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Israel is fighting two wars, one on the battlefield, one in public opinion. On the battlefield, Israel has demonstrated amazing strength, courage, and brilliance. The IDF forces have accomplished remarkable victories.

In the war for pubic opinion, Israel is doing very badly. Many people and nations, even those supportive of Israel, cringe at the ongoing devastation in Gaza and the widespread suffering of its residents. Yes, much of the media coverage is slanted against Israel; yes, enemies of Israel exaggerate the extent of famine and death among Gazans. But the fact remains that the situation in Gaza is very bad. For Israel, Gaza is moral quicksand.

When Israel occupies the moral high ground, it lives up to the ideal of being a “light unto the nations.” When Israel forfeits the moral high ground, it becomes the lightning rod of the nations. It opens itself to criticism, malevolence, and hostility.

As Jews who have suffered first hand from expulsions, calls for the expulsion of other peoples from their lands should be a moral impossibility. As Jews who have known the horrors of concentration camps, it should not even be vaguely possible for anyone—let alone a former Prime Minister of Israel—to compare the situation in Gaza as in any way resembling concentration camps.

Surely, Israel faces serious threats in Gaza but the threats are not only military; they are threats to our moral stature. Maintaining the moral high ground is not for the sake of public relations; it is for the sake of Israel’s own self-respect and self-understanding. Although Israel takes justifiable pride in the high moral standards of its military, it is essential to constantly evaluate and re-evaluate military and political strategies.

The world—including (and especially) Israel’s friends—need to hear Israel’s vision for the future. Will Israel offer a meaningful peace plan in spite of all the obstacles and negatives in the way? Will Israel extricate itself from the Gaza quicksand and offer a positive road forward for Israelis and Palestinians? Will Israeli leaders and spokespeople speak more of righteousness and justice, and less about military concerns?

The prophet Isaiah taught (1:27): “Zion will be redeemed with justice and those that return to her with righteousness.” These were wise words many centuries ago; they are wise words today.