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## We are big boys

By [Uzi Benziman](#)

Once, when a small child had trouble separating from his parents, they would point out the window behind him and say: "Look at the pretty bird." Then, when he had looked away, they would quickly slip off and leave him to the babysitter's care. Today, now that understanding of the needs of young children has improved, more enlightened methods of coping with fears of abandonment are the norm. Today, people understand that hocus-pocus, which is based on deception, is ineffective. It does not inoculate the child against the fear of disengaging from his parents; it merely teaches him not to trust them in other circumstances as well.

Successive Israeli leaders have treated its citizens as foolish children: They would say one thing and do the opposite. Menachem Begin promised to settle Ne'ot Sinai, but returned from Camp David having conceded the entire peninsula. Yitzhak Rabin declared that he would never talk with the PLO, but signed the Oslo Accord. Ehud Barak swore fealty to the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem, but then demonstrated willingness to give them up. Ariel Sharon said that Netzarim's fate was the same as that of Tel Aviv, but led the state to abandon the Gaza Strip.

Ehud Olmert is following in his predecessors' footsteps: On the very day that he declared (at the AIPAC convention) that Israel under his leadership would complete the establishment of a Palestinian state with real territorial contiguity, he drafted a memorandum of understanding with Rabbi Yoel Bin Nun in which he promised to annex "the main settlement blocs: the Etzion bloc, the Jerusalem envelope bloc, the Ariel bloc, and vitally important security zones," and even cited the "security importance of the Jordan Valley." So what remains for a Palestinian state?

Olmert apparently needs a reminder: Israel has grown up. It no longer needs trickery in order to separate from the territories. It is ready for this. Begin is remembered with admiration first and foremost because of the peace agreement he signed with Egypt. Rabin earned a name in Israel's history books thanks to the peace agreement with Jordan and the mutual recognition of the PLO.

Even Barak, who was not an outstanding prime minister, has the withdrawal from Lebanon to his credit. And as for Sharon, the historic disengagement from Gaza will obscure the notoriety that he had previously earned.

The Israeli public accepted these moves, including the territorial price they entailed, with sympathy and understanding. There have always been people who feared the withdrawals, but the results speak for themselves: The majority of the public welcomed them. Thus today, when Olmert is seeking the voters' trust, he would do better to learn the lessons of the past: Every time Israeli citizens were offered any hope in the form of withdrawals that promised either peace, a reduction of friction with the enemy or a reduction in the mutual blood-letting, they voted in favor.

Moreover, Kadima was established in order to continue the process that began with the disengagement from Gaza. The party is identified with the goal of getting rid of most of the West Bank, whether via negotiations or unilaterally. And by dint of this goal, it has earned the status of the leading party. So why blur its goals and mislead the public?

Over the last few days, Olmert has seemed to be feeling pressured by the Likud's attacks and the erosion in the polls and desperate to appeal to everyone. But that will not work: The voters know how to distinguish between truth and bluff.

Unless, of course, Kadima's leaders (like the leaders of the rightist parties) are unable to discern what any child can see: Israel must give up the West Bank, and none of the desperate ideas for evading this necessity (annexing large parts of it, distinguishing between the evacuation of settled territory and the evacuation of security areas, expanding the area encompassed by the fence) will help. We do not need the bird at the window in order to face reality.

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