

Top Ten Jewish Events of 2007

Although this year saw few “headline grabbing” events, there were several watershed moments in unfolding Jewish People narratives. Here they are, in no particular order:

1. **Annapolis** – For the first time in seven years, Israel and the Palestinians sat down together for an internationally-sanctioned and encouraged kick start for talks toward resolution of their Mideast conflict. Convened by President Bush and conducted by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, representative from 20 Arab countries were present.
2. **Sderot**, a town of 22,000 residents in Southern Israel, near the border, has lived under constant threat of shelling from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. A total of 970 rockets and 1,200 mortar shells have been fired at Israel from Gaza since the start of 2007. They have hit factories, homes, kindergartens, and thankfully, mostly open areas. Early warning technology only allows residents 20 seconds to take cover from the time a “Red Dawn “ alert is issued, until the rockets fall.
3. **Mukasey** – Michael Mukasey, an Orthodox Jew who is a member of Kehillat Jeshurun congregation in NY, was confirmed as United States Attorney General, replacing Alberto Gonzales. Mukasey is not the first Jewish A.G.; that was Ed Levi, who served under President Gerald Ford. Mukasey joins Bernard Bernanke as one of the Jews in the upper echelons of the United States Government.
4. **Jewish Camping** – The importance of Jewish educational summer camping in forming and sustaining strong Jewish identities in children was highlighted this year in various studies that gained the attention of national Jewish community leaders. In Greensboro, the national Foundation of Jewish Camping has teamed with the Greensboro Jewish Federation and Temple Emanuel and Beth David, to offer substantial first and second year scholarships for children attending Ramah and Camp Judaea and Camp Coleman. Our own synagogue offers a George and Muriel Hoff Scholarship to Ramah, and we have an additional scholarship fund for Ramah families, and the family of Stanley Shavitz, z”l, established in fund in his memory to send kids to CJ.
5. **Armenian Genocide** - For years, the systematic murder of over 1.5 million ethnic Armenians by Turks during the WW has been a bone of contention between two groups friendly to Jews and Israel – Armenians and Turkey. Turkey, one of Israel’s only friends among the Moslem states, , has consistently denied the genocide. This year, a US House resolution explicitly applies the term “genocide” to the Turkish massacres. Turkey, blaming the resolution on the Jews in Congress, was upset, Israel was disturbed at threats of Turkish political retaliation, and Jewish organizations in this country, particularly the ADL, were caught in the middle. The congressional resolution was ultimately tabled.
6. **Iran** – President Ahmedinijad continues to call for the destruction of Israel and deny the Holocaust. Ahmedinadjad’s visit to the UN in NY this year, and his talk at Columbia University, were met by widespread protests. Despite a recent report downplaying Iran’s nuclear capacity, Israel, and others are convinced that a nuclear Iran is the greatest threat to Israel’s existence and to a quiet Middle East. Here in the U.S., several state legislatures have begun a process of divestment from Iran-connected investments.

7. **Hamas /Gaza** – Israel hoped that its evacuation from Gaza two years ago would lead to a period of quiet, and the establishment of responsible state government among the Palestinians in Gaza. In reality, the opposite has occurred. There are more Kassam missiles than ever. Hamas, which Israel and the US view as a terrorist organization which refuses to recognize the State of Israel or former agreements between the Palestinians and Israel, won the majority in governmental elections in Gaza. There were street clashes between the previously-ruling Fatah party and Hamas, and Fatah legislators, including President Mahmoud Abbas, were forced to flee to the West Bank.

8. **Katzav/Peres**- Israel's president Moshe Katzav, plagued by a series of accusations of sexual misconduct, including rape, was forced to resign. Katzav is the most highly-placed politician among many who have been the target of sexual misconduct allegations in recent years in Israel. The octogenarian Shimon Peres, one of the last of Israel's old guard, was elected President.

9. **Mearsheimer** - The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy is the name of the book by Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer. The authors find that Israeli interests and what they call the "Israel Lobby" were responsible for pushing the US into the war in Iraq.

Former President Jimmy Carter's book Palestine: Peace, not Apartheid criticizes Israeli policy in what detractors claim is one-sided, and bordering on anti-Semitic. Tony Judt, a professor at NYU wrote an essay called "Israel : An Alternative," in which he calls the Jewish State an anachronism.

Norman Finkelstein from DePaul, Noam Chomsky and Nadia Abu el Haj at Barnard, are all part of a growing chorus of anti-Israel academics which are leading many college campuses to be places where Israel's legitimacy as a nation is increasingly debated, or more accurately, denied. Daniel Pipes, CAMERA, Alan Dershowitz, the David Project, are among Israel defenders in the academic world, but the trend is as troubling.

10. **Syria Raid** – A small article in *The NY Times* noted Syria's protest at Israel's incursion into its airspace. Syria confirmed that munitions were dropped, and that an abandoned military base was damaged. Hmmm... Was Israel merely issuing a warning? Were there intelligence reports of a Syrian nuclear reactor, supported and built by North Korea? Israel remained mum, Syria wasn't talking, U.S intelligence community wasn't talking, none of the other Arab states, usually quick to jump on Israel's transgressions, were commenting. The mystery remains. .

In other stories:

Three Israeli soldiers, Gilad Shavit, Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, continue to be held captive in Gaza and Lebanon, and Jewish communities around the world continue to pray and work for their release.

A Jewish professor, Holocaust survivor Liviu Librescu, was killed as he jumped in front of a gunman to protect his students at Virginia Tech.

Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

