

Why Israel is the envy of the Western world - comment

Envy by others is unfortunately the inevitable consequence of success. Israel has succeeded in the past year to prove it can overcome an existential threat to its survival.

By AMY NEUSTEIN
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Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Shin Bet Director Ronen Bar. (photo credit: AVSHALOM SASSONI/FLASH90, Chaim Goldberg/Flash90, MAYA ALLERUZZO/POOL/VIA REUTERS, WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY/REUTERS)

For many Jews, the past year began on [Simchat Torah](#), when a joyous holiday of celebrating the annual conclusion of the Torah readings turned into a bloodbath of epic proportions.

A music festival and towns in southern Israel on [October 7](#) were ambushed by Hamas terrorists who murdered 1,200 innocents and took 251 hostages. Universities around the world ignited vociferous attacks on the Jews reminiscent of 1930s Europe.

With the one-year remembrance of October 7, to occur shortly after Rosh Hashanah, we will begin the year on a far different note. Israel's tour de force intelligence gathering, military superiority, and technical prowess realized a major feat against Hezbollah in its long-term efforts to eviscerate the axis of resistance. Its military prowess and intelligence-gathering capabilities have proven, once again, to be the envy of the Western world.

In fact, so much so, that the same day that Hassan Nasrallah – the redoubtable terrorist responsible for the killing of 238 US marines in October 1983 and for the March 1985 kidnapping of Associated Press Bureau Chief Terry Anderson, held captive for seven years – was assassinated by the IDF's bombing of the Hezbollah central headquarters hidden beneath a building in Beirut.



Bezalel Smotrich is seen pointing down in an illustrative featuring credit agency Moody's. (credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST, SHUTTERSTOCK)

A negative economic outlook for Israel

MOODY'S, THE international credit ratings agency, [downgraded Israel two notches](#) to a Baa1 from an A2 rating. By doing so, Moody's maintained a negative outlook for Israel, placing it in league with countries such as Spain and Bulgaria, whose GDP per capita are remarkably below those of other European Union member states.

With the stroke of a pen, Moody's hammered Israel, hours after the news of Nasrallah's (later confirmed) demise was simmering in media outlets, intelligence communities, and among denizens in countries in four hemispheres.

Was this a coincidence? I think not. My proof is that to justify the unsubstantiated and undeserved credit downgrade, Moody's revived the judicial reform dispute as one of the grounds for the current downgrade.

Certainly, this was not a new phenomenon, nor is it incomprehensible to have a debate of this intensity in a country that accords with democratic principles of free speech and the right to assemble. Most importantly, any discourse over the role of Israel's courts had not ignited protests in Israel for quite some time. So why revive an erstwhile issue to justify the assault on Israel's credit rating, thereby impugning their economic stability?

THE ALIYAH and Integration Ministry has released encouraging statistics showing that 31,000 people have immigrated to Israel despite the shadow of war. This statistic is almost three times the number of those who have left, primarily for employment opportunities, which would have occurred even if there had not been a pending war.

It's hard to find an analogous model of immigration patterns in a comparable Western country that could claim it had an influx of immigrants while its military was fighting on three fronts and its citizens were on high alert for attacks in residential quarters at any time of the day or night.

What these immigration statistics show is that notwithstanding the penumbral halo of war, and its omnipresent uncertainty and insecurity, families and individuals decided to uproot themselves and relocate to Israel. They followed their heart, for it is understood that the place where we live is the grounding of our soul. For this reason, conflicts and wars will never deter our passion to come home to the place of our destiny and origin.

The fact that Jews are rooted in history, identity, and determination provokes the envy of others. The human condition leaves most people peripatetic. They struggle to find themselves. They travel to exotic places; they engage in multiple relationships; or they travel via the psychoanalyst's couch to their past or even to past lives. But Jews are not itinerant. They have a purpose; they have a home.

Even before Israel was a state, the Jews were a nation. They had a home within their souls. As history has proven, God blessed Israel with a grounding so strong that no war, genocide, or persecution could destroy us.

What other ethnic group is pari passu or on equal footing with the Jews? Sadly, instead of others learning how we survived as a nation beleaguered by the hostilities of mankind, we are torn down: criticized, mocked, and repudiated in the universities, public discourse, and in the financial sectors that dole out nasty credit bureau ratings just at the moment of Israel's tour-de-force military and intelligence victory, as shown last Friday in its assassination of Nasrallah.

We are marking the first anniversary of October 7 right after Rosh Hashanah. Perhaps this is not a coincidence either. For the Jewish New Year ushers in renewed hope, strength, and vitality to all Jews in Israel and the Diaspora. We will mark the remembrance of the first year since the massacre of innocents and the tragic fate of hostages, who either died in captivity or were executed by Hamas shortly before their release under a planned Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal, emboldened by the vigor of a New Year.

But we will also mark the first year of remembrance exuding pride, for we have proven once again – just as we have in biblical and modern times – that Israel's military proficiency and its intelligence gathering have proven to be exceptional even among countries that benefit from large defense-spending budgets and military sophistication.

Envy by others is unfortunately the inevitable consequence of success. Israel has succeeded in the past year to prove it can overcome an existential threat to its survival.

We should not allow the envy expressed by others to deter, dampen, or alloy our commitment to Israel's security above all else. Let the New Year release us from a time capsule and begin our journey toward permanent security for Israel and all Jews in the Diaspora.

The writer, a PhD, is the author/editor of 16 academic books with leading publishers. Her two most recent books, From Madness to Mutiny and Moral Schisms, will be published by Oxford University Press. She resides in Fort Lee, NJ.