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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

March 27, 2018

Partisan Fair-Weather Friends of Israel Are Not True Friends at All

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Last week's FLAME Hotline stirred up passionate mail from our subscribers—much of it unequivocally supportive, some of it unabashedly critical. We can only say that the criticism generally says more about our critics than about FLAME.

To refresh your memory, our letter was about whether President Trump is good for Israel: We said we will judge him by his works—not his personality, style or policies in general—and so far we like what he's done for Israel.

Our critics generally ignored this thesis and simply ranted about what a despicable guy Trump is—how he's "harming" America. One letter also went on about how Israel is turning "too far" to the right, is sending refugees back to Africa, and the Prime Minister is a "criminal."

This highlights two disturbing attitudes of some Americans—among them American Jews.

First, these fair-weather friends of Israel usually consider themselves first Democrats or Republicans and secondly supporters of Israel. They hate the opposition, so no matter what that party or politician does for Israel, it's by definition a bad idea. Likewise, if it's *your* party (or guy) doing something harmful to the Jewish state, you loyally justify it.

Here's the point: We can't trust the Democrats to defend Israel, and we can't trust the Republicans—both will help at times, both may betray us. If you're going to support Israel, you have to do it despite party affiliation. *Israel is not a partisan issue.*

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**THIS MONTH'S AD
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PUBLICATIONS
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MILLION READERS**

YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...

Palestinian Mythology
Palestinian Arabs claim full ownership of the Holy Land, denying any Jewish connection or rights—all based on deceptive lies, all easily proven false.

What are the facts?
Even when given the right to create its own nation—then such a nation should be based on truth, especially when it denies the rights of others. We may disagree on interpretation, but at least we should agree on the facts. We do not accept the core components of the Palestinian narrative and will offer their most credible arguments in an effort to help you understand the truth. We will also attempt to disassemble the Jewish people from their own history.

1. Palestinians are indigenous to the Holy Land
False. Palestinians claim to be the indigenous people of the Holy Land, but they are not. The land was inhabited by the Jewish people for thousands of years. The Arabic language, culture, and religion—core elements of Palestinian identity—did not exist until the late 19th century. The Arabic name for the Holy Land was "al-Bilad al-Sham" (the Levant) and was used in the Bible.

2. Israel occupies Palestinian land
False. No, Israel and even mainstream media frequently refer to "Palestinian land." In truth, the Palestinians have never had a state, nor have they had sovereignty over any land in the Middle East. Israel has never taken any land from the Palestinians. The Holy Land has been under Jewish control since the biblical period of the Jews—and has been used in the Bible of Moses, Jesus, and the New Testament.

3. Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian people.
False. Palestinian leaders consistently demand Jerusalem as a "liberal and Christian capital" (including 3,000 copies of the Quran and the Koran) to be built in Jerusalem. History shows King David of Israel founded the capital of the Jewish kingdom around 1000 BCE in the city of Hebron. Jerusalem is cited 100 times in the Hebrew Bible and was a major city in the Roman Empire. Jerusalem has never been an Arab capital, and for most of the city's history, Jews have been the majority population.

4. Palestinians have a right of return to Israel.
False. Nothing approaches 700,000 Arabs who fled or were expelled from Israel in 1948, when the Jewish state was established, only about 30,000.

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FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial

The second disturbing attitude concerns the sense of casual entitlement many well-meaning "supporters of Israel" feel about criticizing the Jewish state. Some write screeds in the Jewish and mainstream press complaining about Israel's "ultra-right-wing" government, Mr. Netanyahu's behavior or the "theocratic" power of the Orthodox in Israeli society.

Let me ask you: How would you feel—no matter what your politics—if Germans, Swedes, Russians or Saudis wrote editorials about what a degenerate right-wing country the U.S. has become because it elected Donald Trump as President and its Congress is controlled by "ultra-right" politicians? Or that our sexual mores are too lax or our freedom of speech laws too liberal?

You might be miffed at these foreigners sticking their noses in our democratic nation—a country whose voters they have no right to criticize . . . and a country they don't fully understand.

Which brings us to this week's FLAME *Hotline*-featured article—a response to an op-ed in the *New York Times* written by Ron Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress. Mr. Lauder is revered in pro-Israel circles, but his editorial crossed the line—a point made by our article's author, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "America's Rabbi," whom the *Washington Post* calls "the most famous Rabbi in America."

Rabbi Boteach finds Mr. Lauder out of line for criticizing what he fears is the demise of the two-state solution and creeping theocracy in Israel. Boteach respects the concern, but he believes Lauder doesn't have a vote on these issues, and his opinion, written from his New York penthouse and published in the pages of Israel's most powerful media foe, is unforgivable.

I think you'll find Boteach's tough line to be bracing as you encounter those who criticize Israel from the safe distance of the United States. I hope you'll forward this article to friends, family and fellow congregants.

I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's latest hasbarah campaign—exposing Palestinian lies intended to dispossess Israel of its rights to a state in the Holy Land. I hope you agree with and will support this message.

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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**FLAME'S WEEKLY
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FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

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Best regards,

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

P.S. As you may have read, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other Palestinian leaders spread blatant lies in the U.N. and other forums almost daily—about Jewish history in Jerusalem and the Holy Land in general, about Palestinian origins, Palestinian refugees and many other factual matters. No wonder FLAME has created a new editorial message —"[Palestinian Mythology](#)"—which is about to run in mainstream 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, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay focused on—and take actions against-Iran's threat to our country, Israel and the entire world.

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](#).

Ron Lauder Unfairly Assails Israel

[by Shmuley Boteach](#) , *The Algemeiner*, March 24, 2018

Let's get the obvious stuff out of the way. Of course, we Jews believe in free speech and of course we believe

that Israel should be self-critical. One of the biggest issues we have with Israel's Arab neighbors is that they are not self-critical and not democratic. So, there is nothing wrong with Jews criticizing the Jewish state.

That being said, when a renowned Jewish leader takes to the pages of *The New York Times* to offer highly unfair and poorly argued criticism of Israel, it demands a response.

I was astonished to see that Ron Lauder, a lifelong Zionist, defender of Israel and longtime leader of the World Jewish Congress, would choose the occasion of Israel's 70th anniversary to launch a blisteringly unmerited and unreasonable critique of the Jewish state in *The New York Times*. The fact that the *Times* would publish it was less surprising given that one way to get an op-ed accepted is by attacking Israel and there is no telling how many others have tried and mostly failed to document Israel's virtues on its pages. Still, it saddened me to see a leader of Lauder's stature assail Israel and make such shockingly irresponsible statements about Israeli policy.

While many critics might claim attacking Israel publicly is their only way of getting out their message, this argument does not apply to Lauder. As a wealthy philanthropist and leader of a global Jewish agency, Lauder has direct access to the highest levels of Israel's government. He could walk into the prime minister's office and deliver the same message, but he either is frustrated by the unconvincingness of his arguments or the fact that Israel's democratically elected government does not need his advice. Someone of his status is used to getting his way, and not having to listen to constituents, so perhaps a public tantrum is his response to being told "no."

By taking his criticism public, Lauder appears to have adopted the J Street attitude of holding Israel's people in contempt, and not accepting their democratic judgement to elect leaders that reflect their views. Hopefully, he has not tilted so far toward J Street that he will start advocating that the United States pressure Israel to adopt his preferred positions.

It is simply contemptible for someone, no matter their stature, to tell Israelis from the comfort of their New York penthouse what is in their best interest. It is only Israelis who serve in the military, like my son and daughter, and Israelis who send their children to do the same who have the right to decide matters involving their peace and security. Israelis have repeatedly had to fight and die for

their freedom and wish nothing more than to live in peace with their neighbors. Their desire for peace is so great they have made great sacrifices and taken enormous risks by evacuating Sinai, the Gaza Strip, and much of the West Bank, often with disastrous and unfortunate results. The gamble on Sinai, once thought to have paid off by producing peace with Egypt, has today produced an ISIS state on Israel's border that Egypt cannot control. The concessions to the Palestinians have only resulted in greater terror and insecurity.

Who is Lauder to lecture Israelis on the wisdom of further concessions?

Lauder has bought into the false idea that the only possibility for peace is a two-state solution and that Israeli policies "threaten to derail this opportunity." He acknowledges "Palestinian incitement and intransigence are destructive" as if these are trivial matters when they are at the core of the conflict. He should know better than to repeat the nonsense about settlements obstructing peace given that the Palestinians were not interested in peace when there was not a single Jew living in the West Bank. Israel's government has every right to decide who can live where and whether it is in the nation's best interest to annex territory that even the Palestinians have agreed would be part of Israel should a peace agreement ever be signed.

Lauder is also angry about Israel's policies related to religion. Diaspora Jews have the right to decide how to worship, but they do not have a say in how religion is practiced in Israel. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Israel and it is up to Israelis to determine how they will exercise that right. As a democracy, Israelis can also vote to change policies they do not like. Lauder's argument that Israel is becoming a theocracy would be news to the hundreds of thousands of people who march in Tel Aviv's gay pride parade or to Israel's secular majority.

That does not mean that many Israelis aren't comfortable with the power of Orthodox parties. Indeed, many are. But they are also part of the electorate and America also debates religiously-influenced issues like gay marriage, abortion, contraception, and public prayer all the time. But even as many Israelis bristle at what they see is the increased power of the religious parties, they still choose—when they practice Judaism—to do so via Orthodox custom.

It is also shameful for Lauder to blame "assimilation, alienation and a severe erosion of the

global Jewish community's affinity for the Jewish homeland" on Israel. Jews in the Diaspora are not abandoning their faith because of any Israeli policies. They are doing so for several totally unrelated reasons and the answer is to educate and embrace the millennials he is worried about and not expect them to cling to Judaism if Israel suddenly stops building settlements or opens an egalitarian prayer space at the Western Wall.

Assimilation and intermarriage rates in the United States are very high. They are being reversed by outstanding organizations like Chabad who employ the Rebbe's vision of spreading a positive Jewish message rather than Lauder's method of attacking the Jewish state.

Young Jews are not abandoning Israel. Yes, they may question Israeli policies and, yes, they are unwilling to accept the traditional way of teaching Israel's history through rose-colored glasses. The answer again is not to demand that Israel change policies in hopes of soothing the angst of young diaspora Jews. Lauder and others should be investing more in educating them about the real Israel rather than the one they may encounter on campus via left-leaning academics who had little sympathy for Israel even when left-leaning prime ministers like Shimon Peres were in power.

I still remember hosting Peres in his post-prime ministerial years at Cambridge University in the UK where a student group tried to have him arrested for war crimes in Lebanon.

Jewish groups on campus must increase teaching students that love of Israel should be conditioned on thousands of years of Jewish connection to our ancient homeland and deep respect for Israel a great bastion of human rights, as Caitlyn Jenner—the world's most famous transgender icon—proclaimed two weeks ago to the world's media.

Lauder says, "the leadership of the Jewish world always honors the choices made by the Israeli voter and acts in concert with Israel's democratically elected government" and yet he has decided "loyalty requires a friend to speak out and express an inconvenient truth." No, Ron, loyalty requires a friend to express his views fairly and respectfully, even if they involve disagreement, and then accept the results of the democratic process. If you don't like the decision you can make aliyah, automatically become a citizen, and use that same democratic process to try to change the policies you don't like. You are likely to find that most Israelis disagree with your increasing

pessimism about Israel and that this is an "inconvenient truth" that they would respectfully offer you.

Either way, Mr. Lauder, we're all grateful for your lifelong dedication to Jewish life, especially in Eastern Europe where you pioneered so much outstanding work. That's the work you should be continuing rather than penning unreasonable harangues against America's foremost ally that continues to function as thriving democracy in the Middle East sea of tyranny.

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