

## **Camp David and After: An Exchange (2. A Reply to Ehud Barak)**

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### **2. A Reply to Ehud Barak**

Both sides in the Israeli–Palestinian war have several targets in mind, and public opinion is not the least of them. The Camp David summit ended almost two years ago; the Taba negotiations were abandoned in January 2001; Ariel Sharon has made no secret of his rejection of the Oslo process, not to mention the positions taken by Israel at Camp David or in Taba; and the confrontation between the two sides has had disastrous consequences. Yet in the midst of it all, the various interpretations of what happened at Camp David and its aftermath continue to draw exceptional attention both in Israel and in the United States.

Ehud Barak’s interview with Benny Morris makes it clear why that is the case: Barak’s assessment that the talks failed because Yasser Arafat cannot make peace with Israel and that his answer to Israel’s unprecedented offer was to resort to terrorist violence has become central to the argument that Israel is in a fight for its survival against those who deny its very right to exist. So much of what is said and done today derives from and is justified by that crude appraisal. First, Arafat and the rest of the Palestinian leaders must be supplanted before a meaningful peace process can resume, since they are the ones who rejected the offer. Second, the Palestinians’ use of violence has nothing to do with ending the occupation since they walked away from the possibility of reaching that goal at the negotiating table not long ago. And, finally, Israel must crush the Palestinians—“badly beat them” in the words of the current prime minister—if an agreement is ever to be reached.

The one-sided account that was set in motion in the wake of Camp David has had devastating effects—on Israeli public opinion as well as on US foreign policy. That was clear enough a year ago; it has become far clearer since. Rectifying it does not mean, to quote Barak, engaging in “Palestinian propaganda.” Rather, it means taking a close look at what actually occurred.

### 1.

Barak’s central thesis is that the current Palestinian leadership wants “a Palestinian state in all of Palestine. What we see as self-evident, two states for two peoples, they reject.” Arafat, he concludes, seeks Israel’s

“demise.” Barak has made that claim repeatedly, both here and elsewhere, and indeed it forms the crux of his argument. His claim therefore should be taken up, issue by issue.

On the question of the boundaries of the future state, the Palestinian position, formally adopted as early as 1988 and frequently reiterated by Palestinian negotiators throughout the talks, was for a Palestinian state based on the June 4, 1967, borders, living alongside Israel. At Camp David (at which one of the present writers was a member of the US administration’s team), Arafat’s negotiators accepted the notion of Israeli annexation of West Bank territory to accommodate settlements, though they insisted on a one-for-one swap of land “of equal size and value.” The Palestinians argued that the annexed territory should neither affect the contiguity of their own land nor lead to the incorporation of Palestinians into Israel.

The ideas put forward by President Clinton at Camp David fell well short of those demands. In order to accommodate Israeli settlements, he proposed a deal by which Israel would annex 9 percent of the West Bank in exchange for turning over to the Palestinians parts of pre-1967 Israel equivalent to 1 percent of the West Bank. This proposal would have entailed the incorporation of tens of thousands of additional Palestinians into Israeli territory near the annexed settlements; and it would have meant that territory annexed by Israel would encroach deep inside the Palestinian state. In his December 23, 2000, proposals—called “parameters” by all parties—Clinton suggested an Israeli annexation of between 4 and 6 percent of the West Bank in exchange for a land swap of between 1 and 3 percent. The following month in Taba, the Palestinians put their own map on the table which showed roughly 3.1 percent of the West Bank under Israeli sovereignty, with an equivalent land swap in areas abutting the West Bank and Gaza.\*

On Jerusalem, the Palestinians accepted at Camp David the principle of Israeli sovereignty over the Wailing Wall, the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, and Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem—neighborhoods that were not part of Israel before the 1967 Six-Day War—though the Palestinians clung to the view that all of Arab East Jerusalem should be Palestinian.

In contrast to the issues of territory and Jerusalem, there is no Palestinian position on how the refugee question should be dealt with as a practical matter. Rather, the Palestinians presented a set of principles. First, they insisted on the need to recognize the refugees’ right of return, lest the agreement lose all legitimacy with the vast refugee constituency—roughly half the entire Palestinian population. Second, they acknowledged that Israel’s demographic interests had to be recognized and taken into account. Barak draws from this the conclusion that the refugees are the “main demographic-political tool for subverting the Jewish state.” The Palestinian leadership’s insistence on a right of return demonstrates, in his account, that their

conception of a two-state solution is one state for the Palestinians in Palestine and another in Israel. But the facts suggest that the Palestinians are trying (to date, unsuccessfully) to reconcile these two competing imperatives—the demographic imperative and the right of return. Indeed, in one of his last pre–Camp David meetings with Clinton, Arafat asked him to “give [him] a reasonable deal [on the refugee question] and then see how to present it as not betraying the right of return.”

Some of the Palestinian negotiators proposed annual caps on the number of returnees (though at numbers far higher than their Israeli counterparts could accept); others wanted to create incentives for refugees to settle elsewhere and disincentives for them to return to the 1948 land. But all acknowledged that there could not be an unlimited, “massive” return of Palestinian refugees to Israel. The suggestion made by some that the Camp David summit broke down over the Palestinians’ demand for a right of return simply is untrue: the issue was barely discussed between the two sides and President Clinton’s ideas mentioned it only in passing. (In an Op-Ed piece in *The New York Times* this February Arafat called for “creative solutions to the right of return while respecting Israel’s demographic concerns.”)

The Palestinians did insist that Israel recognize that it bore responsibility for creating the problem of the refugees. But it is ironic that Barak would choose to convey his categorical rejection of any such Israeli historical responsibility to Benny Morris, an Israeli historian called “revisionist” in large part for his account of the origins of the displacement of the Palestinians and for his conclusion that, while there were many reasons why the refugees left, Israeli military attacks and expulsions were the major ones.

The Palestinians can be criticized for not having presented detailed proposals at Camp David; but, as has been shown, it would be inaccurate to say they had no positions. It also is true that Barak broke a number of Israeli taboos and moved considerably from prior positions while the Palestinians believed they had made their historic concessions at Oslo, when they agreed to cede 78 percent of mandatory Palestine to Israel; they did not intend the negotiations to further whittle down what they already regarded as a compromise position. But neither the constancy of the Palestinians’ view nor the unprecedented and evolving nature of the Israelis’ ought to have any bearing on the question of whether the Palestinian leadership recognized Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state. It is the substance of the Palestinian positions that should count.

**T**hose Palestinian positions may well have been beyond what the Israeli people can accept, particularly on the refugee question. But that is no more the question than it is whether the Israeli position was beyond what the Palestinian people can accept. And it is not the question that Barak purports to address in his interview. The question

is whether, as Barak claims, the Palestinian position was tantamount to a denial of Israel's right to exist and to seeking its destruction. The facts do not validate that claim. True, the Palestinians rejected the version of the two-state solution that was put to them. But it could also be said that Israel rejected the unprecedented two-state solution put to them by the Palestinians from Camp David onward, including the following provisions: a state of Israel incorporating some land captured in 1967 and including a very large majority of its settlers; the largest Jewish Jerusalem in the city's history; preservation of Israel's demographic balance between Jews and Arabs; security guaranteed by a US-led international presence.

Barak's remarks about other Arab leaders are, in this regard, misplaced. Arafat did not reach out to the people of Israel in the way President Sadat did. But unlike Sadat, he agreed to cede parts of the territory that was lost in 1967—both in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The reference to President Assad—whose peace efforts are characterized as “genuine and sincere”—is particularly odd since Assad turned down precisely what Arafat was requesting: borders based on the lines of June 4, 1967, with one-for-one swaps.

Barak claims that “Israel is too strong at the moment to defeat, so [the Palestinians] formally recognize it. But their game plan is to establish a Palestinian state while always leaving an opening for further ‘legitimate’ demands down the road.” But here Barak contradicts himself. For if that were the case, the logical course of action for Arafat would have been to accept Clinton's proposals at Camp David, and even more so on December 23. He would then have had over 90 percent of the land and much of East Jerusalem, while awaiting, as Barak would have it, the opportunity to violate the agreement and stake out a claim for more. Whatever else one may think of Arafat's behavior throughout the talks, it clearly offers little to substantiate Barak's theory.

## 2.

In his account of why the negotiations failed, Barak focuses only on the Palestinians' deficiencies, and dismisses as trivial sideshows several major political decisions that are crucial to the understanding of that failure. When he took office he chose to renegotiate the agreement on withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank signed by Benjamin Netanyahu rather than implement it. He continued and even intensified construction of settlements. He delayed talks on the Palestinian track while he concentrated on Syria. He did not release Palestinian prisoners detained for acts committed prior to the signing of the Oslo agreement. He failed to carry out his commitments to implement the third territorial redeployment of Israeli troops and the transfer of the three Jerusalem villages.

Barak is equally dismissive of the importance of his holding a substantive meeting with Arafat at Camp David—though here one cannot help but be struck by the contradiction between Barak’s justification for that decision (namely that “the right time for a meeting between us was when things were ready for a decision by the leaders”) and his conviction that a leaders’ summit was necessary. If he felt things were not ready for a decision by the leaders meeting together, why insist on convening a leaders’ summit in the first place?

More broadly, from a Palestinian perspective, the issues concerning the timing of the talks were dealt with in ways that were both damaging and exasperating. The Palestinian leaders had called for negotiations on a comprehensive settlement between the two sides as early as the fall of 1999. They had asked for an initial round of secret talks between Israelis and Palestinians who were not officials in order to better prepare the ground. They had argued against holding the Camp David summit at the time proposed, claiming it was premature and would not lead to an agreement in view of the gaps between the two sides. They later asked for a series of summit meetings following Camp David so as to continue the talks. Each of their requests was denied.

In the fall of 1999, Barak was not ready for talks with the Palestinians and chose to focus on Syria. He had no interest in discussions between nonofficials. When, by the summer of 2000, he finally was ready (the negotiations with Syria having failed), he insisted on going to Camp David without delay. And at Camp David he reacted angrily to any suggestion of holding further summit meetings. Barak, today, dismisses those Palestinian requests as mere pretexts and excuses. But it is not clear why they should be taken any less seriously than the ones he made, and on which he prevailed.

All these external political events surrounding the negotiations, in fact, had critical implications for the negotiations themselves. The US administration felt so at the time, seeking on countless occasions before, during, and after the Camp David meetings to convince Barak to change his approach, precisely because the administration feared his tactics would harm the prospects for a deal. As has since become evident, the mood among critical Palestinian constituencies had turned decidedly sour—a result of continued settlement construction, repeated territorial closings that barred Palestinians from working in Israel, and their humiliation and harassment at checkpoints. Confidence in the possibility of a fair negotiated settlement was badly shaken. Israeli actions that strengthened those trends further narrowed the Palestinian leaders’ room to maneuver and accentuated the sense of paralysis among them.

Barak’s failure to recognize this is peculiar coming from a leader who was so sensitive to the role of Israeli public opinion. As so many examples from both the Syrian and Palestinian tracks illustrate, he

was convinced that poor management of domestic public opinion could scuttle the chances for a deal. In his approach to the Israeli–Syrian negotiations, he went so far as to counsel Clinton against moving too quickly toward agreement during the Sheperdstown summit between the US, Israel, and Syria in January 2000, arguing that prolonged talks were required to show the Israeli public that he had put up a tough fight. In December, he had invoked the harsh statement of the Syrian foreign minister on the White House lawn as a reason why he could not show flexibility in their subsequent discussions at Blair House, arguing that the Israeli public would feel he had displayed weakness. He repeatedly insisted on (but rarely obtained) Syrian confidence-building measures in advance of the negotiations to help him sell his proposals back home.

**W**hen dealing with the Palestinians, likewise, Barak evidently felt the pressures of Israeli public opinion. He adamantly refused to discuss the issue of Jerusalem prior to the Camp David summit, claiming that to do so would have “torpedoed” the prospects for success. Settlement activity, to which both the Palestinians and the US objected, nonetheless proceeded at an extraordinary pace—faster than during Netanyahu’s tenure, with over 22,000 more settlers. This was done, as Barak concedes in his interview, in order to “mollify the Israeli right which he needed quiescent as he pushed forward toward peace.”

In short, Barak understood all too well how political developments surrounding the negotiations could affect Israeli public opinion and, therefore, his own ability to make agreements. Yet he showed no such comprehension when it came to the possible effects of his policies on Arafat’s own flexibility and capacity to make compromises. That Arafat was unable either to obtain a settlement freeze or to get Israel to carry out its prior commitments Barak views as inconsequential. In reality, the cards Barak was saving to increase his room to maneuver during the negotiations were precisely those the Palestinians needed to expand their own room to maneuver. Ultimately, the Palestinian team that went to Camp David was suspected by many Palestinians and other Arabs of selling out—incapable of standing up to Israeli or American pressure.

Barak’s apparent insensitivity to how his statements might affect the other side is revealed in his interview with Benny Morris. He characterizes Palestinian refugees as “salmons” whose yearning to return to their land somehow is supposed to fade away in roughly eighty years in a manner that the Jewish people’s never did, even after two thousand years. When he denounces the idea that Israel be a “state for all its citizens” he does not seem to realize he risks alienating its many Arab citizens. Most troubling of all is his description of Arabs as people who “don’t suffer from the problem of telling lies that exists in Judeo-Christian culture. Truth is seen as an irrelevant category.” It is hard to know what to make of this

disparaging judgment of an entire people. In the history of this particular conflict, neither Palestinians nor Israelis have a monopoly on unkept commitments or promises.

### 3.

By now, some of those who said that the Palestinians' rejection of the American proposals at Camp David was definitive proof of their inability to make peace have shifted their argument. Instead, they concentrate on President Clinton's proposals of December 23, 2000, along with the Israeli–Palestinian talks that took place at Taba, in January 2001, which Barak takes the so-called “revisionists” to task for ignoring.

First, the facts. There is little doubt, as we described in our earlier article for *The New York Review of Books*, that the ideas put forward by President Clinton in December 2000 were a significant step in the direction of the Palestinians' position. It is also beyond dispute that while the Israeli cabinet accepted Clinton's “parameters,” Arafat took his time, waiting ten days before offering his response—a costly delay considering the fact that only thirty days remained in Clinton's presidency.

When he finally met with Clinton, on January 2, 2001, Arafat explained that he accepted the President's ideas with reservations and that Clinton could tell Barak that “[I] accepted your parameters and have some views I must express. At the same time, we know Israelis have views we must respect.” His attitude, basically, was that the parameters contained interesting elements that should guide but not bind the negotiators. It is clearly an overstatement to claim that Arafat rejected “every one” of the President's ideas, and it certainly is not the message Clinton delivered to Barak.

On a more specific point, Arafat did not reject Israeli sovereignty over the Wailing Wall but over the much larger Western Wall (of which it is a part), which encroaches on the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. A few days later, Barak presented his own reservations about Clinton's proposals in a private communication.

Again, however, it is the conclusion Barak draws from this episode that is questionable. The Palestinians undoubtedly were not satisfied with Clinton's parameters, which they wanted to renegotiate. They were not responding with the same sense of urgency as the Americans or as Barak, who was facing elections and knew the fate of the peace process could decide them. But unlike what had happened at Camp David, there was no Palestinian rejection. On the contrary, the two sides, which had engaged in secret meetings during the autumn, agreed to continue talks at Taba. Indeed, the intensive talks that subsequently took place there ended not for lack of an agreement but

for lack of time in view of the impending Israeli elections. In January Prime Minister Barak campaigned seeking a mandate to continue those talks. He went so far as to authorize his delegation at Taba to issue a joint statement with the Palestinians asserting that

the two sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections.

If we assume that Barak meant what the Taba statement said, that statement simply cannot be reconciled with his current assertion that the Palestinians are out to achieve the destruction of Israel. That statement also contradicts the constantly made claim that Arafat simply rejected a historic chance to negotiate a settlement.

#### 4.

The failure at Camp David and the start of the second Palestinian intifada are directly linked in accounts by Barak and others to argue that Arafat's response to the unprecedented offers was to scuttle negotiations and seek to achieve his goals through terror.

Clearly, the Palestinian Authority did not do what it could to stop the uprising, which some of its leaders felt might well serve its interests. It is equally true that Palestinians initiated many acts of violence. Later on, as the conflict continued and intensified, cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and militant groups became much closer, and Palestinians engaged in repeated attacks with the clear and deeply deplorable intent of killing as many Israeli civilians as possible. But the charges against Arafat make another claim as well. He is said to have unleashed a wave of terrorist violence in the aftermath of Camp David as part of a grand scheme to pressure Israel; and Israel, it is said, had no choice but to act precisely as it did in response to a war initiated by others against its will. This assessment cannot be squared with the facts stated in the Mitchell report, which describes an uprising that began as a series of confrontations between largely unarmed Palestinians and armed Israeli security forces that resorted to excessive and deadly use of force.

Barak entirely rejects the notion that Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif on September 28, 2000, played any part in setting off the subsequent clashes. To support his case, he asserts that the visit was coordinated with Palestinian security officials. But that is hardly the point. The point is that when we consider the context in which the visit was taking place—the intense focus on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif at Camp David and the general climate among Palestinians—its impact was predictable. As Dennis Ross, Clinton's special Middle East envoy, said: "I can think of a lot of bad ideas, but I can't think of a worse one."



The Mitchell report says:

On the following day, in the same place, a large number of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators and a large Israeli police contingent confronted each other. According to the US Department of State, “Palestinians held large demonstrations and threw stones in the vicinity of the Western Wall. Police used rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition to disperse the demonstrators, killing 4 persons and injuring about 200.” According to the Government of Israel, 14 Israeli policemen were injured.

From then on, the numbers of Palestinian deaths rose swiftly: twelve on September 30, twelve again on October 1, seventeen on October 2 (including seven Israeli Arabs), four on October 3, and twelve (including one Israeli Arab) on October 4. By the end of the first week, over sixty Palestinians had been killed (including nine Israeli Arabs). During that same time period, five Israelis were killed by Palestinians.

According to the Mitchell report, for the first three months of the intifada, “most incidents did not involve Palestinian use of firearms and explosives.” The report quotes the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem as finding that “73 percent of the incidents [from September 29 to December 2, 2000] did not include Palestinian gunfire. Despite this, it was in these incidents that most of the Palestinians [were] killed and wounded.” Numerous other organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights, criticized the excessive use of force by the Israel Defense Forces, often against unarmed Palestinians.

Barak suggests that Arafat had planned as his response to the Camp David summit a campaign of violent terror. That is a curious assertion in view of the fact that the Palestinians had argued that the parties were not ready for a summit and that Camp David should be understood as merely the first of a series of meetings. In contrast, as he knows well, Barak conceived of Camp David as a make-it-or-break-it summit. Defining the summit as a test of Arafat’s true intentions, he early made clear that he foresaw only two possible outcomes: a full-scale agreement on the “framework” of a settlement, or a full-scale confrontation.

Some things appear beyond dispute. The mood on the Palestinian street had reached the boiling point, as the May 2000 violence had shown and as both American and Israeli official reports had confirmed. Sharon’s visit on the Haram was both a pretext and a provocation, a case of the wrong person being at the wrong place at the wrong time. A large number of Palestinians had lost patience with the peace process and felt humiliated by their experience with the settlements and at checkpoints; and many were impressed by the success of Hezbollah in Lebanon, where Israel was believed to have decided to withdraw in the face of armed resistance.

At a tactical level, the Palestinians may have seen some advantage to a short-lived confrontation to show the Israelis they could not be taken for granted. The Israeli security forces, for their part, were still affected by the bloody experiences of September 1996 and of May 2000, during which Palestinian policemen confronted Israelis. They were determined to stop any uprising at the outset, using far greater force to subdue the enemy. Hence the Israeli decision to use lethal weapons, and hence the very heavy (and almost entirely Palestinian) toll of death and grave injury in the early days of the intifada. That, in turn, made it, if not impossible, at least very difficult for the Palestinian leadership to bring things under control; rather, it increased pressure to respond in kind. Some among the Palestinian leaders may have hoped that the uprising would last a few days. The Israelis expected their strong reaction to stop it in its tracks. Instead, in this tragic game, in which both sides were reading from different scripts, the combination of the two may have led to an outcome that neither ever intended.

Again, it is worth recalling the Mitchell report:

The Sharon visit did not cause the “Al-Aqsa Intifada.” But it was poorly timed and the provocative effect should have been foreseen; indeed it was foreseen by those who urged that the visit be prohibited. More significant were the events that followed: the decision of the Israeli police on September 29 to use lethal means against the Palestinian demonstrators; and the subsequent failure...of either party to exercise restraint.

The report concluded: “We have no basis on which to conclude that there was a deliberate plan by the PA to initiate a campaign of violence at the first opportunity.”

## 5.

Barak’s broad endorsement of Israel’s current military campaign is cause for perhaps the greatest dismay. Of course Israel must deal with breaches of its security and look after its people’s safety. Israel cannot be expected to sit idly by as Palestinians target civilians and engage in suicide attacks. The question, however, is not whether Israel should respond, but how. One might have hoped for a wise response—one that combined strong security measures with a genuine attempt to end the conflict—and that Ariel Sharon would have imitated his predecessor in continuing the political talks. Short of that, one might have hoped for a response that was driven principally, and understandably, by security concerns. But what has occurred can be deemed neither wise nor understandable. The wanton destruction on the West Bank of basic infrastructure, of civilian ministries, of equipment and documents, including school records, that have no security value—these are acts of revenge having little to do with

security and everything to do with humiliating and seeking to break the will of the Palestinian people and undoing its capacity for self-governance.

The recent military action is directly related to the question of what can now be done. Barak appears to have given up on the current Palestinian leadership, placing his hopes in the next generation—a generation that has not lived through the catastrophe, or *nakba*, of 1948. But what of the catastrophe of 2002? Is there any reason to believe that today's children will grow up any less hardened and vengeful after the indiscriminate attacks of the past few months?

Barak also appears to have given up on what was his most important intuition—that the time for incremental or partial moves was over, and that the parties had to move toward a comprehensive and final settlement. While in office, he frequently made the point that Israel could not afford to make tangible concessions until it knew where the process was headed. Yet the unilateral withdrawal he now has in mind would have Israel—in the absence of any agreement or reciprocal concession—withdraw from Gaza and some 75 percent of the West Bank. It would concentrate the struggle on the remaining 25 percent and on prevailing on outstanding issues, such as Jerusalem and the refugees. Worst of all, it would embolden those Palestinians who are ready to subscribe to the Hezbollah precedent and would be quick to conclude that Israel, having twice withdrawn under fire, would continue to do so.

## 6.

Ehud Barak came into office vowing to leave no possibility unexplored in the quest for peace and departed from office seeking a renewed mandate to complete the talks begun at Taba. Since he left, he has in effect branded the Taba discussions as a sham and hinted broadly that his goal throughout was to “unmask” Arafat and prove him an unworthy partner for peace. As one reads his interview with Benny Morris, it is hard to tell which is the true Barak. Certainly, his wholesale indictment of the Palestinian leaders, his unqualified assertion that they seek the end of Israel, his pejorative reflections on Arab culture, and his support of Sharon's methods are at odds with the goals he once professed.

The interpretation of what happened before, during, and after Camp David—and why—is far too important and has shown itself to have far too many implications to allow it to become subject to political caricature or posturing by either side. The story of Barak is of a man with a judicious insight—the need to aim for a comprehensive settlement—that tragically was not realized. The Camp David process was the victim of failings on the Palestinian side; but it was also, and importantly, the victim of failings on Israel's (and the United States')

part as well. By refusing to recognize this, Barak continues to obscure the debate and elude fundamental questions about where the quest for peace ought to go now.

One of those questions is whether there is not, in fact, a deal that would be acceptable to both sides, respectful of their core interests, and achievable through far greater involvement (and pressure) by the international community. Such a deal, we suggest, would include a sovereign, nonmilitarized Palestinian state with borders based on the 1967 lines, with an equal exchange of land to accommodate demographic realities, and with contiguous territory on the West Bank. Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem would be the capital of Israel and Arab neighborhoods would be the capital of Palestine. Palestinians would rule over the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount), Israeli would rule over the Kotel (Wailing Wall), with strict, internationally backed guarantees regarding excavation. A strong international force could provide security and monitor implementation of the agreement. A solution to the problem of the refugees would recognize their desire to return while preserving Israel's demographic balance—for example by allowing unrestricted return to that part of 1948 land that would then be included in the land swap and fall under Palestinian sovereignty.

Barak closes his interview with the thought that Israel will remain a strong, prosperous, and Jewish state in the next century. In order to achieve that goal, there are far better and more useful things that Barak could do than the self-justifying attempt to blame Arafat and his associates for all that has gone awry.

*—Mr. Barak and Mr. Morris will reply in the next issue of The New York Review, and Mr. Malley and Mr. Agha will then reply in turn.*

\* For further details, see our article "[Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors](#)," *The New York Review*, August 9, 2001. ↵

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