

# **The Fence: Fortification or Folly?**

## **A Guide for Discussion and Educational Programs**

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### **Introduction**

Reform Judaism magazine's Summer 2004 feature 'The Fence: Fortification or Folly?' seeks to illuminate one of the most significant recent developments in Israeli-Palestinian relations. We sought diverse opinions on three related questions:

1. Is building this barrier a wise course of action?
2. What do you think will be the short and long-term consequences of this project? and
3. What does the "fence" say about this moment in Israel's history?

Readers seeking simple answers to these questions will be sadly disappointed. The writers in the feature make their divergent claims so forcefully that we are likely to find ourselves nodding along in agreement with them one by one until we realize, in a shock of confusion, that they can't all be right.

The fence, like so much in the Middle East, is contested ground; it is different things to different people. Whereas the mass media often reports from a single perspective and with little context or explanation, this feature goes in depth and invites us to work through competing claims on our minds and hearts. The writers, mostly Israelis and all experts, draw on different and even seemingly conflicting 'facts'. Beyond that, embedded in their arguments are different fears and hopes, values and visions. Assuming all are people of intelligence and integrity who write in good faith, how can readers judge their compelling yet conflicting claims?

The seven articles in this feature provide a wide range of opinions about the fence, reflecting different ways people frame or understand its meaning. The Fence is a physical fact, yet one of multi-layered and disputed meanings. Is it simple act of collective self-defense or a subterfuge to hide political ambitions? Is it an expression of self-determination and inner strength, or an act of despair and weakness? What is the intention of this project? Is there a hidden agenda driving its implementation? What will shape its long-term impact? Will it further the fulfillment of the historic challenge of normalizing the place of Jews in the world, or lead a retreat from it? Will it preserve and sanctify life and advance the prospects of Peace? What are Israelis saying about the Fence? The seven articles address these and other questions.

## **Studying and Discussing the Fence Feature**

### **1 Use and purpose of the Guide**

This guide is provided to help professionals and lay leaders of all kinds plan programs in which people can learn about and reflect on the issues and opinions covered by the feature. The guide is designed to offer tools for a wide range of ages, settings, learning styles and available time. In seeking to assist less experienced facilitators, those with more experience will find familiar ground covered here and may wish to skip forward to the section '5 Discussion Frameworks'.

The purpose of learning is not self-evident. When facilitating a discussion or educational experience, it is wise to consider and choose your goals carefully. In this case, the words of J. Bruner illuminate one possible purpose:

... the language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so called uncontaminated language of fact and “objectivity”. It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for meta-cognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or in image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Holy Dimension To This Learning**

When designing and implementing an educational program of this kind, we shape other people’s experience. We must consider the ways this is a Jewish undertaking. As Reform Jews, this implies paying attention to the spiritual and moral dimensions of our collective life as a people. We understand that Israel is not ‘over there’, that the richly multi-layered meaning of the word **ישראל** ‘Israel’ (spiritual forebear, people, land, country) reminds us always that Israel is truly us. Jews living everywhere in the world, including those living in the sovereign Jewish society called the State of Israel, are part of the one, great extended family that - stretching through space and time - struggles to embody truths that partake of the Eternal. That the Fence is a utterly earthly subject, one that may tempt us to dwell in the realms of real politic and self-interest, gives us no license to ignore this covenantal frame to our life and our responsibilities. When we gather and guide Jews in learning, we have the potential to create and sanctify community. In doing so, we strive to elevate our hearts and minds and the lives we lead. If learning can be likened to prayer (in the Talmud it is said to lead to prayer...), Martin Buber wrote,

... (we must not) participate in religious services without hearing the message commanding us to go out into the world and - despite resistance and repulsion, indeed even at the price of perishing - to hammer God's intent out of the unchangeable stuff of life, human life as well as national.<sup>2</sup>

Where else but in holy communities in which we learn and grow can we find the clarity and the courage to live such lives? Finding a way to invite the group to reflect on some of these ideas may be one of the more important things you do in the course of the program.

This suggests that the educator’s goal is not to persuade the learners to agree with her/his own private convictions, but to help them reach a deeper level of insight and to develop well thought out views. The Fence is not only a significant situation in and of itself, but also one that embodies many of the dynamics of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In that sense, delving into this specific situation is to unpack many of the dimensions and layers of meaning that the conflict has for us, and the impact it has on us.

## **2 Choosing an educational style**

A facilitated discussion based on studying the feature’s full texts will be a wonderful way for many people to deepen their insight, to hear others’ concerns, views and questions and to sharpen their own. It is not the only way to use the ‘Fortification or Folly’ feature. In some cases, each participant will read the full version of only some texts and hear about others from peers. Another option is to use shortened versions of the articles (provided here) to lead into, alongside or even instead of the full texts.

Apart from studying the full or abbreviated texts in whatever manner, there are many situations in which alternative educational styles can be used to enrich learning. Informal educational methods can be used to introduce,

<sup>1</sup> Bruner, J., *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Buber, "The Holy Way", *On Judaism*, p. 112.

illuminate or expand on the issues and themes of the feature. Some of these are offered here, and they can be woven into the program.

And of course, in yet other settings, studying the ‘Fortification or Folly’ feature in great detail will be the first step to further, more extensive, learning. Extensive additional resources are referenced at the end of this guide to help in that regard. That list can be given (or emailed) to participants of most programs, enabling further inquiry.

### **3 Laying the ground work**

- ❑ Prior to the meeting starting, set up the room and chairs, review the ventilation and light (unless you are meeting outside near the lake...).
- ❑ Make sure mobile phones are turned off, that participants know where the bathrooms are and when the session is due to finish. Basic human needs are important!
- ❑ Unless this is a long-standing group that has established positive norms of group interaction, you should early on set expectations for everyone. Either spell out or at least remind people of ground rules for a safe and positive experience for all the participants (and for you!). These might include:
  - The need for people to be respectful of others, even if their views are difficult to hear;
  - Share the time (no grandstanding);
  - Help you work with them to stay on subject;
  - Some people are used to being on ‘broadcast’ and do not enter a mode of enquiry without encouragement. Ask questions of clarification. Asking “What did you mean when you said ...?” or “Can you expand on that” can help lead to this deeper mode of discussion. It may save participants from the safe but sterile practice of simply rehearsing known arguments in front of each other. This will be so especially if, perhaps after being modeled by you, these questions come from group members not only you.
- ❑ You should review with the group the process you plan to take them through. Some people need that certainty in order to be able to relax and ‘go with you’.

### **4 Ways to read the feature with your group**

Depending on the group’s age, motivation, and whether there is preparation before the actual meeting, some of the following may be suitable ways for the group to actually read the feature:

- ❑ Ask people to read their copy of Reform Judaism magazine prior to gathering. They can also download the text from this site (if you are reading this in hard copy - see below), or you can do so and send copies to them by mail or email.
- ❑ Ask seven individuals to each read one of the articles prior to the gathering and ask them to present a summary, in turns, to the larger group. This way, everyone is exposed quickly to all the articles early on. This could be followed by
  - Members of the group reading all the articles quietly or in pairs
  - Some discussion, then reading all the articles quietly or in pairs
  - Breaking into groups of seven in which each person in the group is asked to spend time reading one article which s/he will ‘represent’ in the discussion. As you facilitate the discussion amongst participants (using the ideas presented here or your own), they should from time to time refer the group to relevant ideas or quotes of the authors. Using this method makes the activity discussion-centered not text-centered; the texts enrich participants’ discussion rather becoming the focus from which their discussion flows. In a sense, either way, there should be two layers of conversation going on here,

that of the participants and that of the authors. While the latter are not in the room, participants will draw on them, quote them, and use them as authorities. It can be important to make explicit what is going on at a given moment and to move back and forwards between the different modes of discussion. In the end, we hope they will know what the authors think, what group members think and what they themselves think.

- After welcomes and introductions, dedicate an initial time during the session to reading. Have a relaxed environment, ideally with refreshments available. You can suggest that people pair up to read it together if they wish (they will read out loud, so make sure there is room to spread out).
- A creative way to use the “In their own words” section below: print out each author’s quotes in large type on large paper (enlarging regular printing on the photocopier may be the easiest way to do this) and stick or post up each of the seven sets of quotes around the room. Ask your group members to walk round the room to read each author. You can then move into further reading as suggested above or, when they have read all the positions, ask them to go to the one they most identify with (you can also go back to this stage after some discussion). Ask participants within each sub-group to share why they chose that author. Then, initiate discussion between the participants from the different sub-groups while they stay, physically, close to the posted author whom you have now asked them to champion. From time to time (or in an ongoing basis), offer participants the opportunity to move to a different sub-group if they find themselves changing their mind. In this way they can publicly realign themselves with the author whose views most closely reflect their own.
- In some cases, the articles themselves may only be read by the facilitator/educator. The participants may base themselves on the “in their own words” table produced below. You can use any of the methods described here using this table as your basic text. The articles would be given out or made available as ‘follow up’ for people to read in their own time. This may be particularly suitable for groups with little time, low initial interest or a lower reading level.

## 5 Discussion Frameworks

The following ideas are not all suitable for every setting; they are a wide range of possibilities from within which to choose. In most cases, using two to five of them could be a good basis for a single, 1-2 hour program. This section is written separately to the above “‘Ways to read the feature...’”, yet the two ‘moves’ of becoming familiar with the authors and then discussing them can certainly be done in an integrated manner.

As you develop your program plan, your goals for the program bear writing down and thinking about. The following ideas are tools to reach educational goals; selecting amongst them, combining them and creating a program that will ‘work’ requires having goals that make sense, that have a rationale. From this will flow what you wish to focus on, what the flow of activities or questions is and down to other dynamics like how you will move from safer to more challenging topics, what your opening and closing thoughts (and even words) will be, how you describe the ‘take home value’ that you wish for the participants (they will be more knowledgeable, sophisticated, empathetic to Israel, appreciative of the complexity, critical and committed, motivated to be active, etc) and how you build in the greatest chance that they will get it.

Your goals and program choices should make sense in terms of the four ‘variables’ of education – the group, the subject matter, the larger cultural and societal setting and the educator (that’s you).

If you are less experienced, take the time to go over this with a friend, colleague or Jewish professional you know. You may wish to (electronically) cut and paste the parts you plan to use into a single document, adding your own notes and noting the time you have allocated to each section of the activity.

## **Possible analytic and reflective frameworks**

- Ask participants to address the same three questions Reform Judaism magazine asked the authors:
  - 1 Is building this barrier a wise course of action?
  - 2 What do you think will be the short and long-term consequences of this project? and
  - 3 What does the "fence" say about this moment in Israel's history?
- Before the above discussion, ask participants to work in small groups to identify how each writer builds his/her argument about the Fence based on her or his:
  - 1 Understanding of the relevant facts
  - 2 Values/underlying beliefs
  - 3 Short and long-term fears
  - 4 Short and long-term vision for the future.

These are four distinct dimensions of the person's overall response to the Fence and worth this careful work of identification and exploration. It will help participants see what is implicit, but not stated. Perhaps have these small groups look at one of the writers, then join back together to compare and contrast what they found. Making notes in table form on a flip chart will be useful.

When they have done their analysis, make the transition from an analytic to a reflective mode by asking participants to think about and list their own understanding of the facts, values/underlying beliefs, fears and vision (again, give them time to note the difference between each). This would be rich to share in pairs. Then, in larger groups, they can explore how these shape, and are reflected in, their opinions about the Fence.

- What are the different parameters or factors that the different writers focus on? For example, do they focus on short or long-term concerns? Practical or symbolic concerns? Sole concern for Jews/Israelis, or concern also (equally?) for the Palestinians? A pragmatic or a moral framework? Political concerns or historic precedents? Having listed and explored such parameters, which are the most significant parameters for group members? Why?
- Use the following sequence of explorations.:
  - Suppose that tomorrow you become the Prime Minister of Israel. You have unlimited support within the Knesset. What do you do about the Fence?
  - Suppose you have become an Israeli citizen and live in Israel, a Reform Jew and member of a Reform community. You still have your own, current beliefs about the fence; what do you do about the Fence?
  - Suppose you are yourself (that is, in this case there is no supposing, just being yourself). What do you do about the Fence? What do you 'do about' (relate to, engage with) Israel in a more general sense?

Ask how the different versions of "Suppose ..." made them feel and what it helped them see.

- In what ways do the different writers simply speak past the concerns of the others? Identify and explore specific examples.

- ❑ Which arguments or lines or reasoning are explicitly or implicitly Jewish? Israeli? Zionist? Progressive/enlightened? Should this and other important debates about Israel's future be shaped in these ways?

## Different Voices

- ❑ Are there kinds of arguments, or ways of thinking, that should especially appeal to Reform Jews (and which may appeal especially to others, too)? What are they? Identify and discuss specific statements that might especially speak to Reform sensibilities.
- ❑ Distribute copies of the resolution of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism to read and discuss (if you are on-line, click [here](#), or find it at [www.urj.org/csa/reso](http://www.urj.org/csa/reso) ). In groups of five or seven, ask participants to reword parts of the resolution they have different ideas on; as long as they can do so consensually, and have each group present their changes to the larger group for brief discussion.
- ❑ What life experiences do the group members draw on when weighing the different perspectives and claims of the writers (for example, one is a survivor of the *Shoa*, another has never experienced anti-Semitism, another has Israeli friends who have Palestinian acquaintances). The facilitator needs to make sure that this goes beyond story telling so that participants reflect on the impact of these experiences. Some ways to make that happen:
  - Encourage participants to spell out the influence of these stories/events.
  - Ask them whether these experiences overly influence them.
  - Ask A whether, if s/he had had B's experiences, s/he may think like B does.
  - Ask what is the difference between being informed by our experiences or captive to them. Ask for examples. In relation to Israel, how can we expand our experiences? When we hear someone else's experience, does it become in some way our own?
- ❑ Staff working on this story sought submissions from additional women and from Arab Israelis. For practical reasons, these did not materialize. Did you notice whose 'voices' were included here and whose were not? We chose not to incorporate what we termed 'extreme' viewpoints', ones that we felt would not be even potentially compelling to a significant portion of our readers. Do you agree with that judgment? In your opinion, did we achieve that goal? Are there other 'voices' you would like to hear and where might you hear them?
- ❑ We wrote in the introduction, "Assuming all the writers are people of intelligence and integrity who write in good faith, how can we judge their conflicting yet compelling claims?" Which of the writers would you prefer to have dinner with and why? Does your sense of the person behind the words affect the way you relate to their arguments? Should it?
- ❑ How do you respond to the emotional, as opposed to analytical, aspects of writers' arguments? Are there arguments or phrases you consider to be 'scare tactics' designed to frighten you or, alternatively, ones that offer a simplistic utopian dream, not really attainable?
- ❑ The following is a fun technique to encourage people to 'share' the talking and to spice up the discussion. Obtain several large balls of colored yarn. When you begin the discussion, hold one end of one of the yarn balls. Each successive person to speak is passed the yarn so that it unravels as it goes around. Tie on new colors to lengthen the yarn as the conversation unfolds. By the end, there is an entangled, multi-colored spider's web ... or a mess. Either way, it shows the path of interactions and the amazing collaboration that is human conversation!
- ❑ Invite participants to write their own short pieces on the fence. They may wish to use some of the ideas you covered in the program; you may suggest they review this guide to be exposed to

additional ideas and resources. Such pieces can be published on the website of the sponsoring or hosting organization (be it a synagogue, ARZA chapter, NFTY group, Keshet group, camp, or other setting).

## Fences and Maps of Fences

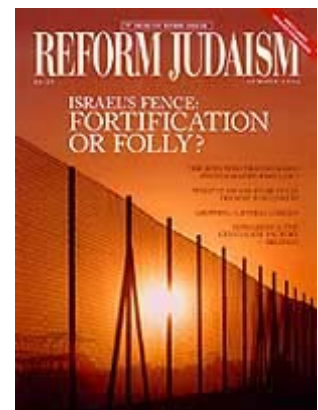
- Start off the discussion by exploring the notion of fences and walls. Locate some walls in the immediate proximity of your discussion and take the group on a guided tour of these (whether by getting close to them or viewing them through a window). These might include space-dividers in an office, low property fences and security walls. Alternatively, photograph fences and walls near where you live and work (or near where the group meets) and project these onto a screen to discuss. Ask the group to describe what they see, to surmise why it was built, to speculate about what function it plays and for whom, whether it favors and perhaps harms the interests of different people in different situations, ask them whether they can envisage a world in which the fence/wall might be taken down. As you move into the discussion on the fence, you will have covered many of the themes and will be able to refer back to and build on the conversations you have had.
- Spend time looking at the map which is based on Israeli Government statements made to the press (provided by the Consulate General of Israel in New York [www.israel.fm.org](http://www.israel.fm.org)). Find all the references to the placement of the fence in the various authors' words. On this critical point, what seems makes most sense? Bring other maps to look at as well (find some through the 'additional Resources' section at the end of this guide). If your group is due to meet again, ask for volunteers who will research this key point (on the Web, in books and through conversations with experts) and present their findings to the next meeting of the group.

*A larger version of this Map can be found at the end of this Guide on a single page.*



## Images

- Look at the cover photo. What does it say? What is the symbolism of the sun here? Is it rising or setting? What does the light appear to do, and is this reality or illusion? How can this help us reflect on the subject under discussion? What would you have put on the cover of this edition of Reform Judaism and why? *If you wish to reproduce or print this photo, place the cursor on the photo and right-click the mouse.*
- For groups with copies of the Reform Judaism magazine: Look at the pictures that were used to illustrate the various pieces. Each photo was chosen carefully. What do they show? Do they merely illustrate the piece they are attached to, or illuminate it, interpret it or even change it? Be specific and concrete.
- Take some printed or online newspaper articles about Israel from the days before the meeting and subject those photos to similar scrutiny. Compare the headline, the article itself and the photo. Photos are a separate text worthy of scrutiny and reflection; especially in the media they can be an indicator of a (sometimes undeclared) editorial line.



*From Reform Judaism magazine, Summer 2004. Available on-line at <http://www.urj/rjmag/04summer>  
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# In their own words

The following quotes reflect the main claims of each author (about whom you can read in the feature) and may be used as an introduction to their opinions:

## 1. High-Stakes gamble - Saperstein

- ❑ The fence is a high-stakes gamble...it offers the promise of both added security and the possibility of moving the peace process forward... (however) if over time there is no movement toward a negotiated settlement, the fence may well lead to a serious deterioration in Israel's security...
- ❑ the original idea for the separation barrier came from Israeli doves. ... they surmised that a fence ...might stop the terrorist attacks long enough to allow Israel and the PA to resume the negotiations, which in their view represented the only hope for a diplomatic, two-state resolution of the conflict.
- ❑ Prime Minister Sharon and most hawks in Israel first opposed the building of a West Bank fence, because ... it would leave many settlements outside the fence.
- ❑ ... recognizing that a growing number of Israelis were deeply frustrated by the failure of his policies to end the violence, Prime Minister Sharon saw an opportunity to turn the fence idea to his advantage by incorporating large swaths of territory east of the Green Line and projecting... where the border of Israel and any future Palestinian entity might be.

## 2. Barriers: the lessons of history - Browder

- ❑ Ever since the beginning of civilization, men have built barriers to keep their enemies out. The first towns relied on walls for protection, and as civilization expanded, the walls grew longer, higher, and stronger.
- ❑ The sheer persistence of walls throughout the ages attests to a certain degree of their effectiveness as protection. Yet, over time, each has been rendered obsolete in the face of persistent adversaries and technological advances. In spite of past failures, however, governments continue to erect walls and fences because they appeal to people in search of safety.
- ❑ In the light of history, it is fair to say that barriers built to keep people in or out can be effective, but only for limited periods. The duration of effectiveness is relative to the determination of both the defenders and the aggressors, and to the rate of technological advancement.
- ❑ Barriers have long been a key part of conventional defenses, and they can be of service--albeit limited service--against determined enemies. Judging from history, while they may offer a measure of security, any benefit will be temporary at best.



### **3. Saving Lives – Taub**

- ❑ We did not want to build this fence. It's ugly, it's expensive--even though it's temporary--and it causes genuine hardship to many Palestinians which we must take every measure to ease.
- ❑ Not a single suicide bomber has succeeded in crossing the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip. ... (this) fence has already brought down suicide attacks by some 30%. The simple truth is that the fence is saving lives.
- ❑ Yes...it causes genuine hardship. And it's our responsibility to do everything we can to ease this ... But in our concern for the Palestinians' quality of life, we cannot forget the Israelis' right to life. The fence, and the hardship it causes, is reversible. Lives lost to terrorism are not.
- ❑ ... a fence along the Green Line, which runs through villages and valleys with high ground on either side, would simply not do that (slow down the terrorists by up to 15 minutes, to enable the defense forces to stop them). This is why the fence diverts at points on both sides of the Green Line.
- ❑ We're not trying to establish a border. If anything, the Palestinians, who insist the fence be built on the 1967 line, are trying to do that. We know that the future border between us has to be negotiated.

### **4. Back in the Ghetto – Ozacky-Lazar**

- ❑ ... this is not a "security or anti-terror fence" ... it is a wall of separation, and a brutal expression of the current Israeli state of mind. It symbolizes the Israeli wish to cut itself from the Arab world; and it declares helplessness, fear, and disbelief in a political solution.
- ❑ Based on years-long experience of dialogue with Palestinians on the grassroots and civil society levels, I am confident that we do have partners for peace among them, partners whom different Israeli governments have tried to weaken and ignore. And yet they exist. Instead of building walls, we should be building bridges to reach them.
- ❑ I feel as if I am back in a ghetto, unlike the ghetto my parents escaped sixty years ago--this one is self-imposed. My parents raised me to believe that we belong to "the first generation of redemption and the last of oppression"--and here I find myself oppressing and oppressed, closing and being closed, denying others their basic rights and at the same time denying myself and my children moral values and justice.
- ❑ I see the wall as a symbol of Israeli-Jewish ethnocentrism, as a psychological barrier and a terrible waste of resources. I hope to see the day it is torn down and destroyed by young people of both sides. They deserve a better future than this wall offers. They need open horizons, not hemming in; hope, not hopelessness.

## 5. Dependent no more – Scheuftan

- ❑ Israel's fence ... is vital because Israel needs to cut itself off--not only from Palestinian terrorism, which has devastated Israel through the mass killings of Israeli civilians; but also from the Palestinian attempt to undermine, demographically, the existence of the Jewish nation state.
- ❑ We are probably the only country in the world that has essentially granted complete, free access to its worst enemies. People who are engaged in mass killing of Jews have free access into our streets, homes, bedrooms, and nurseries ... Israel will not exist if Palestinians are allowed to undermine it, and Israelis are not willing to commit national suicide.
- ❑ Once the security barrier is finished, the number of casualties, particularly civilian casualties, from terrorism will drop sharply ... Once the fence is complete and Israel is more secure, we will see a reversal of the downward economic trend that began with the war (the so-called *intifada*).
- ❑ Israel is once again claiming its right to self-determination ... (due to) the unbelievable folly of the Oslo process--we became occupied by the Palestinians almost to the extent that the Palestinians are occupied by Israel. The Palestinians have determined Israeli life
- ❑ Since Palestinian "goodwill" has never existed, and is not expected--and since it is a major mistake for Israel's vital interests to depend on the goodwill of its worst enemy--this is what self-determination is all about--we are finally denying the Palestinians the ability to hold our lives hostage.

## 6. Absurdity, not security – Pa'il

- ❑ The ... security barrier ... is intended, according to Israeli government claims, to stop, or at least minimize, the continuous penetration of Arab Palestinian murderers.
- ❑ Yet even the barrier's staunchest supporters do not believe it will succeed in stopping every suicide bomber. ... (they will) ... sneak through the barrier's gates ... or ... dig tunnels; or smuggle (themselves) ... the fence cannot defend Israelis from mortars or primitive missiles fired from the West Bank. Historically, strategic walls simply have not worked... Therefore, from a military point of view, the fence is a bad investment.
- ❑ Why, then, undertake such a costly project ...? The unspoken justification is political. The Israeli government is imposing a *de facto* new border that replaces the "Green Line," which had ... served as the border between Israel and Jordan until the 1967 Six-Day War. Eventually it will encircle the whole of the Old City of Jerusalem, plus most of the Arab built-up area of Jerusalem around the Old City, as well as some nearby Arab Palestinian neighborhoods. ... we must reject the building of a barrier that isolates Jerusalem from Moslems and Christians... It is unwise, even dangerous, to cut them off from their holy places and most of their sources of livelihood
- ❑ ... the Palestinian leadership has not done enough to stop the murderous campaign of terrorism against Israel ... But ... the placement of the barrier is causing serious disruptions to the lives of thousands of Palestinians and is a major stumbling block to achieving a viable future Palestinian state.
- ❑ Constructing fences and walls east of the "Green Line" is pouring fuel on the fire of the very hatred that brought us to this sad state of affairs in the first place. When the barrier is completed, it will not be a symbol of security, but of absurdity.

## 7. Warning sign - Amir

- ❑ Given our reality, building a security fence between Israel and the Palestinians is tactically necessary... Terrorism is an international problem requiring all societies to take actions... to protect their citizens. ... we've already seen a decline in terrorism in those areas where the new fence has been built in areas monitored by the Israel Defense Forces.
- ❑ But all of this doesn't prove that in the long term Israel's fence won't be more harmful than helpful.
- ❑ The problem is not the fence itself, but where it is being built. A fence on the Green Line between Israel and the territories would be totally acceptable, legitimate, and effective. ... instead, the Israeli government is building a fence within the occupied territories that separates people from their towns, their land, their hospitals, their economic resources. ... this fence has stopped being primarily a security fence and has become instead a wall... The very fact that Israel is acquiescing to U.S. pressure to change the location of the separation barrier demonstrates that the lines of this fence are not solely determined by security considerations...
- ❑ ... the Israeli government ... (is) harboring an illusion that the fence will ultimately determine Israel's borders. ... I don't think such unilateral Israeli action can change the reality that the Green Line - which the international community regards as the real border of the State of Israel - will be the basis of a future Israeli-Palestinian agreement.
- ❑ It is fueling Palestinian hatred and despair, and if it is not removed in a relatively short time, it will damage our prospects for peace, now and in the future.
- ❑ Instead of delving into the deep questions, we are trying to solve the symptoms. ... symbolically, the fence is for us a warning sign... that says it's time to change course before it's too late.

## Additional resources:

### Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

#### **Saving Lives - Israel's Security Fence (Resources)**

[http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFArchive/2000\\_2009/2003/11/](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFArchive/2000_2009/2003/11/)

**The Anti-Terrorist Fence: Facts and Figures** (PowerPoint presentation, takes some time to load. If asked for a username and password, click 'cancel')

[http://www.israelfm.org/publicaffairs/presentations/security\\_fence.pps](http://www.israelfm.org/publicaffairs/presentations/security_fence.pps)

### Israel Ministry of Defense: Israel's Security Fence

<http://www.securityfence.mod.gov.il/Pages/ENG/default.htm>

### Ha'Aretz special on the Separation Fence, at

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=326397&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>

### B'Tselem (Israeli Human Rights Organization)

For Background, statistics, focus on Jerusalem and maps, see

[http://www.btselem.org/English/Separation\\_Barrier/Index.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/Separation_Barrier/Index.asp)

### Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism (SARJ) resolution

<http://urj.org/cgi-bin/resodispcsa.pl?file=barrier&year=2004>

### The Security Fence - Hopes and Fears: *A Drama in Six Episodes*

An educational exploration by the Jewish Agency's Education Department. Suitable especially for youth, at <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/actual/conflict/fence/intro.html>

### Israel Central at <http://www.nfty.org/israelcentral/index.html>

Contains educational resources about Israel from a specifically Reform perspective. In relation to the fence issue, see particularly:

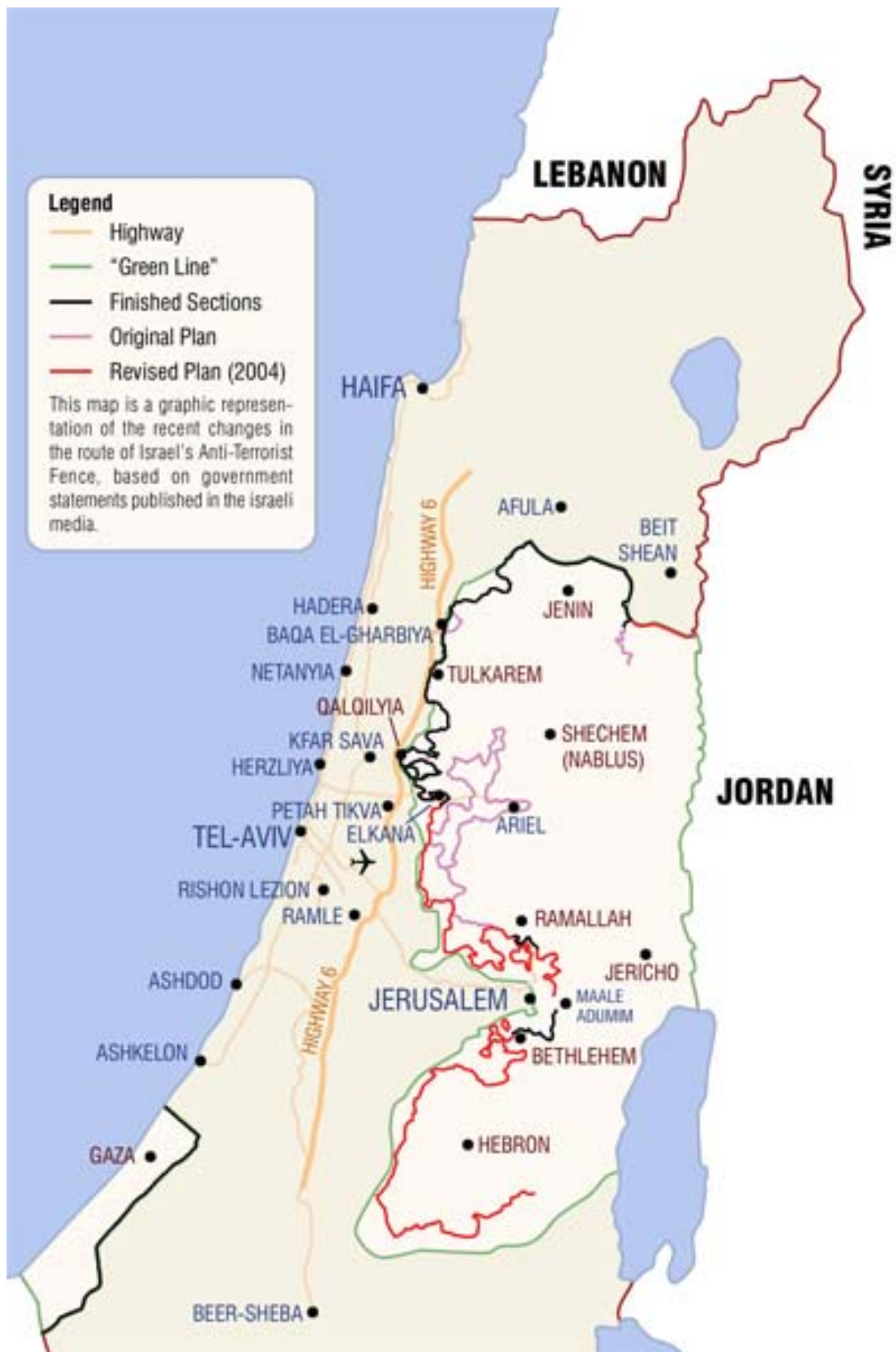
1. An interview with David Horowitz, Editor of the Jerusalem Report, about life in Israel in the shadow of the terror and the prospects for peace, <http://www.nfty.org/israelcentral/eyetoeve/april04.html>
2. An educational program called "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going", at <http://www.nfty.org/resources/studytheme/2003-2004/programs/program3.html>
3. Israel related Websites of interest to Reform Jews:  
<http://www.nfty.org/israelcentral/webresources/index.html>

### As the Walls Close In

From David Horovitz: the Editor of the Jerusalem Report, at

<http://www.jrep.com/Columnists/Article-12.html>

**Map** based on Israeli Government statements made to the press (provided by the Consulate General of Israel in New York [www.israel.fm.org](http://www.israel.fm.org)).



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## **High-Stakes Gamble** by David Saperstein

The fence is a high-stakes gamble, offering both enormous promise and risk. On the one hand, it offers the promise of both added security and the possibility of moving the peace process forward. On the other, if over time there is no movement toward a negotiated settlement, the fence may well lead to a serious deterioration in Israel's security, resulting in even greater instability than the bloody status quo.

Some background: Three years ago, when the *intifada* began, one of Israel's greatest errors was to insist that all terrorism stop before it would return to the negotiating table. Both Israeli doves and hawks held that position. They shared an utter astonishment that the Palestinians could have walked away from the negotiating table when the two sides were so close to a final agreement that offered the real possibility of the Palestinians achieving what they had always dreamed of: a nation of their own. Most Israelis assumed that the logic and potential benefits of the peace process were so strong that the violence would have to end soon to allow the parties to return to the table and complete the negotiations. To pressure the PA to take immediate action against terrorism, the Israeli government took the position that a continuation of talks must hinge on a cessation of terrorist acts. But this position ultimately played into the hands of Palestinian extremists, enabling them to halt any attempt to return to meaningful discussions simply by launching another attack. At the same time, this policy gave Israeli hardline opponents of the Oslo peace process the power to determine the length of time required to qualify as a "cessation of terrorism." Consequently, the hardliners on both sides essentially sidelined the moderates. There was no return to negotiations.

During the Oslo process, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin used to say: "I will fight terrorism as if there were no negotiations and negotiate as if there was no terrorism." Israel followed Rabin's first precept, but ignored the second. Had the policy been "let's keep talking, let's try to work out solutions," perhaps it would have been possible to have brought the violence to an earlier end. We'll never know, but we can say with certainty that the "no negotiations/military response only" policy on terrorism has not brought the Israelis and Palestinians any closer to ending the bloodshed. Indeed, in recent months, former heads of Israel's Shin Bet, as well as former and current generals, including the military's Chief of Staff, have raised serious reservations about this approach, arguing that it has undermined both Palestinian moderates and Israel's security.

Ironically, the original idea for the separation barrier came from Israeli doves. Frustrated by the catch-22 situation preventing renewed negotiations, they surmised that a fence like the one in Gaza, erected on the West Bank, might stop the terrorist attacks long enough to allow Israel and the PA to resume the negotiations, which in their view represented the only hope for a diplomatic, two-state resolution of the conflict. Not surprisingly, Prime Minister Sharon and most hawks in Israel first opposed the building of a West Bank fence, because, among other concerns, it would leave many settlements outside the fence. But recognizing that a growing number of Israelis were deeply frustrated by the failure of his policies to end the violence, Prime Minister Sharon saw an opportunity to turn the fence idea to his advantage by incorporating large swaths of territory east of the Green Line and projecting, with facts on the ground, where the border of Israel and any future Palestinian entity might be.

Whatever the final path of the fence, if it succeeds in stopping terrorism and saving Israeli lives for a period of time, and only if that time--we're talking no more than a year or two--can be used by Israeli and Palestinian leaders to forge a peaceful solution to the conflict, it will have served an

extraordinarily beneficial long-term purpose. That is the promise. If, on the other hand, this potential peace opportunity is ignored--if Israel becomes complacent as a result of the temporary cessation of violence and squanders the opportunity to resolve the conflict diplomatically--the terrorists will eventually find ways to circumvent the fence. They will obtain missile technology to breach it; they will attack by sea; or, most alarmingly, they will set about radicalizing and enlisting Israeli Arabs or residents of East Jerusalem to attack from within. If this happens, Israel's security will forever be compromised, and the window of opportunity to reach a negotiated agreement will almost certainly be closed. That is the risk.

*Rabbi David Saperstein is director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism*

## **Barriers: The Lessons of History** *by Dewey A. Browder*

Ever since the beginning of civilization, men have built barriers to keep their enemies out. The first towns relied on walls for protection, and as civilization expanded, the walls grew longer, higher, and stronger.

The sheer persistence of walls throughout the ages attests to a certain degree of their effectiveness as protection. Yet, over time, each has been rendered obsolete in the face of persistent adversaries and technological advances. In spite of past failures, however, governments continue to erect walls and fences because they appeal to people in search of safety.

Defensive barriers were common in Mesopotamian civilization, and the Greek city-states had their walls, but ancient walls are perhaps best exemplified by the Great Wall of China. Built during the Qin Dynasty in the third century BCE to keep out the Huns, this barrier stretched in a broken line some 1,500 miles along China's northern border. It seemed to work for long periods of time, but had to be augmented with troops--a costly venture. In 166 BCE, raiding parties of Huns burst through weak points and drove to within miles of the Chinese capital. Many centuries later, the Mongols (thirteenth century) and the Manchurians (seventeenth century) got through the Great Wall. Chinggis Khan had united the tribes of Mongolia and turned all their might to the conquest of China. By pure force and brutality, the Mongols dominated the Chinese, and installed their own dynasty.

In those days of yore, technology progressed slowly, and the size of China and the masses of people acted as deterrents in their own right. The testing of the Great Wall was a ponderous undertaking, requiring considerable force and planning. It was repaired periodically and linked together, most notably during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). But even with extensive construction efforts, which gave the Great Wall its modern shape, the barrier was ineffective against internal political and economic chaos and external military force. The Manchus took territory on the fringe of northern China, and then, with the help of internal rebel Chinese forces, they seized the rest of China in 1644.

The Romans, too, built walls around their cities and throughout their empire. In the late first century CE, they formed a 300-mile barrier called the Limes along the frontier through the heart of Europe (from the northern Rhine to the Danube) to keep barbarians at bay. It provided spotty security until the late fourth century. Migrating Germanic tribes, as well as the Asiatic Huns, got through or around the fortifications, sometimes by military force (the Goths in 378 and the Huns in 376) and other times by making alliances or intermarrying Romans. From the late fourth century on, the Limes fortifications were useless; they fell into disrepair and disappeared. Rome also constructed walls across Britain's narrowest east-west point from Wallsend-on-Tyne to Bowness-on-Solway to bar the natives from Roman-controlled areas. Built at the direction of Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius during the second century CE, these twelve- to fifteen-foot-high walls kept the Romans safe for almost two centuries because they were punctuated with manned forts, patrolled regularly, maintained, and fronted by deep ditches, but they became obsolete when Rome withdrew from Britain in the late fourth century to tend to matters closer to home--the barbarian migrations. Subsequently, Hadrian's Wall became a source of building materials for stone houses along the route of the wall; significant portions of it remain today as a tourist attraction.

During the European Middle Ages, a great many towns erected walls with moats for protection from marauders, such as rival lords, the Vikings, and the Magyars. Invaders could choose between storming the battlements or lengthy sieges, during which they waited for the townspeople to run out of food and



water. These walls, nevertheless, served another important function: setting apart the citizens or burghers (who were free men and thus exempt from paying taxes in the market) from the people of the surrounding manors. Citizenship conferred both economic and political advantage. Yet, following the French and Industrial Revolutions, which broke down political and economic barriers, the stone walls became little more than charming adornments to the landscape.

In the twentieth century, during the years between World Wars I and II, France built a vaunted defense system known as the Maginot Line along its border with Germany. The fortifications, which extended from Switzerland to Belgium and featured elaborate underground complexes connected to concrete gun emplacements above the ground, proved pointless. In 1940, the invading German armies simply flanked the Maginot Line, defeated the French forces, and, in a matter of weeks, captured Paris along with much of France. On the other side of the French-German border, also during the lull between the wars, the Germans built their own defensive wall, the West Wall (otherwise known as the Siegfried Line), to guard Germany from attacks launched from French soil. This wall was, in reality, a long series of bunkers, minefields, trenches, barbed wire, and anti-tank barriers. It, too, proved to be insufficient; in early 1945 the Allied juggernaut hurtled into Germany and breached the wall with overwhelming force; the German defensive line collapsed completely. It was never as strong as propounded by Nazi propaganda; indeed, it had never been completed and had never been manned or outfitted with the planned armaments.

More recently, in 1961, the ten-foot-high Berlin Wall was built, ostensibly to keep spies and other enemies out of communist East Berlin, and the same rationale was given for the fortified border separating East Germany and West Germany. However, the real intent of both barriers--augmented by landmines, strips of plowed ground which exposed fleeing people, and armed guards who shot to kill--was to keep East Germans *inside* the communist state. Despite these impediments, some individuals managed to tunnel under the Berlin Wall; others found ways over the wall; and a few escaped to the West through weak spots, braving the hail of bullets and explosive devices. The "iron curtain" was finally torn down in 1989, when the fatally flawed political system it served collapsed.

In the light of history, it is fair to say that barriers built to keep people in or out can be effective, but only for limited periods. The duration of effectiveness is relative to the determination of both the defenders and the aggressors, and to the rate of technological advancement. In antiquity, barriers could be effective for centuries because of the static nature of technology and society. In the modern world, dedicated aggressors will find ways to get through, across, around, over, or under barriers; and effective barriers require considerable expense in manning and maintenance support. Exaggerating the efficacy of security barriers can lead to a false sense of security, resulting in a careless relaxation of defenses. And while some barriers may be enhanced by technology, they also are subject to defeat by technology, especially in a world of rapid innovation.

Barriers have long been a key part of conventional defenses, and they can be of service--albeit limited service--against determined enemies. Judging from history, while they may offer a measure of security, any benefit will be temporary at best.

*Dr. Dewey A. Browder is a professor of European history and the chairman of the Department of History and Philosophy at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee. A retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, he formerly served as assistant political adviser to the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army in Europe.*

## **Saving Lives** by *Daniel Taub*

The suicide bomber who blew up the number 14 bus in Jerusalem yesterday [February 22, 2004], murdering 8 people, and wounding more than 50, was a member of Yasser Arafat's own Al Aksa Martyrs Brigade.

Could anything be more shameful than recruiting, inciting, and paying the murderer of 8 children--students, parents, the brother-in-law of Israel's commercial attaché here in The Hague? Could anything be more shameful than that?

And the answer is yes, there is something more shameful: to do all this and then come to the city of The Hague to ask the United Nation's Court of Justice to censure the victims of terror for trying to defend themselves. To come to the "Court of Justice," on the very morning that the victims are being buried and mourned, and attack Israel for building a fence which might have saved their lives....

We did not want to build this fence. It's ugly, it's expensive--even though it's temporary--and it causes genuine hardship to many Palestinians which we must take every measure to ease. That's why we did not build it for over two and half years of Palestinian violence, why we waited while 935 Israelis were killed. Until we could wait no longer. Until March 2002, a month in which 37 terrorist attacks in 31 days murdered 137 people, including the Passover night massacre. We could wait no longer because the fence works. Not a single suicide bomber has succeeded in crossing the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip. In those areas of the West Bank where it has been constructed, the fence has already brought down suicide attacks by some 30%. Only because of the fence did we recently intercept two suicide bombers on their way to blow up a high school in the north of Israel. The simple truth is that the fence is saving lives.

Yes...it causes genuine hardship. And it's our responsibility to do everything we can to ease this--even if it means creating more than 40 agricultural gates, building underpasses to connect Palestinian areas, running buses to help the 61 kids who are separated from their schools, replanting tens of thousands of olive trees, and building new infrastructure for the Palestinians where this can't be included in the fence, like the kidney dialysis center we have just built at Mukassat hospital. But in our concern for the Palestinians' quality of life, we cannot forget the Israelis' right to life. The fence, and the hardship it causes, is reversible. Lives lost to terrorism are not.

The aim of the fence is simply this: to save lives. In fact it is to slow down the terrorists by up to 15 minutes, to enable the defense forces to stop them. And a fence along the Green Line, which runs through villages and valleys with high ground on either side, would simply not do that. This is why the fence diverts at points on both sides of the Green Line.

We're not trying to establish a border. If anything, the Palestinians, who insist the fence be built on the 1967 line, are trying to do that. We know that the future border between us has to be negotiated. That's what it says in all of our agreements, in United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, and in the Road Map. The Palestinians can't have it both ways. They can't not fight terrorism and insist that we accept their maximalist position on the border negotiations.

At this very moment we know that terrorists are assembling the next suicide bomber belt aimed at the heart of one of our cities, at a restaurant, a mall, a bus. With a Palestinian leadership doing nothing to stop them, the fence is the only thing standing between those terrorists and our families.

But there is a better way. For the Palestinians to do what they've promised to do again and again. Not to send questions to the Court that ignore their obligations, but to fulfill them. Nowhere in the three hours of Palestinian statements before the Court today was there any mention of Palestinian responsibility. Not a mention of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements in which they undertook to arrest terrorists, stop incitement, collect illegal weapons. Not a whisper about the first line of the first phase of the Road Map, which requires Palestinians to take immediate action to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure.

Because ultimately, Court or no Court, no leadership can evade responsibility. And as soon as there is a Palestinian leadership which accepts its responsibility, which talks to its own people about the need for painful concessions, as every Israeli leader for the past decade has done, a leadership like President Sadat of Egypt, like King Hussein of Jordan, then we will be able to stop building fences and start building bridges.

*Daniel Taub is director of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs' General Law Division. This article has been adapted from his statement at a press conference in The Hague on February 23, 2004.*

## **Back in the Ghetto** *by Sarah Ozacky-Lazar*

I'll spill it out right away: I oppose the erection of a wall in the heart of my country and so close to my home. I reject its high cost, and I detest the look of it. I hate the language used by leaders justifying it and brainwashing the frightened Israeli public by arguing that this is the one and only ultimate solution to terror (where have they been in the last thirty years?). I suffer physically when I see it.

For me, this is not a "security or anti-terror fence" as the media refers to it; it is a wall of separation, and a brutal expression of the current Israeli state of mind. It symbolizes the Israeli wish to cut itself from the Arab world; and it declares helplessness, fear, and disbelief in a political solution which, in my opinion, is far from hopeless. Based on years-long experience of dialogue with Palestinians on the grassroots and civil society levels, I am confident that we do have partners for peace among them, partners whom different Israeli governments have tried to weaken and ignore. And yet they exist. Instead of building walls, we should be building bridges to reach them.

When I drive along the new cross Israel route no. 6, I cannot miss this gray concrete wall blocking from us drivers the "other side," as if we can pretend it does not exist. I must admit that the beautiful vegetation planted on the slopes of the road (including hundreds of olive trees, part of them uprooted from Palestinian land) and the lack of traffic jams make the trip nice and smooth. And yet...I feel as if I am back in a ghetto, unlike the ghetto my parents escaped sixty years ago--this one is self-imposed. My parents raised me to believe that we belong to "the first generation of redemption and the last of oppression"--and here I find myself oppressing and oppressed, closing and being closed, denying others their basic rights and at the same time denying myself and my children moral values and justice.

History teaches us that no physical barrier can stop a people fighting for independence and liberty. Just a few days ago, Israeli Chief of Staff Bugi Yeelon said to an astonished journalist that the Palestinians are already developing new methods to overcome the fence, by digging underneath it or by manufacturing rockets to be shot above it. So, what is the use of this fence?

I see the wall as a symbol of Israeli-Jewish ethnocentrism, as a psychological barrier and a terrible waste of resources. I hope to see the day it is torn down and destroyed by young people of both sides. They deserve a better future than this wall offers. They need open horizons, not hemming in; hope, not hopelessness.

*Dr. Sarah Ozacky-Lazar serves as academic director of the Jewish-Arab Center for Peace at Givat Haviva, Israel, where she is active in dialogue and education for peace, and is author of books on Jewish-Arab relations. She lives on Kibbutz Ramot Menashe.*

## **Dependent No More** by Dan Schueftan

Israel's fence is vital, and inevitable.

It is vital because Israel needs to cut itself off--not only from Palestinian terrorism, which has devastated Israel through the mass killings of Israeli civilians; but also from the Palestinian attempt to undermine, demographically, the existence of the Jewish nation state. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have entered Israel freely, and among them are about a hundred and fifty thousand Arabs who have gained Israeli citizenship, many through marrying Israeli women and having children.

Until very recently, we've had a situation I can only describe as absurd: We are probably the only country in the world that has essentially granted complete, free access to its worst enemies. People who are engaged in mass killing of Jews have free access into our streets, homes, bedrooms, and nurseries. This must stop, and it will stop. Israel will not exist if Palestinians are allowed to undermine it, and Israelis are not willing to commit national suicide. That is why the fence must be and shall be built.

Once the security barrier is finished, the number of casualties, particularly civilian casualties, from terrorism will drop sharply. The fence is ninety percent effective against suicide bombers. While suicide bombings constitute only two-thirds of one percent of the terrorist actions committed against Israel, they account for almost half the casualties, and for the majority of civilian casualties. So the first effect will be a decrease in Israeli casualties, particularly fatalities. The Palestinians will probably persist in terrorist actions against Israel, perhaps even increase them, but their ability to inflict Israeli fatalities will sharply decrease.

And there will be economic consequences. Israel's current economic crisis is largely due to the insecurity inside Israel resulting from Palestinian terrorism. Once the fence is complete and Israel is more secure, we will see a reversal of the downward economic trend that began with the war (the so-called *intifada*). Israel's GNP will multiply once Palestinian criminal activity, particularly against property, is tempered; tourism increases; and Israelis enjoy shopping freely once again

In a way, by building this fence, Israel is once again claiming its right to self-determination. Until recently--because of the unbelievable folly of the Oslo process--we became occupied by the Palestinians almost to the extent that the Palestinians are occupied by Israel. The Palestinians have determined Israeli life; we have been largely dependent on their occasional willingness to suspend terrorism. After the fence is completed, the Israeli economy and therefore Israeli society will no longer depend on whether those who dispatch suicide bombers feel like blowing up buses or not. Also, since Oslo, the Palestinians have decided, through the Israeli voter, who will be prime minister of Israel. All they have needed to do is either increase or decrease terrorism, and this has largely determined the outcome of our elections. Since Palestinian "goodwill" has never existed, and is not expected--and since it is a major mistake for Israel's vital interests to depend on the goodwill of its worst enemy--this is what self-determination is all about--we are finally denying the Palestinians the ability to hold our lives hostage.

Thanks to unilateral disengagement and the fence, we are finally taking back our independence.

*Dr. Dan Schueftan is senior fellow of the National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa and senior fellow of the Shalem Center in Jerusalem.*

## **Absurdity, Not Security** by Meir Pa'il

The construction of an approximately 400-mile security barrier between the "West Bank" (Judea and Samaria) and the State of Israel is intended, according to Israeli government claims, to stop, or at least minimize, the continuous penetration of Arab Palestinian murderers.

Yet even the barrier's staunchest supporters do not believe it will succeed in stopping every suicide bomber. Here and there, Arabs, men and women, will sneak through the barrier's gates by posing as laborers or by digging tunnels; or will smuggle through the Jordanian borders (at the south, somewhere between the Dead Sea and Eilat, or in the north somewhere between the Sea of Galilee and Beit Shean). Moreover, the fence cannot defend Israelis from mortars or primitive missiles fired from the West Bank. Historically, strategic walls simply have not worked: neither the Great Chinese Wall nor the Roman Hadrian Wall in northern England nor the Berlin Wall could put a stop to determined invaders or infiltrators. All three are monuments to human shortsightedness. Therefore, from a military point of view, the fence is a bad investment.

Why, then, undertake such a costly project at a time when Israel's economy is in a sad state? The unspoken justification is political. The Israeli government is imposing a *de facto* new border that replaces the "Green Line," which had been established in 1949 under the auspices of the United Nations and served as the border between Israel and Jordan until the 1967 Six-Day War. About half of the fence is being constructed east of the "Green Line," and it is enveloping the whole of Jerusalem from the east by cutting through the Palestinian township of Abu Dis. Eventually it will encircle the whole of the Old City of Jerusalem, plus most of the Arab built-up area of Jerusalem around the Old City, as well as some nearby Arab Palestinian neighborhoods.

We Jews possess a legitimate claim to Jerusalem; so too do Christians and Moslems. Thus we must reject the building of a barrier that isolates Jerusalem from Moslems and Christians who live on the city's northern, eastern, and southern periphery. It is unwise, even dangerous, to cut them off from their holy places and most of their sources of livelihood.

True, the Palestinian leadership has not done enough to stop the murderous campaign of terrorism against Israel and therefore must be held accountable, in part, for the failure to find a just and equitable solution to the conflict. But these leaders were correct when they argued before the International Court of Justice in The Hague that the placement of the barrier is causing serious disruptions to the lives of thousands of Palestinians and is a major stumbling block to achieving a viable future Palestinian state.

Constructing fences and walls east of the "Green Line" is pouring fuel on the fire of the very hatred that brought us to this sad state of affairs in the first place. When the barrier is completed, it will not be a symbol of security, but of absurdity.

*The academic director of the Galilee Center for Defense Studies since 1985, Colonel Meir Pa'il has served as chief of the Department of Operational and Combat Doctrine in the Supreme High Command; commander of the Israeli Defense Forces Central Officers College; a member of the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) and M.K.; and the author of A Palestinian State Alongside Israel, Humane Military Leadership, and Combat & Operational Doctrine. He is also one of the founders of Peace Now and The Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.*

## **Warning Sign** by *Yehoyada Amir*

Given our reality, building a security fence between Israel and the Palestinians is tactically necessary. And we Israelis are not alone. Terrorism is an international problem requiring all societies to take actions--including actions they may not like--to protect their citizens. The U.S. has a fence along its border with Mexico. Israel, too, has a long history of building fences on its borders; if you consider, for example, the fence between Israel and Lebanon or the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip, you can understand that they function as they should. And we've already seen a decline in terrorism in those areas where the new fence has been built in areas monitored by the Israel Defense Forces.

But all of this doesn't prove that in the long term Israel's fence won't be more harmful than helpful.

The problem is not the fence itself, but where it is being built. A fence on the Green Line between Israel and the territories would be totally acceptable, legitimate, and effective. It would help to secure mainland Israel, and at much less cost--not only financially speaking, but also in terms of disrupting Palestinian lives. But, instead, the Israeli government is building a fence within the occupied territories that separates people from their towns, their land, their hospitals, their economic resources. And as a result, this fence has stopped being primarily a security fence and has become instead a wall--a wall that is meant to divide, to maximize Israel's land and settlements, to exclude as many Palestinians as possible. The very fact that Israel is acquiescing to U.S. pressure to change the location of the separation barrier demonstrates that the lines of this fence are not solely determined by security considerations; otherwise Israel would not have budged. And when action is taken regardless of the suffering, regardless of the political consequences, regardless of the degree of terrorism it is evoking, the fence becomes a miserable idea.

Why isn't the Israeli government building the fence along the Green Line? I believe the real reason is it's harboring an illusion that the fence will ultimately determine Israel's borders. This is never stated explicitly, but the thinking is apparent. Ultimately, though, I don't think such unilateral Israeli action can change the reality that the Green Line--which the international community regards as the real border of the State of Israel--will be the basis of a future Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

In summary, I believe Israel is handling a very difficult situation in a rather mature and admirable way. The Palestinians thought that by starting a second *intifada* in 2000 they would disintegrate Israeli society, but that didn't happen. Israel remains a democracy. Yet while the fence could have been a reasonable, practical, effective deterrent of terrorist acts--though of course it would never stop terrorism completely--what we are doing now is harming ourselves, the Palestinians, and the peace process. It is fueling Palestinian hatred and despair, and if it is not removed in a relatively short time, it will damage our prospects for peace, now and in the future.

If our best solution to terrorism is to hide behind a fence, the fence becomes a symbol of running away rather than confronting our problems. Instead of delving into the deep questions, we are trying to solve the symptoms. And in that sense, symbolically, the fence is for us a warning sign--a sign that says it's time to change course before it's too late.

*Yehoyada Amir is director of the Israel HUC-JIR rabbinic program and a professor of modern Jewish philosophy at Hebrew University. He was formerly an active member of Peace Now*