

# Hak'hel הקהל

## Media's role in shaping our image of Israel

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# Introduction of Hakhel

*At the end of every shmita period (the fallow year, which occurs every seven years), on the pilgrimage holiday of Sukkot, there is a mitzva to gather all the Jews in Israel and read aloud certain portions of the Torah. Together, these Torah portions represent the quintessential nature of Judaism. In times when there was a king, he was responsible for reading to the people, but in his absence, any leader of the people was obliged to do so. The underlying concept of Hakhel is the establishment of a fixed, cyclical time to re-engage with the true meaning of Judaism. In the same way, these units are designed to help North American Jewish adults re-engage with and explore the essential issues that underpin their relationship with Israel.*

Below are listed the six Hakhel discussion units that have been developed to date, each one intended to clarify critical issues of North American Jewish engagement with Israel.

1. **Conceptual conversation on: Why Israel?**

Is the existence of Israel a privilege and/or a necessity for the global Jewish community? Why does Israel exist and what are its reasons for existing today?

2. **Conceptual conversation on: The longing for Zion.**

What is the place of “longing” in Jewish life, in a world in which a Jewish State exists? How do we define “longing”? This unit offers a cultural Jewish perspective on the collective and personal sense of Jewish longing.

3. **Conceptual conversation on: Myth and Reality.**

Are we interested in engaging with a “mythic Israel” or with the reality of Israel in 2005? Are we comfortable engaging with this reality? What role do myths play in our relationship with Israel?

4. **Conceptual conversation on: Engaging with Israel through Culture**

Achad Ha'Am conceived of Israel as a Jewish center that will generate a vibrant Hebrew culture. Do you agree with his vision? What is Israel's role in Achad Ha'Am's vision? Does contemporary Israeli and/or American Jewish literature express Achad Ha'Am's dream?

5. **Conceptual conversation on: Media's role in shaping our image of Israel**

What are the ramifications of constant exposure to media images of Israel on our own perceptions and attitudes? How dominant and powerful is the media in comparison to other sources of information about Israel?

6. **Conceptual conversation on: The nature of our engagements with Israel**

What are the ultimate (or desired) outcomes of our engagement with Israel? What do we perceive to be the most effective ways of actively engaging with Israel? What role, if any, do we play in Israeli society?



# Media's role in shaping our image of Israel

"... There is a great deal of emphasis on *hasbara*, which is important but often simplistic, and is unlikely to achieve the task of genuinely locating Israel in the hearts and minds of American Jews. Indeed, there is a fear of complexity – those American Jews who are aware of post-Zionist literature and the findings of the new historians, etc., tend to be anxious about it. Judaism in America is often very personalized and individual – its role is to make *me* feel good – so younger American Jews are turning away from Israel when it becomes difficult for them to feel good about the place. Indeed, modern western culture has created a norm out of 'the comfortable life', where deep engagement in anything is burdensome. Israel's legitimacy appears to have become dependent upon its moral perfection, which is outrageous. The question is whether young American Jews can be engaged in a serious conversation about Israel that brings them into the complexity, and allows them to become 'critical participants.' In short, can the conversation shift from *hasbara* (advocacy) to *havana* (understanding)?"

(NACIE's Philosopher's retreat, New-York, September 2003)

The above is an excerpt from the "Philosopher's Retreat," an intensive meeting held by a small group of Jewish thinkers from Israel and the United States in the summer of 2003 to address conceptual issues relating to the meaning of Israel for North American Jews. This meeting made it clear to all concerned that the task of engaging Jews in a series of discussions about Israel and its role in North American Jewish life should be at the heart of NACIE's mission. A set of educational units (six to date) is being produced as a vehicle for implementing this mission. This particular unit was designed by NACIE, the North American Coalition for Israel Engagement, as part of its ongoing efforts to encourage American Jews to discuss, explore and conceptualize their relationship to Israel.

In recent years we have become increasingly aware of the media as a central source of input into our engagement with Israel. This unit explores just how dominant and powerful the media is in comparison to other sources that inform and influence our engagement with Israel. We will also explore the SWOT -- *Strengths* and *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* -- of our engagements with Israel through media sound bites.

B'hatzlacha,

Esti Moskovitz-Kalman, Director of Education-Israel, NACIE / Makōm



# The Activity

## Context

The word “media” was coined in 1964 by the Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan, in his monumental work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, an analysis of society and individuals in the technological and media-dominated era. We owe the phrases “global village” and “the media is the message” to McLuhan. John J. Mashunis, in his academic textbook *Sociology* (Prentice Hall, 1997) discusses the origins of the word “media.” In Latin, it means both “middle” and “a means to an end,” suggesting that media is the means through which people connect at a middle point. The media, according to this definition, becomes a virtual gathering place, replacing the village square and the market place. In Hebrew, the word for media works in the same way: middle (*emtza*) is the same word used for means (*emtza’l*), and media (*emtza’ei hatikshoret*) translates literally as means of communication, but figuratively it means the “centers” of communication.

The world of the media is different from any other arena in that it is “in your face,” and has become an integral part of our lives to the point that tuning out the media is close to impossible. Moreover, our interaction with the media is not based on a dialogue, where an engagement can develop, but rather on a monologue that denies us opportunity to explore, discuss or challenge these sound bites. North American mass media confronts us with materials, agendas, realities, and biases, in a way that no other medium does. Yet, the media is just one source of input among many that bombard us with information on a daily basis.

Our perceptions of Israel are constantly challenged by many sources. Israel features regularly in the media, very often in an unfavorable light. The reality in Israel and the Middle East is so complex, that sound bites cannot begin to adequately explain an issue the roots of which go back 100 years or more. Complexity requires that one have a strong basic knowledge, something that is difficult to do living so far away from where the news is generated. Images from Israel often challenge our own humane and universalistic Jewish values. They also force us to confront and engage with a non-Jewish society over a reality we did not create and do not always fully comprehend. On college campuses, this has been especially grueling. In response to this challenge, some North American Jews choose to opt out all together, and those who stay “in the loop” are not always equipped with the tools to handle this type of confrontation.

In the 1980s, a module dealing with Israel and the media would have consisted mostly of *hasbara* techniques (ways of publicly explaining Israel's policies in the face of anti-Israel bias). Combating Israel bias has been at the core of the Jewish identity and activism of many groups and individuals. In this



module, on the other hand, we employ self-reflection and analysis tools in an attempt to create and foster a positive Jewish identity and a stronger relationship with Israel. This does not mean that *hasbara* is no longer needed. This module, however, goes beyond that issue to ask different questions: What emotions do different images of Israel in the media raise in North America? Why? Do the media “monologues” which we hear on a daily basis affect our actual engagement with Israel or not? Based on the conversation of “Why Israel”<sup>1</sup> – which discusses the basic building blocks of our relationship to Israel -- we need to ask: Is the media a more influential force for Jews today than the very foundation which underpins our relationship to Israel?

Below are a number of fundamental questions that you may want to consider in preparation for the conversation, and for summing it up. Not all the questions will be addressed, let alone answered, but they can help frame the direction you may want to take:

1. What are the ramifications of constant exposure to media images of Israel for our own perceptions and attitudes?
2. How dominant and powerful is the media in comparison to other sources of information about Israel?
3. How do we react when the media focuses on the complex sides of Israel that we feel uncomfortable with?
4. How do we reconcile the misleading and often negative sound bites with the complex reality of Israel and the Middle East? Furthermore, how do we reconcile the "immediate" nature of the media with the Jewish emphasis on history?
5. When do we feel pride in Israel? Are we still essentially proud of Israel? Is pride a necessary component of our engagement with Israel? What happens when we don't feel pride?
6. How removed/ close do you feel towards the Israel which is portrayed in the media? Do you have an image in your mind of “one” Israel where the compelling sides and the complex sides coexist? Are those sides even?

## Meta Goal:

To enter into a conceptual conversation that will allow each person to explore the ways in which Israel is presented in the media, and how that shapes and influences their individual as well as their collective relationship with Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Why Israel” unit is one of the six units that have been written for NACIE. We recommend conducting that session first, in order to lay the foundations for further conversations such as this one.



## Goals

1. To explore the ways in which Israel is currently presented in the media, and what kinds of images and messages are portrayed.
2. To discuss the impact these images have on our attitudes towards Israel.
3. To examine the different ways that we can engage with Israel through the media
4. To consider the ways in which Israel is or can be discussed/taught in various communal settings and institutions in light of this conceptual conversation.

## Target Audiences

**Unit leaders:** The conversations in this module require two main skills: familiarity with the media and with the various ways in which Israel is portrayed; and an ability to lead a group in an open discussion, in which each view expressed is accepted, validated, and woven into the overall flow of the discussion.

**Participants:** These conversations are suitable for adults; no prior knowledge is necessary. The participants may include community lay leaders and members of various boards and committees; Jewish educators from all types of frameworks; and/or members of the public, who are interested in exploring the Meta Questions of engaging with Israel. (General comment: The texts used in this session were chosen to fit the general audience as defined above. Based on your participants' profile, you may decide to add or replace the texts used in the unit.)

## Structure and Duration of Activity

1. Introduction to the topic – 5 minutes
2. Opening trigger -"My Pie of Sources of Information about Israel"- 20 minutes
3. Optional : SWOT “warm up” – 10 minutes
4. SWOT analysis of case studies in small groups- 35 minutes
5. SWOT discussions in big group – 45 minutes
6. Concluding words- 5 minutes

Total of 2 hours



## Advance Preparations

1. Blank sheets of paper with a large empty circle drawn on them, and pens for each participants; these will be used for the opening trigger, "My Pie of Sources of Information about Israel."
2. Copies of Source #1- the SWOT model - for each small group.
3. If you want to use PowerPoint, you will need a screen and projector.
4. Copies of materials for the case studies you have chosen, for each small group.
5. Make an aisle, and place in it large sheets of paper and markers.
6. If you choose to show excerpts from Exodus, you will need to rent the DVD (which has been in circulation for a couple of years).

Decide if you want to hand out other background materials to the participants for further reading



## Let's Begin...

In order to explore the many ways in which Israel is presented in the media, and to allow us to reflect on our engagement with Israel through the media, we have chosen four different news items that have received considerable international attention over the past 60 years. Each item was carefully chosen to reflect a certain facet of complexity and ramifications when translated into media sound bites:

The four items (in chronological order) include:

1. The story of *Exodus 1947*, the illegal immigrant ship
2. The case of Jonathan Pollard, an American spy for Israel
3. The second Intifada, through the prism of Operation Defensive Shield, undertaken in Jenin in the spring of 2002
4. The heroic and tragic story of Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut

In order to explore our topic from as many angles as possible, we chose to use an analytical tool from the world of organization, business, and marketing, called SWOT. SWOT identifies the *Strengths* and *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* within a certain situation. Usually SWOT is used to identify one's advantages and ability to exploit greatest business opportunities lie. In our session, we will utilize SWOT to reflect on the *Strengths* and *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities* and *Threats* to our engagements with Israel that result from our exposure to the international media.

To these ends, we will be asking questions such as: How does the media in each of these examples affect our relationship with Israel? How does the way that Israel is portrayed in each example have an impact on our sense of being Jewish? It is especially important to apply the "Strengths" and "Opportunities" to the more problematic images, not just the flattering ones. On the other hand, understanding the "Weaknesses" and the "Threats" can often help us learn more about ourselves, our reality, and possibly even find creative strategies for engagements with Israel ("necessity is the mother of invention").

In order to facilitate the analytic process, we prepared a number of questions for each one of the SWOT categories; these are presented separately, as Source #1.

The most important suggestion we can give is: stay away from *hasbara* (Israel advocacy). It is very tempting to go there, but that is not the point of this session. On the other hand, there may be times that explaining Israeli policies will indeed be called for, for example, if the group is totally ignorant about Israel's position on a certain issue, if a participant makes an extremely inaccurate statement, or if the flow of conversation depends on understanding a particular policy. In these cases, please clarify the issue as briefly as possible and then move on; do not allow the conversation to develop in this direction.



Be aware that people tend to identify far more weaknesses and threats than strengths and opportunities, therefore challenge the group to dig deep in search of the latter.

Ideally, reading some of the background sources prior to the activity can raise the level of the conversation. However, this is not mandatory, and as long as you feel comfortable with the topic, it can work well without prior reading.

1. Introduce the conversation by describing the topic (you may want to use the introduction to this unit).
2. Open with a trigger, the "My Pie of Sources of Information about Israel". In this trigger we will explore how our perception of Israel was and is constantly forming, and the role that the media plays in this context. Hand out a sheet of paper with a large empty circle drawn on it. Ask the participants to list at the bottom of the page all the sources of information which feed their knowledge and shape their personal perspective and view of Israel (Sunday school; visiting Israel as a teen; Semester in Israel; popular books; movies; the news; grandparents; Israeli songs; synagogue; Israeli friends/peers; other). After they have made their list, ask participants to slice up the circle, giving the items that had more impact a larger piece and those with lesser impact a smaller piece. Have them discuss their "pies" in small groups.
3. After a few minutes, reassemble the group and ask participants to think about the following question: "Overall, what kind of impact does the media have on your engagement with Israel: positive, negative, or neutral?" Then ask them to divide the specific slice that says "media" into three according to their answers. Again, the size of the slice should reflect its impact. Ask them to share their thoughts. Take note of the divisions within the media slice, and sum up the discussion according to the results. Explain that the media has a huge role in forming our worldviews, especially of a place that is so far away from our own immediate experience, and that this worldview is complex, to say the least. Our relationship with Israel, or lack thereof, has been shaped over the years by many factors – today, we will focus on the media.
4. This is the time to introduce the entire group to the idea of SWOT and how it should be used to analyze the materials they will be reading and viewing. To "warm up" the group and practice a SWOT analysis, try it out on 2-3 visual images (you can download images of Israel from the media (internet) or use some images excerpted from a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Dr. Rachel Korazim). Begin by looking together at one image; make sure everyone understands what the image reflects. Then ask the questions listed in the SWOT description – Source #1. Encourage the group to go beyond the obvious. For example, images of brutality on the part of Israeli soldiers are a obviously weakness and a threat. But can they also be seen as a strength? An opportunity? (One surprising opportunity is that it forces American Jews who may be complacent about Israel or their Judaism to examine their affiliations and their feelings. The threat is that they will choose to tune Israel out of



their minds altogether.) You may want to repeat this exercise if you feel the group has not grasped the concept of SWOT. If the group is not ready to efficiently utilize SWOT in a small group setting, you may also decide to read the materials in small groups and do the actual analysis all together.

5. We suggest leaving enough time to explore at least one case study in depth. We recommend dividing the group into smaller groups of 4 or 5 people (the minimum number of "minds" required for brainstorming). Assign each group to a different case study and hand out the appropriate materials. If the materials involve a PowerPoint presentation (e.g., the Ilan Ramon example), print it and hand it out before the small groups discussions begin or place the materials next to the computer.
7. Ask the small groups to begin analyzing their case study using the SWOT techniques. If you are familiar with the notion of multiple intelligences, you may want to encourage the group to examine the materials using all their faculties – intellectual (thoughts, ideas), emotional (feelings, sentiments), spiritual (search for meaning, higher levels of consciousness), etc. They should write down their findings under the four SWOT categories as so:

S	W
O	T

8. Optional: When the groups are finished, reassemble participants, present the different case studies, and hold a 5-minute warm-up conversation based on preliminary questions: Do you remember the case personally? What were your thoughts and feelings about the case at the time that it happened? What are your opinions about it today?
9. Ask each group to share their findings. Write them all up on large sheets of paper (we suggest that you not use an erasable board, as you may want to keep the lists for further reference).
10. When you have gathered all the data, ask the entire group to reflect on the picture that has emerged. Are there any surprises? (In most instances there are, and if there aren't, you should intentionally plant some, by suggesting strengths and opportunities that have not been mentioned. This will require prior thought.)
11. Begin a reflective conversation focusing on the impact of the media on our perception and perhaps even on our engagement with Israel today, by thinking back to the opening trigger of this session and raising the following questions:
  - a. How dominant and powerful is the media in comparison to other sources that inform and influence our engagement with Israel?
  - b. What are the SWOT (*Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*) of our engagements with Israel through media sound bites?



(You may even want to create the SWOT table, as shown above, and begin a discussion.)

- c. What are the implications (positive and negative) of the list we have just created on the way the media affects our perception of Israel?
  - d. What other sources exist in our daily life to shape our perception of Israel besides the media? Are they as powerful as the media?
10. End the activity with a discussion on the difference between *hasbara* and *havana*." Typically, we find many programs, lectures and speakers coming to speak to us about *hasbara*; about understanding what is going on in Israel so we are better equipped to defend Israel when necessary. *Hasbara* activities teach us how to be more articulate, knowledgeable and "prepared" to speak about Israel in the face of anti-Israel/anti-Zionist rhetoric. Especially on college campuses today, where anti-Israel sentiment is pervasive and far-reaching, campus organizations are bringing *hasbara* lecturers, conducting *hasbara* workshops and sending student to Israel on *hasbara* trips. Israel advocacy has become a popular and widely-used term. We do not, however, often address how this Israel media onslaught is affecting us personally; or how it is changing/affecting our own perceptions of Israel and our relationship to Israel. When we are not engaged in defending Israel, what kind of image do we have in our own minds about Israel? How has the media changed our personal understanding and feelings? Are the words that come out of our mouths when defending Israel always congruent with our feelings and perceptions? Is our understanding aligned with our defense?



# Sources

## Source #1: Engaging with Israel Through the Media - SWOT

Goal: The SWOT analysis, in this session, will help us assess what impact the media has on our engagement with Israel in each of the case studies under discussion.

Strengths:

- What advantages does this media portrayal offer?
- What are the advantages of this particular case (both obvious and hidden)?
- What tools have you already developed (personally/ within the community) which strengthen your ability to *respond* to these situations?
- What positive emotions and thoughts (or even comments and dynamics) come up when confronting this situation? Why do we react this way?

Weaknesses:

- What weaknesses are you exposed to in relation to this media item?
- What are you forced to confront in light of this news item?
- What negative emotions and thoughts (or even comments and dynamics) come up when confronting this situation? Why do we react this way?
- What impact are you concerned this may have on you or others?
- Are you noticing signs of despair or a desire to "opt out"?

Opportunities:

- What are the *good* opportunities that this situation is bringing to the surface?
- What interesting trends are you aware of?
- What are you *forced* to examine in light of this situation?
- What are you learning about yourself and others in light of this news item?
- How can you and others grow from it Jewishly?

A useful approach to identifying at opportunities is to look at the Strengths and ask yourself whether these lead to any opportunities. Alternatively, look at the Weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by turning them around.

Threats:

- What obstacles do you face?
- What and how might this news item be threatening?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your Jewish identity or positive relationship with Israel? Explain.



# Case Study # 1: A Real Story Goes to Hollywood -- *Exodus*

## Introduction:

This is the story of the illegal immigrant ship *Exodus*, as it was brought to the world's attention through the book written by Leon Uris and later, the movie *Exodus* directed by Otto Preminger (originally called "Exodus from Europe, 1947" before the name was shortened, possibly for media purposes). There are three media genres represented here: a popular novel, a best-selling movie, and now a DVD.

This saga was consciously used by Jewish organizations to place tremendous popular and international pressure on Great Britain, the mandated ruler of Palestine at the time, to open the country's gates to Jewish immigrants, especially Holocaust survivors who had been wandering around Europe since the end of the war, in search of a place to call home. For years, they roamed from one displaced persons camp to another. Too traumatized to return to their towns and villages, where they were often the only remnants of a large extended family, or having discovered that their own houses had been appropriated by non-Jewish neighbors, they set out to find a new home and heal their wounds. With the help of the Jewish Yishuv (the organized Jewish community in Palestine), thousands of Jews crowded into small ships and set sail for Palestine. Many ships were intercepted by the Royal British Navy, who sent the passengers to refugee camps in Cyprus and elsewhere. Holocaust survivors who had been incarcerated for many years in ghettos, forced labor camps, and even death camps, then spent more time drifting through post-war Europe in search of family and a home, found themselves yet again behind barbed wire. At the time, other countries were allowing only a few refugees to enter their countries. Jews were the clear underdogs of the world; sympathy was running high and their plight seemed finally to be striking a chord. Not surprisingly, a few months later (albeit, several years before the book was written and the movie filmed) the world voted in favor of the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. Never before and never since then has the Jewish-Zionist cause been so widely accepted among the world community.

[We assume that people have read the book or seen the movie. If not, it may be a good idea to encourage participants to rent the movie, or better yet, read the book. It may also be a good idea to rent the movie and screen parts of it as a trigger to the group conversation.]

We have selected several sources to guide this conversation:

a. A brief synopsis of the historical account of the illegal immigrant ship, *Exodus*, which brought Holocaust survivors from Europe to Palestine in defiance of the British blockade and other attempts to keep Jewish immigrants from entering the Land of Israel.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/Immigration/exodus/html>

b. A selection of pictures that appeared in the media at the time, depicting the saga of illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine. <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/albums/palbum/p01/a0067p3.html>

c. A random selection of reviews submitted to Amazon.com. All reviews were written by readers who have read *Exodus* and send in their opinions of the book. We focused primarily on responses that show how readers have been affected by the book, and how they view the reality of Israel after reading the book.

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tq/detail/-0553258478/104-6532995-318871?v=glance](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tq/detail/-0553258478/104-6532995-318871?v=glance)

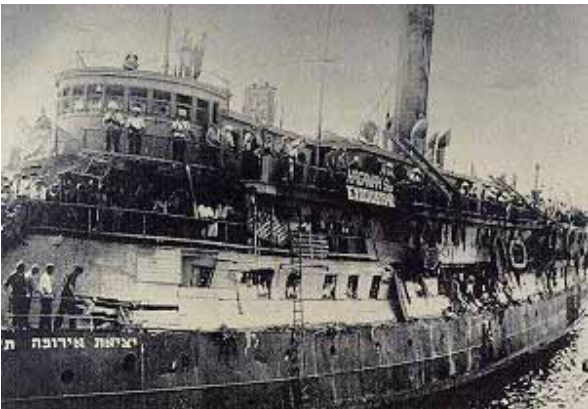
d. A similar collection of reviews of the movie *Exodus*. Both types of reviews are used here since they deal with two distinct modes of communication.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053804>;  
[www.imdb.com/title/tt53804/usercoments](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt53804/usercoments)

## Source 1: The story

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/Immigration/exodus/html>

### The Exodus



The ship *Exodus 1947* became a symbol of Aliya Bet — illegal immigration. After World War II, illegal immigration to Palestine increased and the British authorities decided to stop it by sending the ships back to their ports of embarkation in Europe. The first ship to which this policy was applied was *Exodus 1947*.

The ship sailed from the port of Site, near Marseilles, on July 11, 1947, with 4,515 immigrants, including 655 children, on board. As soon as it left the territorial waters of France, British destroyers accompanied it. On July 18, near the coast of Palestine but outside territorial waters, the British rammed the ship and boarded it, while the immigrants put up a desperate defense. Two immigrants and a crewman were killed in the battle, and 30 were wounded. The ship was towed to Haifa, where the immigrants were forced onto deportation ships bound for France. At Port-de-Bouc, in southern France, the would-be immigrants remained in the ships' holds for 24 days during a heat wave, refusing to disembark despite the shortage of food, crowding and abominable sanitary conditions. The French government refused to force them off the boat. Eventually, the British decided to return the would-be immigrants to Germany, and on August 22, the ship left for the port of Hamburg, in what was then the British occupation zone. The immigrants were forcibly taken off the boat and transported to two camps near Lubeck.

Journalists who covered the dramatic struggle described to the entire world the heartlessness and cruelty of the British. World public opinion was outraged and the British changed their policy. Illegal immigrants were not sent back to Europe; instead, they were transported to detention camps in Cyprus.

The majority of the passengers on *Exodus 1947* settled in Israel, though some had to wait until after the establishment of the State of Israel.

## Source # 2: The Pictures.

If necessary, the pictures can be enlarged and projected, as a trigger for the conversation.

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/albums/palbum/p01/a0067p3.html>

	Jewish Holocaust survivors protesting in support of <i>Exodus 1947</i>		British soldiers board the ship <i>Exodus 1947</i> .
	British soldier removes a refugee from <i>Exodus 1947</i> .		Wounded passenger from the <i>Exodus 1947</i>
	<i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers are forced back to France		British frigate escorts prison ships to Germany
	<i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers under British detention		A British MP carrying a refugee onto German soil
	Jewish refugee injured in clash with the British		Injured Jewish refugee carried to an ambulance

	British removing injured refugee from <i>Exodus 1947</i>		Injured Jewish refugee aboard <i>Exodus 1947</i>
	British remove Jewish refugees from the <i>Exodus 1947</i> .		Demonstration in support of <i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers
	Jewish refugees protest against British Palestine policy.		Jewish displaced persons protest British policy
	Jews demonstrate in support of <i>Exodus 1947</i> .		Internment of <i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers on German soil
	<i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers being forced back to German soil		Heavy British guard on arrival of <i>Exodus 1947</i>
	British soldier on watchtower, near barbed wire		<i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers preparing mattresses
	The Exodus affair; forced return of refugees to Germany		Illegal immigrant opposing arrest
	<i>Exodus 1947</i> passengers forced back to Germany		



## Source 3: Reviews of the book, Exodus

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-0553258478/104-6532995-318871?v=glance](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-0553258478/104-6532995-318871?v=glance)

### New York Times Review:

"Passionate summary of the inhuman treatment of the Jewish people in Europe, of the exodus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to Palestine, and of the triumphant founding of the new Israel."

### From the Publisher

*Exodus* is an international publishing phenomenon--the towering novel of the twentieth century's most dramatic geopolitical event. Leon Uris magnificently portrays the birth of a new nation in the midst of enemies--the beginning of an earthshaking struggle for power. Here is the tale that swept the world with its fury: the story of an American nurse, an Israeli freedom fighter caught up in a glorious, heartbreaking, triumphant era. Here is *Exodus* --one of the great best-selling novels of all times.

### Sample Selection of Readers' Reviews

- "One has to remember it IS historical fiction, and one might describe some of it as propaganda, but it is powerful."
- "It's a nice story, but for historical accuracy, I'll stick with Harry Potter."
- "It is historically inaccurate. It is not historical fiction, it is fiction. Check up on the information, rather than absorbing it unthinkingly!"
- "While at work this morning, I was shown an original birth certificate issued in Israel in 1950. I actually felt something of a thrill of pride (even though I've never been there, and I've long since forgotten Hebrew letters). That's mostly due to my having finished *Exodus* last night."
- "It's no coincidence that the first segment recounts the Holocaust (first, in the eyes of a girl who escaped to relative peace in Jew-friendly Denmark, and then in the eyes of an Auschwitz survivor), and then the second shows the seeds of modern Israel through a pair of mythic-quality Russian shtetl refugees who enter Palestine in the 1880s and begin transforming the soil."
- "The joyously pro-Israel strains of *Exodus* will probably now draw more cynicism than solidarity, in this brave new world of the *New York Times* headlines and Saudi peace proposals. However, I wouldn't change a word."

- "*Exodus* is the extraordinary tale of the birth of Israel. When I first read the book my knowledge about Israel, its history and people was limited. When I finished, I bought every book about this subject I could find and still look for more."
- "While reading this book, you establish fundamental views toward the Jewish people, and a respect for their determination and faith. Uris has gotten under the skin of Israel and into the hearts of millions. Through living characters, and intense emotions, Uris shows you just what it takes to be a man of faith. This book holds an accurate view on past events that should not be passed up. It is a read for teens to adults, and when you are through, you will have gained far more knowledge than you had before."

#### Source # 4: Viewers review the newly-released DVD (1999) of the movie EXODUS (1960), directed by Otto Preminger

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053804>; [www.imdb.com/title/tt53804/usercomments](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt53804/usercomments)

- "Middle Eastern politics aside, Leon Uris' book was important in shaping my views of Zionism and a home country for Jewish people. The book is truly an epic, covering generations of hardship and tons of backstory that doesn't translate easily to the screen. *Exodus* is a silly endeavor as a movie, however. This is a snapshot of late-50s Hollywood, resplendent in its curious casting decisions, 'every-book's-a-movie' epics, and racist undertones."
- "At first glance, this film appears to have co-opted the Zionist struggle to fit in a Hollywood mold. The Jewish main characters are waspy Aryans who look like they belong more in Orange County than in Israel. On the other hand, the story is one that is still going on. It is an amazing reality that a handful of Jews grew to millions and a great economic and military power from nothing."



# Case Study # 2: An Israeli Spy in Washington

## – The Case of Jonathan Pollard

When the story broke out in the media in 1986, it stunned the Jewish world, especially the American Jewish community, Israel, and the international community. The notion of a country spying on its closest ally and political, financial, and military patron was shocking and troubling. It went to the core of Israel's integrity and more than anything else, its gratitude for its ally's support. The affair was especially painful to American Jews, as it cast doubt on their loyalty to their country, and brought to the surface notions of dual loyalty to both Israel, their ancestral homeland, and the United States, their home. It also raised fears of an anti-Semitic backlash. American Jews were also concerned that their access to desirable government positions would be limited, after a century of hard-won integration into all walks of American life.

So traumatic was this case, that some believe Pollard was treated in a much harsher way than any other spy in recent American history (at least in the post-McCarthy era). The Israeli government at first denied their connection with Pollard, but then, under strong American and Jewish-American pressure, it took full responsibility. Israel claimed that he was indeed recruited by a small Israeli intelligence unit, but this unit was never authorized to do so by the Israeli government. Israel granted Pollard Israeli citizenship, but then faced a serious dilemma -- whether or not to seek Pollard's pardon (both as an Israeli citizen, and as an agent filling orders from the Israeli intelligence agency), and the possible repercussions that such an attempt would have, particularly in terms of its potential impact on the American Jewish community.

The American Jewish community faced a similar dilemma. Pollard and his supporters, both in Israel and in the United States, accused Israel of not doing enough to secure his release from prison, and letting him fend for himself, first by denying that he was working on behalf of the State of Israel and later, by not pursuing every possible diplomatic avenue to pressure the American government to release him. Some experts claim that even though the U.S. is Israel's strongest ally, at the time it deliberately withheld intelligence information from Israel that pertained to Israel's immediate security. This incident happened at the tail end of the Cold War, and the information Pollard provided Israel was the basis for its military response to Soviet weapons deployed by Iraqi and Syria. Today, this case is doubly relevant, in the wake of new accusations that a senior Pentagon official provided classified information to AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, D.C.



We have selected several sources to guide this conversation:

- a. "Pollard: Not A Bumbler, But Israel's Master Spy," Wolf Blitzer, *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1987. <http://www.jonathanpollard.org/7890/021587.htm>
- b. An article from the *Toronto Sun*, written by Eric Margolis and strongly accusing Pollard and Israel of endangering American security interests.  
[www.aci.net.kalliste/pollard\\_em.htm](http://www.aci.net.kalliste/pollard_em.htm)
- c. A 1998 statement (press release) issued by the Israeli Government on Jonathan Pollard, acknowledging its earlier admission of responsibility for Pollard's espionage activities, and seeking his release.  
[www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Prelations/Israels+Foreign\\_Relations+since](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Prelations/Israels+Foreign_Relations+since)
- d. Editorial in the *Jerusalem Post*, July 29, 1996 (from the official Jonathan Pollard website). [http://hhermon.tripod.com/jpollard/American\\_injustice.htm](http://hhermon.tripod.com/jpollard/American_injustice.htm)



## Source # 1: "Pollard: Not A Bumbler, But Israel's Master Spy," by Wolf Blitzer, *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1987, <http://www.jonathanpollard.org/7890/021587.htm>

After investigating the Pollard case for more than a year, and interviewing dozens of U.S. and Israeli officials, I have learned some of what Pollard provided to Israel. My information suggests that far from the small-time bungler portrayed in some news accounts, Pollard was a master spy, who provided important information to the Israelis.

Leon H. Charney, a New York lawyer who briefly represented Pollard and is close to senior Israeli officials says: "His help was clearly invaluable to the security of the State of Israel."

Despite the official Israeli claim that Pollard was part of a rogue operation, Israeli officials speak of him in terms that suggest he may prove to be one of the most important spies in Israel's history.

Indeed, Pollard's Israeli handlers even compared him to the legendary Israeli spy in Damascus, Eli Cohen, who rose to the top echelon of the Syrian government in the mid-1960s but eventually was exposed and executed. When Pollard was given an Israeli passport containing his picture as a token of Israel's appreciation, the name on the passport was "Danny Cohen" - the implication being that Israel once had an Eli Cohen in Damascus and now had a Danny Cohen in Washington.

In general, Pollard gave Israel the pick of U.S. intelligence about Arab and Islamic conventional and unconventional military activity, from Morocco to Pakistan and every country in between. This included both "friendly" and "unfriendly" Arab countries.

Why did Israel recruit and run Pollard? Some U.S. officials argue that the operation wasn't necessary, since Israel gets virtually everything it wants from American intelligence agencies. But Israeli officials, living on a thin margin of security, apparently were not convinced of this logic. They feared that the United States wasn't supplying everything. And what the United States wasn't supplying could be essential for Israel, especially in the area of sophisticated reconnaissance photography and electronic intercepts, where Israel's capabilities are limited.

Pollard had all the proper credentials, as far as Israel was concerned. He was intelligent. And he was a dedicated Zionist. Indeed, Pollard told me in the only interviews he has granted since his arrest that he was obsessed by the need to help Israel "personally."



Pollard held "Top Secret" security clearance... An Israeli intelligence official told me that some of the information was "so breathtaking" that it justified the risk Israel was taking in running an agent in Washington... What Pollard did was to make virtually the entire U.S. intelligence-gathering apparatus available to Israel, completing the picture in those areas where Israel's knowledge was limited... Israel had to set up a special unit in New York and Washington to obtain Pollard's documents.... Pollard told me in interviews that he was motivated by his anger that the United States was withholding from Israel information that was vital to the security of the Jewish state. He had been a member of the American delegation on two official intelligence exchanges with Israel, so he had a good sense of what was being shared and what wasn't. "I was very frustrated at the end of these two sessions. And the frustration builds,"...

## Source # 2: "Jonathan Pollard Was No Jewish Patriot", by Eric Margolis, The Toronto Sun, Jan. 14, 1999.

[www.aci.net.kalliste/pollard\\_em.htm](http://www.aci.net.kalliste/pollard_em.htm)

The case of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Jay Pollard has again reared its ugly head. American Jewish groups, Hollywood celebrities and Israel have renewed pressure on the besieged Clinton administration to free the man they call "the Jewish Dreyfus." Pollard has served 13 years of a life sentence. (CHECK THIS: DREYFUS WAS JEWISH TOO)

President Bill Clinton is loath to antagonize America's politically powerful Jewish community, which strongly supports the Democratic Party. But the president is also under intense pressure from the national security community not to free the Israeli spy... To my knowledge, three previous cases of high-ranking U.S. government officials caught passing top-secret information to Israel have been similarly hushed up. Two were senior defense department officials under Ronald Reagan, one a top state department official in a previous administration. None was prosecuted.

Pollard's defenders claim he, like French Capt. Alfred Dreyfus in 1894, is a victim of anti-Semitism in the military. They maintain Pollard was "only" spying for a friendly country, motivated solely by concern for Israel's security. These assertions are patently false. Pollard was suspected for some time of spying. Investigation was held off precisely because of fears of raising cries of anti-Semitism. Pollard took large sums of money and jewelry from Israeli agents in payment for spying.



With remarkable chutzpah, Israel, which receives up to \$5 billion in U.S. aid annually, refuses to return documents stolen by Pollard, or allow U.S. intelligence to debrief Mossad agents who ran Pollard in order to learn the full extent of the disaster. While Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu kept calling for Pollard's release on "humanitarian" grounds, he refused to free prisoner of conscience Mordechai Vanunu, now serving 18 years in solitary confinement in Israel for telling a British newspaper about Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Pollard is no Jewish patriot. He is a traitor who sold out his country, and fellow intelligence officers, for money, then claimed he was being persecuted by anti-Semites. Victim he is not. To the contrary, Pollard is a poster boy for anti-Semitism. His treason unfairly exposes all American Jews to hate, and accusations of doubtful loyalty. Jonathan Pollard is a traitor of the worst kind - not a second Dreyfus - and should stay in prison.

### Source #3: Government of Israel statement on Jonathan Pollard, 12 May 1998.

[www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Prelations/Israels+Foreign\\_Relations+since](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Prelations/Israels+Foreign_Relations+since)

*For the first time since his arrest and trial, and as part of the ongoing efforts to secure Pollard's release, the Government of Israel publicly admitted that Jonathan Pollard was an Israeli agent. Text:*

...The State of Israel has announced that Jonathan Pollard served as an Israeli agent handled by senior members of the Scientific Liaison Bureau (*Lakam*). It should be noted that this position is consistent with the facts that have already found expression in the publicly issued conclusions of the *Knesset* Intelligence and Security Services Subcommittee, and by the Rotenstreich-Tzur Commission of Inquiry, established by the Prime Minister in early 1987.

### Source #4: American Injustice, Editorial- Jerusalem Post July 29, 1996.

[http://hhermon.tripod.com/jpollard/American\\_injustice.htm](http://hhermon.tripod.com/jpollard/American_injustice.htm)

President Bill Clinton's decision on Friday to reject Jonathan Pollard's appeal for clemency was a poorly-timed and ill-advised act which raises serious questions not only about the American system of justice, but also about the American president and his relationship with the Jewish community.

...Given the vast amount of material that Pollard reportedly gave his handlers, as well as its sensitive nature, one could be forgiven for assuming that justice was served in this instance. Yet, even a cursory

examination of the circumstances surrounding the case reveals that Pollard has fallen victim to what can only be described as an act of arbitrary injustice. In receiving a life sentence, Pollard was punished far more harshly than others caught spying for friendly nations by American officials.

In the past 12 years, 11 such men and women have been convicted in the US for spying. Most received sentences ranging from two to four years. Only Steven Salas, convicted and sentenced to 14 years in 1993 for spying for Greece, received more than 10 years in prison. Since both Israel and Greece are close allies of the US, it is inexplicable that Pollard was singled out for such a harsh sentence, while others received relative leniency...

...Adding to the sense of unfairness is the fact that Pollard agreed to plead guilty and waive a trial in exchange for a promise from the US Justice Department that it would ask for no more than "a substantial sentence," it being understood that Pollard would not receive life in prison...

Even now that the truth has come out, the US intelligence community refuses to admit its error, and Pollard languishes in prison as a result... Though Clinton has been one of Israel's warmest and closest friends in the White House, he would do well to rethink the manner in which the Pollard issue has been handled.



## Case Study # 3: A Massacre that Never Happened – Operation Defensive Shield in Jenin

From October 2000 to the present, Israel has been embroiled in its longest war to date, the Intifadah. This war is different from most of its previous wars (excluding the latter part of the war in Lebanon when, after defeating the PLO forces, Israel found itself combating Hizbullah guerilla fighters for close to 15 years):

- a. Israel is not fighting an army as it did in its past wars, but groups of armed terrorists operating from deep within civilian neighborhoods. This deeply influences its image in the media, due to the fact that not a few civilians have been killed in the crossfire.
- b. Due to the nature of this war, it is extremely challenging to identify who is a terrorist and who is not.
- c. No country in the world has yet found a "peaceful" way to handle terrorism effectively. As mentioned above, many civilians are paying the price, by standing in long lines to get through a roadblock, by getting caught in the crossfire, by being falsely identified as terrorists, etc.
- d. Furthermore, there is no clear battlefield. Even though much of the combat takes place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the entire country has been turned into a war zone, with homicide bombers exploding themselves in shopping malls, bus stops, and schools.
- e. The war broke out after 7 years of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, during which it seemed that peace was finally turning into a long-awaited-for reality. The joy and benefits of peace were shattered overnight, and Israel found itself in a radically new reality. Furthermore, as part of the peace agreements, Israel actually armed the Palestinian forces it now faces in battle.
- f. The international media views the Palestinian as the underdog in this war, and often refers to Israel's actions as crimes against humanity.
- g. The longer the war goes on, the less people remember its causes (when a child is killed who cares about Camp David, June 2000?). The nature of the media is such that it focuses on the present. However, it is very difficult to understand current events when they are not placed without a historical perspective.
- h. Furthermore, the television industry seeks out provides brief sound bites that may capture the news as it breaks but loses the broader and more complex context is lost.

We choose to focus on one episode in this ongoing war, "Operation Defensive Shield", and more specifically, the operation that the Israel Defense Force undertook in the refugee camp in Jenin.

"Operation Defensive Shield" was launched in April 2002, following a homicide attack in the Park Hotel in Netanya, where families had gathered to celebrate the Passover Seder; 22 civilians were killed and many more wounded. This attack shocked the country and the world, and the Israeli Cabinet decided that serious action was needed, both to retaliate and to eliminate terrorist strongholds in the West Bank. One of those strongholds was the refugee camp in Jenin. The Palestinians were very well prepared for the attack. Many of the houses in the camp were booby trapped, hindering the advance of the Israeli soldiers and leading to the deaths of 23 of them. Between the fighting, the booby traps, and Israeli bulldozers, a square mile of the camp was destroyed. The Palestinians claimed that a massacre had taken place in the camp, and that hundreds were buried under the rubble. World media printed the story as it were fact, but lost interest when it turned out that the casualties numbered 50, most of them armed men. Three children and four women were also killed, possibly by the booby traps. It also turned out that the relatively high numbers of Israeli casualties was attributable to the military command's the decision not to attack from the air, in order to avoid harming civilians. The international media bought into the Palestinian stories of a massacre and horrific Israeli atrocities, but failed to correct the facts on the front pages of the newspapers and on prime-time television.

This conversation does not seek to engage in counter-arguments with the world media (referred to in Israel as *hasbara*). Rather, we want to focus the discussion on how this case imposed a certain reality on North American Jews, and how that reality affects our relationship with Israel, especially in our efforts to foster a positive relationship with Israel.

[We strongly recommend that you read the article by Hanoch Marmari, "Digging beneath the Surface in the Middle East Conflict," *Ha'aretz*, May 7, 2002. We did not use it as a source, because of its length, but it is excellent background reading on the case.]

We have selected several sources to guide this conversation:

- a. Aerial photographs of the area taken right after Operation Defensive Shield (from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website)  
<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/headlines/media2.html>
- b. Sara Bedein's overview of foreign media on the Operation, "Questionable Reporting - 'Jenin Massacre' Headlines," April 18, 2002  
<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/headlines/media2.html>
- c. An article by Richard Starr, managing editor of *The Weekly Standard*, "The Jenin Lie," written a month after reports of a massacre in Jenin.  
[http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle=1218&R=A0A1AD33](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=1218&R=A0A1AD33)

# Source #1: Aerial Photographs of Jenin,

April 2002

<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/headlines/media2.html>

The City of Jenin including the Jenin refugee camp  
prior to Operation Defensive Shield  
(area of refugee camp marked off)





Enlargement of Jenin refugee camp and com  
2002, after the battle.

Combat zone  
(approx. 100m X 100m)



< -- 1000 meters (2/3 mile) -- >

Additional aerial views of combat zone in Jenin refugee camp:





Source #2: Sara Bedein, overview of foreign media on the Operation: "Questionable Reporting – 'Jenin Massacre' Headlines," April 18, 2002

<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/headlines/media2.html>

### *Media in a Vacuum*

...Foreign media refused to quote Israeli press releases, or air real-time IDF film of their troops in combat, insisting on the privilege of being able to find their own sources and file first-hand reports. ... According to Israeli officials, the reason for the refusal to allow the media into Jenin until the fighting ended was fear for their safety, due to all the booby-trapped explosives which were everywhere and fear of the media getting hurt in the fierce battle that was taking place... The Palestinians... claimed the bodies of 500 Palestinians were piled up in the streets and spread the word that Israel was refusing to bury them. Without verifying the facts from any objective source and without testifying personally to this so called "genocide", this number was repeatedly quoted by the foreign media, turning hearsay into fact.

... The first eyewitnesses from outside of the Jenin refugee camp were able to see for themselves the destruction and devastation that came from the fierce fighting that took place in the camp and the grim results of the terrorists' booby trapping their own houses, bodies, cars, and streets with vast amounts of explosives which reduced the refugee camp into rubble. No mass graves have been uncovered so far and, according to IDF sources, there are none. The claims of hundreds of Palestinians being killed in the battle have been reduced to dozens. The Palestinians have acknowledged that bombs were placed



throughout the camp. However, there have been no media retractions of the shocking "accounts" - and it would be unrealistic to expect any.

Many media outlets devoted huge amounts of ink to unverified Palestinian tales of conspiracies, mass murders, common graves, and war crimes. The credibility of Palestinian "witnesses" was barely questioned (despite the Palestinian track record of fabricating false claims).

European and Arab states described the fighting in Jenin, inter alia, in terms of: *"genocide"; unprecedented humanitarian disaster; Sabra and Shatilla #2; a campaign of revenge and murder; Nazi ethnical cleansing.*

European articles focused mainly on the physical damage to buildings due to Israeli tanks moving through the camp, and failed to mention the fact that many of the buildings and streets were rigged with explosives, which were set off by the numerous terrorist cells operating in the refugee camp.

The British press, in particular, printed unsubstantiated and unverified reports of what took place in Jenin: The British newspaper, *The Independent*, called what was happening in Jenin, "the Jenin Slaughter House". *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Times* all quote the same lone individual, 28-year-old Kamal Anis, who said that he "saw the Israeli soldiers pile 30 bodies beneath a half-wrecked house. When the pile was complete, they bulldozed the building, bringing its ruins down on the corpses. Then they flattened the area with a tank." (*The Independent*)

The American press, by contrast, was generally more balanced in reporting from Jenin, although there were some reports like the one from James Bennet, writing for *The New York Times*, who wrote: "Palestinians here describe bodies cut in pieces, bodies scooped up by bulldozers and buried in mass graves, bodies deliberately concealed under collapsed buildings. They describe people drinking out of sewers and people used by Israeli soldiers as human shields."

T. Christian Miller of the *Los Angeles Times* writes that: Palestinian "accounts, which could not be independently confirmed, painted a picture of a vicious house-to-house battle in which Israeli soldiers faced Palestinian gunmen intermixed with the camp's civilian population."

Israel's comments on what was actually happening at the UNWRA Jenin refugee camp were, for the most part, ignored by world media: In a press briefing on April 12, 2002, Mr. Danny Ayalon, foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, dismissed Palestinian reports of putting Palestinian dead bodies into mass graves as part of the Palestinian propaganda and advised the press to check again the Palestinian credibility. "Most of the people who were killed in the Jenin camp," said Ayalon, "were Palestinian



terrorists and Palestinian gunmen, including major terrorists on Israel's wanted list who were directly responsible for the murders of many Israelis."

A statement from Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said: "...The number of those killed in Jenin stands at dozens and not hundreds, and the great majority of them were armed men who shot at our forces. We did not bury a single body - and certainly not in a mass grave."

... In another press briefing the same week, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said: "There wasn't a house that wasn't booby-trapped and there was no way to neutralize the danger without demolishing the structure... We also encountered booby-trapped men, Palestinians who raised their hands to surrender while wearing explosive vests, in an attempt to detonate themselves among our soldiers. It was a very bitter combat. We lost 23 soldiers, which indicates that this was a difficult operation, in which the Palestinians did their maximum to inflict as many casualties as they could...The Israel Defense Forces received clear instructions to avoid harming civilians, and that is exactly what they did..."

Source # 3: "The Big Jenin Lie," by Richard Starr, managing editor of The Weekly Standard, May 8, 2002

[http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle=1218&R=A0A1AD33](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=1218&R=A0A1AD33)

PRECISELY A MONTH AGO, on April 8, the Palestinian news agency Wafa was reporting that Israel had committed the "massacre of the 21st century" in the Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin. "Medical sources" informed Wafa of "hundreds of martyrs." This was a lie, concocted not only for local consumption--to keep the Palestinian people whipped up in a patriotic, Israel-hating frenzy--but mostly for export to the West.

That same day, you could hear breathless reports of the supposed Israeli atrocities in Jenin being spread by Palestinian sources on NPR, CNN, and elsewhere. Typical was the hysteria of Nasser al-Kidwa, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations, on CNN: "There's almost a massacre now taking place in Jenin. Helicopter gun ships are throwing missiles at one square kilometer packed with almost 15,000 people in a refugee camp. . . . Just look at the TV and watch, watch what the--what the Israel forces are doing. . . . This is a war crime, clear war crime, witnessed by the whole world, preventing ambulances, preventing people from being buried. I mean this is an all-out assault against the whole population."



... Screenwriter Daniel Gordan's [description](#) of the ax-grinding media in action is also worth a click. My favorite part is his description of this encounter between CNN's Sheila MacVicar and an Israeli soldier in Jenin:

"One [Israeli] reservist sensed MacVicar's hostility. He was a soft-spoken man who approached her and introduced himself as the reserve unit's medical officer, Dr. David Zangen. He told her that when the fighting was over, they found photograph albums of children from roughly 6 years of age up through early- and mid-teens. It was an album of photos of children who would be the next crop of suicide killers, with notations indicating when each of the children would be ripe. The reporter had no time for the doctor, however.

"Perhaps you should ask yourself why,' she said, dismissing him.

"I do, madam,' he said, 'I ask myself why. I can't imagine it. I can't imagine sending one's child out to be a mass murderer who commits suicide to kill women and children.'

"Well, I can explain it,' said the reporter. 'For me it all comes down to one word, "occupation."

"But madam,' the doctor said, 'Jenin hasn't been occupied for nine years.'"

Oops.



# Case Study # 4: An International Israeli Hero - Ilan Ramon

Instead of a lengthy introduction, we let an edited version of an article from *The Jerusalem Post* tell the story. Media loves Heroes and villains, and for once Israel offered a hero! An important question to ponder as you are doing the SWOT, is

We have selected several sources to guide this conversation:

1. Aland Abbey, *The Jerusalem Post*, online edition: "Ilan Ramon – Israeli hero," February, 1, 2003.  
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/Printer&cid=1044093797116&p=1006688055060>
2. A PowerPoint presentation of Ilan Ramon, with the song "Can You Hear My Voice" (Rachel) in the background. This song was played on the shuttle, at the request of Ramon's wife, Rona. She meant to tell him she loved him from afar, but no one knew the words were prophetic ("The day of tears of farewell is approaching...").  
<http://www.jr.co.il/pictures/israel/history/ilanramon.swf>. The words of the song can be found on the same site, at  
<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/people/IMAGES/ramon/zemernugeh.jpg>.
3. The story of the Torah scroll that Ilan Ramon took with him to space: "A Promise Fulfilled," Tovah Lazaroff, *The Jerusalem Post*.  
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/Printer&cid=1045631313887&p=1077768895041>

Source #1: In Lieu of an Introduction: Excerpts from of the *Jerusalem Post*, online edition: "Ilan Ramon – Israeli hero," February, 1, 2003,  
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/Printer&cid=1044093797116&p=1006688055060>

He was identified only as "Col. A.," a veteran F-16 pilot who had logged many combat missions and was an electrical engineer. Ramon was born June 20, 1954, in Tel Aviv. His wife's name is Rona, and the two have four children. He graduated from high school in 1972 and began his military service. He then attended flight-training school. He distinguished himself in combat. He participated in the Yom Kippur War

in 1973. In 1974, Ramon graduated as a fighter pilot from IAF Flight School. It wasn't until the day after he flew into space that we learned he had performed an historic mission for Israel long before he flew into space. In 1981, Ramon was one of eight Israeli F-16 pilots who obliterated the French-built Osiraq reactor near Baghdad in a lightning raid that shocked the world. It was a milestone in Israeli aviation history because the planes flew over enemy Arab territory for hours without detection. The pilots flew in a tightly bunched formation to send off a radar signal like that of a large commercial airliner.

In 1997, a colleague called and asked if he'd like to become an astronaut. At that time Ramon had been planning to retire from the Air Force. As Ramon began to make the rounds in the media in the last few years, he let out details of his hopes for the flight, as well as personal details that added to the drama and interest in him and his flight. Ramon said he would carry with him various artifacts that "emphasize the unity of the people of Israel and the Jewish communities abroad." Ramon did not reveal at first what those would be, but said he saw his planned mission in space as a "good stage to proclaim that we [in Israel] need you, and you [in the Diaspora] need us." He began identifying himself as the son of a refugee father from Germany who fought in Israel's War of Independence, and a mother who survived Auschwitz. Ramon said that serving as his country's first astronaut was part of a "miracle" that stretched back 50 years. Ramon was not an observant Jew, but said early on that he would eat only kosher food and try to mark Shabbat on board. He became the first to request kosher meals. "This is symbolic," Ramon said. "I thought it would be nice to represent all kinds of Jews, including religious ones." He joked about affixing a mezuzah to the shuttle's door, but said it was up to the commander.

## Source #2

Flash presentation in memory of Ilan Ramon <http://www.jr.co.il/pictures/israel/history/ilanramon.swf>, accompanied by the song Hatishma Koli ("Can you hear my voice?"). The words of the song can be found at <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/people/IMAGES/ramon/zemernugeh.jpg>.

## Source #3: "A Promise Fulfilled," Tovah Lazaroff, The Jerusalem Post, February 19, 2003

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/Printer&cid=1045631313887&p=1077768895041>

ONLINE EDITION  
**JERUSALEM POST**

Life, and science, goes on despite the death of Columbia's astronauts

For two frustrating years, young scientist Yoav Yair stood by as the launch of the space shuttle Columbia was delayed for one reason after another.

But Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut, always lifted his spirits, recalls Yair. "He said, 'Don't worry Yoav, we will make it. We will fly. We will bring you down excellent results.'

"He lived up to this promise," says Yair.

Today, scientists have a better understanding of the atmosphere, including the physics of thunderstorms and climate changes, thanks to data collected for Israeli scientists by the seven astronauts on the Columbia, which broke apart on February 1, killing its crew, including Ramon.

By that fatal Saturday morning most of the data had already been sent back to the six-member Israeli scientific team, which included Yair, tracking the flight on the ground in Maryland. Now the scientists, who have returned to Israel, are torn between excitement over the new data and sorrow over the loss of the crew who had become their friends.

"We were about to celebrate and instead we mourn," says Yair of the Open University.

With 80-plus experiments on board, the shuttle was a science lab in space. Among them were experiments designed by a team of 14 Israeli scientists organized out of Tel Aviv University. For four years, while the astronauts trained for their mission, this team trained for theirs. Although the bulk of the work was done in Israel, they went to the United States many times to coordinate with the crew.

While the crew worked in space around the clock, so too did six of these scientists, who kept a 24-hour computer vigil in Maryland.

Joachim Joseph, of Tel Aviv University, one of two lead scientists on the project, says that Ramon and the astronauts were like one family.

"They spent so much time together and they were all similar people. They were smart and enthusiastic."

Ramon, a small man with a twinkle in his eye, "was active and quick and intelligent, caring, so it was impossible not to like him. He was just that kind of guy. When you saw him, you immediately took to him. I particularly liked the way he interacted with his children," says Joseph.



Ramon was on a dual mission for Joseph: one for science and one for history.

Upon visiting Joseph in his Tel Aviv home, Ramon noticed a miniature Torah scroll in a small wooden box. A Holocaust survivor, Joseph explained that it was a bar mitzva present from an Amsterdam rabbi who shared his barracks in 1944. The rabbi secretly arranged a bar mitzva ceremony for Joseph at 4 a.m. The rabbi then made him promise to tell the story of what went on in the camps should he make it out alive.

"Later Ilan called from Houston and asked if he could bring it into space to show it to the world as a symbol of the many good qualities of the Jewish people, such as resilience," Joseph says.

It doesn't bother him that the box is now empty, because for him the Torah still exists.

"I am not sorry that it didn't come back. Ilan allowed me to fulfill my promise to Rabbi Dasberg. I would never have been able to reach the whole world without Ilan. I think the Torah scroll did its job on earth and in space."



# Bibliography

"Digging beneath the Surface in the Middle East Conflict," by Hanoach Marmari, *Ha'aretz*, May 7, 2002. <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/headlines/media4.htm>

Following is the text of a lecture delivered by the *Ha'aretz* editor-in-chief on May 27 as part of the 9th World Editors' Forum in Bruges, Belgium:

First, the good news: Abu Ali's nine children are alive and well - as well as children can be among the ruins of the Jenin refugee camp. Please deliver this news to all of your friends who may have read, a few weeks ago, Abu Ali's mournful declaration: "All my nine children are buried beneath the ruins." Abu Ali's photograph was spread across a double page in a very distinguished and influential European magazine, under the title: "The survivors tell their story."

Israeli tanks and bulldozers had entered the camp, Abu Ali recalled. He went out to fill his car, telling his nine children to meet him at a nearby intersection. But the Israeli forces blocked his way back, and it was a week, he told the reporter, before he could return to the ruins of what had been his home. "It smells of death here," he is quoted as saying. "I am sure all my children are buried beneath the rubble. Come back in a week and you will see their corpses."

The reporter and his editors did not wait a week and published the tentative story as is. They were not satisfied with the extent of the tragedy that they could see with their eyes and legitimately depict in their copy. The desire to hype the story blunted their healthy journalistic instincts to doubt and double-check any story before publishing it.

While preparing this address, I made some inquiries about Abu Ali's case. First, final numbers indicate that three children and four women were killed during the fighting in the Jenin refugee camp. Second, Abu Ali's children were not among them. And third, the magazine did not bother to tell its readers of this relatively happy end to its story. Perhaps because they are tired of writing editor's notes on Middle East stories.

The past 20 months of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have created a real crisis of values for journalism. I believe I can compress the enormous volume of coverage and comment into four fundamental sins: obsessiveness, prejudice, condescension and ignorance. The story of Abu Ali conveniently exemplifies all four.

It is impossible to cover an ancient dispute in post-modern idiom, using 21st century technology, without recognizing the inherent dissonance. But such recognition is not always there. That is perhaps why the intensive media coverage of the conflict is often so self-absorbed and so harmful to the region. Sometimes it is a disgrace to our profession. I wonder whether the disseminators of the Abu Ali story were

conscious of the impact they may have had on readers, from the back streets of Jakarta to the universities of Boston, from the Muslim neighborhoods in Marseilles to the Jewish community in Toronto. Were they conscious, one wonders, of the effect of their story on the parties themselves?

One day, historians examining this period of crisis will have to consider the circular process by which the media were transformed from observers to participants. From covering the story to playing a major part in it, to stimulating and sometimes agitating the environment for their own media purposes. The media in this cruel Israeli-Palestinian conflict are like a very rich junkie, who parks his Mercedes on the high street of a slum. You can be sure that in no time at all, everyone will be out there, pushing a whole variety of merchandise.

The worldwide resonance of the conflict has meant that there is a greatly intensified response to the work of *Ha'aretz*, the newspaper I am representing here today. All of us at the paper, reporters and editors alike, find ourselves dealing with consequences of our work that we never experienced in the past, and frankly never expected to experience.

The months of violence have forced our venerable, 84-year-old newspaper to play its part in the collective national ethos, though our critics claim we do not show sufficient enthusiasm for this role. Daily, we feel the impact of our work in our contacts with Israeli public opinion, and we can trace our impact, though less measurable, on world public opinion.

That does not mean, though, that we are free of those four cardinal sins I referred to. Oh yes, we are often obsessed. Sometimes we do prejudge. Hopefully we are not ignorant. As to the fourth sin, condescension, many of our readers think we are condescending toward them.

Recently, a best-selling Israeli author, politically middle-of-the-road, canceled her subscription to *Ha'aretz*. She wrote (and I quote): "... I have reached the conclusion that you and I don't live in the same place. A large and growing proportion of the reports and articles in your newspaper stink of the foreign press, which regards the State of Israel as a different, distant and repulsive territory."

Immediately after her letter ran through the Internet, on-line forums, talk-back sections, and discussion groups were swamped with many hundreds of reactions, including rude comments from people who probably never read *Ha'aretz*, but for whom the newspaper symbolizes a lack of patriotism and serves as a ready target for jingoistic attacks. Every radio broadcast that raises the purported question of *Ha'aretz's* loyalty results immediately in canceled subscriptions.

*Ha'aretz's* attitude to the conflict has outraged some of our paying subscribers, who are well-informed, opinionated and sometimes tempestuous in their response to our work. For these readers, *Ha'aretz* is part of a broader range of media options to which they are exposed, and when they get angry, some are ready to give up the paper and make do with softer journalism.



The difference, then, as I see it, between the situation of *Ha'aretz* and that of the international press covering the region is, I hope, now clearly emerging. Unlike those who report the conflict as a grand adventure, we live the consequences of our reporting, with every inch of our being.

*Ha'aretz* is a small paper in a small country. Our paid daily circulation, Hebrew and English - the English edition is a joint venture with the *International Herald Tribune* - reaches 100,000 copies. This is less than 10 percent of the Israeli newspaper market. Nonetheless, in the past 15 months since we launched our on-line edition, our Hebrew-language Web site is now logging half-a-million page-views a day, and our English-language site another 700,000, mainly from outside Israel. But if I were speaking in the [55th World Newspaper] Congress next door, describing our business model, I would have to say that despite all the enormous global interest in our Internet product, we have yet to earn a single penny from it.

Very quickly, we were forced to recognize that despite our modest pretensions, we had been chosen by many on the Net as producers, suppliers and packagers of information from the Middle East. We are servicing individuals, media groups, communities and organizations all around the world. We had become a global brand, with all the challenges and difficulties that result from that status.

Are we one of the dealers that hang around the Mercedes parked on our high street? We certainly are not, but we constantly need to persuade others in our neighborhood that we aren't.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict may lack mystery, but it is deceptive. Practically, nothing obstructs acquiring information from the region, but it is no simple task to assess to what extent that information reflects reality. On the day-to-day level, it is hard to argue with what the eyes see, though it is preferable to put the visual images into context. What the ears hear, particularly in the Middle East, can be seriously misleading, if it isn't backed up with additional information - or carefully attributed to its source. It can be difficult to distinguish between a solid source providing an accurate account and someone lying through his teeth in the service of his nation, or someone else pushing an elaborate but baseless conspiracy theory. Exaggeration, disinformation and provocation are the region's stock-in-trade.

At the most basic level of sight and sound, the conflict is easy to cover. But that is also the greatest stumbling block. Nothing is what it appears to be. For example, one day last August, while on a family vacation in a peaceful seaside town in Brittany, France, I couldn't miss the front-page headline of the regional newspaper shouting from every kiosk: "Israel assassinated Palestinian political leader." The non-credited story told how an Israeli helicopter fired a missile through the office window of Abu Ali Mustafa, the secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Ramallah, killing him instantly. Now, the PLFP is indeed a political movement, but it is also an active terrorist organization.

I could not help but wonder how this news report, as it appeared in the paper, enriched a local reader's perception of the conflict, and what made the local editor turn it into the lead story of the day. Did he draw his conclusions about the event by making an analogy to European politics?



Obviously, the editor who wrote the headline was not aware of definite information concerning Mustafa's involvement in coordinating a terrorist attack on an Israeli school that took place the following week, on September 1st. To know that in real time, the editor would have needed deep, reliable sources inside the secret service. If he had had that knowledge, would he have phrased the headline differently, or would he just make out of it a short foreign-news, back-page story?

As you see, even simple, neutral coverage is often loaded; in many cases, there is no real distinction between peaceful civilian and underground militant, between a decent politician and an active terrorist. So is the use of contradictory terminology that often reflects the two sides' conflicting narratives. "Shaheed" (martyr) or "suicide bomber"? "Resistance fighter" or "terrorist"? These are all different expressions for the same person. By choosing to use one of them, you expose your own take on the conflict. In the Middle East, naivete is an intolerable professional failing, especially when it comes to terminology.

No one in the region uses the present tense to describe the actual moment. There is only past or future. Retaliation for what happened, or prevention of what is yet to happen. As our children tell us: "Everything started when she hit me back ..."

And yet, the story as depicted in the media is sometimes so painfully present tense, lacking in context and lacking in consequence. For example, the image of the Palestinian suspects, stripped to their underpants, with the Israeli soldier aiming his rifle at them, is inevitably shocking to anyone who does not know how much blood has been spilled by people wearing explosive belts under their clothes, who managed to slip through the checkpoints in the age of innocence.

The phenomenon of journalists obsessed by a personal sense of mission is very common in our region and has not passed us by at *Ha'aretz*. Quite a few of our reporters are driven by an ambition to improve society, and their writing often overflows with idealistic passions. After all, this is one of the motivations for a person to choose journalism. But faced with such reporting, editors must make a constant, careful effort to remove the "over-enthusiasm" from news reports. In our own case, since both editors and local readers are intimately familiar with the local scene, these instances can usually be handled with a certain degree of success. But when a correspondent serves a distant, uninformed audience, his editors can often fail to filter out the distortions.

Some correspondents might have been obsessive in their determination to unearth a massacre in a refugee camp. Prejudice and ignorance were at work here, too. A more professional approach would have factored in the five million cellular phones in Israel, and half-million more in the Palestinian areas, which would make a cover-up impossible. Even before the first reporters were on the scene in the Jenin camp, it was obvious that there had been no massacre there. Hundreds of soldiers who were involved in the operation are reservists, meaning reasonable and opinionated civilians, many of them are among our readers, and each one had a cellular phone in his pocket that he used constantly.



Four years ago, in June 1998, at the World Editors' Forum in Kobe, Japan, I made a case which I called: "Sometimes you have to stand up to your readers." At the time, I described the pressure on *Ha'aretz* from readers who objected to our exhaustive coverage of the Palestinian side. These readers found it obsessive, and saw us as condescending toward them and their desires. A number of them canceled their subscriptions. That was during the first Palestinian intifada. In recent months, we have been going through the same experience, but even more intensively.

As the current Palestinian intifada goes on, *Ha'aretz* finds itself in a crisis of confidence with some of its readers who want to regard the newspaper as a source of solidarity and consolation, and not only as a mirror, reflecting and exposing reality. The newspaper has a strong network of readers and advertisers, and can absorb the shocks, but the ongoing public storm about our coverage is worrying, forcing us to constantly and thoroughly re-examine our approach.

As Israel has gradually disengaged from the Palestinian territories over recent years, our coverage of those territories has become more like foreign correspondence in some respects than like domestic reporting. Yet, at the same time, we remain intimately familiar with the territories and with the Palestinian community - as though they were parts of our domestic beat. Over the years, our coverage has spanned most areas of Palestinian society. Our reporters have acquired a deep knowledge of its mores and culture, and deep relationships with their sources of information.

*Ha'aretz* today has nine reporters covering various aspects of the Palestinian side of the story, and many others who take on special assignments. And we enjoy a special advantage because a senior member of our editorial staff, Amira Hass, has lived in the territories since 1993, first in Gaza and later, after the Palestinian Authority was established, in Ramallah, reporting full-time from inside the Palestinian areas. This is unique for an Israeli.

Part of the special skills required by a *Ha'aretz* reporter covering these beats is the ability to critically examine manipulative information of all kinds and to filter it. Only someone deeply informed and intimately connected can, sometimes within a few hours, scotch a rumor or reduce an exaggerated report to its natural proportions.

Thus, thanks to Amira Hass' presence in Jenin as soon as the camp was opened, and thanks to the credibility of her reports from the chaotic scene, *Ha'aretz* was able to quickly and reliably report that there was no massacre in Jenin during or after the fighting.

Because of *Ha'aretz's* years of readiness to listen to the Palestinian side, and because of the natural inclination of the newspaper to regard our mission to be the exposure of wrongdoing, there are reporters at *Ha'aretz* who have specialized in documenting the humanitarian cases on the Palestinian side. This is not new for us. During the periods of diplomatic dialogue with the Palestinians, the reports did not arouse any special antagonism. But as the relationship between the sides grew ever more extreme, and Palestinian violence intensified against Israelis, some of our readers have found it difficult to accept an



Israeli reporter who shows sympathy or even compassion for Palestinian casualties of the situation. As attacks proliferated and more and more innocent Israelis fell, antipathy has grown toward those reporters who continue to describe the suffering on the other side, and they are now the main target of criticism leveled against the newspaper, and are cited as the main reason for canceled subscriptions.

Trying to be conclusive about the basic question "what actually happened there?" is not always fruitful, especially as we try to sift and match Israeli and Palestinian sources. We make a huge effort to give our reader a clear picture, but nevertheless some of the stories seem equivocal. They cite two or more conflicting versions, but sometimes make no final judgment. And that, of course, can leave your reader frustrated and angry.

Over the past year, there has been a dramatic change in the demographics of the *Ha'aretz* reader. That is a direct result of our 24/7, free-access on-line editions, both in English and Hebrew. The newspaper's content is now exposed through the Internet to two new communities we never knew before: the non-subscribing Israeli who browses for the latest news, using several sources of media for his information, and the foreign reader. Both these communities actively respond to the newspaper and its products. The Internet edition has ended the exclusive, intimate relationship between the print edition and its readers, with the newspaper now judged by a much larger range of users.

The English Internet edition has meant that *Ha'aretz* is now quoted in unprecedented numbers of articles and reports. While this gives us tremendous satisfaction and pride, it can also cause concern. Sometimes, we discover that material that ran in *Ha'aretz* is taken out of context and used to serve various political or media purposes - sometimes deliberately distorting the intentions of our writers and editors. Sometimes we find ourselves being overly cautious because of our ongoing direct discourse with the Palestinians, with the Arab world, and with world public opinion. The newspaper's reputation is sometimes exploited in order to legitimize anti-Israeli propaganda, and we are worried about that.

If the paper exposes cases of vandalism by soldiers during the recent massive military operation on the West Bank, we do so in good faith, trusting that our work helps to clean the system. Then, when the story is quoted widely, under our brand name, as proof of Israel's profound and pervasive evil, I find myself thinking that perhaps there is a fifth major sin in running a paper in this region: The sin of naivete.

Thank you.

