



Canadian Institute for Jewish Research  
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## ISRANET DAILY BRIEFING

[cijr@isranet.org](mailto:cijr@isranet.org)   [www.isranet.org](http://www.isranet.org)   514-486-5544

Friday Sept. 13, 2013   Volume XI, No. 3,142   Yom Hamishi 9 Tishrei 5774

P.O. Box 175 • Station H Montreal • Quebec • H3G 2K7   514-486-5544   [cijr@isranet.org](mailto:cijr@isranet.org)   [www.isranet.org](http://www.isranet.org)

### **HESHBON HANEFESH — REMEMBERING ON YOM KIPPUR OUR MISDEEDS, MAN'S HOPE, ISRAEL'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

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### *Heshbon Hanefesh* **Rosh Hashana-Yom Kippur 5774, Sept. 13, 2013** *Baruch Cohen*

*In loving memory of Malca z'l*

Many of our sisters and brothers who label themselves as secularists or agnostics are uneasy, confused by the term "High Holidays". Some are unsure of the historical, poetic and cultural values of the holidays' historic-religious content.

*Teshuva*, the Hebrew word for repentance, means turning away from the wrong path and coming back to the *right one*. Repentance is both a subjective and positive moral and ethical change, within an individual, a community and society at large.

*Rosh Hashana*, the New Year, has a universal motif. The prayers are *not* for Israel alone, but for the entire world: for redemption, compassion, brotherhood, loyalty; against hate and discrimination, and for love and respect between one another. *Teshuva* means to remember what we did wrong, and that we must gauge the gap between our promise and our conduct, between our standards and our actions.

The wonderful Hebrew phrase *Heshbon Hanefesh* means taking stock of one's soul, an inner "account", a sitting in judgement upon ourselves. *Heshbon Hanefesh* also means to confess our failure, to bring ourselves to a higher standard of humanness. Better to perform actions, we must consider what we should have done, and did not do!

*Shana Tova 5774 to Am Yisroel, all CIJR friends and to the Jewish people and to the State of Israel. A happy, healthy and peaceful 5774 to the House of Israel, and to the entire world: Shalom, peace and love!*

*(Baruch Cohen, who will be 94 in October, is Research Chairman of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, and a member of the Holocaust Memorial Centre.)*

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## **ROSH HASHANA WITHOUT END**

*Nathan Lopes Cardozo*

*Jerusalem Post, Sept. 4, 2013*

The Holy One, blessed be He, has many ways to create an uproar in our souls. He can show us a moment in the life of a person who seems to live simply, and do it with such tranquility and profundity that we are immediately transformed. It would be completely impossible to continue our lives as we did before. Our very being is shattered and we feel the need to start all over again, as if we are infants who have just entered the universe. It is in that very moment that we enter the world of *Rosh Hashana*.

In the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam there is a portrait by Rembrandt's most celebrated student, the master painter Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693). The painting is called *Old Woman at Prayer*. It is sometimes called *Prayer without End* because it portrays an old woman praying in total surrender. A lonesome figure resigned to her simple, lonely life, yet totally content. Nothing can disturb her while she is praying; her devotion is absolute. She prays with a profundity that is rare in the extreme. Only a few of us can reach that place.

She thanks God for her simple bread, fish and drink; for the clean tablecloth and the chair on which she sits. She is grateful for the little cat that gives color to her life, which is coming to a close. She gives thanks for being allowed to be, in spite of all the worries and suffering she has had to endure in her life. No resentful melancholy; no rebellion; no boredom; and above all, no mockery. Nothing but: Lord, thanks for my share.

But there is more: She knows that her life is of great significance in the eyes of the Lord. Not because she has achieved great things on this earth, but because she knows that all human life takes place in the presence of God – and therefore must be significant. She knows the secret of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur: that even the trivial has ultimate meaning and needs to be sanctified. She realizes that there are no negligible deeds. Man should never see his life as compatible with the ordinary. Time is broken eternity.

Consequently, every moment counts, since it is part of a great infinite mystery in which not even one second can be recaptured at a later time. The old woman's prayer teaches her that man does not live in his own private time, but in God's. Every second of his life he must infuse divinity into the mundane, bringing together the passing with the everlasting, the common with the unique and the momentary with the eternal (A.J. Heschel).

For this reason, man needs to learn that only in the detail can he really live a life of profundity. Detail is the breaking down of generalities into such subtle components that they touch eternity. The High Holy Days are a warning to ensure that we live vertically and not horizontally. When we live our lives in the pursuit of new objects, believing that through them we will find meaning and joy, we need only look around us and see to what extent most people are afflicted with boredom.

The excitement of new possessions often leads to the trivialization of our lives after only a few days. This is true, however, only if we see them in a horizontal position.

If we view them vertically, i.e. in the process of constant spiritual growth, then we are seeing them in the light of eternity and, consequently, in profundity. Maes's *Old Woman at Prayer* is therefore immensely rich with the little she has. She doesn't need many possessions to be more.

But more than that, though she lives in profound loneliness, her awareness of God is so intense that she is in touch with all her fellow men. It is through her distinctiveness that all people are her personal friends. Only in relationships can one be an individual, and it is through this individuality that man encounters his greatest challenge: a call for accountability from which there is no escape. It is only man who bears ultimate responsibility, and through his deeds he meets the Other, whether it is God or man.

Nothing has more far-reaching consequences than the human deed. One act may decide the fate of the world. It is through carrying out his deeds that man reveals his mind and heart. And even when the act takes place among a multitude of people, and in cooperation with others, it remains distinct and carries its own responsibility.

*Rosh Hashana* celebrates the birth of the human being, the first creature destined to be an individual. Among all of God's creations, he is the only one who carries responsibility. *Rosh Hashana* is the time when we must learn to turn every human deed into a dignified encounter with God. On this long, 48-hour day we are reminded that our lives and deeds must redeem God's presence and rescue Him from oblivion. We are enjoined to rediscover our fellow men as unique individuals who stand together with us before the throne of God.

When looking at Maes's painting, one is forced to peer into one's own soul. We should ask ourselves whether we are capable of living this life of simplicity and tranquility. Can we reach such a state of soul and mind in today's world, where we are so completely overtaken by the ongoing barrage of crises that we ourselves have created because of social and other pressures? We have constructed a tower of financial needs and have convinced ourselves that we can no longer live without them. We hope that by satisfying these needs, we will find the tranquility enjoyed by the old woman. But we fail to realize that we have become caught in a web that we ourselves have spun, and that moves us farther away from our goal.

Like a Jungian archetype, deep in his soul the Jew realizes that at least once a year, on *Rosh Hashana*, he needs to return home and be part of his people and his faith. He must liberate himself from all artificiality and hear the storm that accompanies the sound of the shofar, as a wake-up call signaling that life's tight web can be unraveled – and that real spiritual and moral liberty can be achieved.

The soul rarely knows itself. It is unaware of how to raise its deeper secrets to the level where the mind can grasp them. Most religious people act their faith, but do not realize that faith is a constant happening. It cannot be stored away somewhere for the mind to find whenever it so requires. Faith is a moment of meeting between man's soul and God's majesty. No ladder of philosophical arguments can be climbed to reach this moment.

The mind is walled and there are no ways to enter. All it has is some translucent windows, through which it can see the landscape of the soul and catch a glimpse of what is happening on the other side. And when man rises to reach out to God, it is the result of divine light within, which creates this yearning.

Maes's old woman knows more than the greatest philosophers. She experiences the moment when – to use the talmudic phrase – heaven and earth kiss. She knows how to lift the veil off the horizon of the unknown and gain a vision of the eternity of her life on earth, soon to end.

A thunder in her soul transforms her into a woman in complete stillness. She knows the verse, "The Lord spoke these words to your entire assembly on the mountain, out of the fire, cloud and thick darkness, in a loud voice that continues forever" (*Deuteronomy* 5:19). She may not have been Jewish, but she managed to have a *Rosh Hashana* without end.

*The writer, who is an author and international lecturer, is dean of the David Cardozo Academy in Jerusalem, and a member of CIJR's International Board.*

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## TWENTY YEARS TO OSLO

*Efraim Inbar*

*[Israel Hayom](#), Sept. 13, 2013*

The Oslo process -- started between Israel and the Palestinians 20 years ago -- clearly failed to bring a resolution to the conflict, and did not result in a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians. The nearly 1,500 Israeli casualties and many more thousands of wounded during this period by Palestinian terrorist and rocket attacks testify to this failure. Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's land-for-security formula did not work. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority, established within the framework of the Oslo process, now rules in the West Bank and promotes anti-Israel hatred through its education system and controlled media. Furthermore, Hamas, an Islamist organization dedicated to destroy the Jewish state, rules the Gaza Strip, continuing the armed struggle against Israel.

The current peace negotiations are unlikely to change the status quo. The chances that they will lead to the establishment of a stable, unified, and peaceful Palestinian state are nil. The differences in positions, particularly on refugees and Jerusalem, are unbridgeable. Moreover, the PA has displayed considerable difficulties in state building, and the resulting entity borders on a failed state. It failed to meet the essential test of statehood, monopoly over the use of force, and subsequently lost control over part of its territory, Gaza. It is hard to imagine the PA surviving without the infusion of billions of dollars of international aid. The PA mirrors the deep socio-economic and political crisis of several Arab states, putting a big question mark on the capacity of the Arab political culture to sustain modern states. Finally, both sides of the ethno-religious conflict still have the energy to fight over the things important to them. Such protracted conflicts usually end only if at least one side displays great weariness of the conflict.

Therefore, 20 years after Oslo, we are left with the entrenchment of two revisionist Palestinian national movements, one traditional and one Islamist, in parts of Palestine. Palestinian-controlled territories are nothing more than local bases of terror against Israel. Yet, Palestinian terror has largely been contained and more vigorous Israeli actions could further limit its impact on Israeli lives.

The Palestinian ability to exact great political cost is somewhat exaggerated as long as Israel benefits from moderate American diplomatic support. Appeals to ineffective international forums can be ignored, while some international institutions have only limited impact. Similarly, the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign has largely failed, although some of its long-range ramifications should be a source of concern. Significantly, most world states prefer not to link their bilateral relations with Israel to the oscillations in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Moreover, the awareness that the Palestinians are not ripe for statehood has slowly spread into foreign policy decision-making forums. Subsequently, we also can detect greater international indifference to the Palestinian issue, particularly among Arab states, as plenty of crises in the Middle East and elsewhere attract greater attention.

All of the above means that the conflict with the Palestinians will not end any time soon, but that the situation is bearable. Israel's strategy in the past decade, conflict management rather than conflict resolution, should continue. Israel must display willingness to negotiate boldly and make concessions. In fact, the continuing turmoil in the Middle East sensitizes the international community to Israel's security needs, which reduces pressures for meeting impossible Palestinian territorial demands.

Israel must also point out that the fractured Oslo process has brought about one more partition of Palestine (the Land of Israel). The first partition, imposed by the British colonial power, took place in 1922, when 75 percent of mandatory Palestine, the area east of the Jordan River, was taken away from the Jewish national home to be given to a throne-less Hashemite to establish the Jordanian kingdom. A second partition, this time of western Palestine, was the result of the Arab conquests in the 1948 war (Jordan took control of the

West Bank and Egypt of the Gaza Strip), leading to the so-called "1967 borders," which were actually erased following the Arab aggression in 1967.

The Oslo process amounts to a third partition because it led to a situation where eventually more than 95% of the Palestinians in the West Bank and all of the Palestinians in Gaza are living under Palestinian rule. As we have seen in other parts of the world, partitions can be messy and without clear-cut political outcomes. The limited Israeli military presence in the West Bank is only marginally concerned with the welfare of the Palestinians; the security of the Israelis is its main goal. Israel is no longer responsible for the Palestinians and they are on their own. Despite the anti-Israel rhetoric, the "occupation" of the Palestinians has practically ended. Anyone visiting Ramallah, with its cafes and shopping centers, can see it for himself.

While the Oslo process failed to attain peace and security for Israel, it was conducive to a partition of the Land of Israel, relieving Israel of the Palestinian burden. Most Israelis have supported the traditional Zionist pro-partition position. They also supported the withdrawal from Gaza and the establishment of a security barrier that signal a desire to disengage from territories heavily populated by Arabs.

Israeli society paid dearly for the Oslo experiment. It can honestly say, "We tried to make peace with the Palestinians," which is a prerequisite for treating future armed conflict as a "no-choice" (ein breira) war. Such an attitude, prevalent during the Oslo years, has been central in forging great Israeli resilience to withstand protracted conflict, and an unwillingness to make dangerous concessions.

*Prof. Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, is a professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University, and a fellow at the Middle East Forum.*

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## ISRAEL'S SECRET DOCTORS

*Robert Fulford*

[National Post](#), Sept. 7, 2013

To help refugees from the Syrian war, Israeli doctors and aid workers must do their work furtively. When they go into refugee camps in Jordan, they change clothes so that they can fade into the background. They must be smuggled in and out. They don't tell others where they're going and when they go home they usually don't say where they have been. Above all, they don't want anyone to know the names of their patients.

They move "under the radar," in the words of a clandestine organization in this field. When they treat Syrians in Israeli hospitals, they make sure no visiting journalist learns details that will identify the patients to authorities back in Syria.

Usually, Israel is glad to announce when it contributes to emergency relief. The case of Syrian aid is different. Syria does not recognize Israel and forbids its citizens to go there. Israeli doctors are not welcome in Jordan, where their work has been denounced as a violation of Jordanian sovereignty. And Israel is anxious not to be involved in the Syrian civil war. It does nothing, officially, that could make it look like the medical corps of the rebellion.

For Syrians the possibility that their own government will punish them adds to the horror of their situation. This summer, in Nahariya, Israel, near the Golan Heights, scores of patients have been covertly brought across the border from Syria to be treated by Israeli doctors. For patients' friends or relatives, Israel becomes a last hope when no Syrian medical help is available. Masad Barhoum, clinical director at Western Galilee Medical Center, recently told an NBC reporter that many patients arrive unconscious. "When they wake up and find that they are in Israel they are anxious and afraid."

A Syrian woman in the hospital said that she came to Israel because her daughter was hit by a sniper's bullet. "The hospital in my town was destroyed. They saved her here, but now I am afraid to go back. We will be marked."

An Israeli organization, iL4Syrians, operates anonymously in Syria and other desperate countries. Providing food and medical supplies for those who need them, it relies on secrecy to protect both its local contacts and its own practitioners. Its web site identifies no directors or staff but carries a defiant slogan: “Nobody asks permission to kill. We do not ask permission to save lives.”

They explain that “We focus on countries that lack diplomatic relations with Israel, transcending differences.” They argue that a respect for the sanctity of human life expresses Jewish tradition and culture. As they see it, this applies to Israel’s toughest and cruelest enemies as well as anyone else. Since all of these efforts are unofficial and unrecorded, no one can say how many Israelis are involved. I was alerted to this phenomenon by one of the regular letters of Tom Gross, an astute British-born commentator on the Middle East.

Gross has a 15-minute film showing a couple of days spent by an aid group visiting refugees. The refugees don’t expect them to arrive and are surprised when they learn that their benefactors are Israelis. That makes some of them nervous but in the film others say in Arabic “May God bless Israel.”

The team takes along a professional clown to perform for the children while food is being handed out; in one camp, however, the adults briefly riot over limited supplies. A journalist asks one of the aid workers, “Do people call you crazy?” She answers: “Not many people know.”

Information about this work has to be pieced together from fragments of journalism, like a paragraph in an Israeli/Arabic paper: “The Arab countries offer condolences but the best role is provided by the Israelis because they are crossing the border to provide assistance to the refugees, risking their lives without a word of thank you.”

These are dark days for much of the world, dreadfully dark for Syrians. Few can even imagine a solution that does not involve even more tragedy for them. W.H. Auden, in his poem “September 1, 1939” described an even darker time and offered the only advice that made sense to him: “Show an affirming flame.” As Jews celebrate the start of the new year, it’s worth noting that these Israeli humanitarians have found a way to make their flame burn with a brave affirmation.

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## ON TOPIC

**[Israel, Twenty Years After Oslo](#)** : [Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, \*Jewish Press\*, Sept. 13, 2013](#)—On September 13 it will be twenty years since the Oslo Agreements were signed. Today’s political situation in the Middle East is far from the one perceived by Abba Eban when I interviewed him a few months later. ...

**[Israel’s 20-Year Nightmare](#)**: [Caroline B. Glick, \*Jerusalem Post\*, Sept. 12, 2013](#)—Twenty years ago today, Israel’s so-called peace process with the PLO was officially ushered in at the White House Rose Garden. A year or so later, when the death toll of Israeli victims of the massive terror offensive that the PLO organized shortly afterwards reached what then seemed unbearable heights, a popular call went out to “Put the Oslo Criminals on Trial.”

**[Three Years Too Late, Golda Meir Understood How War Could Have Been Avoided](#)**: [Abraham Rabinovich, \*Times of Israel\*, Sept. 12, 2013](#)—She had been sleeping poorly for several nights but this morning she was wakened into her nightmare – a ringing telephone at 3:45 a.m. on Yom Kippur. It was her military aide, Gen. Yisrael Lior, passing on a message from Mossad chief Zvi Zamir who had just met in London with his most valued source. War, said Lior. This day, before dark.

**[Facing Apocalypse: The Yom Kippur War 40 Years on](#)**: [Abraham Rabinovich, \*Jerusalem Post\*, Sept. 3, 2013](#)—Abandoning itself to hubris, Israel kept its guard down as Arab armies massed on its borders in the weeks before Yom Kippur 40 years ago. As its front lines collapsed in a war it never planned, the IDF was obliged to fall back on raw courage. It was the generals who tipped Israel into the cauldron of the Yom Kippur War. It was the soldiers in the field who averted catastrophe.

**[Israelis Don't Forgive Golda](#)**: [Dan Margalit, \*Israel Hayom\*, Sept. 13, 2013](#)—The sad testimony of Golda Meir, Israel's prime minister during the Yom Kippur War, to the Agranat Commission highlights a tough dilemma that modern leaders face, particularly during wartime. An array of experienced military officials told Meir, based on intelligence sources, that war was not imminent. So what could she do?