establishment of any runaway, radical, revolutionary Palestinian states.

And if there are any accommodations and reconciliations in the broader region to be had, they run through the Abraham Accords prism which purposefully and smartly sidelined the Palestinian issue.

(This is also why it is so nonsensical of France, Saudi Arabia, and others to resuscitate delusions of Palestinian statehood, specifically now. This is a recipe for devastating disappointment and escalated conflict. And of course, for the isolation of Israel - which may be the point of the whole French-Saudi exercise.)

Similarly, Israelis understand that beyond whatever interim accords might be possible with the new Al-Jolani regime in Syria and the Aoun government in Lebanon, the IDF itself must and will continue to regularly interdict threats to Israel over the borders with these countries. Israel will not sit back for a decade or two, merely gathering intelligence on emerging threats until the threat reaches monstrous proportions (as Israel unfortunately did versus Hezbollah).

The same goes for Judea and Samaria. Nobody is under the illusion that any Palestinian "authority" can or will counteract the build-up of Iranian backed Islamic terrorist armies in these areas - which directly threaten Jerusalem and central Israel. Only the IDF can and will; thus, the full-scale Israeli military operations in places like Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus to resolutely rout out such

threats. This is likely to be a permanent feature of Israeli policy. President Macron should take note.

The same goes for Iran. The IAEA is warning that Iran already has enriched enough uranium at near-bomb-ready levels for 6-8 nuclear bombs, and that its advanced centrifuges could do so many times over within three months' time. Thus, Israelis know that complete dismantling or military destruction of this apparatus (as well as Iran's ballistic missile empire) is necessary soon.

Half or cosmetic measures based on "trust" that purport to put the Iranian nuclear juggernaut to bed are insufficient. Especially if they ignore the missile threat and Iran's other hegemonic incursions across the region. Any such boondoggle of an American accord with Iran will force to Israel to act against Tehran on its own.

THE ENEMY wars of attrition against Israel, like the drawn-out and purposefully never-ending negotiations for hostage release, have an additional, central purpose. This is the ripping to shreds of Israeli society from within – the exacerbation of political and religious-social divisions; the exhaustion of Israeli citizens and fighters; and the sapping of a will to fight on.

Alas, this enemy strategy is highly effective. Israel is indeed increasingly drained and divided (not to mention highly taxed and exasperated with the country's leadership); although not crushingly so.

I am certain, as detailed above, that most Israelis understand the long-term ideological and civilizational nature of the battles ahead and are girding themselves for them. This, irrespective of what political changes may be wrought by an Israeli election campaign over the next year and regardless of what mistakes of accommodation/surrender might be made in the coming weeks by Western leaders.

Israelis have every reason to believe that the State of Israel can successfully reset the regional strategic architecture in positive directions – as it did once through the Abraham Accords; as it has in going a long way toward crushing Hamas and Hezbollah (which also sped forward collapse of the Russian- and Iranian-backed Assad regime in Syria); as it has in stripping Iran of its air defenses, and more.

The question is: How does one advance a deeper, more mature, more resilient,

and more patient appreciation of threats and responsibilities in the Middle East among Western leaders? How does one assist them in growing a spine and backing Israel along its long path toward security and prosperity?

Published in The Jerusalem Post 06.06.2025.

****The opinions expressed in Misgav publications are the authors' alone.****

Macron's 'recognition' of a Palestinian state is a way to punish Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 08.08.2025

Instead of pushback against the increasingly genocidal Palestinian national movement, we get more perilous pablum about the “urgency” of Palestinian statehood.