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The Milky way

Very few years or so our public consciousness focuses – often hysterically – on the issue of emigration. Also referred to in its pejorative formulation as *yerida* (literally, "descent"), or as the brain drain when those being considered are the best and the brightest, emigration is seen as a major threat to Zionism.

The trigger for the latest bout of collective hand-wringing was a lead headline in Monday's *Ma'ariv*, heralding a social media-leveraged campaign calling on Israelis to abandon ship. The campaign was launched on Facebook and other forums by expats living in Berlin who are complaining about the high cost of living in Israel.

If cottage cheese was the symbol of the socioeconomic demonstrations of the summer of 2011, the Berlin-based campaign is using Milky, the popular Israeli chocolate pudding topped with whipped cream, as its rallying call for mass emigration in protest against the outrageously high cost of living in the Jewish state.

Its manufacturers, Strauss, claim Milky is the most successful dairy product on the market. A German-made version of the Milky costs the equivalent of 80 agorot compared to more than three shekels in Israel.

Both Army Radio's Razi Barkai and Reshet Bet's Oded Shahar devoted their morning programs Monday to Israel's high cost of living in comparison to other Western countries. The conclusion reached was clear: Consumer goods, food and housing prices are more expensive in Israel than in Berlin and other cities in Europe and America and salaries tend to be lower.

This is no surprise. Last year, Channel 10 ran a series called *Hayordim Hahadashim* (The New Emigrants), which reached an identical conclusion. The series showed Israelis – particularly of the young, secular and educated variety – in pursuit of socioeconomic comfort, particularly in Berlin but also in London and New Jersey. The January 2013 elections were the first in decades to be dominated by socioeconomic issues.

Yet much remains to be done by our government to make Israel a more affordable, attractive place to live. Young people who have already emigrated or are thinking about it need to know that they will get a fair shot at succeeding here. Too much of personal advancement in Israel depends on whom you know, not how much talent you have. Meri-

Israel bashers' phony contrition



r. Richard Horton, the editor of the English medical journal *The Lancet*, was not transformed by his visit to Israel last week.

Horton came to Israel last week the guest of Rambam Medical Center in a bid to dig himself out of the hole he dug himself into. On August 19 Horton published a 1,600-word letter criminalizing Israel. In it, Israel was accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The authors called for a boycott of Israel, including Israeli academia. Since its publication on *Lancet*'s website, the letter has garnered 20,000 signatures.

The letter made no mention of the fact that the war this summer was initiated by Hamas through its illegal missile, mortar and rocket offensive against Israeli population centers. The esteemed medical professionals who wrote the letter failed to mention that Hamas's operational headquarters was located in Shifa hospital in Gaza. And of course, they ignored the underlying fact that Hamas's entire campaign against Israel was a crime against humanity.

Immediately following its publication, Prof. Gerald Steinberg, the head of NGO Monitor, exposed that the letter's principal authors are frothing-at-the-mouth anti-Semites. Dr. Paola Manduca and Dr. Swee Ang disseminated a video entitled, *CNN, Goldman Sachs & the Zio Matrix*. It was produced by the former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke.

As Britain's *Telegraph* reported, in disseminating the video, Ang exhorted her audience to understand that the Jewish threat outlined in the video is a threat to humanity. In her words, it "is not about Palestine – it is about all of us!"

For her part, as the *Telegraph* reported, Manduca has accused Israel of responsibility for the Boston Marathon bombing. And she disseminated an article comparing Israel to a "strangler fig," which as the *Telegraph* explained, "grows around other trees and takes their sunlight, often resulting in the deaths of the original trees."

Steinberg cataloged Horton's long record of publishing anti-Israel slanders under the guise of a scientific research. Horton responded with indignation to the initial criticisms of his decision to publish the defamatory letter. He told the *Telegraph* that the anti-Semitic views of letter authors were "utterly irrelevant." He called criticism of his decision to publish the letter, "a smear campaign."

Horton then pledged not to retract the letter – which is still posted on *Lancet*'s website – "even if [criticism of the authors] was found to be substantiated."

Yet as the outrage mounted against him, and the stench of the Jew hatred of his colleagues grew stronger, Horton began to feel the heat. So after refusing to publish a letter from Israeli doctors from Rambam rejecting the libelous attacks against Israel, Horton accepted learn firsthand how none of his allegations were true. At the end of his three-day visit, Horton gave a lecture at Rambam where he condemned the Cossack style law

at Rambam where he condemned the Cossack-style Jew hatred of his colleagues Ang and Manduca. But despite his seeming contrition, Horton did not disavow their letter. He did not agree to remove the slander from *The Lancet*'s website.

Horton's selective contrition was an expression of contempt for Israel, for his Israeli hosts and for their Herculean efforts over three days to demonstrate to him that Israel is good, not evil. Yet, instead of calling him on his obnoxious behavior, the heads of Rambam and other critics embraced him and praised his transformation.

As Dr. Anthony Luder, the director of pediatrics at Ziv Medical Center in Safed, wrote in a letter to *The Jerusalem Post* published Monday, "In what looks like an academic version of the Stockholm Syndrome, my esteemed colleagues at Rambam Medical Center have only succeeded in throwing sand in the face of the medical community by providing legitimization for a hateful hypocrite and terrible scientist."

Horton's behavior is very much in keeping with what has become standard operating procedure throughout much of Europe today. First, attack Israel. If you get called on it, issue a clarification or a clearing-of-thethroat apology that does not contain any retraction of your falsehoods. For your willingness to rhetorically temper your mendacious allegations, you can expect to be forgiven by Israel and those who care about truth in your country.

CONSIDER THE new Swedish government's behavior.

During his inaugural speech last Friday, the new Social Democrat Swedish prime minister, Stefen Lofven, announced that his government will recognize the non-existent State of Palestine.

Israel rightly responded angrily to his statement, noting that the reason no peace accord has been signed between Israel and the Palestinians is because the Palestinians have scuttled and prevented negotiations for the past five years.

In the face of Israel's angry rebuke of Lofven's statement, the Swedish Embassy in Tel Aviv issued a clarification saying that Sweden supports a negotiated settlement and values its ties with Israel. Ambassador Carl Magnus Nesser told Army Radio that the remark was simply made to jump-start peace talks.

Lofven's statement was not notable because he revealed himself as a fan of Palestinian terrorists who refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist. That's been Sweden's policy for decades.

What was notable about Lofven's statement is that he made it in his inaugural address to the Swedish Parliament. What this means is that in Sweden, supporting the Palestinians against Israel is not a foreign policy issue. It is a domestic policy issue.

As Benjamin Weinthal documented in Monday's *Post*, Swedish Social Democrat politicians with no connection to foreign policy have long records of vilifying

ing the Jewish state. Lofven's government reflects this anti-Israel, and frankly anti-Semitic trend.

Lofven appointed Turkish-born Green Party politician Mehmet Kaplan to serve as urban planning and environment minister in his government. Three years ago Kaplan participated in the illegal, pro-Hamas Turkish flotilla to Gaza as a passenger aboard the Mavi Marmara terrorist ship. In a rally over the summer, he used jihadist language and called for the "liberation of Jerusalem," and the "liberation of Palestine." Kaplan has likened Swedish jihadists who travel to Iraq and Syria to fight for Islamic State to Swedish freedom fighters who fought against the Soviets in Finland during World War II.

Other leading politicians in the Social Democratic Party have traveled to Israel and participated in riots against IDF forces.

In other words, Swedish politicians have identified anti-Israel activism as a potent tool for garnering domestic support. This is why Lofven spent so much more time discussing it in his inaugural address than he spent discussing the killing fields in Syria and Iraq, for instance.

But just as Horton wasn't willing to be lumped together with his Ku Klux Klan-supporting comrades, so the Swedes aren't willing to admit that their hostility towards Israel owes to domestic considerations that have nothing to do with what Israel does.

Horton's phony contrition and the Swedish embassy's "clarification" flow from the same source. And they tell us something about what is happening in Europe and how we need to deal with Europe as it transforms itself before our eyes.

Europe is abandoning the ideals of the Enlightenment, and embracing authoritarianism and irrationality. But it isn't willing to admit what it is doing. As a consequence, it is possible to harken to those ideals to shame Europeans for their irrational bigotry and so slow the process down.

Horton will no doubt revert to open defamation of Israel in due time. The Swedish government will similarly attack us in due course.

But forcing them to slow down is important.

Whether or not Europe's downward spiral is unstoppable is irrelevant for Israel because what is clear enough is that if Europe decides to abandon its current path, it won't be because of anything Israel does.

Facing this situation, Israel must be guided by two goals as it confronts Europe. It needs to stop caring about what Europeans think of it, and it needs to reduce as much as possible its exposure to the European market.

On the latter issue, unless something fundamental changes, it is undeniable that at some point in the next 10 to 15 years, Europe will join the Arab League's boycott of Israel. Israel needs time to develop alternative markets for its exports.

On the former issue, Europe's main non-economic weapon against Israel today is the fact that the Israeli public and particularly Israel's elites still care what Europe thinks of us. Israelis need time to understand that European hatred for Israel has nothing whatsoever

tocracy has to replace the culture of *protekzia* (connections).

We need to revamp the public sector so that the most talented – not those with ties to the strong labor unions, politicians and senior bureaucrats – are chosen to serve the public. We need to put in place mechanisms in our education system that reward the best teachers and make it possible to fire the worst teachers.

More needs to be done to improve competition and reduce the tremendous amount of economic power that is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of companies and families. The regulator must get involved where monopolies or oligopolies keep prices artificially high. And where necessary, the regulator must be given more power and autonomy to fight for fairer competition.

Housing costs remain ridiculously high, both in absolute terms and in terms of the number of average salaries it takes to buy an average house. Everyone knows that the problem is low supply, and the bureaucratic barriers are preventing more housing projects from being built to keep up with demand. But nothing of substance has been done to streamline the planning process.

There are a number of adverse side effects to high housing prices, one of them being increased polarity between the rich and the poor. Young couples who are lucky enough to own a house because they have parents who bought them one have a significant head start compared to those forced to save and pay off a mortgage.

The vast majority of us are not contemplating emigration. Our families and friends are here, so are most of our business contacts. We feel comfortable with Israeli culture, we want to live among Jews, we would feel alien living anywhere else, and we have chosen to tie our destinies with that of the Jewish people.

But it would be a mistake to take for granted – or take advantage of – the fact that most of us are here for better or for worse. We have an obligation to improve the socioeconomic situation here in relation to other Western countries. We must never cease to strive for perfection, not just out of fear that the most educated and talented will pick up and leave, but out of a desire to implement the 21st century version of being "a light unto the nations."

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Rambam's invitation to come to Israel last week and Israel and condemning Jews that insist on support- to do with anything Israel does.

From a place of purity to a place of peace

• By SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

A nyone who has ever been to Jerusalem in the days between Yom Kippur and Succot will testify that there is a unique energy in the air. A frenzy. The city is abuzz. The excitement is palpable, as people fill the streets and flood the markets, buying the Four Species, supplies for their succot and food for the holiday.

Many have the custom to begin building their succa immediately following the conclusion of Yom Kippur. After fasting and praying all day, they eat something and get to right to work – going from one mitzvah to the next – not delaying or missing the opportunity. It is a labor of love, which expresses the desire to carry over the inspiration of the past 25 hours. There is something magical that takes place on these Jerusalem rooftops and balconies, lit by the moon and stars. In my neighborhood of Har Nof, you can hear hammering (and singing!) well into the night. It's an intense ending to an intense day.

The custom to begin building one's succa immediately following Yom Kippur is cited by Rabbi Moshe Isserles, the Rema, in his glosses to Orah Hayyim 624:5 and 625:1. Curiously, the Rema cites this *minhag* (custom) twice: Once in the last section of the Laws of Yom Kippur, and then again in the first section of the Laws of Succot.

Why does the Rema, always meticulous in his comments, cite this custom twice? And what is the reason for this practice? Can't the succa wait until the next day?

The Mishnah Berurah (ad loc.) suggests that the first time the Rema records the minhag, he mentions that "those scrupulous in observance [*ha-medaqdiqim*] begin building immediately...." Everyone else, explains the Mishnah Berurah, begins the next day. That is why the custom appears twice in the Rema: once for those who begin at night and once for those who begin the next day.

But that answer is difficult to accept as the Maharil (Minhagim, Hil. Succot), an early source for the practice, writes that immediately following Yom Kippur "every individual" should be involved in building the succa – not just those scrupulous in their observance!

Perhaps there is a deeper answer. By building the succa immediately after Yom Kippur, we recognize the intimate connection between Succot and the days that immediately precede it. By mentioning the custom in both the Laws of Yom Kippur and again in the Laws of Succot, the Rema stresses this intimate connection.

According to Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (Hokhmat Shlomo, Orah Hayyim 625:1), we begin building the succa right after Yom Kippur, for God, so to speak, covers over



PEOPLE SHOP for the Four Species in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

our sins on Yom Kippur, and on Succot covers us with His Succa.

This intimate connection between the Days of Awe and Succot is deeply rooted in our historical experience. According to one opinion, the succa we sit in represents God's Clouds of Glory, which protected the Jewish People in the Wilderness (Succa 11b; Torat Kohanim 17:11). But after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Clouds of Glory were removed from the Jewish People. On Yom Kippur, the Jewish People were forgiven for the Sin of the Golden Calf, and the Clouds of Glory returned. The Vilna Gaon writes that the holiday of Succot commemorates the return of the Clouds of Glory and with them, the Divine Presence. This is why, explains the Gaon, Succot is celebrated at this time of year – immediately following Yom Kippur (See the Vilna Gaon's Commentary to Song of Songs 1:4).

Once Succot begins, we are surrounded by mitzvot – an expression of our closeness with God. We carry the lulav through the streets, raised like a banner, expressing confidence that we were victorious in judgment just days prior. And while we are required to rejoice during every festival, Succot is especially joyous (See Rambam's Hilchot Lulav 8:12-15). In fact, in our liturgy, Succot is called the "time of our rejoicing." It is the paradigm of joyful celebration. That joy is a result of our closeness with God, achieved during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

During these incredible days between the Days of Awe and Succot, we go from a place of purity (*lifnei Hashem titha'ru*) to a place of peace (*haporeis succat shalom aleinu*).

As we sit in the succa, the Divine Presence surrounds us. In Hassidic thought, it is a symbol of God's love. The Sefat Emet compares the succa to a huppa, a wedding canopy. It is the canopy under which the Jewish Nation is wed to God. The succa is also an embrace. According to Jewish Law, the succa must have at least two walls and a handbreadth. The "two walls" and a "handbreadth" could appear like an arm providing a great big Divine hug. And after having gone through the Days of Awe – isn't that all we need?

The author lives and teaches in Jerusalem.