



Discerning Media Accuracy: Natan Sharansky's 3-D Test

Twenty first century mass communication is making translation of the Bible and the spread of the Gospel into all corners of the world a reality that could be completed in our lifetime. Within minutes the news of a single event can reach across the globe. Repressive regimes can no longer guarantee that their "secret" activities will not be exposed across the world in real time. Access to critical information in the midst of cataclysmic events is providing life-saving measures. These are some of the wonderful benefits available to the masses today because of new developments within the cyber communication world.

However, the capability of spreading lies, misinformation and distortions on a global level, never imagined, are the negative consequences of cyber communication in the hands of those with evil intent. No longer can anyone place blind trust in what is presented as news, no matter how legitimate it purports to be. We must use discernment, particularly, when the Issue is Israel and the Jewish people. We must be able to assess whether criticism of Israel is legitimate or whether it is based in bigotry, distortions or misinformation that leads to faulty opinions and wrong conclusions.

Dr. Hillel Newman, former Consul General of Israel to New England, speaking at a prayer gathering to Aglow in New England, said:

While most of the world recognizes the painting of swastikas and the toppling of gravestones as morally reprehensible, a new stage of anti-Semitism is also developing. Because racism is no longer socially accepted, anti-Semitism has mutated like a disease in order to escape detection, and some forms can be harder to detect than others. Nonetheless, modern anti-Semitism is still extremely lethal, insidious, and dangerous. And, like a disease, it can spread very quickly. Today, anti-Semitism often takes the form of anti-Zionism- the denial of Israel's right to exist --a new dressing for the same old hatreds... Criticism is acceptable. Israel is a democratic country with a full range of opinions. Yet, the attacks upon Israel often go far beyond legitimate criticism. Thus, the question becomes how to distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israel's policies and anti-Semitism.¹

The 3-D Test

Natan Sharansky is a former Soviet dissident who survived thirteen years of forced labor in the Soviet Gulag. Upon his release he made aliyah to Israel and became an Israeli politician, human rights activist and author. In 2003 he founded the Global Forum against Anti-Semitism. He developed a simple, yet workable set of criteria for distinguishing legitimate criticism of Israel and the Jewish people from anti-Semitism.

¹ Dr. Hillel Neuman, "Anti-Semitism" (Tri-nation Prayer Summit for Israel) Gordon College, Wenham, MA, 2004)

1. Demonization

The first D of the 3-D test is **Demonization**. It refers to the horrific and outlandish accusations directed toward the Jewish people in an effort to incite hatred.

When the Jewish state is being demonized; when Israel's actions are blown out of all sensible proportion; when comparisons are made between Israelis and Nazis and between Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz - this is anti-Semitism, not legitimate criticism of Israel.²

Demonization can be obvious, as in the Syrian state sponsored film, “Al Shattat” that was shown throughout the Middle East several years ago. Among other horrible images a Rabbi is depicted cutting the throat of a Christian child, draining his blood to use in making matzo for Passover.

Palestinian Media Watch, an organization that monitors media, education and cultural structures, regularly reports of the systematic presentation of Jews planning and executing heinous crimes, including burning Palestinians in ovens, murder, using prisoners for Nazi-like experiments and comparing Israel to Nazis and of the Palestinian refugee camps to Auschwitz.

Obama is shown reading a newspaper and reassures the Jew that the American media has not reported on the crime he must have committed with the bloodied knife.



The Israeli army is depicted as Hitler and other evil leaders.



Israel's establishment in 1948: bodies and skulls of Palestinians have been crushed by the stone.

Demonization of Israel and Jews on college and university campuses sponsored by Muslim/pro-Palestinian student organizations is rapidly expanding. The thirteen days of “Israel Apartheid Week”, birthed in 2004 at the University of Toronto, present a host of lectures, exhibits and activities that engage in outrageous attacks on Israel. The nation is called, among other things, an apartheid state, stirring up visions of the former rule in South Africa that was so oppressive for its black majority. Pro-Palestinian extremists incite hostility against Israel charging that the Jewish state, by its very nature, is a racist and oppressive nation. They deny Israel’s right to exist and call for the dismantling of the Jewish State.

2. Double Standard

The second D of the 3-D test is **Double Standards**. This criteria can be harder to detect, but no less dangerous. A double standard means singling out a group and judging them by a different set of rules; in other words, treating a group very differently or using a different yardstick to judge their actions.

² Natan Sharansky, *Jewish Political Studies Review* (Jewish Center for Public Affairs, Fall 2004)

Through centuries of history, many nations subjected the Jews to discriminatory laws. However, today, it is often the entire state of Israel that is treated with bias and partiality.

The automatic majority of the Arab block, the fifty-six member Organization of Islamic Co-operation, and their supporters in the UN General Assembly assure their own success in the passage of any resolution against Israel, no matter how prejudiced, outlandish or ill-intentioned. The numerical advantage of those nations hostile to Israel also prevents passage of any resolution critical of the Palestinians or any Arab country. As former Israeli diplomat Abba Eban once said, *“If Algeria introduced a resolution declaring the earth was flat and that Israel had flattened it, it would pass by a vote of 164 to 13 with 26 abstentions.”*

Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, is routinely singled out for condemnation by the United Nations for perceived human rights abuses while the gross human rights abuses by other nations, like Saudi Arabia, Sudan, North Korea and Syria are ignored.

Examples of other double standards and bias are innumerable. Israel is the only country in the world that is not eligible to sit on the UN Security Council, and Israel’s Magen David Adom is the only ambulance service that has been denied admission to the International Red Cross.

Israeli response to Hamas/Hezbollah rocket attacks are consistently treated in the most negative light while Hamas terrorist activities, rhetoric of hatred and regular missile attacks go unreported or, at best, underreported.

3. Delegitimization

The third D of the 3-D test is **Delegitimization**.

In the past, anti-Semites attacked the Jewish religion, the Jewish people, or both. Today, the “new” anti-Semitism is often more subtle. It is disguised as anti-Zionism, denying the legitimacy of the Jewish state, the very right of Israel’s right to exist.

It ignores the legality of the State of Israel as historically determined at the 1920 San Remo Conference in Italy, ratified by the League of Nations in 1922 and established by UN Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947.

Unfortunately, growing movements within the Christian community such as Sabeel, Christ at the Checkpoint Conferences sponsored by Bethlehem Bible College, the Christian-Palestinian theology movement and other anti-Zionist proponents within mainline denominations fuel the delegitimization of the Jewish state.

As responsible Christians we must be discerning when considering Israel and the Jewish people. We must be informed and we must use wisdom.

I Kings 3:9 *“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.”*

Additional Resources

Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America: www.camera.org A media-monitoring, research organization promoting accurate and balanced coverage of Israel and the Middle East.

Honest Reporting: www.honestreporting.com A site for monitoring the news for bias, inaccuracies, or other breach of journalistic standards in coverage of the Arab-Israel conflict.

Middle East Media Resource Institute: www.memritv.org MEMRI bridges the language gap between the Middle East and the West by monitoring, translating, and studying Arab, Iranian and Turkish media, schoolbooks, and religious sermons.

Palestinian Media Watch: www.palwatch.org Founded in 1996, Palestinian Media Watch is an Israeli research institute that studies Palestinian society from a broad range of perspectives by monitoring and analyzing the Palestinian Authority through its media and schoolbooks.