



Carnegie Shul Chatter

August 19, 2020

Shabbat Shalom

Light candles 7:50pm Shabbat service 9:20am

The Big News

While network news in the United States has been overwhelmingly concentrating on the Coronavirus pandemic and on the upcoming Presidential elections, there has been a lot happening abroad involving Israel that has not gotten as much attention as it might otherwise have received.

In recent weeks, there has been an increase in tension between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, but the major ammonium–nitrate explosion that destroyed a large chunk of Beirut has shifted Hezbollah and Lebanon’s attention away from Israel for the moment.

Peace in Our Time?

It has been a year like few others what with the pandemic that has turned our world so upside down.

But the news that Israel and the United Arab Emirates have come to an agreement to establish full diplomatic relations, and the possibility that Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states may follow suit in the coming months, gives us some hope that someday, somehow, we may actually have a peace of sorts for our Jewish homeland.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. The Palestinians are crying foul. Iran still wants to see Israel destroyed. Hezbollah is still a dangerous proxy for Iran in Lebanon. And Turkey, a supposed U.S. ally in NATO, has been making ugly noises of late.

But perhaps, just perhaps, there is a new pathway toward peace in the Middle East.

Perhaps the Abraham Accords will finally bring security for the State of Israel.

And perhaps we can have Next Year in Jerusalem without fear of war.

There has also been an increase in incendiary balloon and rocket attacks by Hamas in Gaza at Southern Israel. Israeli retaliation, both military and economic, has included cutting off diesel fuel shipments necessary for electrical power transmission in Gaza.

But the biggest news happened on August 13 when Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced their acceptance of a U.S.-brokered peace deal, the Abraham Accords, that will result in full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Emirates.

Here is an article from *thejewishpress.com* that announced the agreement, and an analysis from the August 18 edition of the *Times of Israel* concerning this historic event.

Historic Peace Deal: Israel, UAE Reach Peace Agreement, Sovereignty ‘Suspended’

By Hana Levi Julian

24 Av 5780 – August 13, 2020

Israel and the United Arab Emirates have reached an historic peace agreement, the first such event to take place since Israel and Jordan signed their peace treaty in 1994. The two countries are expected soon to exchange ambassadors and embassies, Reuters reported.

President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi closed the deal — to be known as the “Abraham Accords” — Thursday in a phone conversation. A

joint statement issued by the three nations said the three leaders had “agreed to the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.”

“This historic diplomatic breakthrough will advance peace in the Middle East region and is a testament to the bold diplomacy and vision of the three leaders and the courage of the United Arab Emirates and Israel to chart a new path that will unlock the great potential in the region,” the statement said.

Delegations from Israel and the United Arab Emirates will meet in the coming weeks to sign bilateral agreements regarding investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications and other issues, the statement said.

However, there’s a catch: “A result of this diplomatic breakthrough and at the request of President Trump with the support of the United Arab Emirates, Israel will suspend declaring



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks Thursday, 13 August 2020, from his office by telephone with US President Donald Trump and UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

sovereignty” over areas of the West Bank that were envisioned in the U.S. peace plan unveiled by Trump in January.

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman and Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz have been deeply involved in the negotiations for the agreement, as well as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and White House National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien.

One of the most important benefits to emerge from this agreement will be the expansion and accelerated cooperation between Israel and the UAE on COVID-19 treatment and vaccine development, which is to take place immediately.

“Israel for the foreseeable future will be focused on building this relationship and pursuing all the advantages that can come from having this new relationship with this country, and which also breaks the ice for doing more normalizations and peace agreements with other regional players as well,” a White House official told Reuters.

Shalom, Abu Dhabi! Why the Israel-UAE agreement changes (almost) everything

It marginalizes both right and left, helps Israel globally, makes us less divisive in the US. But it doesn't solve the Palestinian conflict – which is the most radical thing of all

*By David Horowitz
17 August 2020*

About four years ago, for a conference, I spent a few days in one of the Gulf states not yet at peace with ours and was struck, every time I introduced myself as being from Israel, by the warmth with which this information was received.

At one particularly surreal moment, I was looking out across the waters of the Gulf and trying to figure out, with the help of my cellphone, where I was standing relative to Israel, Iran and everywhere else, when two tall local men in flowing white walked up to ask if they could help. Sure, I said.



Israeli and United Arab Emirates flags line a road in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya, on August 16, 2020. (Photo by JACK GUEZ / AFP)

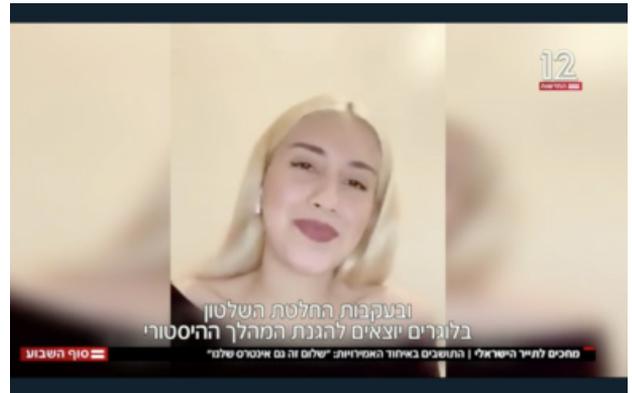
I told them where I was from, and they smiled broadly, expressed their pleasure at meeting me, and said they hoped one day to visit Jerusalem. I explained my geographical ignorance, and they cheerfully oriented me — pointing fingers in the general direction of, first, my distant home, and then, the rather closer enemy committed to my destruction.

It was always widely believed in Israel that much of the Arab world, and certainly many in the Gulf, were fairly indifferent to the plight of the Palestinians, and, at worst, not particularly

ill-willed toward Israel. My trip in 2016 anecdotally indicated the same, though I stress it was a brief visit, I was speaking with local citizens as opposed to foreign workers, and I know other Israelis have had less pleasant interactions. It was also widely believed in Israel that much of the Arab world, including the Gulf, would nonetheless not overtly partner with Israel, much less fully normalize relations with Israel, so long as the Israel-Palestinian conflict went unresolved. And so it proved. Until Thursday.

The UAE-Israel deal has not yet even formally been consummated, but we have already entered the honeymoon period. After endless domestic political deadlock, and months of a pandemic and a collapsing economy, Israeli media is understandably delighted to be reporting some good news, and the coverage is downright giddy — thanks, in great part, to interviewees in the UAE itself mirroring the Israeli delight.

On Saturday night, courtesy of Channel 12, for example, we met ex-pat Israeli businessman Yoni in Dubai, hailing this “amazing” peace deal; his UAE pal Hamdan, who informed us, in Hebrew, that “I started learning Hebrew a while back”; a blogger sending cheerful “mazel tov” wishes to us all; and a hotel reservations clerk “excited about the peace with Israel” and “happy to give you a 40% discount from the room rate.”



A UAE blogger sends Hebrew mazel tov wishes on the UAE-Israel peace deal, August 15, 2020

On Sunday night, courtesy of Channel 13, real estate tycoon Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor beamed out of the screen to hail the “great” deal done by the leaders of our two countries, and to vouchsafe that he is working with Israil to set up the direct flights promised in Thursday’s joint statement on the “full normalization” of relations.

And there’s meat underpinning the merriment: As of Sunday afternoon, the phone lines between our two countries are open, our foreign ministers have been speaking, and Israeli websites — including this one — are now accessible even to Emiratis who don’t rely on VPNs.



Alex Peterfreund, a co-founder of Dubai’s Jewish community and its cantor, with a Torah scroll in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, August 16, 2020. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

Both of our prior peace treaties also started well enough, but both were mutilated by deadly acts of violence against Israelis (at Ras Burka in the Egyptian Sinai in 1985, and Naharayim on the Jordan border in 1997), and gradually reduced to pragmatic interaction rather than genuine people-to-people warmth. The word from the UAE, including from members of the Jewish community, by contrast, is that Israelis need have no fear for their security and will be welcomed.

Alex Peterfreund, a co-founder and cantor of the Dubai Jewish community,

in a television interview on Sunday, indeed, hinted at quite different concerns. Doing his best to be diplomatic, he noted that the Emiratis are “very polite” people and that Israeli visitors — when the direct flights are up and running, and (COVID-19 permitting) they are free to enjoy the UAE’s extraordinary tourism facilities — should try to “act as ambassadors.” (What on earth could he be worried about?)

Honeymoon giddiness aside, this partnership holds potential for lasting, genuine change.

The UAE is our first peace partner with whom we do not have a bloody history. Our ties are not being established over shared memories of war and loss. The forging of our alliance is less emotionally dramatic, less fraught, less militarily important. In short, more normal. The union might just last. And there may yet be further weddings.

Consensual diplomacy

Early signs are that the diplomatic bombshell is not remaking Israeli politics. Snap opinion polls Sunday night showed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party either halting its recent slide, or rising slightly, but nothing more dramatic than that. Tantalizing though peace with the UAE may be, a fifth of the country is unemployed, and few people are flying anywhere amid the pandemic. Netanyahu was and remains the politician favored more than any other as prime minister, but his Yamina right-wing rival Naftali Bennett is faring well largely on the basis of his criticism from the opposition of the handling of the pandemic. The anti-Netanyahu demonstrators, demanding his resignation for alleged corruption, are maintaining their protests.



Tel Aviv City Hall is lit up with the flag of the United Arab Emirates as the UAE and Israel announce an agreement establishing full diplomatic ties, August 13, 2020, (AP Photo/Oded Balilty, File)



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plants a tree during an event for the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shvat, in the West Bank settlement of Mevo'ot Yeriho, in the Jordan Valley, February 10, 2020. (Flash90)

Yet Netanyahu has now placed himself closer to the center of the Israeli consensus, and seems certain to enjoy the benefits as time passes.

He insists daily that his plan to annex the 30 percent of the West Bank allocated to Israel under the Trump peace plan remains “on the table,” and that he remains committed to applying sovereignty in full coordination with the U.S. Nothing has changed, he repeats.

Except that everything has changed.

The Trump administration proved unwilling to subvert its own plan by approving unilateral Israeli annexation. And Netanyahu chose one diplomatic breakthrough, and the prospect of others to come, over his own promises to a goodly part of his electoral base. Pushed aside for now, whereas they have for years been punching far above their demographic weight, most of the settler leaders are fuming and threatening, while the center and center left are cheering through clenched teeth. Netanyahu's corruption trial hasn't gone away, but the likelihood of a credible political challenge, hugely reduced in any case when Benny Gantz partnered up with him, has now receded still further.



Palestinians burn pictures of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a protest against the United Arab Emirates' deal with Israel, in the West Bank city of Nablus, August 14, 2020. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed)

More importantly, on the international stage, this agreement is wonderful news for Israel.

It's now not only the Trump administration and the right-dominated Israeli government that is warning the Palestinians that their intransigence is self-defeating but also, as of Thursday, a goodly chunk of the Arab world as well.

Only the UAE has so far made its peace with Israel and encouraged the Palestinians to get working on doing the same. But the UAE is being either applauded for its actions or at least defended by much of the Arab world against the bitter recriminations and cries of betrayal from President Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority, and the dark threats from Tehran and Ankara.

The agreement has the crucial potential, moreover, to bolster bipartisan support for Israel in the United States. Joe Biden had indicated that he would not be moving the US Embassy back to Tel Aviv if elected, but that he would stand opposed to unilateral Israeli annexation in the West Bank. Rather than finding himself at odds with Netanyahu on taking office, a president Biden would now inherit a peace framework accepted by Israel, endorsed to some extent by part of the Arab world, and open to the Palestinians, whom he would doubtless encourage to re-engage.

If they do so, whether under Trump or Biden, the framework on the table remains open to them. Israel has not preemptively grabbed its annexation spoils. The Trump administration has made plain that the terms of the deal are not set in stone; Biden would doubtless do the same.

If the PA stays away, and deepens its nascent alliance with Hamas, things could get very ugly on the ground, including for Israel. Placing itself starkly with the Iranians, the PA would alienate some regional and international supporters, and could face rising internal dissent.

'A new method of doing things'

A complex process led to Thursday's extraordinary diplomatic bombshell. In the mix was the Gulf's shared concern with Israel at the ongoing strengthening of Iran, and the awareness that Israel simply cannot and will not allow itself to be cowed by an Islamist regime aiming for our demise and bent on achieving nuclear weapon capability. Somewhere in the mix, too, was that indifference to the Palestinians, or at least impatience with them, and ultimately a decision no longer to be constricted by the Palestinian conflict in their dealings with Israel.



UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash speaks on Channel 12 news, August 15, 2020 (Channel 12 screenshot)

In a brief interview on Channel 12 on Saturday night, the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash summed up the shift like this: "Clearly, 70 years of not communicating with Israel has led us nowhere. I think we need to shift to a new method of doing things. And that method simply is: We can disagree with you in political issues, but we can work with you [on] nonpolitical issues."

That's a statement at once banal and earth-shattering, a statement hitherto almost unthinkable in the context of Israel and the Arab world. It changes nothing about the core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it potentially remakes the regional, and even the global context, in which that conflict is viewed and handled.

An influential Arab country basically held up its hand and said, yes, we know the Palestinians still don't have a state. They should have. They should negotiate with the Israelis. But we're

not waiting for that.

We've not been at war with Israel. We don't have bloody debts to settle, or territory that we want back from Israel. We're making peace with Israel. Right now.

Why? Because "70 years of not communicating with Israel has led us nowhere."

To which we Israelis say, and can now be heard and read online in the UAE saying: Shalom, Abu Dhabi!



Women wearing face masks against the coronavirus walk past United Arab Emirates and Israeli flags at the Peace Bridge in Netanya, Israel, August 16, 2020. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)