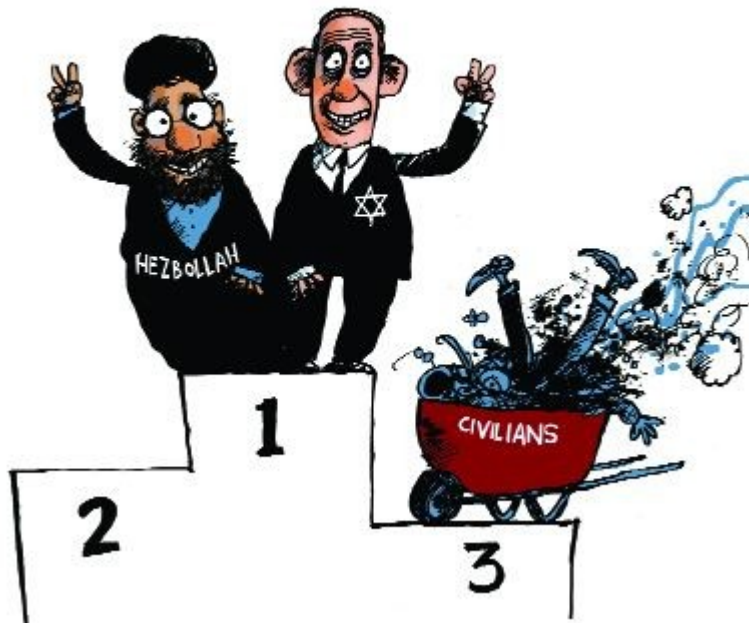


# Century Marks

Century Marks in the [September 5, 2006](#) issue



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**Let them make lentil soup:** Charities prefer that people send money rather than goods, because the money can go toward things most needed, whereas goods need to be sorted and shipped—often long distances. However, American Muslims are reluctant to write checks toward relief efforts in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries out of fear that their names will end up in a government terrorist watch. “If you send lentils,” says Ibrahim Hooper of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, “at least no one can accuse you of supporting terrorism.” The Arab American Institute has petitioned the U.S. government to publish a list of legitimate charities, but an official says that the government won’t do that lest it appear to play favorites. Besides, it can never guarantee that a charity will remain clean ( *Washington Post*, August 9).

**Fair and balanced?** Two analysts in the UK *Independent* (August 15) argue that the American media left little doubt as to who the good guys were in the recent war

between Israel and Hezbollah. Israel was portrayed as the aggrieved victim, Hezbollah as “an incarnation of the same evil responsible for bringing down the World Trade Center, a heartless and faceless organization whose destruction is so important it can justify all the damage Israel is inflicting on Lebanon and its civilians.” The cable news networks were especially guilty of this one-sided coverage—notably Fox News, which documented almost every rocket attack by Hezbollah, with little or no interest in what was happening on the other side. Fox News also gave airtime to Michael D. Evans, an apocalyptic end-times interpreter of Middle East events who has no expertise in the politics of the region.

**What culture wars?** Despite talk of culture wars, the American people aren’t polarized into liberal and conservative camps, according to research done by the Pew Research Center in mid-July. Americans tend to be conservative in opposing gay marriage and adoption, liberal in supporting embryonic stem cell research, and a little of both on the issue of abortion, the researchers discovered. While there has been little change in recent years in views on same-sex marriage and abortion, there are signs of a move in the liberal direction on homosexuality: Americans now support civil unions for homosexual couples by a margin of 54 to 42 percent. Even though abortion remains the most divisive social issue, according to the Pew researchers, two-thirds of those surveyed want the country “to find middle ground on abortion laws” (*New York Times*, August 5).

**Your order, please:** Writing in the Jewish newspaper the *Forward* (August 4), Judy Bolton-Fasman says that the ancient rabbis declared that the *Sh’ma*, the central prayer in Judaism, did not need to be said in Hebrew. In fact, it could be said in 70 different languages. As a Jew, therefore, Bolton-Fasman says, she was outraged when she recently read about a fast-food restaurant in Philadelphia that demanded people place orders in English only. “If God is willing to hear the *Sh’ma* in 70 languages, why can’t someone in Philadelphia order a cheese steak in Spanish? God should have the ultimate word in the immigration debate.”

**The long war:** As of August 14 the war in Iraq had lasted as long as the U.S. war against Germany in World War II. If the war continues until the Saturday after Thanksgiving, it will have gone on as long as the war with Japan during WW II (*Chicago Tribune*, August 14).

**Can’t trust those PKs:** Katherine Harris, who came to national attention as Florida’s secretary of state during the presidential election recount in 2000, is a two-

term member of Congress running to unseat Senator Bill Nelson. She has gained a reputation for being hypercritical of her staff—she’s gone through three campaign managers so far—and has been criticized for meeting with a lobbyist who gave her illegal contributions. Says Harris: “I really thought we could run this race with integrity. I know campaigns tend to be nasty business, but I tried to get away from all of that. I hired preachers’ kids and young people that I thought would sort of have a level of integrity” (*Palm Beach Post*, August 6).

**Character witness:** James Dobson of Focus on the Family has come to the defense of Mel Gibson, apparently because Dobson believes that Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ* is “one of the finest films of this era.” While Dobson didn’t condone Gibson’s drunken tirade against Jews, he said Gibson is seeking help for his alcoholism, apologized profusely to the Jewish community for his anti-Semitic comments and asked for forgiveness. “What more can he do?” asked Dobson, who has said he doesn’t believe *The Passion of the Christ* is anti-Semitic (AP).

**Trojan horse:** In a spoof on megachurches, LarkNews.com reports that Maria Holsapple, a Catholic, complained of being tricked into attending a non-Catholic worship service. Having received tickets to “drama presentations,” she attended what appeared to be a mini-concert and play with a motivational speech thrown in at the end. Sure, the speaker quoted Jesus, but he also quoted Socrates and Britney Spears. “How was I to know?”

**Correction:** *How Postmodernism Serves (My) Faith: Questioning Truth in Language, Philosophy and Art*, by Crystal L. Downing, cited in the July 11 News, was published by InterVarsity Press, not Brazos.