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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

Pessach..... 1
 Hamas in Zugzwang..... 3
 Trumps Nahostfrieden 5
 Medienquerschnitt 6

Pessach

Pessach ist Erntedankfest und zugleich Erinnerung an den biblischen Exodus, den Auszug der Israeliten aus Ägypten, die Flucht vor Unterdrückung und Sklaverei. Zentrales Element der Haggadah, die die Geschichte erzählt, sind die zehn Plagen, mit denen Gott die Ägypter strafte, während die Israeliten verschont blieben. Das Pessachfest dient vielen zum Anlass, aktuelle Parallelen zu ziehen und zur Solidarität zu mahnen mit Menschen, die heute auf der Flucht sind. Für fromme Juden gilt das einwöchige Verbot, gesäuerte Nahrungsmittel zu sich zu nehmen. Politiker streiten darüber, in welchem Ausmaß Brot, Nudeln und Bier dennoch auch während der Pessachwoche im öffentlichen Handel und Restaurants erhältlich sein sollen.

The sigh of slavery

The Haggadah is fascinating for what it says and for what it does not say. (...) Although it starts with slavery and moves to freedom, the slavery story it tells is weak on details. (...) The biblical text communicates the tension but then moves on to Moses and his mission, the plagues and the Passover sacrifice. Hundreds of years of slavery are summed up in a cry. (...) The Haggadah asks us to recreate a story. In a festive mood, we tend to minimize the pain and move on quickly to redemption. But if we are to be true actors on this vast historic stage, we must try to embody, quite literally, what the experience of slavery was like. (...) Imagine yourself in the

body of the slave, the harshness of the labor on your shoulders. The thinness of a tunic that cannot protect you. The sores on a back that's been whipped. (...) Let's sit with the pain and let it enter our very bones. We cannot get to true joy any other way. We cannot treat the stranger differently if we cannot experience the bodily pain of the stranger. Compassion lives in that sliver between us and them that collapses with a sigh. Passover is about learned compassion. I love our people, but there are few things I like less than a Jewish racist. That's the blight of one who forgets what pain feels like. That's not our Passover story. It's the opposite of our story. Erica Brown, TOI, 04.04.17

The price of freedom

(...) this is how the Hebrew nation emerged - a nation that began with a clan of 70 members in Egypt, freed and saved by the power of divine intervention and grew to a nation of 2.5 million in the land of Israel as part of the covenant between God and Abraham. (...) Processes of creation require chronological intervals. Passover means skipping over processes that take time, therefore everything is done in haste; those who manage to get out in time are delivered, but those who walk in darkness and fall behind are left behind. (...) the Egyptians drown, but the miracle is that the Israelites are saved. Slavery and assimilation and removal from history are the way of nature. But not for the Jewish people. The Jewish people inherently try to defy

nature - they are rebellious, revolutionary and natural-born leaders. And indeed, that elicits hate. Unnatural hate. But it should be noted with pride that not everyone in the world is against us. (...) Our people's return to Zion also defies the nature of nations. This is Zionism - the movement that delivered millions of Jews to the physical and mental freedom they longed for. And while many oppose this movement, it is also the object of admiration and emulation. (...) On the night of the Passover Seder, our souls will long for true freedom and we will pray for the freedom of other nations, too. The Jewish people have paid a heavy price to regain its freedom, but in a historical perspective, it was well worth it.

Dr. Gabi Avital, IHY, 09.04.17

The festival of freedom and responsibility

(...) the exodus from Egypt (...), which occurred approximately 3,500 years ago, continues to ignite many people's imagination. You do not need to be Orthodox or traditional to perceive a seminal ethos in the story. (...) Many non-Jews, too, had an intense experience of the narrative of the book of Exodus and shaped their inner world in its light. Both the Puritans, who immigrated to the New World, as well as the African Americans, who arrived there as slaves, saw themselves as continuing the exodus saga, and were thus able to overcome the enormous difficulties that confronted them. In other words, the exodus is a captivating drama, larger than life, to which each generation connects in its own way. The heart of the story is the freedom won by a group of slaves, freed from grueling servitude, who became a nation that bears its own distinctive identity and has left a lasting mark on world history. (...) Today's Israel has more than achieved its physical freedom. Israel is a regional superpower that dwarfs its enemies. (...) Jews have never known the physical freedom they enjoy here and now. (...) The Festival of Freedom must be a signpost that it is time to push ourselves to be accountable, personally and nationally, to the question of purpose. (...) Being "a nation like all nations" means adopting another's point of view — and that is the mental and emotional state of slaves. (...) The physical freedom we have obtained gives us the freedom of the mind to exercise responsibility, as Jews, to treat the Arab minority decently, to insist on the highest standards of morality when we deploy our military might, to exercise sensitivity in the socioeconomic field, and to conduct a moral foreign policy. (...) the Festival of Freedom is also the Festival of Responsibility.

Yedidia Stern, TOI, 10.04.17

Freedom and Jewish identity

(...) The slavery of Jews in Egypt ended when one Jew dared to act as a free man -- first against an Egyptian who struck a Jew, and later against the all-powerful Pharaoh. The slavery of the Jews in the U.S.S.R. ended when hundreds of Jews dared to act as free men. (...) The similarity between the two slaveries and two exoduses is uncanny. It is no coincidence the phrase "let my people go" was chosen as the slogan of the struggle to release the Jews from the "Soviet paradise." The Exodus from Egypt was the first stage in shaping our identity as a people, while the exodus from the Soviet Union brought back one of our people's largest branches. Remember that when you eat another piece of matzah.

Ariel Bolstein, IHY, 12.04.17

The forgotten genocidal commandment behind the story of the Exodus

Can the Bible be taken as a moral and political exemplar? (...) Ben-Gurion took pride in the fact that, after more than 3,500 years, Jews still remember every detail of the Exodus and commemorate its date, the clothing worn by the Israelites and even the food they ate. (...) The Exodus is a terrific story. So national, yet so humanistic. The primary source of all enlightened values. But (...), attached to the story of freedom from bondage is a tale far less humanistic: the commandment to annihilate the peoples of Canaan during the conquest of the land. We should not forget that this is one of the most detailed set of instructions for genocide we have from the ancient world. Accounts of slave uprisings are truly enthralling. But what we have here is a somewhat different story. Let's say you were told about a group of oppressed people who escaped from a certain country and then adopted a fanatic, murderous general as their leader. They invaded a neighboring country, ravaged its cities and did not even allow the original inhabitants to live under their rule. That's certainly a far less heartening story – but it's the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The emancipation cannot be divorced from the subsequent bloodbath: In the wake of the leader Moses perforce comes the conqueror Joshua. (...) It was not by chance that the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said remarked, "There is no Israel without the conquest of Canaan... then as now." Why, then, do we not tell the story of the annihilation of the Canaanite peoples each year? (...) In any event, even for those who do not advocate ethnic cleansing, not to mention genocide, it's worth remembering the dark side of the story of the liberation from Egypt. (...) On the

other hand, it's likely that neither the Exodus from Egypt nor the conquest of Canaan ever happened. Despite centuries of feverish research, not a trace has been found to this day of a passage across Sinai by nomads during the period of King Ramses. (...) It's more than likely, then, that the Exodus from Egypt and the atrocities that followed never occurred. When we relate this story, we can take solace in the fact that it is an imagined tradition that was invented 700 years after the events it ostensibly depicts. Thank heaven for that.
Ofri Ilany, HAA, 15.04.17

Kosher for Passover

With the Festival of Freedom about to conclude, some of the Jewish state's politicians have found no better a time to revive a long-ignored debate over the so-called Hametz Law of 1986. (...) Meretz MK Tamar Zandberg last week announced her intention to submit a bill to revoke the law, saying it undemocratically prohibits the sale of hametz (leavened products) in Israel during Passover. While she may be commended for her attempt to defend Israel's freedom of worship, the law does not prohibit the sale of hametz, but rather its public display during the holiday.

(...) In a typical knee-jerk response, Shas MK Yoav Ben-Tzur called Zandberg's initiative "dangerous" and "yet another attempt to harm the Jewish character of the State of Israel, the status quo and the unifying common denominator of the entire people of Israel." Such Shas rhetoric is characteristic of the fundamentalist view, shared by its coalition partner United Torah Judaism, that declares Reform Judaism anathema. It is to Israel's ongoing disgrace that our curious form of government allows the imposition of Halacha as the law of the state rather than the freedom of worship optimistically proclaimed in our Declaration of Independence. Ben-Tzur is sadly mistaken in thinking that Zandberg and other Jews who favor the freedom to choose their level of observance are trying to harm the Jewish character of the state. Surveys over the past decade have shown that Israel's population is almost evenly divided between those who choose more stringent religious observance and those who choose to ignore it, and this is actually what constitutes the Jewish character of the state.(...) Zandberg's bill should be supported as part of the effort to keep Israel both Jewish and democratic.

Editorial, JPO, 15.04.17

Hamas in Zugzwang

Der Mord an einem ranghohen Hamas-Mitglied Ende März sowie die sich verschärfende Energiekrise im Gazastreifen steigern die Gefahr eines erneuten Krieges. Die islamistische Führung im Gazastreifen macht den Mossad für den Tod von Mazen Fuqaha verantwortlich. Israel streitet das ab. Aus dem Außenministerium in Jerusalem verlautete die Vermutung, dass der Mord an Fuqaha vor dem Hintergrund einer internen palästinensischen Auseinandersetzung verübt worden sei. Der Streit über Steuerzahlungen für Treibstoff, die die Palästinensische Autonomiebehörde (PA) in Ramallah von der Hamas im Gazastreifen verlangt, führte zu einer erneuten Energiekrise. Die gut zwei Millionen Palästinenser im Gazastreifen müssen mit nur noch fünf bis sechs anstatt der bisherigen acht Stunden Strom täglich auskommen, weil der Treibstoff, den Ramallah bewilligt, für das einzige Kraftwerk nicht ausreicht. Auch die Versorgung der Menschen mit Frischwasser wird von dem Energiemangel beeinträchtigt. Arabischen Medienberichten zufolge schlägt die Hamas mit einer veränderten Charta einen moderateren Kurs ein, um den internen Streit mit der Fatah, der Partei von Palästinenserpräsident Mahmud Abbas, beizulegen und international an Boden zu gewinnen. Die israelischen Bedingungen, dem bewaffneten Widerstandskampf abzusagen, Israel und die bisherigen Abkommen anzuerkennen, erfüllt die Hamas mit der neuen Charta nicht.

Israel must take advantage of Hamas' weak spot

Israel is waging a PR offensive (...) aimed at deterring Hamas from targeting its main security project: The new Obstacle defense system around the Gaza Strip. In this PR campaign, however, Israel is revealing its weak spot to Hamas: The ability to defend a huge project, which includes thousands of people and hundreds of vehicles that will be exposed in the next two years near the Gaza border. Israel is threatening that any damage to the project will claim a heavy price, which could reach an overall military conflict. (...) Israel needs a state of calm in order to complete the Obstacle, which is supposed to provide an alternative solution to the tunnels and infiltrations. (...) Israeli officials estimate that Hamas, a decade after rising to power, has formed a world view of a state, with public responsibility, and that it has no intention of losing the "miracle" of establishing a Hamas-controlled Sunni state in Gaza. The threat of losing this historic achievement is Israel's main leverage, which is why Israel is threatening a military conflict which would include massive use of fire from the very beginning. (...) The next war too

will be waged with the goal of “wearing out Hamas (...). The price will be paid by the population in the strip (...). It’s true that the public in Gaza wants to see Israel destroyed. There is deep hatred there. (...) Israel is not even trying to create some kind of distinction between the leadership and the population. (...) Israel should talk to the residents over Hamas’ head by encouraging the construction of infrastructures and transferring energy and water. Not out of kindness, God forbid, but out of an egoistic national interest: To present an alternative to the military plan in order to try to get through the coming years peacefully.

Alex Fishman, YED, 01.04.17

Don't let Hamas' wordplay dazzle you

So far, it's only a draft that a few in the know have managed to see. (...) One thing is clear. The new document will present a challenge for Israel, since some of those who have rejected Hamas thus far will want to see the organization change. Hamas (...) is in desperate need of a dramatic move. According to the draft document, the organization no longer sees Jews as monkeys or pigs. It has nothing against Jews who are not Zionists or Israelis, has no interest in intervening in other countries' affairs (...), it sees the Palestine Liberation Organization as the organization that represents Palestinians, and is even prepared -- for now -- to see the establishment of a Palestinian state according to the 1967 borders, without any mention of who would be on the other side of said border. (...) But Hamas wouldn't dream of declaring that the Palestinian struggle for independence will be free from violence from now on; it does not recognize Israel; and it does not recognize the agreements to which the PLO is a signatory (...).

Israel will need to explain that the document changes nothing in its attitude toward the violent Islamist organization, which clings to the path of terrorism. (...) Israel must explain that as far as it is concerned, so long as Hamas does not relinquish that option, and continues to claim that violence is a legitimate means of obtaining independence, no word games will change its status among those who understand how dangerous the group is and refuse to see it as a legitimate partner in any moves toward peace.

Yossi Beilin, IHY, 04.04.17

Defend the Israeli Bedouin from Gaza rockets? Let them dig trenches

(...) The missiles from Gaza land in the south of the country on the heads of all the citizens, regardless

of their nationality, religion or language. But the government claims that the risk that a Jewish community will be hit is greater than the risk to an unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev, even if they are both the same distance from the danger originating in Gaza. Therefore the Jewish communities in the south have protection, while tens of thousands of people who live in the unrecognized villages are abandoned to their fate, and all that's left for them to do is pray that the missile won't land near them. (...) The Home Front Command tried to reassure the residents (...) by means of a special plan, which included the suggestion to the Bedouin in the unrecognized villages to dig trenches by themselves; instructions to protect themselves by lying on the ground and placing their hands on their heads; and even the distribution of pocket brochures. The Home Front Command also suggested to the residents to run to the protected clinics located in the recognized Bedouin villages – a distance of several kilometers – when a siren is sounded. (...) the government has the obligation to protect the lives and safety of its citizens, it must take active steps to preserve these basic rights, and in the case of Bedouin living in unrecognized villages, it sins repeatedly.

Nisreen Alyan, HAA, 04.04.17

Same old Hamas

(...) Arab media have been releasing reports in dribs and drabs about an impending dramatic publication of the amended Hamas Charter.(...) There are two major changes in the charter. The first is an acceptance of the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 1967 borders, and the second is severing ties with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. These two changes, however, come with a demand to cancel the Balfour Declaration, the Partition Plan and the Oslo Agreements, and statements about a holy war to fully liberate historic Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, from north to south. (...) Senior Hamas member Ahmed Yousef stressed in an interview that the acceptance of a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders was a way to maintain a national consensus, and that Hamas would accept an independent Palestinian state only if it would be allowed to hold onto the weapon of resistance (...). Hamas, according to the new charter, “distinguishes between the Jews, the People of the Book, and Judaism as a religion, and between the occupation and the (...) defined enemy (...), the “Zionist project”: It is threatening the Arab and Islamic nation, as well as world peace and security. The State of Israel

is not mentioned. (...) The new charter aims to upgrade Hamas' standing in all of its activity centers. First of all, in its power base in the Gaza Strip (...). Second (...) in the Palestinian internal political arena. (...) The new acceptance of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders—the PLO's political banner—may pave the way to a better partnership that could represent the Palestinian people in any peace process which may take place. Third, Hamas wants to become a regional political player. (...) As for Israel, there is nothing in the new charter which could change Jerusalem's perception that Hamas is an enemy that has not renounced incitement, violence and terror and that sees the conflict with Israel as a key component of its existence. (...)
Gilead Sher, YED, 14.04.17

Trumps Nahostfrieden

US-Präsident Donald Trump meint es offenbar Ernst mit seinem Plan für einen Nahost-Friedensgipfel. Nach dem Besuch des ägyptischen Präsidenten Abdel-Fattah al-Sissi Anfang April im Weißen Haus verdichten sich die Anzeichen dafür, dass Kairo eine zentrale Rolle bei künftigen Verhandlungen zufallen soll. Allem Anschein nach wird die Friedensinitiative Saudiarabiens aus dem Jahr 2002 Grundlage für die Gespräche sein. Israels Regierung hat auf die Initiative nie offiziell reagiert. Außenminister Avigdor Lieberman zeigt sich indes zunehmend offen für ein regionales Friedenspaket, das er einem bilateralen Vertrag mit der Palästinensischen Befreiungsorganisation (PLO) vorziehe.

Trump's Middle East peace challenge

(...) practical matters are what Palestinians are primarily concerned about these days. The reality is that negotiations and one state or two are removed from the average Palestinian's daily preoccupations. (...) according to public opinion it is jobs, cost of living and the economy that top daily priorities (...). 70% of the population today is under 30, the majority of whom had not yet been born when the Oslo Accords were signed. (...) 48% of those aged 18-30 in the West Bank say they are opposed to two states. The reason given by the plurality for their opposition is that "facts on the ground [do not] support an economically viable Palestinian state." (...) Whether one state or two, over 40% believe cooperation (...) with Israel would be beneficial if peace were to be achieved. And recent protests against Abbas's domestic policies aside, 41% of the surveyed youth support his approach to resolving the conflict, an increase from a year ago, compared to

less than 20% who favor that of Hamas. So, maybe there is hope, if economic opportunity and prospects of a better life for all are part of the package. (...)
Owen Kirby, JPO, 01.04.17

Restarting the peace process by flipping the formula

(...) the keys for restarting the peace process are already in the ignition, and all it takes is turning the key. Egypt will get the leading role, Jordan is defined as a "key partner," and, Israel will remain an onlooker from the sides that will occasionally make its interests known. Trump's team is rolling up its sleeves to assemble the negotiating table. That's the reason why Abbas, the least significant player, was the last one invited to the White House. (...) When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the Arab summit with an alternative settlement for the Amona evictees, the Arabs were furious. The leaders of the Arab world (...) now say "historic pan-Arab reconciliation," on the condition that Israel agrees or that Trump makes Netanyahu accept the two-state solution and Israel commits to a full withdrawal to the 1967 borders. (...) The more Netanyahu sticks to his positions and the more Trump lets him off the hook, the more the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will remain gridlocked. (...) The way things look, Trump is beginning to realize that he's received a complex package. While his advisors are searching for a formula, my recommendation is to reverse the order: Refuel the political process through the bread and butter. First set financial projects and economic incentives in motion, and only bring everyone back to the table after those have taken root.
Smadar Perry, YED, 02.04.17

Trump doesn't really care about Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Trump, Trump, Trump. America isn't interested in anything but President Donald Trump. His image has completely taken over the American public discourse, from scientific conversation to popular culture. (...) The American Left is extremely satisfied with what it sees as masses of Americans joining the active resistance to the Trump administration. The extent of the political movement against Trump is indeed impressive, but it's far from being popular and influential. (...) There is no chance of impeaching Trump through street protests or a cultural boycott, and not even through court rulings. (...) So far, populism is only being intensified. (...) Trump's associates have been showing an interest recently in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the new president's alleged "strong desire" to promote an

agreement between the two sides. This is intentional deception aimed at presenting Trump as a statesman with global aspirations. It's a waste of time and effort: Trump has no real intention of jumping into the Israeli-Arab swamp and he has no dream of being the patron of the reconciliation. (...). Trump doesn't care about our conflict, and he won't get his hands dirty solving it. (...)
Sever Plocker, YED, 03.04.17

The emerging Trump Doctrine

(...) US President Donald Trump (...) sees clearly that the interactions among five primary players will determine the course of the 21st century: the US, Europe, Russia, China and Islam. The US remains by far the richest and strongest of the five, but military and economic mismanagement have weakened it, while others have grown stronger. (...) Rational interests have driven Russia, Islam and China to challenge American power indirectly, by targeting our vulnerable allies. The fear of Russian military incursions in Eastern Europe and the Islamic refugee crisis destabilizing Western and Northern Europe threaten our most important alliance. That Russia and Islam also share an interest in elevated oil prices doesn't hurt their coordination, either. Meanwhile, China is working to undermine our Asian allies while prospering from its increasingly central role in global commerce and finance.

(...) Trump (...) wants the US to remain the world's strongest and richest player, and he knows that we can't get there without strong allies. His challenge is thus to alter the rational calculus driving Russia, China, Islam and Western progressivism. As a businessman, Trump understands that the only way to change someone else's calculus is to change their perceptions of costs and benefits. (...) His promotion of European nationalism and defense budgets seeks to push our vulnerable ally to pay greater attention to its own future. His focus on immigration from selected Muslim-majority countries seeks to increase the costs of Islamic incursions beyond the lands it already controls. His complaints about Chinese monetary and trade policies seek to increase China's perceived costs regarding its own expansionism. And his simultaneous acknowledgment of Russian greatness and critique of Russian actions seeks to alter Russian perceptions of the benefits of cooperating with the US. If President Trump succeeds, he will leave office with a stronger, more self-confident Europe, Chinese influence in East Asia no greater than it is today, and weaker coordination between Russian and Islamic expan-

sionism. No combination would better serve American interests.

(...)

Bruce Abramson and Jeff Ballabon, JPO, 06.04.17

Medienquerschnitt

Rundfunkreform

Broadcast news

(...) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon finally agreed (...) on the fate of Israel's new public broadcasting-without-a-news division corporation (...). According to the great compromise, the Israel Broadcasting Corporation that the prime minister opposed will still go on the air, but its news department will be run by the staff of the old Israel Broadcasting Authority. (...) The very announcement of the settlement by the two rival party leaders seemed to be one of mutual embarrassment. (...) The compromise reached between Netanyahu and Kahlon makes one wonder what all the fuss has been about over shutting down the IBA and replacing it with the IBC. (...) The body that results from all this horse trading and countless hours of negotiations will probably not look much different from the IBA that we know (...). But with one hopes, the sorry saga now behind us, it will free some time up for our leaders to actually govern.

Editorial, JPO, 01.04.17

Giftgas in Syrien

Syria proves that 'Never Again' has not been learned

(...) There are photographs that, when we see them, our hearts can't help breaking. (...) "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" the Bible warns. Yet, six years into the Syrian conflict, and that is just what international community is doing. (...) "Never again" was the basis for the founding of the United Nations, established in the wake of the Second World War after the Holocaust and the systemic of millions of Jews. On a day when a dictator murders – using poison gas – his own citizens and harms many more — on a day when solid red lines are crossed, "never again" needs an enforcement mechanism. (...) People die in wars, but even in wars there are laws, rules of engagement, and things that are not done. (...) The children of Syria are the children of the world - and they are looking at us. Will the world stand idly by as their blood is

shed? Can moderate elements still expect that in times of trouble there will be those who will end the horror — or is it better to be on the side of evil? Now is a moment when interests and morality fuse: it is time to act accordingly.

Tzipi Livni, JPO, 06.04.17

Syria is a complete failure of the West's non-intervention policy

(...) There is no difference between a child murdered by a bullet in the head and a child poisoned by gas, who is seen in the pictures quivering, trying to draw one last breath of air into lungs that had stopped functioning. Both children were murdered, and they were murdered with complete malice. (...) In the past few months (...) Russia has been killing more people in Syria than ISIS. Assad and Putin are demonstrating to the world the power of unrestrained, brutal and goal-fixated force. The international bodies were supposed to block and disrupt the use of such force, but they (...) are paralyzed because of the basic structure which gives Russia the power to veto and they are paralyzed because of American indeterminateness. (...) Syria is a complete failure of the Western non-intervention policy. (...) In order to resolve the crisis, the world needs an effective global watchdog, and there is only one such person—in Washington. Unfortunately, for the time being, he is refusing to assume that role. Let's hope that changes.

Nadav Eyal, YED, 07.04.17

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