



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 12/13

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

18. Juni – 02. Juli 2013

1. Kerrys Shuttle-Diplomatie

US-Außenminister John Kerry hat seine Versuche, Israelis und Palästinenser an den Verhandlungstisch zu bringen, fortgesetzt. Obwohl sein jüngster Aufenthalt in der Region, bei dem er Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu und Präsident Mahmoud Abbas jeweils drei Mal traf, zu keinem Durchbruch führte, sprach Kerry bei seiner Abreise von bedeutensamen Fortschritten. Auch Abbas sagte, er sei optimistisch, dass Kerrys Vermittlungen bald zu einer Wiederaufnahme der Friedensgespräche, die seit 2010 ruhen, führen würden.

Netanyahu hatte zuvor verkündet, Israel sei zu Verhandlungen bereit. Die palästinensische Seite besteht weiterhin auf Vorbedingungen – darunter ein Stopp von Siedlungsbautätigkeiten, die Freilassung von palästinensischen Gefangenen und eine Anerkennung der Grenzen von 1967. Medienberichten zufolge hat Netanyahu sich zu einigen Konzessionen bereit erklärt.

Selbst wenn es zu Gesprächen kommen sollte, bleibt jedoch offen, ob die Regierungschefs genug politisches Kapital besitzen, um Schritte in einem Friedensfahrplan durchzusetzen.

Kerry hasn't given up

"Kerry [...] has not been able to advance his project. [...] Kerry began his term believing wholeheartedly that he can bring both sides back to the negotiation table, which is in the interest of the US. [...] He thought he would come here with a reasonable plan and two diligent aides and be able to move mountains. [...]"

Each time Kerry boarded the plane en route to another crisis somewhere in the world, both sides returned to the starting point. Kerry failed also because he focused, before anything else, on two core issues - borders and security. [...] But there is no Israeli prime minister who will agree to sign on the

borders before receiving Palestinian commitments regarding the right of return."

Alex Fishman, JED 20.06.13

Proceed with caution

"Immense pressure is being brought to bear on both sides by the Americans who do not want to see Kerry's efforts fail. Neither side wants to be the one blamed for torpedoing talks.

Yet, even if Palestinians and Israelis are brought together [...] finding common ground on key issues [...] will be much harder.

At a time when the region is in turmoil, [...] those [...] who [...] favor, at least in principle, some kind of two-state solution are rightly wary. The rockets being fired from Gaza Strip at Jewish towns in the South in recent days are a reminder of what happened after Israel dismantled its settlements in Gaza, removed its soldiers and gave Palestinians limited autonomy.

Unless the government is vigilant, the same sort of scenario could easily repeat itself in the West Bank." JPO 25.06.13 Editorial

Kerry vs. Palestinian obstinacy

"While it seems that Israel is placing great importance on renewing diplomatic talks and jump-starting the process, within the Palestinian Authority there is a fear of coming to the discussion table. That is why the Palestinians are setting unacceptable preconditions. [...]"

The goal of Abbas is to get to September, when he will move ahead with unilateral steps to establish a Palestinian state. [...] Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority is demanding the release of terrorists with blood on their hands [...].

Keep in mind that [...] the reality here is not like that in Northern Ireland, where there is today a true cease-fire and a spirit of cooperation between two peoples who hated each other. We are far from that and Israel must protect its security interests. [...]"

Israel's representatives and advocates around the world now have the chance to again show who the real obstacle to peace is. The reality, following the recent round of shuttle diplomacy, speaks for itself." Eli Hazan, IHY 01.07.13

Why PA sets preconditions

"While world leaders attempt to cajole and nudge the two sides into negotiations, only one side consistently says it is ready to sit face to face without preconditions - Israel. The Palestinians, on the other hand, refuse to meet unless Israel agrees in advance to several demands. [...] The demand for preconditions exposes their true intentions. [...] The reason they are inflexible with precondition demands is because they actually have no desire to 'negotiate.' Negotiations require compromise, which means they would have to give up some of what they demand. [...] If they truly wanted a two-state solution it would have happened long ago. Their goal is Israel's elimination." Dan Calic, JED 30.06.13

Has Netanyahu turned dovish?

"There's no sign of substantive change in either Israeli or Palestinian positions, but there has been a marked improvement in [...] Netanyahu's public approach. That can be traced to Obama's reelection last November following Netanyahu's clumsy and politically risky efforts to prevent it. Two things dawned on Netanyahu [...]: Obama is going to be around for another four years, and his backing is essential to Netanyahu's top priority, preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. So if that means looking like he has converted from hawk to dove, so be it. It's really a low-risk game in his view because he's convinced the Palestinians won't test him. [...] Kerry finds himself in the familiar position of wanting peace more than the parties themselves." Douglas Bloomfield, JPO 26.06.13

Does Netanyahu ever mean what he says?

"I'm not sure if Bibi doesn't want to, but I'm quite convinced that he simply can't. By the way, Abu Mazen can't really either. He doesn't have any real power. [...] If Netanyahu really wanted to renew negotiations, he would have to clearly state that they could be held on the basis of the 1967 borders. [...] But Netanyahu is not capable of saying those words. His genetics won't allow for it. So he speaks in riddles and dispatches messengers." Ben Caspit, JPO 28.06.13

Another Abbas trick?

"Israel does fear that the Palestinians will gain the upper hand in a game of guilt, since they enjoy wider support in the international media and in parts of the Western establishment and academia. [...] All of Kerry's talks in the Middle East are a game of tug o' war between Jerusalem and Ramallah." Dan Margalit, IHY 25.06.13

The Sharonization of Bibi

"A senior political figure who recently met with the prime minister came away with the impression that he is serious about his intentions to reach an agreement. A willingness to meet Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas' demand to release security prisoners is not an impossibility. There is an effective moratorium on construction in the territories. [...] These are the messages that [...] Kerry is receiving [...]. American observers have noticed that Bibi has not visited a single settlement since being elected prime minister. Bibi is undergoing a process similar to that experienced by Sharon after he decided to evacuate the settlements. This is his opportunity to [...] finish what Sharon didn't have time to do: uproot the crazy dream of Greater Israel once and for all." Yoel Marcus, HAA 28.06.13

Out of credit

"Over the past four years, since negotiations with the Palestinians stopped, Netanyahu has talked the talk, but he hasn't walked the walk. [...] It's hard to see how one can advance a dialogue when the settlement enterprise continues to establish facts on the ground. [...] Even his recent conciliatory statements could be interpreted as an effort to placate [...] Kerry. [...] Moreover, we're now starting to have doubts not just about Netanyahu's desire, but also about his ability. It's not at all certain that he has a majority in his government for a diplomatic initiative [...]. This is probably the last opportunity for an Israeli-Palestinian-American dialogue before all diplomatic and security hell breaks loose." Editorial, HAA 26.06.13

2. Wahlen zum Obersten Rabbiner

Das Oberste Rabbinat besitzt in Israel die Hoheit über jüdische Eheschließungen und jüdische Speisegesetze sowie weitere religiöse Angelegenheiten. Dies hat auch für säkulare Israelis eine große Bedeutung, da es keine Zivilehe gibt. Geführt wird das Rabbinat von zwei Obersten Rabbinern, einem Ashkenazi (europäischer Abstammung) und einem Sephardi (nordafrikanischer Abstammung). Nun stehen die Wahlen für einen neuen ashkenasischen Rabbiner an. Nachdem das Rabbinat seit langem in der Hand von ultra-orthodoxen Rabbinern ist, gibt es jetzt einen orthodoxen Kandidaten, Rabbi David Stav, der als moderat gilt. Insbesondere in der national-religiösen Öffentlichkeit – die orthodox, aber zionistisch ist, also etwa im Gegensatz zu den ultra-Orthodoxen in der Armee dient – wird er als viel versprechender Amtsanwärter angesehen.

Divine timing

"The time has come to do one of two things – either dismantle the Chief Rabbinate or revamp it from head to toe. [...] The Chief Rabbinate has its share of decent rabbis and employees, but it's a lawless, shameless system: [...] the appointment of cronies, the collection of illegal fees and payments, the granting of unearned rabbinical ordination certificates, the lack of rules and procedures. [...] The problem is that this corrupt culture has direct victims: Jews who live in Israel and need the rabbinate's services. [...]"

The biggest waste of opportunity, however, is the apathy of secular Jews toward the rabbinate – the unwritten agreement under which secular politicians let the religious do whatever they please with it and thereby waive their ability to have an impact on Jewish life."

Yair Ettinger, HAA 21.06.13

Honest leadership needed

"The Chief Rabbinate will not be shut down anytime soon. [...]"

The vast majority of Israel's citizens are traditional or religious Jews who want religious leadership. They want a rabbi to conduct their wedding ceremonies, oversee their divorces, supervise over the preparation of the food they eat and bury them when the time comes. The Rabbinate is not only a bureaucratic institution, it also serves as a spiritual authority [...]. Closing the Chief Rabbinate of Israel is not the solution to the rampant corruption in the institution.

The solution is to elect a worthy, honest and more pleasant leadership for the institution."

Akiva Novick, JED 25.06.13

Ending the Chief Rabbinate electoral machinations

"For the first time in many years an eminently suitable Ashkenazi national religious candidate has emerged. [...] Rabbi Stav states that his primary goal, if appointed as chief rabbi, will be to infuse the Rabbinate and the Jewish world with the Zionist ethos which prevailed before the ultra-Orthodox takeover. [...]"

He will seek to synthesize Jewish values with modernity and promote a friendly rabbinate [...] whose mandate is to reach out and make Judaism more accessible to all Israelis – from religious to secular. [...]"

Stav's opponents are pulling out all the stops to neutralize him. Despite the fact that the Chief Rabbinate is currently derided and regarded with contempt by the vast majority of Israelis, they claim that his election will split the religious community. [...]"

It is highly overdue for the state to intervene and ensure that anti-Zionist rabbis are no longer sponsored by the state. This situation will only be resolved if a Zionist chief rabbi is elected."

Isi Leibler, JPO 18.06.13

Divvying up the rabbinate's spoils

"Expectations of dramatic change in the rabbinate are disconnected from reality. Rabbi Stav, just like his rivals [...], is an Orthodox rabbi who obeys halakha (Jewish law) as it was set down hundreds of years ago. [...]"

The Chief Rabbinate and its branches [...] are mainly a tool for divvying up political influence, appointments, budgets, cars and drivers and other perks. That's why the three religious parties [...] are battling for control of this institution. What's less clear is why parties whose voters are mainly secular [...] opted to intervene in the race for the chief rabbinate. [...] Instead of supporting Rabbi Stav, and thereby perpetuating the rabbinate as a state instrument for imposing Orthodox halakha on the general public [...] these parties' leaders [...] should propose a real reform: separating religion and state."

HAA 21.06.13 Editorial

Why Stav, and Israelis, will lose

"Rabbi David Stav, an Orthodox rabbi who nevertheless wants to make things easier for secular Jews. [...]"

He has been endorsed publicly, or privately, by most Knesset members [...]. And yet [...] his chances of becoming chief rabbi are slim. [...]

Because [...] the Chief Rabbinate is a medieval labyrinth of mystification, disguised in and drenched in religious dogma."

Simona Weinglass, IHY 17.06.13

Close Chief Rabbinate now

"If a chief rabbi fails to gain the respect and desire allowing him to represent the people – and this has been the situation for many years – the continued existence of this institution is devoid of meaning. [...] In every synagogue there is a neighborhood or community rabbi capable of meeting his flock's needs on issues he engages in. [...]

The Chief Rabbinate has become a synonym for nepotism, charging money to hold a Jewish marriage ceremony, refusal to accept the other, stationing kosher supervisor in necessary and unnecessary places, etc.[...]

It should be closed, the sooner the better."

Nechama Duek, JED 23.06.13

Unholier than thou

"The elections for chief rabbi are no longer about Torah knowledge or the ability to explain Judaism. Rather, the next chief rabbi must be bold enough to overturn every tile of the Chief Rabbinate and of religious institutions and clear away the barnacles of corruption clinging to them. [...]

We need nothing less than a revolution in the entire conduct of religious services in Israel."

Haim Shine, IHY 24.06.13

3. Debatte um israelisches Erdgas

Seit 2009 sind vor Israels Küste mehrere große Erdgasfelder entdeckt worden, und im Frühjahr 2013 wurde mit ersten Förderungen begonnen. Dies bedeutet, dass Israel zukünftig unabhängiger von fremden Energielieferungen sein wird. Umstritten wie unklar ist jedoch, welche Mengen des Erdgases für den Export und wie viel für den nationalen Bedarf zur Verfügung gestellt werden sollen. Das Regierungskabinett gab kürzlich 40% für den Export frei, um Investoren einen Anreiz für weitere Explorationen zu geben.

Oppositionsführerin Shelly Yacimovich (Arbeitspartei) und andere Parlamentarier haben gegen diese Entscheidung allerdings Klage beim Obersten Gerichtshof eingelegt. Kritiker befürchten, dass die

israelische Bevölkerung überhöhte Preise für das eigene Gas zahlen würde, wenn große Mengen für den Export freigegeben werden.

Gas interests

"The challenge facing our policy-makers is how best to balance the interests of the gas giants, who took great risks and invested hundreds of millions in exploration, with the needs of society. Obviously, private investors who succeeded where state-owned firms failed for decades to uncover gas or oil are entitled to profit from their efforts. [...] At the same time, large quantities of cheap natural gas could transform the economy and radically improve our standard of living. Industries and transportation would operate at lower cost and produce less pollution. The Israel Electric Corporation would be able to produce power much more cheaply, lowering all of our electric bills. If too much gas is diverted to destinations outside Israel, these benefits could be lost. [...] How best to allocate our abundant gas reserves is perhaps the single most important economic decision to be made in years, if not decades. [...]

It is therefore imperative that the decision-making process be democratic, transparent and balanced."

JPO 20.06.13 Editorial

Controlling our future

"Israel's natural gas must remain here for the good of its residents. Otherwise, generations to come will rue the decision. [...]

If Israel decides to go the tycoon route and export over half our natural gas, we will be faced with a new reality in which our fate will be determined by foreigners. [...]

This is not only about the exportation of our resources. It is about the future of every worker in the gas production plants. Domestic management can assume responsibility for the workers and their job security. Foreign management will minimize this responsibility and alienate them, with no sense of responsibility for the welfare of the local communities they represent. [...]

The natural gas is a strategic resource, and for the security of Israel let us keep it in our own hands."

Mati Shemoelof, IHY 23.06.13

Israel's gas ensures a better future

"An economy cannot grow under uncertain circumstances. Investors, who knowingly risk enormous amounts of money in the search for natural gas, won't invest; banks won't approve funding; projects

won't be launched, and the natural gas will remain in the ground. [...]

Outgoing Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer [...] sees the export of natural gas as a lifeline for the Israeli economy. Does anyone suspect that his remarks were influenced by lobbyists and tycoons?

On the other hand, Opposition Leader MK Shelly Yachimovich's populist approach is extremely unfortunate. She clearly hopes to reap political profit from her battle against entrepreneurs."

Smadar Bat Adam, IHY 23.06.13

My Word: Tapping into gas

"Whose children and grandchildren should benefit from the find, those of the entrepreneurs willing to take the risk and invest in the offshore explorations or the ordinary citizens of the country? [...]

All agree that the effects of the country's gas policy will be felt in a large number of spheres; beyond the socioeconomic implications, there could be an impact on Israel's diplomatic ties and also its security. Becoming an exporter of gas will likely affect Israel's standing in the Mediterranean basin and beyond, while being independent of the need to import gas via the volatile Egyptian pipeline is another obvious benefit. [...] The government is understandably in a hurry to make the most of the gas because of the geo-political opportunities and the immediate economic benefits, but such decisions cannot be taken in a rush [...].

Going against the flow, I'd still prefer that more investment were made in harnessing a truly infinite and natural asset with which Israel is blessed – solar energy."

Liat Collins, JPO 27.06.13

Pipeline to Turkey or LNG to China?

"The amount of gas that the government will approve for export will be sufficient for one large export project. Two possibilities are on the agenda: laying a pipeline [...] to Turkey; or constructing a huge land-based LNG installation [to] China and the markets in the East. [...]

At the economic level, a victory on points emerges for the LNG installation. The reason for that is that gas prices in China and the East are currently 50% higher [...].

The gas pipeline to Turkey, by contrast, is a relatively simple project that does not require special permits and approvals. [...] This is where the political level comes in. On this level, the pipeline to Turkey beats the LNG installation by a knock-out. [...]

The Americans [...] see [...] the laying of a gas pipeline to Turkey a way of strengthening ties between the two most important US allies in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Amiram Barkat, GLO 19.06.13

4. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der in Israel relevanten Themen kann in einem Medienspiegel nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen LeserInnen dennoch einen Einblick in das breite Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe wieder eine kleine Auswahl an weiteren Themen, die in den vergangenen zwei Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

*Über den 90. Geburtstag von **Präsident Shimon Peres:***

President Peres

"Peres is [...] an invaluable asset for the State of Israel. He is the wise, tolerant, gentle face of the Jewish state. He is Mr. Peace. He is loved and respected by international leaders, [...] by astute scientists, accomplished artists, successful businessmen and cynical journalists. [...] He gives Israel a positive image, emphasizing its many accomplishments, especially in the fields of hitech and brain research. [...]

He continues to keep alive hope for the prospects of a negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while others on both sides of the conflict with less mileage have given in to cynicism and pessimism.

As he celebrates his 90th birthday [...] our popular president should be honored not just as a national treasure, but as a source of inspiration and hope for the future."

JPO 18.06.13 Editorial

An evening of lies

"Shimon Peres' birthday was an immoral event [...] because it contained everything except the truth. [...] The birthday boy was presented as a man of peace and vision. [...] The party thrown by the man of peace was attended by leaders from all over the world [...]. But who wasn't there? Not a single Arab statesman. There wasn't even a single Palestinian, except for the token child who was successfully healed in an Israeli hospital, a generous gift to the

thousands of Palestinian children who have been killed or injured by the State of Israel, which is also Peres' Israel. [...] The man who was present at every decisive junction in the nation's history bears a heavy responsibility for the state of the nation today. His talent for deception and his artful presentation of the state as seeking peace has been no less detrimental to Israel than the settlement enterprise, for whose launch he is also responsible." Gideon Levy, HAA 20.06.13

*Über ein **Gerichtsurteil**, dem zufolge Geschäfte in Tel Aviv zukünftig am **Shabbat** geschlossen bleiben müssen:*

Don't touch our Shabbat

"Tel Aviv-Jaffa has become a synonym for secularism in Israel, and symbolizes the values of freedom and pluralism more than any other city. [...] A city where going to the beach or to the cinema or sitting in a café are part of the characteristics of its Shabbat. [...] But contrary to the initial instinct – the High Court ruling on the Tel Avivian Shabbat actually opens up quite a few options. First of all, it forces the Tel Aviv Municipality to determine the meaning of the Tel Avivian Shabbat, its borders, what stays open and what is closed. [...] In the new situation created, the Municipality will have to change the anachronistic law binding us to the status quo, a law which has nothing at all to do with the Tel Avivian Shabbat. [...] Just as importantly, it puts an end to the absurd situation in which the Tel Avivian Shabbat has turned into an economic mechanism yielding profit to the Municipality through weekly fines imposed on anyone opening a business on Shabbat. This mechanism gives a clear advantage to those capable of paying the fines over the small businesses fighting for their economic survival."

Mickey Gitzin, JED 27.06.13

Why secular Jews need Shabbat

"Shabbat is one of Judaism's greatest contributions to mankind, sanctifying the seventh day for rest. It is a day when we do not work, [...] do not conduct business or add to our wealth. A day devoted to family, to community, to leisure, culture, learning, and the spirit. Shabbat does not only belong to observant Jews but to all of us. It is in everyone's interest that Shabbat not be a regular day of the week. [...] I would like to see the Sabbath in the Jewish state have a special character. A day of neither commerce nor work, but of cultural and community life. [...] Nothing could be further from this vision

than a Shabbat of shopping, consumerism, getting and spending and growing richer while enslaving workers who have their Shabbat snatched away." Uri Heitner, IHY 02.07.13

HAA = Haaretz;
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
IHY = Israel HaYom
TOI = Times of Israel
GLO = Globes

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