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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

June 6, 2017

50th Anniversary of Israel's Six-Day War Victory Raises the Question: Why Won't the Arabs Accept Peace?

Dear Friend of FLAME:

I was at a talk in San Francisco last week given by Bret Stephens, former editor of the *Jerusalem Post* and political columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, and now writing for *The New York Times*. During the Q&A, Stephens was asked why Israel, a nation supposedly founded on moral Jewish principles, still “occupies” the “Palestinian territories.”

This begs the question, of course—it’s a bit like asking someone if he still beats his wife. Above all, the Palestinians do not have territories—there is no Palestinian state, so the territories under Israeli control are, at worst, disputed territories.

Stephens answered the question like this (and I summarize greatly): Israel has no desire to be in “the occupation business” and never has. Israel sought peace with the Arabs after its war of independence in 1948, after the 1967 Six-Day war, and after the Yom Kippur War (1973)—all turned down by the hostile Arabs.

Egypt finally signed a peace deal with Israel in 1979 and received the Sinai Peninsula in return; Jordan made peace with Israel in 1994 and gave up its claims to Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”). All other Arab nations have steadfastly refused to make peace with Israel or even accept Israel’s existence. As such they remain an existential threat.

Likewise, the Palestinian Arabs remain unbowed, waging a virtually continuous terrorist war against Israel since 1987, starting with the first intifada. Israel made a generous, sincere peace offer to Yasser Arafat in 2000, which Arafat turned down. Israel abandoned its settlements in Gaza in 2005, hoping for peace, and was rewarded with three wars waged by Hamas. Israel

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YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...

Israel's Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?

Arabs opposed the State of Israel before there were settlements—and they oppose it still today. It's time to clear up 5 false myths about settlements.

The U.S., as well as some American media and politicians, claim Israel doesn't want peace, since Jews build houses in disputed territories of Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank). But the facts reveal settlements to be a misconception. What's much greater obstacle to any permanent peace...

What are the facts?

Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands. In fact, Jews are indisputably the indigenous people of Palestine (including Israel, Judea and Samaria), who have lived in the region for millennia and ruled it as a state, providing Arab settlements by a 600-year "Palestinian" have never had a state nor possessed public land in the region. Thus, the idea of "Palestinian lands" is false. In fact, both people can live claim in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). It is a disputed territory.

Myth #2: Jews have no right to live in the disputed territories. Jews and Arabs have lived together for hundreds of years in Palestine. The only exception is during 49 years of Jordanian rule, when Jews were evicted from the West Bank. Today, some two million Arabs live on full citizens of Israel, and some 400,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria. Yet Palestinians insist that no peace with Israel is possible so long as Jews live among them. In 2013, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated that "in the final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli—civilian or soldier—on our lands." Why should Abbas, who accuses Israel of "apartheid," issue a racist ban of Jews? Why should Arabs be welcome in Israel society—as they are—when Jews would be forbidden from living with Palestinians in the West Bank?

Myth #3: Israel is increasing new settlements in Judea and Samaria. In December 2014, President Obama's alleged national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to FOX's *Holy Wood* of "tens of thousands of settlements being constructed" by Israel. *De Jure* no new settlements are under construction in Israel, and Israel has created no new settlements in over 20 years. The number of settlements, plus illegal outposts, now stands at 210. While the number of settlers in living in established settlements has increased by 355,000 since 2013, the number of settlers living east of Israel's anti-Arab separation barrier has since 2009 increased by only 20,000. Less than 1% of the population in the disputed territories. In fact, Israeli communities take up only 2% of the land of the West Bank. *Almost all the settlements are located on land not previously occupied, used or privately owned by individual Palestinians.*

Myth #4: Israel's settlements are illegal under international law. Most who assert Israeli settlements are illegal cite the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." However, Britain has settled its people into the Middle East, Turkey has settled Turks into Turkish-occupied Cyprus, and China has settled Chinese into occupied Tibet. *The Israel has never transferred any of its people into the West Bank. All settlements in Judea and Samaria have been voluntary, undertaken by private Israeli citizens. Why does the world focus on Israel—which has not broken this law—while allowing other nations to violate it liberally?*

Myth #5: The Palestinians would make peace if settlement building stopped. "Israel has created no new settlements in some 20 years." In 2009, Israel froze new settlement activity for 10 months to entice the Palestinians to negotiations sponsored by the U.S. The Palestinians refused. Instead, Israel has made numerous land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians, most recently in 2009 and in 2016, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories, plus land swaps—plus a capital for Jerusalem. *But the Arabs turned these down. They refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state and insist on "hijack" of the 1948 UN declaration of Arab refugees from 1948 to "resettle" in Israel, which would swamp Israel demographically.*

Israel has a standing offer to resume negotiations with the Palestinians with preconditions. *But the Arabs refuse, citing Jewish settlements as an obstacle. One thing is certain: Settlements are not the obstacle to peace in 2017—what Israel was before and there never was—and they're not the obstacle today.*

This message has been published and paid for by FLAME

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made another offer of peace to Mahmoud Abbas in 2008, which Abbas ignored—and terrorist attacks against innocent Israelis continue to this day.

In short, Israel built a security fence to keep terrorists out of Israel and maintains troops in Judea and Samaria to prevent terrorists from killing its citizens. When the Palestinians get ready to accept and stop fighting the Jewish state—and when its leaders are capable of enforcing that decision on their people, then Israel will happily make peace and withdraw its troops.

This week's featured FLAME *Hotline* article, below, helps us understand the background to Israel's reconquest of Judea and Samaria, as well as why Israel still maintains a security presence there. The article's author, Michael Oren, is a former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., a current member of the Knesset and author of a seminal book about the Six-Day War.

Oren also explains how victory in the Six-Day War profoundly changed Israel's—and the Palestinians'—identity. The conflict turned Israel's image for many from David to Goliath and turned a group of amorphous Arabs into a “people” who suddenly demanded a state.

Finally, I hope this week's Hotline helps you explain to friends—as I had the opportunity to do at a Memorial Day picnic—why Israel's presence in those disputed lands is logical, justified and necessary.

Finally, I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's recent *hasbarah* campaign to expose the Palestinians' funding of Islamic terrorists using U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson
President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

PLEASE HELP US!!

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial *hasbarah* messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$400 million taxpayer dollars a year, the U.S. is also funding the P.A.'s program of paying salaries to Palestinian terrorists who have killed innocent Americans and Israelis? In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this Palestinian practice of rewarding jihadi assailants and murderers with U.S. funds, FLAME has recently been publishing a new position paper: "[U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism](#)" This paid editorial has appeared in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME Hotline [at no charge](#) every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively [tell the truth about Israel](#)? Just go to [free subscription](#).

Israel's Overwhelming Victory in the Six-Day War Hasn't Yet Convinced Most Arabs to Accept Peace

By Michael Oren, *New York Daily News*, May 28, 2017

At midnight, June 11, 1967, a battle-blackened Israeli soldier stood on Mount Hermon and looked out across an unrecognizably altered Middle East.

Around him, the Golan Heights, once a Syrian redoubt, was entirely in Israeli hands, as was the formerly-Jordanian West Bank further south. From Egypt, the entire Sinai Peninsula had been seized along with the Gaza Strip. Other Israeli soldiers

were swimming in the Suez Canal and, for the first time in millennia, raising the Star of David over a united Jerusalem. Most astonishingly, these transformations took place over a mere six days, marking one of history's most brilliant—and controversial—campaigns.

All wars in history inevitably become wars of history. No sooner do the guns grow silent than the debate begins over whether the war was justified and its outcome positive. The arguments surrounding the Civil War, for example, or even World War II, fill volumes.

But few wars in history have proved as contentious as the Six-Day War. On American campuses, students and faculty members still lock horns on the question of Israel's right to Judea and Samaria—the West Bank's biblical names—and the Palestinians' demand for statehood in those areas. U.S. policy-makers, meanwhile, devote countless hours to resolving the war's consequences diplomatically. Obsessively, it seems, the media focuses on the realities created by those six fateful days.

And never have the disputes surrounding the Six-Day War been bitterer than now, on its 50th anniversary. The battle lines are clearly drawn. On the one side are those who insist that the Arabs never threatened Israel seriously enough to provoke her territorial expansion. The war resulted in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the building of Israeli settlements. Rather than a victory, the war transformed Israel into colonial, apartheid state.

The other interpretation maintains that Israel had no choice but to fight and that this defensive war provided the state with secure borders, vital alliances, peace treaties and a renewed sense of purpose.

To decide this war of history, one has to return to the eve of the Six-Day War, to June 4, 1967. What did Israel look like then, and how did the region—and the world—appear to its leaders? What were the circumstances leading up the struggle and what was the value, if any, of its results?

Israel in 1967 was a nation of a mere 2.7 million, many of them Holocaust survivors and refugees from Arab lands. At its narrowest, the state was nine miles wide with Arab armies on all its borders and its back to the sea.

Its cities were within enemy artillery range—Syrian guns regularly shelled the villages of Galilee—and the terrorists of the Palestine

Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yasser Arafat's al-Fatah nightly struck at civilian targets.

Jerusalem was divided and Jews prohibited from visiting their holiest places, above all the Western Wall.

Economically, the country was in crisis, and internationally it was alone. China, India, Soviet Russia and its 12 satellite nations were all hostile. The United States, though friendly, was not allied militarily with Israel. Most of its arms came from France which, just days before the war, switched sides.

The Arabs, by contrast, were jubilant. With the Soviets lavishly arming Egypt, Iraq and Syria, and the U.S., Jordan and Saudi Arabia, they enjoyed massive superiority over the Israel Defense Forces.

Under the leadership of Egypt's charismatic president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Arabs rallied around a sense of national—as opposed to religious—identity, the centerpiece of which was rejection of Israel. The humiliating failure to prevent Israel's emergence 19 years earlier and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem sent millions of Arabs clamoring for war.

Though Nasser almost certainly did not want bloodshed, he nevertheless saw an opportunity to bolster his power. In mid-May, he expelled UN peacekeeping forces from Sinai and paraded his army back into the peninsula. Next, he closed the Straits of Tiran, cutting off Israel's Red Sea route to Asia.

These moves further incited Arab opinion to the point where Nasser's Syrian rivals signed a mutual defense pact with him and even his arch-enemy, Jordan's King Hussein, placed his army under Egyptian command. PLO Chairman Ahmad Shuqayri predicted Israel's "complete destruction." Cairo Radio welcomed "Israel's death and annihilation."

Isolated, surrounded, Israelis believed they faced an existential threat. Many remembered the 1948 War of Independence in which Arab forces besieged Jerusalem and nearly conquered Tel Aviv, killing 1% of the population.

Consequently, the government distributed gas masks and dug some 10,000 graves but assumed they would not suffice. The army called up reserves, paralyzing the country's economy.

"The people of Israel are ready to wage a just war," General Ariel

Sharon berated Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. "The question is . . . the existence of Israel." Still, agonizingly, Israelis waited, hoping for help from overseas.

None came. U.S. President Lyndon Johnson suggested sending an international flotilla to break the Tiran blockade, but no country would volunteer ships and even Congress opposed the idea. Through back channels, Israeli leaders secretly urged Arab rulers not to begin a war that nobody wanted. Their appeals went unanswered.

So the decision was made to pre-emptively strike. Even then, the goals were limited: neutralize Egypt's air force and the first of three offensive lines in Sinai. No sooner did Israeli warplanes begin destroying Egyptian jets on the ground, though, than Jordanian troops advanced toward West (Jewish) Jerusalem and their artillery pounded the city as well as the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

The Syrians rained thousands of shells onto the Galilee. In response, Israeli forces entered the West Bank and mounted the Golan Heights.

Still, at every stage in the fighting, Israeli leaders hesitated.

On the morning of June 7, as IDF paratroopers prepared to enter Jerusalem's Old City, Eshkol wrote to King Hussein offering to forgo liberating the Western Wall if Jordan agreed to peace talks. Again, the answer was silence.

A month after the war, Israel formally annexed East Jerusalem, but it also offered to return almost all of land captured from Syria and Egypt in exchange for peace.

The Arabs responded with "the three noes": no negotiations, no recognition, no peace. Nevertheless, that November, the United Nations passed Resolution 242, affirming the right of all Middle Eastern states to "secure and recognized borders" and establishing the principle of "territory-for-peace."

That concept served as the basis for Israel's 1979 peace agreement with Egypt which, in turn, enabled the Israel-Jordan treaty of 1994. The peace process, as it came to be known, is a product of the Six-Day War.

So, too, is the U.S.-Israel strategic alliance. The war awakened the White House to the existence of a democratic,

pro-American, Middle Eastern powerhouse that had just defeated several Soviet-backed armies. Today, America's military and intelligence relationship with Israel is deeper and more multi-faceted than with any other foreign state.

The war also galvanized Jewish identity. The reuniting of the State of Israel with the Land of Israel—Haifa is not in the Bible, but Hebron, Jericho and Bethlehem are—made the country much more Jewish. The war also enabled American Jews “to walk with our backs straight,” and their organizations became proudly pro-Israel.

For Soviet Jews, especially, who could be sentenced to prison merely for studying Hebrew, the war served as a source of inspiration and courage. After playing a key role in bringing down the USSR, nearly a million of these Jews would immigrate to Israel and help transform it into the world's most innovative nation.

Thanks to the Six-Day War, Israel will never again be nine miles wide, and Jerusalem will always be open to the followers of all faiths. Thanks to the Six-Day War, the Syrian civil war is raging far from the old border, a mere 10 meters from the Sea of Galilee.

Due in part to its display of strength in 1967, Israel today has flourishing ties with China, India and the former Soviet Bloc countries. Though unthinkable a half-century ago, the Sunni Arab states now view Israel not as an enemy but as an ally in the struggle against ISIS and Iran.

But what about the occupation of Palestinians? What about the settlements and the damage they inflict on Israel's image?

“I am deeply pained by the occupation,” said Minneapolis Rabbi Michael Adam Latz. “It's a moral wound to the Jewish people.”

For the Palestinians who consider the war al-Naksa—the Setback—1967 inaugurated a period of profound humiliation and a sense of abandonment.

There can no gainsaying the erosion of Israel's standing, particularly among liberal groups, resulting from the lack of a peace agreement with the Palestinians. The settlement policy frequently draws fire.

But the Palestinians have been offered a state—in 2000 and

2008—only to turn it down, and all of the settlements account for only 2% of the West Bank. Paradoxical as it might sound, and without diminishing their trauma, the Palestinians were fundamentally transformed by the Six-Day War.

Before the war, with Jordan in possession of the West Bank and Egypt occupying Gaza, nobody spoke about a Palestinian state or even about the Palestinians at all. But then, for the first time since 1948, the three major centers of Palestinian population—in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel—were brought together under a single country's governance (Israel's).

The result was a tremendous reinforcement of the Palestinians' identity, rooted in the realization that they could no longer look to Nasser or any other Arab leader to fight for their cause.

Not accidentally, shortly after 1967, the PLO merged with al-Fatah under Arafat and launched high-profile terrorist attacks. Seven years later, that same Arafat received a standing ovation in the UN General Assembly. The Six-Day War put the Palestinian issue on the international political map.

For Israelis, though, the ultimate legacy of the Six-Day War is the belief that the “swift sword” with which they defeated their enemies could someday be beaten into plowshares. Wars in history do indeed become wars of history, but they can also result in reconciliation. Gazing from Mount Hermon 50 years ago, the Israeli soldier could glimpse a scorched and still-dangerous landscape, but one that nevertheless held the possibility of peace.

The logo for FLAME, featuring the word "FLAME" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a flame shape integrated into its top and right sides.

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