

Piss Process

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

Israel has changed dramatically from when I first went there in the 50's. In those early days of healthy Israeli pioneers, when the kibbutz movement was the country's pride and joy and the Mecca of all young European idealists, [good manners was seen as the disease of the Old World Order](#). Every time I would automatically say "Please" or "Thank you", I would be laughed at or told that the Germans were polite and look what they did to people. Or the [British Mandate soldiers](#) for that matter, polite gentlemen who thought nothing of kicking you in the teeth, preventing Jewish immigration, and cuddling up to the Arabs. Besides, they would argue, it is plain dishonest. If you do not like someone just say so, none of this polite diplomacy. That was fine for Abba Eban at the United Nations, but what really counted was being tough, self-reliant, and brooking no nonsense.

Besides, Western European Jews had good manners and went to the slaughter like lambs, while only a few Israeli-type fighters held up the Nazis at the Warsaw Ghetto. The Lohamei HaGetaot, the [fighters of the Ghetto](#), were the heroes, and the rest of the Holocaust survivors were regarded almost with suspicion for having survived instead of going to an honorable fighting death.

At the time [Israeli machismo](#) sounded like an attractive position. The young lions had won the War of Independence, the Suez Campaign, and would in due course accomplish the decisive Six-Day War. Up until that moment, Israel was overwhelmingly admired. Diaspora Jews who had tended to hide now felt confident enough to come out. But then Israel became an occupying power. It should have learnt from the way the West Bank Arabs welcomed the Israelis in '67 (because they got rid of the hated Hashemite occupiers) that no matter who an occupier is, he is still an occupier.

The changing mood of the world, the power of Arab oil, the insecurities of western democracies, all helped put Israel on the defensive. For years they were warned about the importance of public relations, courting the press, presentation. And for years they responded that Israel didn't need it; her case spoke for itself and, besides, the world was all a bunch of Islamic fanatics or anti-Semites who wouldn't listen anyway so there was no point in wasting time trying.

True, no one cares for your wellbeing as much as you, yourself. Politics knows no ideals, only interests, power, and money. No one will put his own life in danger to help Israel, and the mantra of post-Holocaust secularism was "Never Again".

But the fact is that one needs allies and support and it is becoming more and more difficult to go it alone. Although, if anyone has shown it can be done, Israel almost has, with its technology and arms industries. Still, we know from recent conflicts that Israel needs supplies from the outside, and

America in particular. So presentation and PR are useful tools.

[Netanyahu was educated in both traditions](#), Sabra [derring-do](#) and American diplomacy and PR. So why is he such a disaster? Why am I embarrassed by him? He promised something more refined, someone one would be proud of, an articulate diplomat like [Eban](#) or [Chaim Herzog](#), a good speaker, a rational mind, the [brother of a war hero](#). But he was awful first time around, both at home and abroad. The Right Wing had no one else of stature. He has been given another chance by political machination rather than electoral victory. So you'd think he'd learn. Even Shimon Peres, despised politician for years, has mellowed into the presidency (if only he would stop talking about the Piss Prrrrrocesss).

But no. Netanyahu appoints [Lieberman as Foreign Minister](#) to represent Israel abroad, an unappetizing a man of dubious financial probity, with links to all sorts of unsavory people, with a mouth that takes off before his brain clicks in. Could not be worse for Israel's image abroad. Like those Israeli tourists who [clean out all the fixtures from the hotels](#) they stay in from Turkey to Machu Picchu. Whatever other faults he had, Olmert at least put on a good show. And what does Lieberman mean by insisting Arabs accept Israel as a Jewish State? Has he considered the difference between a Jewish State and a State for Jews? How does he propose to enforce it, by pulling down people's pants at immigration? Will he expel Karta because they proudly proclaim that they are anti-Zionists who refuse to accept the State of Israel?

It is clear that not only America, but large chunks of the Jewish world do not want to be held hostage by messianic fanatics or thugs. In the end it's clear there will be compromises and adjustments. Boundaries will be redrawn. So why go on playing games? Why provoke odium and newspaper headlines by insisting on a few more new homes when you can gain credit as a reasonable man willing to consider another point of view by simply stopping now?

Why does he always feel that if he concedes on one point he has to be doubly tough on another. I know there is no honesty in politics. I know of the pressures and the bribes and the vested interests. But when [Tzipi Livni](#) spoke, for all her faults, people felt more positively, even warmly disposed to Israel, than when blustering Bibi takes the stage. Of course Israel must protect itself. But I want to feel proud when its top people talk, not embarrassed.

Maybe [Obama hates Israel](#) (an exaggerated, even neurotic reaction to [his trying to compromise](#)), but why shouldn't he try to be perceived as being an honest broker who will pressure both sides in order to achieve a peace settlement that takes each into consideration? Why choose davka THIS moment to drive out Arabs from their homes in [Sheikh Jarra](#), even IF they were there illegally?

Every change of government I hope and pray for a change, for moral clarity. But each time I am disappointed. Another piss process.