

Greater Toronto Area

If peace, rather than merely an end to the conflict, is ever to emerge between Israelis and Palestinians, all the educational instruments – broadly defined to include religious, cultural, political, media, labour, military, medical institutions and, of course, schools – will have to be mobilized to inculcate into Palestinian society values of tolerance and acceptance toward Jews and their right to live in Israel.

Even if the massive educational effort were to begin this month, it would take years, indeed even decades, to plant the seeds and sow the harvest of bona fide feelings of neighbourliness toward Israelis.

But such a harvest seems far away. For there is scant evidence that any seeds are being planted.

Even Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, in whom Israel and the European Union have placed so much hope, is equivocal and ambivalent toward the Israelis.

It is true that he telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to convey his best wishes to Sharon after the Israeli leader suffered a mild stroke.

But it is also true that he has never condemned Palestinian violence as unjustified or wrong or immoral or otherwise odious in its own right. Rather, he has always criticized the violence as being inimical to Palestinian interests. Indeed last week after the barrage of Qassam rockets from the Gaza Strip toward Ashkelon, those were his precise words. He condemned the rockets as being “against Palestinian interests.”

The “ordinary” Palestinian would undoubtedly fully understand the intended nuanced meaning of so vacuous a condemnation of violence. With no example of positive attitudinal change toward the Israelis emanating from the highest elected political office, is it any wonder, then, that there is so little change in the vast mainstream of Palestinian society?

And we have not even taken into

Can this message bring peace?

account the unalterably murderous attitude toward Israel and its Jews by the fundamentalist Islamic groups within that society.

Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook of *Palestinian Media Watch*, based in Jerusalem, carefully monitor the content of newspaper, radio and television programming in the media outlets under Palestinian auspices. Last week, they reported on the broadcast of a dismaying

message toward Jews in a Palestinian television program about the city of Jaffa that was telecast on Dec. 20.

“It is time for you [Israelis] to be gone. Live wherever you like, but don’t live among us. It is time for you to be gone. Die wherever you like, but don’t die among us. We have the past here. We have the present, the present and the future. So leave our country, our land, our sea, our wheat, our salt, our wounds. Everything. And leave the memories.”

Marcus and Crook provided the context of the program’s message. “These words of hate are the parting moments of yet another program on Palestinian Authority television calling for the destruction of Israel. The words, calling for the expulsion of every last Israeli from Israel, are spoken while the screen is showing Jaffa-Tel Aviv, Israelis and Israeli flags. Official PA TV has aired this twice in recent months.”

The message unobtrusively echoes the views of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who believes with all his heart that the Jews do not belong in the Middle East. Sadly, the Palestinian and Iranian messages are the same.

Only the Palestinians can reform their

own society. It is wrong, if not also disingenuous, to suggest that the Israelis can bring about that change. But where are the signs that the majority of Palestinians even want to?

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Anyone still looking for a calendar for the new year might consider acquiring *A Kindness a Day 2006 Calendar: 365 Ways to Make the World a Better Place*.

It is both functional and inspiring.

Published by the New-York based, non-profit organization Areyvut, the calendar comes in a 4.5-by-5.5 inch, flip-top, one-day-per-page format.

Each day is noted in both the Gregorian and Hebrew calendars and the entry in the calendar provides a suggested act of kindness for that day, as well as a reference from classic Jewish sources.

The closest approximation in

English for the meaning of the Hebrew word *areyvut* in this context is mutual responsibility.

Some readers might be familiar with the rule of life propounded by our ancient sages, “*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*,” which means “All the people of Israel are responsible for each other.”

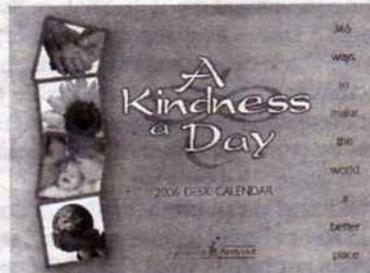
Established in 2002, Areyvut uses the very meaning of its name as its mission statement. It reaches out to Jewish day schools, congregations and communities regardless of affiliation.

The calendar it has produced is handy and pleasant, and is quite possibly a modest, uncomplicated route to improving oneself along with the world. It is available through Amazon.com, JudaicaPress.com, Areyvut.org and local Jewish book and gift stores.

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From the editor's desk



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