

A tale of three speeches

• By YISRAEL MEDAD

Speeches are a tool and a showcase for politicians, educators, and rabble-rousers. They can be inspiring and mobilizing, or polarizing. Here in Israel, senior army officers also make speeches.

Last month, as the outgoing head of the IDF Central Command Maj. Gen. Yehuda Fuchs marked his resignation, he addressed remarks critical not of his commanders or his troops but of the local and spiritual leadership in Judea and Samaria (Yeshva), the civilians his job was to keep safe and secure.

Fuchs' opinion on violence directed by Jews at local resident Arabs was that the leadership of the Yeshva communities did "not find the strength to come out openly and act according to the Jewish values that they are educating their children on." He then added, theologically, "This is not Judaism to me. I was born the one I grew up with in my father and mother's house. This is not the way of the Torah. It is about adopting the tactics of the enemy and following their rules." Fuchs may be 100% correct. Or he may not.

What should be viewed as incorrect is the use of an army platform to comment on political, social, and religious concerns. All Fuchs needed to do was wait a few days and then share his opinion as a civilian.

Incidentally, as Rescuers Without Borders reported, in the period between January and June of this year, some 3,300 acts of terror were committed by Arabs against the Jews living in Judea and Samaria. Thirteen Jews were murdered. The terror structure, despite impressive operations, is increasing, with more shooting incidents. Fuchs could have expanded on those aspects in his speech.

The phenomenon of military leaders—successful in the field or less so—becoming an unnecessary interference here in Israel is growing.

In a democracy, it is the civilian echelons that supervise the military, not the other way around. America's Gen. Douglas MacArthur learned that lesson after making controversial statements to the media at the end of 1950, concerning the war in Korea. On April 11, 1951, he was informed that president Harry Truman, his commander-in-chief, had concluded that MacArthur was "unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States." Golan's extremist remarks pertaining to his official duties" and had



BRIG.-GEN. Barak Hiram stoked anger when he said that current Israeli society is detached from past commitments and from the burden of its future, and above all is devoted to the moment, the writer notes. (IDF Spokesperson's Unit)

relieved him of his commands.

We have witnessed a similar incident here in Israel.

Eight years ago, on May 4, 2016, then-IDF deputy chief of staff Yair Golan (head of The Democrats party founded last month) made a speech that halted his promotion. Speaking at a Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony at the Ghetto Fighters' Kibbutz, he declared, "If there's something that frightens me about Holocaust remembrance it's the recognition of the revolting processes that occurred in Europe in general, and particularly in Germany, back then—70, 80, and 90 years ago—and finding signs of them here, among us today, in 2016."

Golan added that the Holocaust "must make us think deeply about the responsibility of leadership, the quality of society, and that its recent primed anti-government backlash activities—such as besieging the prime minister's wife, Sara Netanyahu, at her hairdresser, alongside other extraordinary actions and comments during the anti-Netanyahu demonstrations—are a sort of revenge for that slight."

In any case, Golan's extremist remarks have now led to a police investigation into

his call for military service refusal.

A third speech came from Brig.-Gen. Barak Hiram, incoming commander of the Gaza Division, earlier this month. Already a target of criticism from the Left for failing to protect Kibbutz Be'eri, he further stoked their anger, noting that:

"The gap between Israel 2023 and Israel 2024 is beyond imagination. Our firm stand is in complete contrast to the Israeli culture that has developed here—which seeks everything 'now'; to 'make a [hi-tech monetary] exit' to realize momentary profits from a society that seeks to be light and energetic, detached from past commitments and from the burden of its future; and above all devoted to the moment, to the present. Our enemies recognized this and believed that this would be the opportune time for our destruction."

Although the issue of this generation's youth, denominated "Tik-Tokers," has been a constant on talk shows as has been whether Hamas was influenced by the discord and dissension of these past years, these, again, are matters better left out of the IDF's sphere.

We need no more diversions. The responsibility of the military is to defend the country and its citizens and to wage war successfully. There is no need for army officers to preach or lecture to the public on political and social matters, whether from the light or the left.

The writer is a researcher, analyst, and opinion commentator on political, cultural, and media issues.

Troubling double standard

• By SLIMAN AL-AMOUR

The disturbing events of last weekend, in which a car carrying four Bedouin women and a child from Rahat was violently attacked by two residents of Givat Ronen after accidentally entering the settlement (having taken a wrong turn on the way to Nablus) once again revealed racism in Israeli society. These actions expose the deep-seated hatred and fear ingrained in certain segments of Israeli society towards Arabs in general and Bedouin in particular.

Radwan al-Jaar, the husband of one of the women, later pointed out the painful irony in the despicable attack. "We were in the South during the October 7 massacre and we protected and saved people there, at risk to our own lives."

While it's true that the attackers were arrested by the IDF and Shin Bet—and the victims were evacuated to the Rabin Medical Center-Bellinson Campus—the Israeli authorities must, at the same time, use the full extent of their legal power to bring the perpetrators to justice. These individuals need to understand that their actions have consequences and that there is no place for violence and racism in Israel.

Additionally, the nation's leaders must unequivocally clarify that the state does not support racism or violence of any kind, and must work toward promoting true equality and dialogue between the various populations.

This incident highlights the deep divisions between Jews and Arabs in the country, underscoring the urgent need for a strong and unequivocal response from the nation's leadership. If we fail to denounce this racism with full force, we

effectively legitimize its continued spread, eroding whatever trust remains between the two populations. It is crucial to recognize that this racism is not just a problem for those directly affected but for all of Israeli society. It undermines the foundations of a democratic state, which is supposed to guarantee equal rights for all its citizens, regardless of religion, race, or gender.

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in the number of demolitions of houses in the Negev [resulting from the 1965 Israeli Planning and Building Law], exacerbating the sense of deprivation and injustice within the Bedouin community. The social and economic disparities between Jews and Bedouins in the Negev manifest not only in inadequate infrastructure [in the 11 villages illegally recognized by Israel despite governments effort to concentrate the entire Bedouin population in seven townships—as well as in the unrecognized villages] but also in growing tensions that ultimately lead to violent incidents.

It is crucial to remember the higher goals at stake: building a future of peace and equality for all citizens of the state.

The fear and tension between Jews and Arabs are significant obstacles on the path to achieving this goal. We must do everything in our power to maintain the fabric of shared life in the Negev and throughout the country, and to build an equitable and just society where every person can live in safety and dignity, without fear of discrimination or assault based on their origin.

The writer is co-CEO of the Arab-Jewish Center for Empowerment, Equality, and Cooperation—Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Economic Development.



SECURITY FORCES keep watch during a house demolition in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Wadi al-Kharr in the Negev, in May. The demolitions in the Negev exacerbate the sense of deprivation and injustice within the Bedouin community, the writer argues. (Open Zvi/Fish90)

New tax benefits for olim

• By SAGIV RON and BEN MAROCK

Since the beginning of this year, we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of people interested in migrating and becoming Israeli citizens. Various statements in the news working abroad to streamline the immigration process to Israel report a surge of hundreds of percent in requests for assistance with moving to Israel and obtaining citizenship. Purchasing residential property is one of the primary steps when relocating to Israel, and the

tax implications can be a significant cost in this respect.

Like many other countries, Israel imposes taxes not only on the income from the sale of real estate but also on the purchase itself (purchase tax), which is generally at the rate of 6% of the cost of the asset or 8%/10% of the cost of the asset in case of a purchase of a residential property by a foreign resident.

In an effort to attract more individuals to migrate, the finance minister has introduced a new tax relief that substantially lowers the purchase tax rates for residential

property transactions involving new immigrants, with a particular focus on those purchasing their sole residential property in Israel.

Under the newly introduced tax relief, a new immigrant purchasing a single residential property will benefit from an exemption from purchase tax on the portion of the property's value up to NIS 1,988,090 (as of 2024). For the property value that exceeds such an amount, and up to NIS 6,055,070 (as of 2024), a reduced purchase tax of 0.5% will apply. Any value exceeding NIS 6,055,070 will be subject to the

standard purchase tax rate of 8%. It should be noted that the relief will not be granted should the value of the residential property purchased exceed NIS 20,183,565 (as of 2024).

Immigrants who purchase an additional apartment in Israel will pay the standard purchase tax rates set in the law (8% and 10%).

An immigrant purchasing a business property will pay 0.5% purchase tax up to NIS 1,988,090, with a 5% tax rate on any additional amount.

The reduction in purchase tax rates will only apply to transactions

executed from one year before the immigrant's arrival to Israel and up to seven years afterward, and in which time the immigrant holds an immigrant visa or an immigrant certificate, according to the Law of Return.

However, for residential properties that are under construction at the time of purchase, the new immigrant must relocate to Israel within three years of the purchase date to be eligible for the tax relief.

Those who immigrated to Israel before the amendment to the regulations may choose to follow either

the previous regulations or the new regulations, according to their preference.

It should be noted that the Tel Aviv District Court recently addressed the residency conditions required from foreign residents and new immigrants in order to qualify for tax relief or exemption on purchase and capital gains tax, with each case rooted in different sections of the law. The court's conclusions varied in ways that may potentially affect new immigrants.

The writers are tax lawyers at Benjamin & Co.

LETTERS

Antisemitic undercurrent

In "Donald Trump is not a friend of the Jews" (August 13), Amy Neustein rails against the Trump campaign for reducing the chances that Kamala Harris would select for her running mate someone who would have helped her win a critical state.

Although Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro happens to be Jewish, Neustein offers no evidence that this entirely rational political maneuver was anti-Jewish. The suggestion is that Trump had an obligation to affirmatively help a Jewish potential candidate even at the risk of losing the election.

Interestingly, Neustein rejects the obvious antisemitic undercurrent of Harris's ultimate decision, choosing Minnesota Governor Tim Walz. He has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Rep. Ilhan Omar, an antisemitic Squad member from Minnesota. By choosing Walz, Harris cast her lot with the execrable far left wing of her party. During my time as assistant US special envoy to combat antisemitism, I was amazed and gratified by the unstinting support from the Trump White House in the battle against Jew-hatred. Compare Trump's support for Jews and Israel throughout his presidency with his Democratic opponent's actions.

Harris's occasional statements of support for Israel are lukewarm and conditional. She accepts without question the blood libel that the IDF ignores the safety of Gazan civilians. Her strongest criticisms are aimed at Israel's army and prime minister, while she ignores Hamas's use of its own people as human shields. Nor does she denounce Iran as the ultimate enemy of Israel and the US.

Trump has proved his deep affinity for the Jewish people in both word and deed. Harris's selection of Walz for vice president is one in a series of actions that prove the opposite regarding the Democratic presidential candidate.

EFRAIM COHEN
Zichron Ya'acov

Trump is notorious for saying things off the cuff which are inappropriate. While I strongly agree with the statement that any Jew who votes for the Democratic ticket needs to have his "head examined," it is not smart for Donald Trump to say it. Jews are notorious for voting against their own interests, and any Jew who is thinking of voting Democrat is not going to be persuaded to do otherwise by being told he is an imbecile.

Trump's record and history are strongly pro-Jewish. This is not a recent thing. His father was known to have many Jewish friends and is on record as having donated large sums to Jewish causes, including helping to build a synagogue in New York. Trump himself has a Jewish daughter, a Jewish son-in-law, and Jewish grandchildren. More importantly, he was the most pro-Israel American president in history, recognizing Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and moving the US Embassy to Israel's capital in Jerusalem, against all the objections in the State Department. He also censured Iran, the sworn enemy of both Israel and the US, and was instrumental in creating the Abraham Accords, a major breakthrough for peace in the Middle East. Unfortunately, President Joe Biden's policies, dictated by the numerous Obama rebrands in his administration, have succeeded in undermining or even reversing much of the progress created by Trump.

It is true that Trump's campaign managers succeeded in sabotaging Josh Shapiro's bid for vice president, that is just good political strategy; Shapiro would have been a formidable opponent, possibly bringing Pennsylvania, a critical swing state, into the Democratic camp. In any case, it would not have been difficult to persuade the Democratic Party, heavily influenced by its extreme left-wing, anti-Jewish elements to veto Shapiro, known to be a proud Jew and an ardent

supporter of Israel.

However, the most important reason for voting for Trump is that he will make America stronger. A comparison between the United States under Trump's presidency and the disasters under Biden makes it very clear who is best for America. A strong US is good for Israel and the Western world. Another four years of Democratic policies would be disastrous for both America and Israel.

STEPHEN COHEN
Ma'aleh Adumim

Antisemitism in Israel

Kudos to Herb Keinson and *The Jerusalem Post* for "Tisha B'Shvat: Lessons Compromised over conflict to avert catastrophe" (August 13). I was dumbfounded to read that Tel Aviv couldn't wait to legislate hatred of Jews against Jews. The law forbidding a *mehitza*, a partition between men and women, during prayer in a public area on Yom Kippur is tantamount to antisemitism in Israel.

Can the non-observant Jews not tolerate not playing ball or riding scooters in that area on the holiest day of the year? How can those who do not believe that the Torah is God-given not tolerate those who do believe? Was October 7 and 9 Av not enough to teach us that even if you do not "love your neighbor as yourself," at least "live and let live?"

When will we ever learn?

SHIMON GALITZER
Jerusalem

Turbulent defense minister

Regarding "Netanyahu's total victory is nonsense" (August 13): Defense Minister Yoav Gallant asserts that total victory over Hamas is impossible. As defense minister, he is responsible for Israel's ability to vanquish its enemy. Not only was he defense minister for close to a year before October

7, he was also IDF southern commander when Gilad Shalit was captured, and oversaw two mini-wars against Hamas that failed in their objectives. There might be a pattern here.

In recent years, the IDF has decided to reinvent the wheel and has abandoned 6,000 years of military history. In every war to date, worldwide, the aim of an army is to deny the use of territory to the enemy and break the enemy's will to fight (which can be achieved by other means than a set-piece battle).

However, the current IDF strategy, since 2006, is to enter a territory, expend blood and treasure to capture it, perhaps killing a few enemy combatants, and then to withdraw, handing it back to the enemy. It's no wonder that this strategy neither breaks the will of the enemy to fight, nor does it win wars.

As prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu must fire his turbulent defense minister and appoint one with the knowledge, expertise and drive to achieve victory.

KOBI SIMPSON-LAYY
Rehovot

Good for America?

"An A great existential threat" (August 12), Martin Oliner writes for the fore a very disturbing question. Should American Jews vote more for what they perceive as right or wrong, is good for America or good for Israel?

It unfortunately gives credence to the antisemitic accusation that Jews have a dual loyalty; how much more so, when American Israelis, some who have not lived in the US for over 40 years, are urged to try to influence the American election by using their absentee votes.

MARION REISS
Beit Shemesh

Send letters to lettersjpost@gmail.com. Priority is given to brief, topical letters that include the writer's name and place of residence as well as the title and date of the Post article being referred to. Letters may be edited and shortened. For more letters, go to www.jpost.com.