



# NEWS REVIEW

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## 32nd Government of Israel sworn in at Knesset Plenum

*On Tuesday, March 31, 2009, the 32nd Government of Israel headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won the approval of the Knesset by a vote of 69-45, and its ministers took the oath of office.*

Israel seeks peace with the entire Arab and Muslim world but continues to be threatened by the forces of Islamic extremists, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said several hours before he was sworn in Tuesday evening.

He took the oath of office just before midnight, after the Knesset voted 69-45 to approve the new government.

"These are irregular times," Netanyahu told the Knesset plenum. "Today Israel is faced with two tests - an economic crisis and a security crisis. The source of these crises are neither our past actions nor past mistakes.... Our current actions, however, will determine the results of these crises."

Netanyahu was interrupted numerous times by critics of his extra-large government as he presented it and its guidelines to the Knesset. In the past, Netanyahu himself expressed opposition to large governments due to the expense involved. "It is not with a victor's joy that I stand here today in front of you, but with a great sense of responsibility," Netanyahu began. "I ask for your trust at this time of worldwide crisis of a kind we haven't known before, and it is with a sense of worry, but also with hope and faith, that the State of Israel confronts two major challenges: the economic challenge and the security challenge. I am certain that the people of Israel will cope successfully with the challenges that lie ahead of it."

Regarding Iranian threats to "erase Israel from the map," Netanyahu criticized the international community for its lack of response. "The Jewish people has experience with dictators and it cannot overestimate megalomaniac dictators who threaten to destroy it," he said. The new prime minister added that the worst thing for the State of Israel and the world would be "that a radical regime obtains nuclear weapons."

The threat to Israel came from the spread of extremist Islam in the region and in the world, Netanyahu said. "I separate extremist Islam from the general Muslim world, which is also threatened by extremist Islam," he told the plenum. "The Muslim culture is a rich culture that knew times of prosperity, of Arabs and Jews who lived together and created things together." Six prime ministers had strived for peace with the Palestinians but failed, he said, adding that "the failure was not their fault. If the heads of the Palestinian Authority want peace, I tell them now - we can achieve it."

Netanyahu said his government would work for peace with all of Israel's neighbours on three levels: economic, political and security. "We will carry out ongoing negotiations for peace with the Palestinians in an attempt to reach a permanent agreement," he said. "We don't want to rule another people, and the agreement will give the Palestinians all the rights to rule themselves, except for those that endanger Israel."

Netanyahu explained how his government would handle the "truly unprecedented" economic crisis, saying it threatened the livelihood of tens of thousands of Israelis and that no one could tell when and how it would end. "But I know that the Israeli market has clear advantages that enable it to cope with many challenges," he said. "The fact that we are a small country provides leverage in

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getting out of this crisis. The Israeli market is like a small and light speedboat whose direction can be changed more easily. I myself will lead this change of direction and the government I head will operate to protect work places, to resolve the shortage of credit in the market, and to maintain macroeconomic policies."

Netanyahu also promised a revolution in the education system and set a goal to place Israel among the top 10 countries in the world within 10 years. "From my experience, when you set a goal, a process to achieve the goal starts right away," he said.

Netanyahu discussed his plans to address the increase in crime, promising to strengthen the police, implement more severe punishments and advance reforms. "It is unacceptable that the Jewish people, who were dispersed in more than a hundred countries in the Diaspora where they maintained high standards of morality, came back to their country where crime organizations that deal in murder, women and drug trafficking are emerging," he said.

The new Prime Minister said he was committed to the Declaration of Independence from 61 years ago, "including the obligation for full equality for all people regardless of their religion, gender and race." He praised departing prime minister Olmert and thanked him for the work he had done for the state, its security and its citizens.

Finally, Netanyahu read out the long list of ministers and deputy ministers that he asked the Knesset to approve - to loud catcalls from the opposition. He explained that the coalition agreements had been checked with the relevant legal bodies, adding that when he was in the opposition, he had never shown disrespect for the Knesset.

He paused and looked out to the spectators gallery where Aviva Schalit sat along with Karnit Goldwasser and Esther Wachsman. Aviva's son Gilad was kidnapped by Hamas in June 2006. Until two weeks ago, hopes had remained high that Olmert would find a way to conclude a prisoner swap with Hamas for Gilad's return. Now, it was Netanyahu's turn to speak of prioritising Gilad's release.

It is right before Pessah, he said. "At our national table, there is an empty chair. It is Gilad Schalit's chair. I will do everything in my power to ensure his speedy return, healthy and whole, to his family's bosom," Netanyahu said. Then he moved from a personal address to the Schalit and said that as an expression of his feelings as Pessah approaches, he had chosen to read to the plenum a portion of one of the last letters that his brother Yonatan had written before he was killed in July 1976 leading a raid in Entebbe, Uganda, to rescue hostages.

His brother, Netanyahu said, had written that Pessah was the best holiday, because it focused on the liberty of the Jews. The Jews had gone through many long years of suffering, oppression, vagrancy and degradation, Yonatan wrote. For many years, there appeared to be no ray of light, but that is no longer true, he wrote. This holiday is a testament to the eternal goal of freedom. "Pessah awakens an emotional bond, because of the Seder, and like all of us, I recall old memories from my personal past," Yonatan wrote. But even, he said, as he reflected on his past, "I also see myself as an inseparable link in the chain of the existence and independence of Israel."

Then Netanyahu continued where his brother had left off. "Israeli citizens, in this fateful hour, we are all an integral link" in that chain. "From this podium in Jerusalem, which is our eternal capital, I am uttering a prayer to God, to bless that the work of our hands will be blessed, and that the unity with which we started on our way will be a good sign... that will ensure our future."

## Myth & Facts

Mitchell Bard | 31 March

**MYTH:** *"Netanyahu is not an advocate for peace."*

**FACT:** Before even taking office, Benjamin Netanyahu is being caricatured as a right-wing extremist uninterested in peace when, in fact, he is a proven peacemaker who carried out the last large-scale Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and negotiated with even his sworn enemy Yasser Arafat. It was no surprise that Netanyahu staked out tough positions during his election

campaign, emphasizing his commitment to Israel's security, but after being chosen to serve as prime minister he also pledged his government a "partner for peace."

When Netanyahu became prime minister the first time, he also was vilified by the media and Arab leaders; yet, he entered talks with Arafat and agreed to withdraw Israeli troops from Hebron. Both leaders signed the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron on January 17, 1997, turning over to Palestinian jurisdiction more than 80 percent of the city of Hebron with the promise of further redeployment from the West Bank in the coming weeks. Here was the "right-wing" prime minister agreeing to give up territory in a city with a long Jewish religious and political history in the hope of achieving peace.

This same opponent of peace signed the Wye River Memorandum on October 23, 1998, at the White House. Netanyahu agreed to turn over another 13 percent of the remaining territory under full Israeli control to the Palestinians in return for their pledge to outlaw and combat terrorist organizations, prohibit illegal weapons and prevent weapons smuggling, and prevent incitement of violence and terrorism. Netanyahu's government also agreed to resume permanent status negotiations. Unfortunately, the Palestinians once again failed to fulfill their promise to end terror and sabotaged the plan for additional Israeli redeployments.

Today, the political climate is very different. The Palestinians are in disarray. The Palestinian Authority is split, with Hamas terrorists controlling Gaza and Fatah clinging to power in the West Bank. The nominal president of the PA is considered a reasonable person who simply is impotent to negotiate or implement an agreement. In addition, Israelis are in no mood to make territorial compromises after seeing how the complete evacuation of Gaza brought them more terror rather than peace. Until the Palestinians demonstrate they are committed to peace, few Israelis are prepared to give up territory the Palestinians may use to launch rockets at Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or Ben-Gurion Airport.

In this context, Netanyahu is advocating that the next steps in the peace process focus on improving the lives of the Palestinians. He believes that by strengthening the Palestinian economy and promoting rapid growth, the average Palestinian civilian will have a greater stake in coexistence. While critics seeking to discredit Netanyahu suggest he is trying to avoid political concessions, Netanyahu has made clear this is not the case. "The economic track is not a substitute for political negotiations, it's a complement to it," he explained. "If we have a strong Israeli-Palestinian economic relationship, that's a strong foundation for peace." He has also told international leaders that the Palestinians should have the rights to govern themselves as long as they do not threaten Israel and at the Knesset's commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, Netanyahu reaffirmed this commitment. "The government I am about to form will do all in its power to reach peace with our neighbour. Every one of our neighbours who will be ready for peace will find our hands outstretched before them."

## Examining the conduct of IDF operations in Gaza

Jeffrey White | The Washington Institute for Near East Policy | 27 March

Critics have raised serious ethical questions about how the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) carried out Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip. The IDF has been accused of war crimes ranging from launching an unjustified and aggressive war to wanton damage to civilian property. The Israeli government and the IDF have countered these claims, and investigations of some of the complaints, including those of individual misconduct by Israeli soldiers, are already underway. Analysis of Cast Lead, however, indicates that this operation was limited in scope, duration, and intensity, and that Israel's conduct restricted the amount of damage inflicted on the civilian population as a whole.

**Background:** It should come as no surprise that this issue was raised, since any large-scale IDF operation in Gaza was bound to put civilian life and property at risk. The destructive power of modern weapons is substantial, even when employed precisely. Ground combat can be intense and lethal to soldiers and civilians alike, particularly in an uncertain and emotionally charged environment. Military operations are not antiseptic events conducted in a vacuum; today, where irregular and asymmetric warfare is common, the lines between the civilian and military sectors are increasingly blurred, complicating military operations and increasing risks to civilians. The situation

was further complicated by Israel's opponents -- Hamas and others -- who used the civilian population and property as cover for their offensive and defensive actions, including the booby-trapping of civilian housing and public buildings. But no reasonable observer of Cast Lead would have expected the operation to be free of violence to the civilian community in Gaza; civilians were going to be killed and wounded, and their property destroyed and damaged.

**Strategic and Operational Aspects:** Charges against Israel's conduct during the war give the impression of an unrestrained campaign against an undefended population. Some have suggested that the IDF deliberately and systematically inflicted excessive violence on Gaza's civilian population. In other words, the IDF, both as an organization and as individuals, directed the war against innocent civilians and those seeking to aid them. In the words of a UN report, Cast Lead was ". . . a massive assault on a densely populated urbanized setting where the defining reality could not but subject the entire civilian population to an inhumane form of warfare . . ." (author's emphasis). Analysis of the conduct of operations, however, paints a different picture. At the strategic level, it is evident that Cast Lead was an operation with limited political and military objectives -- too limited, in fact, for many Israeli critics of Ehud Olmert's government. The operation did not aim to overthrow or bring down the Hamas regime in Gaza (although it certainly intended to damage it), and it did not aim to reoccupy the entire Gaza Strip.

Ground operations were narrowly focused, and air operations, while ranging widely across Gaza, were concentrated in the north and the south. In addition, the IDF employed only a fraction of the ground combat power available to it. In essence, only one reinforced division was used in Cast Lead: three paratroop/infantry brigades and one armoured brigade, plus supporting artillery and special units such as engineering and intelligence. This hardly constituted a "massive assault." This force was employed only in the north; central and southern Gaza saw no significant -- if any -- ground combat. Even where ground forces were employed, fighting was not sustained. Some units saw little intense combat, as reflected in the very low Israeli combat casualties. No attempt was made to penetrate with ground forces deeply into populated areas, even where Hamas fighters were known to be located.

The IDF took active measures to reduce civilian casualties, including the extensive use of leaflets and phone messages warning Palestinians to leave the area or to avoid potential targets. Civilian warnings also included the Israeli Air Force (IAF) "knocking" actions -- shots fired to alert building inhabitants of an imminent attack. While the efficacy of these measures is questionable given the military situation, the IDF did attempt to mitigate the effect of its actions on civilians.

**The Tactical Level:** Complaints against the IDF have come from sources of varying credibility. UN reporters and other witnesses have claimed that the IDF employed weapons, tactics, and rules of engagement (ROE) that resulted in the killing and wounding of civilians, and that these actions were, in some cases, "war crimes." Of course, the merit of any particular claim can be determined only by an investigation that considers what actually happened, the context, and the intentions of those involved. But without specifically addressing any individual claim, some important elements of the nature of the fighting need to be understood.

First, with respect to the use of aerial weapons, the IAF attacked a broad set of targets within Gaza, including leadership, infrastructure, smuggling tunnels, military facilities, roads, and rocket and mortar launch sites. These targets were not concentrated in designated military zones or areas, but often located near, next to, and within facilities that are normally civilian in purpose. There is good evidence that Hamas and other organisations made a conscious decision to place these targets in civilian areas. Israel chose to attack these targets and accepted the risk of collateral damage. But it did so with some substantial measure of accuracy. According to the IAF, 80% of the bombs used by the IAF were precision weapons, and 99% of the air strikes hit their targets. The extensive use of these weapons (up from 36% in the 2006 Lebanon War, according to the IDF) made the attacks more effective and probably reduced civilian losses. Nevertheless, civilian lives were lost and civilian property damaged.

Where ground combat occurred, the localised effects were often severe. Modern ground combat systems, and associated systems such as attack helicopters, are highly destructive. The IDF has not released its ROE for Cast Lead, but it seems evident that a high value was placed on protecting the lives of IDF soldiers. IDF ground commanders acknowledged this from the beginning of the operation, and it led directly to the use of heavy firepower against targets. Israeli sources also

report that some low-level IDF commanders urged their troops to act aggressively and not take risks in dealing with suspect threats. Hamas and other combatants were interspersed with the civilian population, first as matter of choice for cover and concealment, and later out of perceived necessity to escape IDF fire. Palestinian fighters reportedly operated from within civilian dwellings, schools, and mosques, and used ambulances to transport combatants. Israeli sources report that Shifa hospital was used by Hamas as a command center for its senior leadership throughout the conflict. In addition, Hamas had trained youths and women for combat and suicide missions, and advertised this capability broadly. These actions further contributed to the uncertainty as to who was and was not a combatant in Gaza. For innocent civilians, this sometimes was a lethal environment.

IDF measures to protect its soldiers undoubtedly translated into additional destruction or damage to civilian property – tactics that included using bulldozers and other armoured vehicles to clear axes of advance, breaking through exterior and interior walls of structures to avoid exposure to observation and fire, and clearing rooms for use by IDF personnel. These measures, though, were taken in response to Hamas's preparation of the battlefield with mines and improvised explosive devices intended to impede Israeli movement and inflict casualties, as well as to the group's tactical employment of snipers and antitank weapons. In effect, Hamas had already prepared the civilian environment for military purposes. IDF commanders felt it was an acceptable trade-off to open an approach through civilian houses or greenhouses rather than risk being ambushed and taking losses.

**Conduct of War vs. Conduct of Soldiers:** The issues concerning IDF treatment of Palestinian lives and property are being used by some critics to argue that IDF soldiers were motivated by racism or religiously inspired fervour against the Palestinians, and that the IDF devalued Palestinian life, as demonstrated by the nature of Cast Lead, the aggressive tactics and weapons employed by the IDF, and its allegedly loose ROE. These arguments are similar to some assertions by historians that the U.S. conducted a racist war against the Japanese during World War II. These arguments are flawed, however, in that they conflate the "conduct of war," the objectives, plans, and operations that are carried out, with the "experience of war," the conduct of individual soldiers. In the case of Cast Lead, it is clear that the Palestinian population was not the target. In other words, Cast Lead was not conducted with the aim of killing civilians and damaging their property, although Palestinian civilians were killed and property destroyed as a consequence of military operations.

The "experience of war" refers to what individual soldiers did, saw, heard, and thought. Obviously, the experience of individuals can vary enormously in an operation on the scale of Cast Lead. Soldiers sometimes do terrible things, and this is true of all armies at all times, but this does not excuse criminal conduct and breakdowns in discipline. So far, there have been only a few cases of alleged serious misconduct involving the "cold-blooded" killing of civilians, and these are in dispute. Some Israeli soldiers were none too gentle in their treatment of civilian property, but others exercised consideration. The IDF, for its own good, needs to investigate the serious allegations carefully -- even more so if they point to systemic problems in discipline, training, or the climate in specific units.

**Conclusion:** The criticism leveled against the IDF raises a broader issue: to what standard should the armed forces of states be held when they are in conflict with non-state actors operating from within a civilian population. Certainly, these standards should be high, but they cannot be so high as to prevent states from acting in legitimate self-defense. Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organisations put the Palestinian population of Gaza at risk, often deliberately. Israel responded with an operation that in its essential elements was limited. To be sure, Israel had its own reasons for keeping its operation limited, but the overall effect was to reduce the consequences, harsh as they were, for the civilian population.

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## My own humanitarian crisis

**Amnon Rubinstein | The Jerusalem Post | 31 March**

Hardly a day passes without mass media and NGOs reporting about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The siege of Gaza has become a major subject in international human rights discourse. Indeed, the hardship of the people of Gaza - an abject and dependent enclave - is authentic and painful, even if we disregard the casualties and destruction caused by the latest war.

Moreover, stories about alleged killings of civilians by IDF soldiers which have surfaced recently exacerbate Israel's public image - Oliphant's cartoon likening a soldier carrying a lethal Star of David to a goose-stepping Nazi is just one abhorrent manifestation of this phenomenon - and should move Israel to a thorough, open investigation of these allegations to be conducted by an independent judicial body, without concealing anything.

The suffering of the people of Gaza is the suffering of human beings - even if this tragedy is brought about by a leadership elected by the people of Gaza. And it really does not matter - in this context - that the hardship can disappear overnight if Gaza were only governed by leaders who prefer life and peace to death and war.

But besides this Gaza crisis, there is also an Israeli humanitarian crisis, and alongside the siege of Gaza, there is also a siege of Israel. A large chunk of this tiny country is exposed to brutal shelling from Gaza and the psychological effects of this exposure are felt by every Israeli.

True, Gaza is smaller than Israel, but Gaza has a border with Egypt - not merely an Arab state, but the self-proclaimed mother of all Arabs and a staunch defender of Palestinian causes. Israel has no border with a kin state and even in the two countries - Jordan and Egypt - which are at peace with it, Israelis do not feel welcome and, especially in Egypt, cannot but hear the hate barrage aimed against their country and people.

True, Gaza's border with Egypt is virtually closed, but this can change any day, once the rulers of Gaza stop using an open border as a means to smuggle in arms and missiles to wage their war against the Jewish state. In contrast, Israelis see no chance for lifting the virtual siege against their country. On the contrary, the hate and rejection which they meet when they cross their borders only increase by leaps and bounds.

This sense of siege is enhanced not only by closed borders but also by the fact that most Israelis live close to hostile Palestinian areas, and the existence of Jewish settlements in these areas is no relief for Israelis like this author, who regard them as one of the major causes for their resentment and pessimism. De facto, these Palestinian areas - a short drive from the homes of most Israelis - are closed to Jews. Any Israeli taken prisoner by terrorists there will not enjoy any human right accorded under international law, and his relatives and friends will not know anything about him. No human rights organization - including the Israeli ones - will utter a word of protest or demand that the International Red Cross be allowed to visit the prisoner.

Indeed, our humanitarian crisis consists of a constant anxiety surrounding our captured men. The anxiety which engulfed the whole country when we were uncertain whether our two soldiers - Eldad Regev and Udi Goldwasser - would be returned alive or dead from Lebanon is of no interest to the human rights NGOs - abroad or at home. A Palestinian POW can always appeal against maltreatment to the High Court of Justice, but every Israeli knows that if he ventures into hostile Palestinian territory he may disappear, or be lynched in broad daylight.

This too is part of the siege of Israel.

And there are also other components in the humanitarian crisis. The hate campaign against Israel and the Jews has reached such heights that it must be ranked as equivalent to the Nazi propaganda which preceded the Holocaust, and the fact that this campaign is aided and abetted by Jewish and Israeli academics does not make the crisis any easier. True, the country must act as a liberal democracy and never compare itself with Arab regimes; we must investigate every alleged war

crime. But this does not detract from the daily burden of our humanitarian crisis.

And there is one more little item which the human rights NGOs - at home and abroad - tend to ignore: over Israel hangs a constant Iranian threat to obliterate their country and its people with nuclear weapons. Obviously, this threat, made publicly by a rich and powerful nation, is somehow not considered an infringement of human rights, and this fact too is part of my own humanitarian crisis.

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## Death of Frank Stein, 'the face of Australian Jewry in Israel'

**Ha'Aretz | 1 April**

He was called "the face of Australian Jewry in Israel," so it is not surprising that several hundred Australian Israelis showed up yesterday for the funeral of Frank Stein, the former director of the Zionist Federation of Australia's Israel office.

Stein died Monday at the age of 52 of kidney failure, after a brief but intense battle with cancer.

The illustrious group of mourners who gathered in Jerusalem's Har Hamenucha cemetery included prominent Anglo Israelis such as Australian ambassador James Larsen, Ehud Barak's brother Muli Brog and countless representatives from organizations that deal with Diaspora-Israel relations and immigrants, such as JNF, Birthright Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Stein was born in Brisbane, where he became involved with the Zionist youth movement Beitar at a young age. After he moved to Sydney, he continued his community work for Hineni, where he led programs for young Australian Jews.

In 1985, he moved to Jerusalem, where he worked for several organisations dealing with Diaspora youth and assisting English-speaking immigrants in Israel. He went on to become director of the Zionist Federation of Australia's local office, a position he left last year to serve as an Israeli emissary in South Africa. He spent three months there.

"He always wanted to help others but never wanted help himself," said his brother Benny Stein, who lives in Tel Aviv. "Frank was a very private person. He was always totally reliable."

Stein's sister Hannah Cunningham, who flew in from Australia earlier this week and spent four hours at her brother's hospital bed before he passed away, added: "He was a giver, not a taker. Giving to other people, that was his pleasure in life."

Stein never married. He is survived by his father George and four siblings, most of whom still live in Brisbane.

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## In Brief

**Parkinson's patients dance to a different tune:** Israeli therapist and martial arts expert Alex Kerten has developed a unique dance treatment for patients suffering from Parkinson's, a neurological disease that affects the nervous system.

The Gyro-Kinetics therapy, which is attracting the interest of patients from all over the world, combines music, rhythm and movement to help patients learn to live with the disease, and gain some kind of control over it. A pilot study suggests that the treatment slows down the progress of the disease, enabling patients to avoid increasing the dosage of drugs. More information: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1057839.html>

**Israel a land of opportunity, according to *The Economist*:** Israel, like the rest of the Western world, may be in the midst of a recession, but international financial magazine, *The Economist*, called the country a land of opportunity, in a recent report. The article, which also listed Denmark and Singapore as lands of opportunity, praised Israel's high-tech industry, saying that skills, trust and camaraderie developed in the IDF, plus a high tolerance for risk due to living in a country often under attack, provide the makings of an "entrepreneurial firecracker".

The report notes that the governments of all three countries enthusiastically endorse entrepreneurship, but added that "the Danes and the Singaporeans regard it as their ticket to success in a global economy and the Israelis as a matter of survival". Israel has 4,000 high-tech companies, according to the magazine, and about 100 venture capital funds. Innovations developed here include Intel's Pentium chip, the firewall (Check Point), the Pillcam (Given Imaging), and voicemail, which was developed by Comverse Technology.

**World financial regulation experts to gather in Israel for conference this June:** Financial regulation experts from all over the world are set to gather in Tel Aviv in Israel this June for the International Organisation of Securities Commissions Conference (IOSCO), the global securities regulators most important annual event.

The conference, which will be held from June 8 to 11th, will be one of the first opportunities for world-leading regulatory authorities to address the global effects of the current financial crisis on the financial and securities system and the stability of the world economy. The event will be headlined by Mary Schapiro, the chairman of the US Securities and Exchange Commission. Other global experts will take part in the event, including Lloyd C. Blankfein, chairman and CEO of the Goldman Sachs Group; Deven Sharma, president of Standard & Poor's; Stanley Fischer, governor of the Bank of Israel; and William Brodsky, CEO of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. The conference will be hosted by the Israel Securities Authority and the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

**Jewish, Arab youth take part in stem cell workshop in Jerusalem:** Jewish and Arab youth took part in an international workshop on stem cells in Jerusalem this week. The youth, from Jerusalem and Abu Ghosh, heard lectures from senior researchers in the field and learned of the ethical and religious issues involved in stem cell research. They also engaged in Internet discussions with German students on the topic.

The event was organized by the Joseph Meyerhoff Youth Center for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It was the initiative of TELESCOPE, the educational arm of ESTOOLS, which is the largest grouping of human embryonic stem cell researchers in Europe. Dr. Devora Lang, director of the Youth Center for Advanced Studies, said that the "uniqueness of the workshop was its providing an opportunity for students of different religions who are living in Israel to participate in joint discussions and to relate to the religious and ethical aspects of stem cell research."