

October 29, 1993

SHAS'S LAMENTABLE LACK OF LOGIC

IN my youth I was privileged for a time to be given lessons in Talmud; and the first and strongest impression I retained of the system of talmudic discussion and disputation was the devastating logic with which it was permeated.

Moreover, what seemed unbeatable volleys of logic were often met by the no less accurate returns of other Talmudic sages - until every problem was ground down to a conclusion, or a non-conclusion: *teiku*. *Teiku*, we were told, was an acrostic for *Tishbi yetaretz kushiyot uva'ayot* - meaning that the answer would be provided only when the Messiah came. Nowadays the term is much more popularly used to denote a drawn game in sport.

Disappointing then is the revelation that modern rabbis who by definition are qualified to teach the Talmud seem to lose the quality of logic in everyday discussion. For example, political discussion; even on life-and-death issues. Take, specifically, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who has persistently laid down that the crucial national problem of our time must be decided by *pikuah nefesh*: the need to save lives.

No other question seems, publicly at least, to concern him. That is why he supports the present government's "peace process" - which involves the surrender, within a few years, of the historic and strategic heartland of Eretz Yisrael; and, at this moment, a complete bill of forgiveness of all the crimes and the bloodshed carried out by the "Palestine Liberation Organization" under Yasser Arafat - and often at his specific personal order. Honoring the memory of the children massacred at Ma'alot, and all the other children murdered and the sportsmen at Munich - the list is endless - the prime minister of Israel last month shook the hand of Arafat.

Since that incredible obscenity the government has been engaged in a worldwide campaign to scrub that hand free of the accumulated blood, while inviting the cooperation of the whole world in creating, for the first time in history, an Arab state in Eretz Yisrael; envisaging to that end the voluntary surrender by the Jewish people of its 3,000-year-old patrimony. This could not be effected by the nihilistic Rabin-Aloni government without the assistance of the handful of Shas members of the Knesset who take their orders from Rabbi Yosef. All this, according to Rabbi Yosef, in order to save life.

Then, however, without even a brief interval, Jews continue to be killed; and the prime minister himself explains why they are being killed: it is because of the peace agreement. Its opponents demonstrate their opposition to it by killing Jews. Just as earlier, so we were told at the time, Jews were killed because there was no agreement.

That is, Rabbi Yosef has failed, by supporting Rabin's "peace process" to achieve *pikuah nefesh*, which was his one proclaimed criterion for giving the government the crucial parliamentary support. What is more, the organization responsible for the killings - Hamas - proclaims its intention to go on killing indefinitely. There is no *teiku* here.

The answer stares Rabbi Yosef in the face. His has been a grievous blunder. THE situation of course is much more complex than is suggested by Rabbi Yosef's simplistic calculation.

True, Arafat may be prepared, in return for the unprecedented historic victory handed

to him on a platter, to let up on terror for a while. But what has Israel gained? In store for this country in the immediate future is the continuation of the terrorist war. Which means that the PLO, which has been touted for two decades as the "recognized" legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is unable to control or prevent that war.

Not only Hamas, whose inspiration and headquarters are in Iran, but 10 organizations centered in Syria, and guided by President Hafez Assad, reject Arafat and the PLO as leading the war against Israel. Rabin's reactions to these facts are simple. He sees them, but does not attribute serious weight to them.

That Jews should be killed by non-PLO Arabs is unavoidable. It does not move him. As long as he is engaged in a peace process which is earning him praise all over the world and which will result, as a first step, in "getting rid" of Gaza - with the added sweetener of Jericho - nothing moves him.

When Arafat does not even lift a finger toward cancellation of the infamous Palestinian Covenant, makes no move to call together the "Palestinian National Council" (where a two-thirds majority would be required) - Rabin "understands his difficulties." Rabin must therefore bear the burden of guilt for having, by his agreement with Arafat, given recognition in the name of Israel to an organization whose central purpose, as enshrined in its constitution, is to destroy Israel as a state, and to disperse or eliminate its people. All this is written. Irresponsible as was - from Rabin's own point of view - the readiness to negotiate without insisting in advance on the erasure of that barbaric covenant, fatuous as was the faith in the promise of Arafat - one of the century's most notable liars - to cancel "offending passages," Rabin is now accepting the covenant in effect as remaining unchanged as a legitimate national striving.

Arafat, so heavily silent on the subject of the covenant, continues unrestrainedly to go well beyond what was (as far as we know) agreed upon with Rabin. He has assured his PLO critics that all he is doing is implementing the first of the two "phases" decided upon at the all-Arab Rabat Conference in 1974 for the final solution of the "Palestinian problem." He has added color to this assertion by forecasting the second phase. Soon, he has told the world, the Palestinian State will arise and the Palestinian flag will fly over its capital, Jerusalem.

Neither Rabin nor any of his colleagues has taken Arafat to task over this inflammatory breach of the agreement. Moreover, Arafat has been accorded, perhaps unwittingly, Rabin's moral support for his promises to his critics. In a speech on Tuesday to future US Jewish National Fund leaders the prime minister said that "within its new borders Israel will remain a Jewish State not only in name, but in demography, so that more than 80 percent of the population will be Jewish." That must mean approximately the 1949 Armistice lines.

That means the rest of Western Eretz Yisrael will be Arab. That means the "Palestinian Arab State." And that is the projected starting point of the second phase of the "two-phase" solution. That solution was agreed upon by all the Arab states in 1947, and all - including Egypt - are pledged to help in its consummation.