

# Israel and Iran at the Olympics

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

It didn't take very long after the brilliant opening of the Olympic games at Beijing before the Iranians showed their insane hatred of Israel. All seemed normal during the parade of the nations as the Iranians and Israelis entered the great stadium with flags flying, comfortably separated by a dozen other nations. Indeed, it seemed at first as if the Iranians would act like normal human beings. But several hours after the Iranian National Olympic Committee announced that its swimmer would compete with an Israeli in the same Olympic pool because the swimmers would be separated by five lanes and would not face one another, a dramatic turn of events took place.

The Iranian swimmer, Mohammed Alirezaei, left his lane empty and refused to swim in the same pool with the Israeli. How much more hateful and insane can an athlete get? He had never met the Israeli swimmer, Tom Be'eri, and would have not shaken his hand had it been held out to him. We wonder how the Iranian could bear to breathe the same air as the Israeli. He should have been wearing an air-filtering mask. And what kind of horrible trauma would the Iranian have experienced if he had actually seen the Israeli swimmer face to face?

The Israeli swimmer came in fourth, setting a new Israeli record with 1.02:42 time in the 100-meter breaststroke category. I guess the Iranian was actually terrified that he might not be able to beat the Israeli, thus embarrassing his equally insane president.

Back in the 2004 Games at Athens, the Iranian judo world champion refused to compete because of the presence of an Israeli athlete. But the Iranian Olympic Committee said that the boycott would not be repeated this year. We shall see.

But it is obvious that the Iranians do not believe in the credo of the Olympic Games which preaches tolerance for others, fair play, and world brotherhood for athletes of all nations.