

Israel's "Groundhog Day"

By [Steven Shanok](#)

What would you do **if you were stuck in one place, everything is the same, and nothing you did mattered ?**" This is the lament of TV weatherman Phil (played by actor Bill Murray) in the modern classic movie [Groundhog Day](#).

Resentful over his yearly assignment of having to cover the Groundhog Day ceremonies in the small town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, TV **Phil is irritable and uncooperative with his news team**, and increasingly sarcastic in his reporting. His behavior towards the local town people is condescending and dismissive. **He just wants to finish and get out** . But fate intervenes, as a snowstorm closes the road back to Pittsburgh and Phil must stay the night. When he awakes in the morning, it is still February 2, **Groundhog Day, all over again, and again, and again**. He is reliving the same day over and over and tries to tell his TV producer and anyone else who will listen that he has been there and done that, but **they think he's loony and ignore his complaints**.

The Israeli people are experiencing the same nightmarish time warp as TV Phil. Only the stakes are much higher, and the time warp far longer - the Israelis are reliving not the same day but **the same decades over and over**. And the reliving is not just a singular experience; **the same nightmare is inherited from father and mother to son and daughter** - *dor l'dor*, generation to generation.

Thus, in 1947, some 25 years after Winston Churchill cut away 80% of the Jewish Mandated Palestine gave it to the ousted (Arabian) King Abdullah who renamed it Transjordan, the United Nations Partition Plan confiscated half of the remaining 20% of the land in an effort to appease the Arabs and gain their agreement to live in peace with a Jewish State. Notwithstanding that the **Arabs would now possess 90% of the original mandated land**, a reluctant **David Ben-Gurion**, on behalf of the Jewish population, **accepted the**

give away. The die was cast: land for peace; and Arab rejection. Day one of "Groundhog Day."

Awaken to July 1967. Israel, acting in self-defense from an aggressive war launched in part from the 10% of land previously extorted from the Jews and given to the Arabs (so-called "land for peace" became land for war), repatriated Judea, Samaria and Gaza. As if reliving the era of the imposed Partition Plan, Israeli citizens awoke to the nightmare of Israel Defense Minister Moshe Dayan unilaterally returning the keys of the Temple Mount to the Moslem *Waqf*, and their Labor Party-led government pronouncing that it was willingly awaiting a "phone call" from the Arabs so that it could voluntarily give them the recently repatriated land . The Arabs did respond to the Labor Party's gift: Arab leaders meeting in Khartoum in November 1967 adopted a formula of three noes: "No peace with Israel, no negotiation with Israel, no recognition of Israel." Once again: land offered for peace, and Arab rejection. Day two of "Groundhog Day."

Wake to 1968. The United States elects Richard Nixon to his first term as President. Nixon appoints William Rogers as Secretary of State, who gives birth to the "Rogers Plan," demanding a unilateral withdrawal by Israel to the pre-1967 borders without any corresponding Arab commitment to the peace and security of Israel . But the Arabs cannot stomach being in the same room with an Israeli to even accept Roger's gift of Israeli land - a real deal killer! Day three of "Groundhog Day."

Toss and turn and wake to post-Yom Kippur, 1973 . A bloodied but victorious Israel rouses itself only to learn of the "Kissinger Disengagement Plan," in which the American Secretary of State declared that the Israelis should return a "few lousy kilometers," including the conquered town of Kuneitra on the Golan Heights to Syria, notwithstanding its unprovoked sneak attack on Israel. This "roadmap" would display Israel's good intentions in allowing Syrian civilians to return to their homes, and might encourage the

Palestinian Arabs to take note and then accept land for peace . Israel relented; Syria was allowed to reoccupy Kuneitra on condition that it normalize the town with civilian residents, not soldiers. They never have to this day . The message of Kuneitra is not lost on the Palestinian Arabs: take what you can get, and never give what you promised in return. Day four of "Groundhog Day."

Jump to 1979 and Camp David I. For the first time, Israel is governed by a non-Labor Party, the Likud. No matter - the Israelis are destined to relive the same day once again. President **Carter** obtains Prime **Minister Begin's commitment for "autonomy" for the Palestinian Arabs and a freeze on Israeli "settlements." Land for Peace. Or, as Israelis have already learned , Land for No Peace. Day five of "Groundhog Day."**

Skip to 1991. The Bush/Baker Madrid Conference, foisted on Israel after the First Gulf War , with Prime Minister **Shamir forced to attend under threat of loss of loan guarantees** for the resettlement of waves of Russian immigrants. The Conference is an open and unsubtle gift paid with Israeli coinage to the Palestinian Arabs who were resentful over the defeat of their benefactor Saddam Hussein in the first Persian Gulf War. **Secretary of State James Baker proposes** a unique dual formula to solve the Arab-Israeli problem: **freeze all Jewish settlement activity, and land for peace. Day six of "Groundhog Day."**

Awake in **1993**, but Israel finds itself back to square one. The Labor Party and Yitzchak Rabin are again in control. The **Oslo Accords** and the American movie "Groundhog Day" appear in tandem (perhaps not coincidentally, as noted by columnist Sarah Honig in her *Jerusalem Post* article of July 18, 2003). The former is far more comical than the latter, with Arafat's unconditional promise to forever reject violence as a solution to the dispute. Day seven of "Groundhog Day."

Slumber fitfully to **1998** and awaken to an Israel with **Prime Minister Netanyahu but without *Shechem* (Nablus) and *Hevron* (Hebron), given by him as succor to Arafat** for an end to the very Arab violence previously renounced but actively supported. The comedy continues, as does reliving the same day by another name: the **Wye River Memorandum. Day eight of "Groundhog Day."**

Jarred awake again by **Camp David 2000**, an eruption known as **Ehud Barak** gives forth **unimagined concessions** overflowing like lava from an active volcano in consideration for which Arafat is once again importuned to eschew violence. But the only ones burned are the Israelis: **the Arab response causes 781 killed, 5,471 injured, and 17,633 attacks between September 2000 through May 28, 2003 . Day nine of "Groundhog Day."**

Another dawn, another plan, **2002-2003, the "Road Map."** The Palestinian Arabs are the invited passengers in the stretch limousine driven by the "Quartet" (the European Union, Russia, the United Nations, and the United States) to a destination known as a "**Palestinian State .**" **They will arrive in 2005.** They **need only to dismantle their terrorist organizations, arrest the murderers, and collect their weapons. PA Prime Minister Abbas refuses** , citing the need to avoid a civil war (which is exactly what needs to be fought!). The road trip continues nevertheless. It is abundantly clear to even those who sleep that there is **more profit to be made in violation of agreements than in compliance.**
Day 10 of "Groundhog Day."

June 29, 2003, the rooster crows ***hudna* , a temporary cease fire declared by the terrorist organizations. Writing a script only Joseph Heller (author of *Catch 22*) could love, Prime Minister Sharon**, in an effort to prop up Abbas, **agrees to release the very type of prisoners from Israeli jails that Abbas is required to arrest and imprison under the terms of the "Road Map."** And while Sharon continued to relinquish control of land in Judea and Samaria to the Arabs as good will gestures, there were **180 terrorist attacks during the self-declared "cease fire,"** resulting in the deaths of 31 Israelis and the wounding of

hundreds of others. **Land for Pieces of Israelis. Day 11 of "Groundhog Day."**

December 2003, The Herzliya Conference. The denizens' troubled dozing is disrupted by the clamorous sounds of "**dismantling and disengaging.**"

Unfortunately, these are not mere hallucinations. They are the stark reality of **the "Unilateral Disengagement"** plan of Prime Minister Sharon. Thus, in view of the Arab failure to fulfill even one condition of their past agreements, **Sharon will show them. He will retreat from Gaza**, and in its wake destroy every Jewish home, and expel every Jewish person - **unconditionally**. And if that is not enough, he will throw out more Jews and lay waste to a few more towns in Judea and Samaria as well. So take that! **Land for Nothing! Day 12 of "Groundhog Day."**

Is the Jewish State capable of ending its time warp? In the fictional movie "Groundhog Day," TV Phil slowly began to realize that it was his own repeated misbehavior that was denying him his future.

His capacity to reevaluate and change his conduct, goals and values uplifted him over and out of the time warp and delivered him to his ultimate redemption. Likewise, **it is Israel's repeated acceptance of faulty premises which doom it to repeatedly travel a circular road on which the Palestinian Arabs can drive off at their whim (for acts of violence) and then get right back on at the same point**, never having been penalized even the loss of one kilometer for their reckless driving. **How long is any civilized society expected to accommodate such conduct?**

Israel must finally acknowledge **the actual Arab motivation in its war against Israel**. It is not Arab despair over a poor economy, uneducated youth, or lack of self-determination. **The Palestinian Arab economy was flourishing between 1993 and 2000 until Arafat began his latest war against the Jews.** Furthermore, data shows that 38 percent of the suicide bombers had university educations, and 47 percent had high school diplomas. Most

importantly, the Arabs never had national aspirations before the coming of Zionism. And thereafter, the national Arab movement never focused its aims at a state within Israel, but rather on eliminating the State of Israel itself. The Arabs could have had their state within Israel in 1947 but refused; and from 1948 to 1967, Palestinian Arab nationalism vanished when the territories were in the hands of Jordan and Egypt. In 2000, Palestinian Arab nationalism could have been satisfied with Barak's willingness to concede virtually all of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. But it is not what they want.

None other than **British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin** , not exactly known for his affection for the Jews, **stated to the British Parliament in 1947:**

To the Jews, the essential point of principle is the creation of a sovereign Jewish State. To the Arabs , the essential point of principle is to resist to the last the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in any part of Palestine.

Arab motivation is defined by its negative nature and is based upon a simple premise: the elimination of Jewish sovereignty over any part of Israel. Nothing else will satisfy. And as long as Israeli political leaders fail to admit this unimpeachable fact, and continue to give credibility to the same failed "plan," albeit wrapped in new clothes with a different name, Israel will be shackled to the interminable misery of everyday as "Groundhog Day."