



ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

swap Palestinian terrorists for Israeli hostages for the first time, every time that Iran's terror armies have held Israeli hostages, they have successfully used them to achieve strategic gains.

Commentary...

Netanyahu's Red Lines for 'The Deal' By Caroline B. Glick

Currently, Israel's media is laser-focused on the prospect of "the deal" with Hamas. Will "the deal" come to fruition or will Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu scuttle it?

The premise of the discourse is that "the deal," is objectively desirable. Anyone who tells you otherwise—particularly, if his name is Netanyahu—is a liar acting solely out of personal, political and morally corrupt considerations.

The leaders of the security establishment, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Israel Defense Forces' Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, Shin Bet director Ronen Bar and Mossad director David Barnea, support "the deal" and insist that Israel can live with the concessions it requires Jerusalem to make to Hamas.

Ahead of a new round of discussions about "the deal" this week in Qatar and Egypt, Netanyahu convened Israel's negotiating team led by Barnea and Bar on Sunday. Following the meeting, the Prime Minister's Office published five "red lines" for a deal ahead of the talks.

Broadly, "the deal" involves a six-week ceasefire during which Hamas would release 20 live, predominantly female hostages. Hamas is currently holding around 120 hostages, of whom some 80 are presumed alive. Israel would be required to release hundreds of terrorists from its prisons, including murderers, to secure the release of the 20 women.

Netanyahu's first red line is for Israel to retain its freedom to resume offensive operations after the six-week ceasefire. Hamas long demanded that Israel concede that position and agree that the ceasefire would be permanent. Hamas is now willing to give up that demand. But it replaced it with a demand that the U.S. guarantee that Israel will not reinstate military operations in Gaza. Hamas's reasonable assumption is that Israel will not defy the United States.

Netanyahu's first red line makes it impossible for the administration to accept Hamas's demand.

Netanyahu's second red line requires Hamas to be blocked from smuggling arms from Egypt during the pause in fighting.

His third red line requires a mechanism to ensure that no armed men are able to return to northern Gaza from southern Gaza.

These two red lines come in response to Hamas's demand that Israel withdraw its forces from the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors during the six-week ceasefire (which Hamas, and its international supporters, seek to render permanent).

The Philadelphi corridor controls Gaza's border with Egypt. On Oct. 7, Israel was stunned by the expanse of Hamas's arsenal and realized that Egypt—far from acting as Israel's partner in its effort to prevent Hamas from expanding its military power—was enabling it.

Since Israel seized control over the Philadelphi corridor, it has exposed dozens of cross-border underground tunnels. One, in particular, is a massive, three-story highway. Speaking to Amit Segal of Channel 12 news, IDF commanders said on Monday that what Israel has exposed to date is less than half of what Hamas has built yet to discover. So the situation remains threatening, and Egypt is not helping to remedy it—to the contrary.

This brings us to the Netzarim corridor, which IDF forces began constructing several months ago. The Netzarim corridor runs east to west in central Gaza. It enables Israel to control the traffic of Gazans from south to north, as well as prevents Hamas's reconstitution of its political and military power in northern Gaza by blocking the return of its forces to the area.

Given the strategic significance of corridors, the imperative for Israel to maintain Netanyahu's red lines is self-evident.

Netanyahu's fourth red line requires Israel to "maximize the number of living hostages freed during the initial ceasefire."

Hamas took 250 men, women and children on Oct. 7, and still holds 120 of them nine months later because it rightly views the hostages as its strategic trump card. Since 1985, when Israel agreed to

If Israel removes its forces from Gaza, including from the Netzarim and Philadelphi corridors, and releases hundreds of terrorists from jail to secure the release of 20 hostages, what will it have to give to receive the release of the other 100, including 60 people presumed to still be alive?

Without troops on the ground, without the ability to reinstate combat operations, the cost of negotiating their release would be utterly prohibitive for Israel. As a result, either Israel will capitulate and start the countdown for its destruction to get them released, or it will leave the rest of the hostages in Gaza indefinitely with scant military or diplomatic prospects for their rescue.

Netanyahu's final red line requires that "the deal" not undermine any of Israel's war goals. This sounds redundant. But actually, it is important because it includes aspects of the deal that he doesn't mention explicitly. One of the deal's components being presented as "pro-Israel" stands out in particular. This component would see an "Arab force" take over security responsibility in Gaza. The idea is that forces from moderate Arab states at peace with Israel would be in charge.

There are two problems with this. First, as has been discovered regarding Egypt, ostensibly moderate and friendly Arab regimes are not necessarily moderate or friendly when it comes to Israel's war against Hamas specifically or in relation to the Palestinian goal of annihilating Israel more generally. Bringing Arab forces into Gaza effectively merges the existential Palestinian conflict with the all-but-resolved Arab conflict with Israel. Since most Arabs support the Palestinians against Israel, this would undermine the peaceful relations Israel has built with Arab regimes across decades.

Netanyahu's final red line would reject a deal that in any way undermines Israel's war goals—and that includes preserving Israel's peaceful ties with its moderate Arab neighbors.

These red lines need to be viewed as an all-or-nothing package. Either the negotiators secure all of them, or there is no deal. Their implication is obvious. Israel will accept a hostage deal. Indeed, it is willing to pay a massive price to achieve one. But it will not undermine its position strategically. It will not enable Hamas to win this war. It will not abandon the rest of the hostages. It will not sign its national death warrant.

Given the near-unanimous support of the public for the goals of the war, we should pay attention to the actors that have condemned Netanyahu's red lines.

Aside from leftist politicians and activists, who can be expected to condemn him, Netanyahu's red lines have also been sharply criticized by senior officers in the Mossad and the IDF. Channel 12 quoted two security sources who castigated Netanyahu's decision to publish his red lines. "Netanyahu pretends that he wants a deal but is working to torpedo it," one said. That source insisted that Netanyahu was acting for personal reasons.

A second source insisted that Netanyahu refuses to see the half-full side of the cup. Netanyahu, he said, "emphasizes the gaps" between Hamas and Israel, rather than the agreements they have reached to date.

Statements like these and others raise the disconcerting sense that Israel's General Staff and its other security services reject the government's decision to fight for victory in the war. Ynet news reported that the generals, including Gallant, believe that securing the release of 20 hostages is more important than maintaining control over the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors. This means that they aren't committed to the government's war goals of defeating Hamas militarily and politically, and to preventing the terror group from rebuilding its military and political power.

Halevi's spokesmen made the case all but explicitly in an interview Monday with ABC News.

"Will you and me be talking five years from now about Hamas as a terror organization in Gaza? The answer is yes," said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, spokesman for the IDF.

A second source of criticism of Netanyahu's red lines is the

Biden administration.

President Joe Biden himself presented the broad outlines of “the deal” last month and insisted that it was Israel’s offer. In intervening weeks, it became clear that Biden was speaking for himself and not for Israel. True, Israel agreed to “the deal.” But it agreed to “the deal” with Netanyahu’s red lines.

The administration has been pushing full throttle for Netanyahu to accept “the deal” without his deadlines. It is reportedly threatening sanctions against Netanyahu if he rejects it. According to a high-level source, the International Criminal Court’s declared plan to issue international arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant was not an ICC initiative. Rather, it was the brainchild of Maher Bitar, senior National Security Council director for the Defense Department and the Intelligence Community. Bitar, one of the most powerful officials in the administration, is a former UNRWA employee and views Israel as an illegitimate state. He also serves as special counsel to the president. Chatter is now being heard that the White House is threatening Netanyahu, saying the ICC will issue the arrest warrants if he refuses to accept “the deal.”

Rhetoric aside, given the strategic consequences of “the deal,” the administration’s clear position is that it supports Hamas’s victory over Israel in this war.

Netanyahu has long insisted that he is willing to pay an enormous price to achieve the release of the hostages. The fact that he supports “the deal” with his red lines is proof that he is telling the truth. His red lines—minimal as they are—place him on the opposite side of the fence of his detractors. They are willing to accept capitulation. He is not.

The media, the administration and the security establishment refuse to discuss the strategic implications of “the deal,” as proposed, for Israel. Instead, they harshly and hysterically condemn Netanyahu and accuse him of behaving selfishly for refusing to abandon Israel’s war goals.

Given the actual stakes, it is clear that the media is distorting events. Netanyahu is the only actor on the stage who isn’t behaving politically. He is the only one acting to protect Israel from strategic catastrophe. (JNS Jul 8)

Judea and Samaria are Literally on Fire By David M. Weinberg

Reading the international press and much of the overwhelmingly left-wing Israeli press, you inevitably get the impression that the threats to stability in Judea and Samaria stem from “settler violence” and settlement housing starts.

You wouldn’t know, couldn’t know, much about the real sources of instability—which are escalating Palestinian terrorism, surging illegal Palestinian construction in zones of strategic importance to Israel and wildly out-of-control arson attacks. The arson attacks in particular have become a central tool in the terrorist assault on Jewish life in Judea and Samaria.

Here is a reminder of some basic facts.

Attacks on Palestinian property and individuals committed by a few extremists at the fringes of a half-million-strong and overwhelmingly peaceful community of Israelis who live over the Green Line—works out to a level of violence lower than Israeli on Israeli violence in greater Tel Aviv.

And without meaning to diminish the ugliness of extremist Israeli attacks on Palestinians (about 1,100 incidents of all types a year), harassment and vandalism by some angry settlers pales in comparison to more than 5,000 Palestinian bomb, car-ramming, knifing and shooting attacks a year aimed at killing Israeli civilians in Judea and Samaria.

(And of course, the 1,200 Israelis slaughtered by Hamas on Oct. 7 or the reign of terror inflicted on all Israelis by the more than 20,000 rockets and missiles fired by Hamas into Israeli civilian population centers over the past half year.)

Everybody knows how Nablus and Jenin (and Tulkarem and Qalqilya and more) have become dens of hard-core, Iranian-supplied terrorist groups, requiring nightly interdiction raids by Israeli commandos with heavy engineering and air support. (So much for the Oslo Accords promise of a demilitarized Palestinian autonomous entity.)

The threat of terrorist assault from the western Samaria seam line into central Israel is concrete, and already there have been scattered shootings over and through the security barrier into the Bat Hefer and

Mount Gilboa areas.

Israel has been forced to eliminate 450 terrorists in Judea and Samaria this year in more than 60 brigade-level raids, and arrest 3,600 other terrorists or those suspected of terrorism. Some 8,000 Israeli troops, mostly reservists, have been stationed on regional defense missions in the area this past year.

As for housing starts, well, there are about 4,000 Israeli “structures” (mobile homes, caravans, etc.) considered unapproved or illegal in Judea and Samaria. This includes homes for which final residence permits are pending or homes where a garage or additional room was built without permits. But note: 85% of these “structures” are inside the municipal boundaries (what is known as the “blue line”) of recognized Jewish communities.

That leaves only some 500 structures that are, according to international critics of Israel, “changing the footprint of Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria.” (Not a great showing for “Zionist expansionism,” if you ask me.)

On the other hand, there are at least 90,000 defiantly built Palestinian homes that have cropped up illegally in Area C of the West Bank in recent years, almost all of which can be considered strategic threats to Israel.

These structures actively are changing the map of Area C, purposefully placing Palestinians in areas that never before had an Arab presence. They are dividing the settlement blocs, encroaching on access routes (forcing the Israeli government to pave bypass roads to the bypass roads, which leads to accusations of land expropriation, etc.)—all in an attempt to prevent any future logical division of the territory into neighboring polities (for those who still believe in the wisdom of this).

A recent report by the Regavim Movement argues that illegal Palestinian construction seems designed to conquer the Judea and Samaria security buffer zone, meaning the seam line adjacent to the security barrier that Israel constructed mostly along the Green Line over two decades.

Regavim’s mapping division has revealed three sample clusters of illegal construction: In the southern Hebron region in the vicinity of Ramadin, Dahariyeh and Eshkolot; in the Judea-Etzion region, south of Tarkumiyeh, Khirbet Khatta, Khirbet Adir, Sureif, Wadi Phukhin, Batir, Beit Ikka, Beit Laqya, Kfar Tzaffa and Na’alin; and in Samaria, in the northern and southern sections of IDF firing zone 203 near Kfar Thulth, north Tzofim, and a-Ras.

Regavim identified 7,675 illegal structures in these clusters, all within a one-kilometer radius of the separation barrier, all of them in Area C.

In the seam line buffer zone stretching from the northern tip of the Jordan Valley to Ein Gedi in the south, Regavim has mapped 16,866 additional illegal structures within a one-kilometer radius of security and border barriers.

And then there are the multiple brush and forest fires being lit every day in Judea and Samaria by Palestinian terrorists in an attempt to literally smoke Israeli farmers, ranchers and settlers out of the area.

Over the past months, firefighters have battled well over 1,000 fires in Judea and Samaria, many of them adjacent to Jewish towns and Israeli army bases, almost all of them certainly caused by arson.

This included difficult-to-control fires around the community of Peduel, on the western ridge of Samaria, and adjacent to Elon Moreh, an Israeli town of 2,000 people in the Samaritan highlands; fires near Revava, Shavei Shomron, Karnei Shomron, Salit, Nahal Shiloh, Yitzhar, Givat Itamar, Tzur Harel, Oz Zion and Kochav Hashachar; in Gush Etzion and the Jordan Valley; near the important IDF base on Mount Hazor near Ofra, near the Mount Kabir base above Nablus, and adjacent to the “Ofrit” base on Mount Scopus on the eastern ridges of Jerusalem.

And every single day, Palestinians and their extreme left-wing Israeli anarchist allies torch the grazing grounds of cattle in the central Binyamin and Samaria highlands where pioneering Israelis have established a string of some 100 ranches (in Hebrew: havot); or as Western media and hostile NGOs call them, “wildcat settler outposts.”

The grass and brush that grows in the vast and mostly unsettled parts of Binyamin and Samaria are “natural gold” for feeding these herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Burning the pastures is outright warfare, designed to firebomb Jewish “settler sheep” off the land and drive settlers from the area.

This is not too different from the devastation caused by thousands

of incendiary balloons and kites sent over the Gaza border by Hamas since 2018, firebombs that destroyed tens of thousands of acres of nature reserves and farmland in southern Israel. (Experts say it will take years to rehabilitate the burned farm fields in southern Israel.)

But who cared about the Hamas fire balloon blitz, and who cares about the manifold arson assaults in Judea and Samaria? Who cares about the dangerous and illegal Palestinian building juggernaut along the seam line and other strategic zones? The first is long forgotten, the second grossly underreported and third shrugged off (or even supported by the European Union).

And in the face of exaggerated reports of “settler violence” and crassly misreported stories of settler “land grabs”—well, the reality of Palestinian terrorist violence and belligerence does not stand a chance of grabbing anybody’s attention in Tel Aviv, Washington, or Brussels. (Israel Hayom Jul 10)

Does the Palestinian Leadership Represent All Palestinians?

By Khaled Abu Toameh

Palestinians who live abroad are calling for a voice in Palestinian decision-making, arguing that neither the Palestinian Authority nor the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have the right to speak for all Palestinians. In 2017, a portion of the Palestinian population residing outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip announced the formation of a group called the “Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad.” The group, which claims to represent 6-7 million Palestinians dispersed throughout more than 50 countries, is fiercely opposed to the Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the PLO in 1993, and supports the “resistance” against Israel. The group’s leaders say that the primary impetus behind its formation is the “marginalization” of Palestinians abroad since the signing of the Oslo Accords.

Prior to the agreement, there was a semi-consensus among the Palestinians that the PLO is the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” After the signing of the Oslo Accords, however, the PLO leadership moved from Tunis and other Arab countries to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As the PLO began concentrating the majority of its efforts on the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the organization’s ties with the Palestinians abroad increasingly deteriorated.

In the past three decades, the PLO Executive Committee, a crucial decision-making body, and other institutions associated with the organization have met regularly in Ramallah. The PLO no longer has offices in most Arab countries.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who also chairs the PLO Executive Committee, and several PLO leaders are incensed over the formation of the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad. They see the PLO’s status as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” as directly threatened by the group. They are also concerned about the extreme stances the group has adopted since its founding, particularly its opposition to recognizing Israel’s right to exist and commitment to the “armed struggle” against Israel.

The representatives of the Palestinian expatriates maintain that former PLO leader Yasser Arafat was not entitled to “give up 80% of the lands of Palestine” when he recognized Israel’s right to exist. Furthermore, they contend that Arafat had no right to abandon the “armed struggle” by purportedly amending the PLO’s Charter shortly after the signing of the Oslo Accords. They further state that the PLO leadership is not authorized to surrender Palestinian refugees’ and their descendants’ “right of return” to their former homes within Israel.

Accusing Abbas of “hijacking” and “weakening” the PLO, the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad has demanded extensive reforms in the PLO, but to no avail.

Two of the group’s declared objectives are “engaging the Zionist enterprise” and “supporting the resistance” inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A standard definition of “resistance” is the use of violence by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups against Israel. Abbas claims he favors only peaceful “popular resistance” against Israel and therefore views the group’s commitment to the “armed struggle” as a challenge to him personally.

Given that the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad was established in Istanbul, P.A. officials surmise that Turkey, together with Qatar, is its primary backer. Qatar and Turkey have supported and encouraged Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization, for a considerable amount of time.

Currently, the offices of the Popular Conference for Palestinians

Abroad are located at the Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultation in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, where the Iran-backed Hezbollah terrorist militia exists as a state-within-a-state.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad has voiced support for the Palestinian “resistance” in the Gaza Strip and called on the Palestinians to utilize the worldwide support for the Palestinians, especially on U.S. college campuses, to intensify the diplomatic and legal campaign against Israel in the international arena.

For now, it does not seem that the representatives of the Palestinians abroad are interested in taking on any role in overseeing the affairs of the Gaza Strip after the war. Instead, they believe the Palestinians should invest their energies and resources in pursuing an international campaign to delegitimize and isolate Israel.

In addition, they demand a complete overhaul of the Palestinian political structure, which would involve the ouster of the 88-year-old Abbas and the majority of his associates.

On June 28, 2024, some 200 representatives of the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad convened in Istanbul to engage in a symposium centered on the aftermath of Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack on Israel. Speakers at the parley agreed that the attack catalyzed “achievements” gained by the Palestinians, including anti-Israel student demonstrations in the United States, a rise in international attention to the Palestinian cause, a “schism” that has split Israeli society over the war, and the issue of the 120 Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip.

It is difficult to see how Abbas or any other Palestinian leader can ignore the voices of Palestinian expatriates. These Palestinians are sending a message to Abbas and other Palestinian leaders that they are not authorized to sign any peace agreement or make any concessions to Israel on behalf of millions of Palestinians abroad whose views seem to be more aggressive towards Israel. (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Jul 9)

Kamala Harris Thinks Campus Anti-Semites Are Very Fine People

By Jonathan S. Tobin

One of the inevitable results of President Joe Biden’s disastrous debate performance last month and subsequent refusal to drop out of the 2024 presidential race in November is the increasing attention being paid to his running mate. Vice President Kamala Harris has been something of a punch line since she assumed her current office. But now that most Democratic officeholders and pundits have realized that the president is unlikely to win re-election, she has, for a number of compelling reasons, become the most likely replacement for him should he be prevailed upon to drop out. That means that even though she has fared poorly during her time in office, many of the same biased corporate media hacks that spent years covering up the growing evidence of Biden’s lack of mental acuity are now taking up the task of convincing the country that the generally accepted opinion of Harris as someone whose talents have not kept pace with her ambition is mistaken.

One major front in the battle to reintroduce Harris to the public relates to her stance on the war waged by Israel against Hamas in Gaza after the terrorist attacks on Oct. 7. Harris’s husband, Doug Emhoff, has been the figurehead for the administration’s toothless “U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.” The vice president reminded the left-wing base of the party that she hopes to lead—either this year or in the future—that this is the one issue about which she’s been willing to signal her disagreement with her boss, dubbed “Genocide Joe” by pro-Palestinian protesters for his on-again/off-again backing for Israel. In an interview with the leftist magazine *The Nation*, Harris lauded the mobs who have demanded that the terrorists be allowed to survive, as well as backing their calls for Israel’s destruction and terrorism against Jews.

She did throw in some weasel words to distance herself from what the Israel-haters who took over campuses, and blocked streets and bridges, in addition to demonstrating outside Jewish businesses and synagogues, have been saying. But much like what Biden and other Democrats falsely assert that former President Donald Trump said about neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017, Harris seems to think that those chanting “from the river to the sea” and engaging in open acts of antisemitism are very fine people.

“They are showing exactly what the human emotion should be, as a response to Gaza,” said Harris about protesters who have, in some

cases, been paid by Amnesty International or even Iran. “There are things some of the protesters are saying that I absolutely reject, so I don’t mean to wholesale endorse their points. But we have to navigate it. I understand the emotion behind it.”

There’s nothing new about Harris embracing those who libel Israel. In September 2021 during an appearance at George Mason University in Virginia, a student given the opportunity to ask the vice president a question launched into a tirade in which she claimed Israel’s existence was an act of “ethnic genocide” and condemned U.S. funding for Israel’s Iron Dome missile-defense system that prevents its people from being slaughtered by Palestinian terrorist rockets. In response, Harris didn’t challenge these antisemitic libels, instead responding with a lecture about pluralism and the need for activism. “Your voice, your perspective, your experience, your truth cannot be suppressed, and it must be heard,” Harris told the student.

When asked about the three college presidents who wouldn’t declare that advocacy for the genocide of Jews was against their schools’ rules, Emhoff said the trio “lacked moral clarity.” The same might be said of his wife, who seems to think that a movement that has mainstreamed hatred for Jews should be judged by its supposed good intentions.

That might be the sort of answer that the intersectional wing of the Democrats that despises Israel is looking for. Still, it poses a difficult question for Jewish Democrats, who are clinging to the dubious notion that she and her Jewish husband would be allies of a Jewish community facing a post-Oct. 7 surge of antisemitism, let alone a friend of Israel.

I have never believed that Biden would leave the race voluntarily and have pointed out to those who assume that some shadowy group of Democratic kingmakers could force him to do so that they are mistaken. Over the course of the last 60 years, American political parties have been hollowed out in the name of democracy, and there are no bosses or machines that can decide presidential nominations. Whether referring to congressional leaders, Hollywood Democrats like George Clooney or the editorial board of *The New York Times*, there is no “they” that can make Biden do anything he doesn’t want to do. Everything we know about his arrogance, contempt for critics and the single-minded lust for power that defines both him and his wife argue that Biden will never concede defeat or be persuaded to withdraw. Short of Divine Providence intervening in the election in some manner (or as the president told George Stephanopoulos, “the Lord Almighty” personally telling him to drop out), Biden is going to be the Democratic nominee.

If he were to drop out, anyone who assumes that Harris could be bypassed for the Democratic nomination is dreaming. Only she can access the money that has been raised for Biden’s campaign. It’s just as true that dumping a black woman from the ticket is something that the Democratic Party can’t contemplate. They are fixated on identity politics and the woke catechism of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) that can be viewed as mandating Biden’s choice of Harris in 2020. And that’s not even mentioning the fact that female African-Americans are the Democrats’ most loyal voters.

Equally important, if Biden is able to defy the pollsters and the widespread perception of his decline and defeat former President Donald Trump in November, the odds that he would be able to serve out a second term are steep, leaving many to assume that Harris, who is already a heartbeat away from the presidency, would replace him at some point in the next four years.

That makes it even more imperative that Harris undergo far more scrutiny than she has already received.

To be fair to her, few who have occupied the office of vice president have thrived in it. As John Adams, the first vice president put it, it is, “The most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived, or his imagination conceived.” Unless and until they were elevated to the top job by the death of the president, virtually every vice president prior to the last half-century was not just left out of major policy decisions, but ignored. In George Gershwin’s classic 1931 Broadway musical “Of Thee I Sing,” the vice president is only able to get into the White House by paying for a tour like a common tourist. And the office was the butt of the old joke about there being two brothers: One went to sea, the other became vice president, and neither was ever heard from again.

That changed in recent decades as vice presidents like Walter Mondale, George H.W. Bush, Al Gore, and especially Dick Cheney, were given serious responsibilities and power. But not all have

measured up to that standard, and the respective staffs of the president and vice president have often clashed. That was certainly true when Biden was vice president and reports of the Obama inner circle mocking him were given even more credence when he was pushed aside in favor of Hillary Clinton during the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election.

The same pattern repeated itself since January 2021.

Biden did give Harris the job of dealing with one of the country’s most important problems—the massive increase in illegal immigration at America’s southern border. Not wishing to offend her party’s left-wing base by actually trying to stop what can only be termed an invasion of several million migrants entering the country without permission, she did nothing. Indeed, she didn’t even visit the border for several months after being named the “border czar” and then only briefly.

Since then, the White House has made it clear that the president has little confidence in her and so has given Harris as little to do as possible with Biden’s staff not taking much care to conceal their contempt. As a result, she is now mainly known for speeches widely mocked as incomprehensible word salads and her trademark laugh that might better be described as a cackle. Indeed, one of the main arguments that underpinned Biden’s determination to run for a second term and to stay in the race has been the fact that Harris’s general election prospects are even worse than the president’s. While in the wake of Biden’s infirmity being exposed at the debate some polls have shown her doing better than him, the RealClearPolitics average of all polls has her trailing Trump by a larger margin than that of Biden.

Whether she gets the chance to run this year or succeeds Biden at some point in the next four years, the one thing you can say about Harris is that she is clearly interested in appealing to the Democrats’ anti-Israel left wing. She has been careful to mix in some pro forma comments about supporting the Jewish state’s right to exist and defend itself, as well as hosting a White House showing of a film about the use of rape as a weapon of war against Jews. Yet she has also cultivated a reputation as this administration’s resident Israel-basher. Indeed, while speaking at length to *The Nation* about her worries over whether Palestinian women have a reliable supply of feminine hygiene products, she rarely speaks about Israeli hostages and has gone out of her way to buttress false claims about Palestinian casualties and a mythical famine in Gaza.

So, while not an all-out opponent of Israel in the manner of her friends in the left-wing congressional “Squad” who traffic in antisemitism, Harris can be seen as a transitional figure for the Democrats on this issue as they complete their journey from a pro-Israel party to one that is hostile to it. She not only lacks the record but the instinct to pretend to be a supporter of Zionism, as Biden has done. She also makes a greater effort than the president to show the younger generation of Democrats who have been indoctrinated in toxic ideas like critical race theory and intersectionality, which falsely label Israel and the Jews as “white” oppressors, that she is on their side.

Nor should anyone look to Emhoff as someone who can be a credible voice on antisemitism or Israel. The first man to hold the title of “second gentleman” spent his life demonstrating zero interest in Judaism or Israel until it became politically important for his wife’s career to do so. He’s representative of a large segment of people whose ties to Jewish life are largely cultural and therefore ephemeral. His daughter, Ella, a fashion model, not only spurns the title of a Jewish influencer but has raised money for the viciously anti-Israel U.N. Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) that has ties to Hamas terrorism and has helped perpetuate the century-old war on the Jewish state. Those who are relying on him to advocate effectively against antisemitism are fooling themselves.

When placed beside a president whose physical and mental decline is obvious, Harris—a healthy and vigorous 59-year-old—seems like a credible alternative, as well as a DEI choice who might hold together the Democratic coalition. However, the prospect of her elevation to the presidency ought to worry anyone who cares about Israel and the imperative to roll back the woke tide that is fueling a surge in antisemitism in the United States and worldwide. Her husband’s origins and any pandering to the community notwithstanding, if she winds up leading the Democrats, the case for the party as a home for Jewish voters will become even weaker than it already is. (JNS Jul 10)