

לכבוד יצחק

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(In memory of Moshe Yehuda ben Avrohom Yaakov, Mala Mindel bas Meir, Moshe Tzvi ben Yitzchok Aharon, Gittel bas Sinai, Nechemia ben Menachem Mendel, Yaakov ben Menachem Mendel)

Behaalosecho 5785

FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

"...When you kindle the lamps, the seven lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah."

In the name of Heaven, it seems that almost as much blood as rain has soaked the earth.

Self-righteous fanatics from the Spanish Inquisition to modern day terrorists have invoked the name of Heaven to justify their atrocities. The Nazis believed that their obscene horror-show was the Divine Will. In 1646, after the Civil War in England, Mathew Hopkins, the self-proclaimed "Witchfinder General" led a terrifying purge that relied on testimony extorted by means of "ordeal." This featured torture of the most horrific nature including hot pincers and the thumbscrew.

All in the name of Heaven.

"...When you kindle the lamps, the seven lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah."

Rashi tells us: "The face of the Menorah" means the ner ma'aravi, the middle of the seven lights. The wicks of the three flames on either side of the ner ma'aravi must incline and "cast light" toward this central light. If so, why does the Torah say, "the seven lights shall cast light"? It should say, "the six lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah" – the ner ma'aravi.

Six represents the mundane and the workaday. Seven represents Shabbat; Shabbat is not so much the end of the week as the week's end — its goal and purpose. The six lights pointing toward the central flame teach us to orient all our actions towards the center, towards Heaven.

When the Torah says that all seven lights should cast light on the center, it means that even the center must face the center. It's all too easy to justify anything and everything "in the name of Heaven." We must be sure that the things that we do in the name of Heaven should truly be worthy to bear Heaven's name.

IF THE MILK CAN'T BE UNSPILLED, WHY NOT CRY?

RABBI NAFTALI SILBERBERG (Chabad.org)

Pesach Sheni, "the Second Passover," is observed on the fourteenth of Iyar. The origin of this semi-holiday is quite fascinating. On the first anniversary of the Exodus, while all the Jews were occupied with preparing their lambs for the annual Paschal offering, Moshe was approached by a small group of Jews who were ritually impure and thus excluded from offering, or partaking of, the Paschal lamb. They weren't satisfied with their "exemption" from this Passover mitzvah. "Why should we be deprived?" they exclaimed. "We, too, want to experience the spiritual freedom gained by participating in the Paschal service!"

Moshe agreed to convey their grievance to the Almighty, and incredibly, the heartfelt wishes of this small group caused G-d to add a mitzvah to the Torah. G-d instructed that from that year and onwards, all those who weren't capable of offering the Paschal Lamb in its proper time on the fourteenth of Nissan, due to impurity or distance from the Temple, should offer the Paschal lamb exactly one month later, on the fourteenth of Iyar.

Jewish holidays are not commemorations of historical events; rather, they are spiritual reenactments. No two holidays are alike—every holiday features a distinct spiritual energy, offering us the opportunity to gain

inspiration and the necessary spiritual powers in a specific area of our service of G-d. On Passover we receive the strength to liberate ourselves from our natural enslavement to our impulses and destructive habits; on Shavuot we tap into the core of the Torah, recommitting ourselves to connecting with G-d through its study; and on Sukkot we fill the reservoirs of our hearts with true joy. We stock up on these unique spiritual powers, enough to last us for an entire year, until the holiday returns once again. The mitzvot unique to each holiday are tools which enable us to tap into the spiritual energies present at that time.

Passover is the first holiday of the year, as the "holiday calendar" commences on the first of Nissan. Immediately after this holiday we are taught an important lesson, a lesson which applies to all the following holidays too. Indeed, there is a biblically mandated designated time for Passover, but a person who for one reason or another has missed out and did not take advantage of the benefits which the holiday has to offer can have a personal Passover whenever he sincerely yearns for divine assistance in gaining personal redemption.

According to Kabbalah, the months of Nissan and Iyar are diametrical opposites. Nissan is a month pervaded by divine kindness: the month when G-d redeemed—and redeems—even those who are unworthy of redemption. Iyar, on the other hand, is a month of discipline and self-improvement: the month when we count the Omer and are involved in personal refinement in order to earn the right to receive the Torah in the following month. Yet, the penitent Jew has the ability to experience a Nissan redemptive holiday even during the month of Iyar!

The lesson of Pesach Sheni is that it is never too late. Never think, "Everyone else has already left Egypt weeks ago, and is well on their way toward receiving the Torah—and I haven't even begun my spiritual journey! I'm impure!" Don't despair; you too can make the Passover leap and join everyone else in their state of Redemption, worthy of receiving the Torah on the holiday of Shavuot.

It's no use crying over spilled milk, because G-d has an infinite supply of milk which can be accessed anytime—provided that we have a sincere thirst, and express to Him this feeling.

BETWEEN JOBS

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

You stride briskly into the waiting room, fifteen minutes late. This is intentional: you're trying to reduce those wasted waiting-room minutes. But a brief conversation with the receptionist reveals, to your dismay, that you have mistakenly arrived 35 minutes early...

You miss your connection, and the next available flight departs the following morning. As you check into the airport hotel, the thought crosses your mind that you've never been in this city before. What to do now? Do some shopping? Walk around downtown? Spend the evening in your room catching up on work?

You're stuck in a dead-end job. For some time now you've been aware that this is not what you want to do with your life, and it's inevitable that your boss will soon realize this too. You're exploring a number of possibilities, but it will take a while before any of those materialize. So you're looking at a good few months of treading water (and that's the best-case scenario....)

We inhabit two kinds of time: real time and in-between time. In real time we pursue our lives: our careers, our relationships, our family and social interactions. Then there's waiting-room time, airport time, between-jobs time. The trick is to maximize the real time and keep the in-between time to a minimum.

Not so, says the Rebbe. There's only one kind of time. There are long journeys and short journeys, there are large jobs and small jobs, there are obvious opportunities and situations in which we scratch our heads and wonder, "why are we here?" But all of time is real; every moment is crucial. Every segment of our lives, no matter how fleeting or temporary, has a center, a purpose, an objective.

In one of his letters, the Rebbe explains his basis for this view: the story of our ancestors' travels through the Sinai Desert.

The book of Bamidbar describes how the Children of Israel camped and journeyed in the desert. At the very center of the Israelite camp stood the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary that housed the Divine presence. Surrounding the Mishkan were the tents of the Kohanim and Levites who served in the Sanctuary. And beyond the Levite camp radiated, like the spokes of a wheel, the tent communities of the 12 tribes of Israel — three tribes to the east, three to the south, three to the west and three tribes to the north.

Above the Mishkan hovered a cloud signifying the Divine presence which dwelled within it; when the cloud lifted, that was the sign that it was time to move on. There was no pre-set period for each encampment. Sometimes the cloud—and the people—stayed put for a year, sometimes for but a single night. Whenever the cloud lifted, the people journeyed on.

We said that the Mishkan was portable. But this was no collapsible pup-tent. This formidable edifice included forty-eight 17-foot-tall wall sections, a hundred 150-pound foundation sockets, more than two dozen huge tapestries, and numerous pillars, fasteners, furnishings and utensils. It required a crew of 8,580 Levites to dismantle, transport and reassemble the Mishkan each time the people moved.

And the Torah emphasizes that the entire process was repeated each time the people journeyed. Including those times that they camped for a single night. Each time, the Mishkan was erected and 600,000 households pitched their tents in the prescribed formation around it.

Thus the people know that they were never simply "passing through" or "biding time" at a particular juncture in their journey. Their every encampment, no matter how short or temporary, was to have its center, its focus, its objective: its own distinct way of making G-d at home in their lives.

"TRUTH, TIME, AND TRUMPETS"

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (Chabad.org)

How do we balance the old with the new, the ancient and venerable with the latest and the greatest? How do we speak to a generation that views tradition as antiquated relics of the past? Is old necessarily old-fashioned? Is dated automatically outdated? Can we, in fact, embrace modernity without compromising our long-established values?

We find an interesting contrast in the Torah portion of Behaalotecha. At the beginning of the reading (8:1-4), we find the instructions to Aaron, the first High Priest, for kindling the Menorah, the golden candelabrum in the sanctuary of the Holy Temple of old. And then we read, "And Aaron did so." To Aaron's credit, he did exactly as he was told with no changes, deviations, or embellishments.

Later in the portion (9:2), we read the instructions to Moshe, Aaron's brother, to fashion two silver trumpets (chatzotzros) to be used to call the leaders to a meeting, or the people to assembly, or to announce that it was time to break camp. The Talmud (Menuchot 28b) tells us that the trumpets were to be made by Moshe and they were only for him and not for subsequent generations.

The Menorah, a basic staple of the Temple, is a fundamental symbol of our faith. It represents the G-dly light, the Torah, the spiritual enlightenment with which the Temple illuminates the world.

Conversely the trumpets that Moshe fashioned were simply tools, a "microphone" to call the people to assemble, to lead them into battle, or to announce special festive days.

The Menorah was the message. The trumpets were the medium. One is a basic core value; the other is a means to an end, a method of communication. One is eternal and non-negotiable; the other is guided by pragmatics. If a trumpet doesn't work and someone invents a loudspeaker, we may well put aside the trumpet and embrace the new loudhailer.

Every generation needs a Menorah (and the fact that we do not have a Holy Temple now is tragic), but not every generation needs trumpets.

Moshe had trumpets. Rabbi Goldman has a column on Chabad.org, or an account on Facebook, or LinkedIn, or any contemporary form of social media that can get the word to the people. And it's perfectly fine. We need to speak to the people, and whatever works best should be used.

But the Menorah is not an instrument to communicate a message. It is the message itself. It is truth. And truth is eternal.

I remember launching our synagogue's first website some years ago. We soon learned that websites need to be redesigned regularly. The content

remained the same. But the presentation and the packaging had to develop and move with the times.

Back in 1976, I founded what was for many years South Africa's only Jewish radio program, "The Jewish Sound." A generous gentleman named Issie Kirsh gave us an hour a week on his radio station. It was a station boasting an "international sound," hosting programs from various communities, so a Jewish program fit in well with his station format. A few years after we started, Issie made the big time when he founded a new station called Radio 702. It was an instant hit and is still one of our country's biggest and most popular stations. Not long after its initial success, I noticed that the station changed its format, schedule, and presenters. I remember asking Issie at the time, "If it's not broken, why fix it? You are doing so well. Why change things?" His reply was fascinating. "In this business," he said, "if you don't change things and shake them up frequently, it becomes tired and stale, and people stop listening."

Such is the nature of the beast called radio.

And so it is with all media. And the trumpet, too, was a medium, the messenger rather than the message.

Our values are eternal and never changing, but how we communicate those values to the people will change with each generation. Baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z all have their own mindsets and need a style of communication that resonates with them.

When I train young rabbis, I always call to mind the sign that is traditionally posted above the amud, the reading stand from where prayer services are led: Da lifnei mi atah omed, "Know before whom you stand." It is, obviously, a reminder to the prayer leader to focus on his prayers with intent and concentration.

But I tell the rabbis, that same sign should be there for the rabbi too, not just the prayer leader. "Know before whom you stand" means "know your audience!" Understand the mentality of the people you are speaking to. If you don't know your audience, your message will fail because you will not be talking to them in a language or style that they can relate to.

Those of us in positions of community leadership, as well as our educators, may well need to reinvent ourselves, and more than once in our tenure. We will still share the very same subject matter and values, but with new vision.

"Adapt or die" has been a byword of business strategists for a long time. While trumpets may be passe, the Menorah and its message will never die.

CLOUDY VISION

RABBI JARED VIDERS (Aish.com)

1984. Hollywood introduces the latest "underdog" to American pop culture – Daniel LaRusso, a/k/a the "Karate Kid," who overcomes the odds, refuses to be bullied and goes on to win the Under-18 All-Valley Karate Tournament via the rarely seen and virtually indefensible "Crane kick".

One of the film's more memorial scenes depicts a dialog between a disgruntled LaRusso and his sage karate instructor, the stoic (yet loveable) Mr. Miyagi. Daniel laments the fact that he hasn't learned a lick of martial arts; but rather has been duped into performing an endless number of domestic chores his purported trainer.

"I've been working for four days and haven't learned anything," Daniel protests.

"You learned plenty," Miyagi responds unfazed.

"Yeah... I learned out to paint your fence, sand your deck, wax your car ... that's what I learned."

"Not everything is as seems."

When LaRusso storms out, Miyagi calls him back. "Daniel-son ... show me 'sand the floor...'" Slowly, Daniel begins to realize that the seemingly mindless domestic chore was, in reality, teaching him a crucial move in the art of self-defense.

"Now show me wax-on, wax-off..."

"Show me paint the fence..."

"Show me paint the house - side to side..."

Sure enough, Miyagi launches a barrage of karate chops, jabs and kicks all of which LaRusso fends off with his newly-discovered "skill set" all of which accrued from Miyagi's veiled coaching techniques. What appeared to be pointless burdens were, with hindsight, appreciated as priceless acquisitions of sought-after talents.

"And sometimes the cloud would remain from evening until morning, and the cloud would be lifted in the morning and they would journey; or for a day and a night, and the cloud would be lifted and they would journey. Or for two days, or a month ... when the cloud would linger ... the Children of Israel would encamp ... but when it was lifted they would journey. According to the word of Hashem would they encamp and according to the word of Hashem they would journey ..." (9:21)

Rashi (10:28): These are the journeys: This is the seder (order or arrangement) to their journeys."

The Jewish people's sojourn in the wilderness was no walk in the park. It was an arduous and circuitous odyssey encompassing dozens of stops-and-starts along the way. As the Ramban elaborates, the sequence of check-ins and check-outs seemingly left much to be desired. There were four-star destinations where they alighted for a mere cup of coffee before getting back on the road. Meanwhile, there were desolate and harsh destinations where they remained for months on end.

Lest one think that these voyages were the end-result of a haywire-GPS, a lousy sense of direction or some other combination of random geo-political forces, perish the thought. To the contrary, G-d ushered His beloved nation through thick and thin. Each encampment - be it desirable or quite the contrary, be it a prompt overnight or a protracted stay - was deliberate, purposeful and ultimately designed to instill some lesson or awareness that was essential to the development of the Jewish nation.

Similarly, our lives each present their own personal Divine TripTik. We experience stretches of success and endure periods of disappointment; relish seasons of contentedness and brood through eras of confusion. Through all these steps, our service is to sincerely follow and embrace the twists and turns that G-d has in store for us. Not just the destinations but the journey as well. Not just the triumphs and attendant satisfaction, but the challenges and the attendant struggles and even the defeats and the attendant disappointments.

When we commit ourselves to an outlook of life whereby we are prepared, whole-heartedly to "journey and encamp according to the word of G-d," then we can life more fully with the innate sense that we are exactly where we are meant to be and there is a real purpose to our being there. Undoubtedly, there are lessons to be gleaned and growth to be accomplished as we press on, confidently, knowing that "not all is as seems to be."

MISSING MUCH MORE THAN HALF

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

And when the people complained, it displeased HASHEM; and HASHEM heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of HASHEM burnt among them, and consumed those who were in the outlying parts of the camp. (Bamidbar 11:1)

One thing is for certain. If you want to try to figure out what HASHEM wants from us and what HASHEM does not want from us, it is abundantly clear, even without a deep reading, that complaining is strongly not recommended. Frankly, nobody appreciates complaining. It betrays a lack of trust and a shortage of gratitude. Not only that, but it is not an effective tool to "win friends and influence people". Maybe it works in the short run. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease!" However, for the long haul, it's not an effective way to build or retain a relationship with the important people in our lives or with the Creator of the Universe either.

Rabbi Yonason Eibshitz ztl. pointed out a percentage point difference between two statements from the sages. One says that "If somebody has 100 then he wants 200!" It's the nature of a person to want even more than what he has attained. This statement seems to say that he has reached 50% of his ambitions. Another phrase states that "a person does not leave this world having fulfilled half of his desires." That means he reached, at best, 49.9%, and certainly he did not get to the 50-yard line of his hopes and dreams. How do we square this circle? How do we reconcile the subtle and percentage point differential between these two statements about human nature. It's not a joke!

Rabbi Yonason Eibshitz ztl. offers a brilliant answer with profoundly personal implications. He says that the half that the person does not have is more-dear to him than the half that he does have. So, while quantitatively he may have reached 50%, attitudinally and qualitatively he is still shy of that halfway mark. When my daughters would ask me, if they can go buy more shoes in Marshalls, I would point out to them how many shoes they have in the shoe bag behind the door. I came to appreciate that the shoes that are in Marshalls are more-dear to them than the shoes they have already.

The Mishne in Pirke (4:1) asks, "Who is the wealthy person?" It answers, "The one who is (SOMAYACH B'CHLKO) happy with his portion."

We understand that the person who celebrates what he has rather than complaining about what he doesn't have or lacks is the truly wealthy person. That makes a lot of common sense.

I was thinking of a different answer recently. The word that's used for one's portion is CHELEK. The mystical books are telling us that Hashem breathed a breath of life into humanity and that divine investment is referred to as a "CHELEK ELOCHAI M'MAAL MAMASH" - An actual piece of G-dliness that resides within the person. One who knows how to exercise, stimulate, and rejoice with his G-dly soul, is the wealthy person. How is it done?

Rabbi E.E. Dessler says that worry and unhappiness begin when one has ambitions that are dependent upon other people. When someone has a

spiritual goal that is only reliant upon his degree of desire and doing, then he has control over his destiny and can choose to excite and rejoice his G-dly CHELEK.

Rather than complaining and blaming and looking for fault, and feeling lack, frustration, and jealousy, it becomes possible to adjust our mindset and become truly optimistic. We always hear that an optimist is someone who sees the glass as half full and the pessimist sees the glass as half empty. The Torah has an entirely different approach, I do believe to optimism and pessimism. There is a story about two brothers, twins one was an optimist, and the other one was a pessimist. On their birthday, their father decided to put their attitudes and nature to test. For the pessimist, he bought a room filled with toys. When he went to see what his response was, he observed his son sitting there and fretting about all the toys. "What if it runs out of batteries!? What if it breaks?! What if somebody borrows it and doesn't return it? Where am I gonna keep all of this stuff!?" Then he went to visit the optimist. For his birthday, he filled a room with a giant pile of horse manure. He found the boy was jumping and skipping with joy. He asked his son, "Why are you so happy?" The boy replied, "there has to be a pony in here someplace!"

The world is dense with the presence of HASHEM. There is no place which is absent of His presence. A Torah optimist does not see a glass as half full. It is brimming! If a pessimist sees a glass half full, he is missing much more than half.

SPOILING FOR A FIGHT

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Leaving Sinai, the Jewish people arrived at the desert of Paran and immediately complained.

"... Then even the children of Israel once again began to cry, and they said, 'Who will feed us meat?'" (11:4)

Rashi, based on the Sifri, comments, "Did they not have meat? Does it not say, 'Also a great mixed multitude went up with them, and flocks and cattle' (Shmos 12:38)? You might argue that they had already eaten them. But when they were about to enter the Land, is it not written that, 'the children of Reuben had much cattle' (Bamidbar 32:1)? The answer is that they were seeking a pretext."

This interaction is extremely relevant as many people have grievances and complaints which, when examined, are merely excuses to start a conflict or distractions from other issues taking place.

Unfortunately, despite the lack of logic in a complaint, it is rare that a party to an argument will stand down when shown the flaw in their position. And this is because the argument is the pretext. They are just looking for a fight.

We all know examples of where others persist in complaints even when the solution has been provided.

Maybe we ourselves engage in such behaviour?

When the person is not interested in the solution then the problem is pretext.

SWEET MEMORIES

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

Sweet memories do not fade fast. And neither do pungent ones. That is why the Jewish nation complained bitterly about their miraculous fare, the manna. The manna was a miraculous treat sent daily from heaven to sustain a nation of more than two million people in a barren desert. It was shaped like coriander seed, shone like crystal, and had a miraculous property. It would assume the flavor of any cuisine that its consumer would think about! If a person wanted steak, it tasted like steak. If ice cream was on the menu of the mind, then ice cream it was. My teachers, though I can't imagine they had Midrashic sources, claimed that it could even taste like Cookie Dough Ice Cream! There was a small catch, however. Though the manna had the miraculous ability to transform into a palette of delicacies, merely on the whim of its consumer, it was not able to transform into every imaginable taste. It could not assume the taste of onions, garlic, and a variety of gourds. The divine ability was of course there, but Hashem's compassion overrode His culinary metamorphosis process. Onions and garlic are not the best foods for nursing mothers. And if a pregnant or nursing mother would think of the pungent flavors of those foods, it would, perhaps, maltreat the child.

And thus the men complained, "we remember the fish that we ate in Egypt - and the gourds and onions and garlic! But now there is nothing, we look forward to nothing but the manna!" (Bamidbar 11:5-6).

Though the complaint seems slightly ludicrous, for many years I wondered: Supernatural Divinity was able to transform the dough-like fare into the most sumptuous of meals - all according to the whim and fancy of the individual taster. Why, then, didn't Divinity let the manna discern? Let a garlic taste manifest itself only for the men and women who it would not affect, and not for the women who were with child, whose babies would be

harmful by the pungent effluvia?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski in Not Just Stories tells the legend of Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin, whose disciple, Reb Yitzchok, was in dire straits. Impoverished, he had hardly any food to feed his children, and in addition he had two daughters to wed. Reb Yitzchak's wife pleaded with him to ask the Rebbe of Kobrin for a blessing, but alas, each time Reb Yitzchak crossed the saintly Rebbe's threshold, he forgot about his own necessities.

Finally, Reb Yitzchak mustered the courage to ask for a blessing of wealth.

Rabbi Moshe promised him the blessing of great wealth, but he made one provision. He gave Reb Yitzchak two gold coins and ordered him to buy the finest food and drink.

"However," added the Rebbe, "your wife and children may not partake in any of this food. Not a morsel. Not under any circumstance. After you use the money," concluded the Rebbe, "return back here."

The next days were mere torture. As his starving wife and children looked on, Reb Yitzchak only nibbled on the food he had bought. He was sick to his stomach. The fine delicacies had no flavor. He could not bear to see the pain of his starving family while he enjoyed the finest food. The pain added a gall-like flavor to the normally delicious food. Reb Yitzchak pleaded with the Almighty to take his soul so that he would not bear the pain.

Reb Yitzchak quickly returned to the Rebbe.

"Yitzchak," said the Rebbe. "I could have blessed you immediately, but are you ready to enjoy the abundance of wealth, while knowing that other Jews do not have? Your recent experience is a lesson for those who have, while others are deprived. Now, Yitzchak, are you ready for wealth?"

Reb Yitzchak exclaimed, "Never!" and returned home.

Eventually, the blessing rested upon Reb Yitzchak and his wife, but they never forgot the plight of others.

Manna fell with inherent qualities; and it had the potential to explode with a bounty of delicious flavors. But it would not be fair to limit its pleasures only to a portion of the people. If expectant and nursing women could not partake in certain foods, their spouses and the entire nation had to share the restrictions too.

And though there may be no great pain in abstaining from onion and garlic for a while, it is important to find commonality even in life's little inconveniences. Because true sharing is feeling the pain of even the minutest discomforts. It is a lesson that Klal Yisrael had to learn as they trekked together in the desert, striving to become one large unit. They learned to unite by joining together while missing out on some of the spices of life. Because the nation that blends together – bands together!

NOTHING AND EVERYTHING

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

What was the secret of the greatness of Moshe? What special qualities made him stand out as the greatest spiritual leader in the history of the Jewish people? How did he reach the supreme level of prophecy, far surpassing all previous and subsequent prophets? In this week's reading, the Torah gives us the answer. Moshe may have been the greatest person in the history of the world, but he was also the most humble. In fact, his humility was the key to his greatness. The commentators, however, are puzzled by the context in which the Torah chooses to record this endorsement of Moshe.

Towards the end of this week's portion, we read that Aaron and Miriam took their brother Moshe to task for separating from his wife. Why was it necessary, they contended, to withdraw from ordinary life? After all, they were also blessed with the gift of prophecy and they still had normal spousal relationships. At this point, the Torah interrupts the story to tell us about Moshe's humility. Then the story is continued. Hashem reprimands them severely for their slander, and Miriam is punished.

Why does the comment about Moshe's humility belong right in the middle of this episode?

The commentators explain that very often people who set off in pursuit of spiritual greatness remove themselves from human society and isolate themselves from contact with other people. This, however, is not the path towards spiritual growth that the Torah advocates. Such people may indeed expand their awareness of the Creator, but at the same time they are also expanding their awareness of themselves. By focusing on their own goals, ideals and aspirations at the expense of other people, they are inevitably channeling their lives into a selfish direction. This is not what the Torah wants.

Miriam suspected that Moshe had separated from his wife because he hoped this would bring him to higher spiritual levels. She suspected he was selfishly willing to sacrifice his spousal relationship to advance his own personal spiritual goals, regardless of how his wife was affected. Therefore, she took him to task for being so focused on his own goals that he became insensitive to the needs of others, in this case his own wife.

Not so, the Torah bears witness. Moshe was the ultimate humble man, without a single selfish bone in his body, and his decision to separate from his wife was clearly not for his own aggrandizement but for the greater good of the Jewish people.

A young fellow once traveled to a faraway land to study in the academy of a great sage. After the first day, he heard two of the older students conversing about the wisdom of the sage.

"Oh, the words of the sage are like the sun," said one of the students. "When I listen to him I realize that I am absolutely nothing. That's all I am. A great big nothing."

His friend nodded sagely. "I know exactly how you feel. I feel exactly the same way. When I sit at his feet, listening to the pearls of wisdom pouring from his lips, I realize am just a nothing, a living, breathing nothing."

The new student was very moved and inspired. "Me, too," he cried out. "When I look at the glowing face of the sage, I realize that I too am just a nothing."

One of the older students turned to the new student and fixed him with an eagle stare. "Listen to this!" he exclaimed. "This fellow has just arrived in the academy, and already he presumes to be a nothing."

In our own lives, we often find ourselves taking the high ground in various circumstances and professing moral indignation about the behavior of other people. In such cases, we would do well to take out a little time for introspection and examine our motivations. If there is even the least bit of self-interest involved, if we seek to show that we have a higher standard than other people, then we would do better to remain silent.

News & Views

HAMAS PLANS ATTACKS ON US AID SITES IN GAZA

ADAM KREDO (FreeBeacon.com 10-6-25)

Hamas and its terror affiliates in the Gaza Strip plan to attack American aid distribution centers, Telegram messages confirmed by a senior U.S. official show, threatening to draw the United States into direct conflict with Palestinian militant factions.

"Resistance security is authorized to firmly confront anyone who cooperates with the enemy or its agents, and agents and mercenaries will be legitimate targets," Hamas affiliates said in a statement issued late Sunday to "Palestinian resistance factions" active on Telegram, a social networking site terrorist groups regularly use to coordinate their activities.

The terrorists directed their threats at the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a joint U.S.-Israeli aid effort formed in February with private contractors to replace the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is known to collaborate with Hamas.

A senior U.S. official confirmed that the Trump administration has monitored the situation to protect Americans working with GHF in Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid.

"These reports of Hamas threatening the GHF and its workers, many of whom are Americans, are deeply concerning," the senior administration official told the Washington Free Beacon. "Hamas should think twice. We are watching closely."

The Palestinian terrorist groups claimed that GHF centers established throughout Gaza "have become traps targeting our hungry people. Their goal is to end UNRWA's mission and turn the Palestinian cause into a humanitarian one to facilitate forced displacement and ethnic cleansing in Gaza."

They further demanded "the resumption of aid distribution through UNRWA—and international institutions, given their legal competence and expertise that guarantee the lives and dignity of our people."

Israel formally banned UNRWA from operating in January after it became clear that the U.N.-backed aid organization employed dozens of Hamas terrorists who participated in the Oct. 7 attacks and helped keep Israeli hostages hidden in Gaza. The Trump administration supported this move, citing additional evidence showing that Hamas systematically steals UNRWA supplies and resells them on the black market to generate profits.

GHF said in a Monday statement that it is aware of Hamas's "explicit threats against GHF's American and Palestinian workers who deliver humanitarian aid and the Gazan people who accept that aid."

"At the same time," the group added, "Hamas endorsed the United Nations, an organization it has routinely stolen from, as the only legitimate providers of aid." GHF also urged the international community to rally around its aid efforts and protect those delivering much-needed aid to the Gazan population.

"The contrast is telling," GHF said. "After delivering over 10 million meals,

GHF has built a system that delivers aid directly to the people who actually need it. Despite these threats, we will continue to deliver urgent humanitarian relief with resolve and purpose.”

GHF began its operations two weeks ago, distributing approximately 11,495,902 meals at multiple sites across Gaza—even as Hamas attempts to orchestrate violence in and around these locations.

A week ago, Hamas gunmen opened fire on Palestinian civilians and attempted to blame the attack on Israel. The Israel Defense Forces quickly debunked the claims, but not before they had spread across social media and Western news outlets.

90% OF REPORTS OF ‘VIOLENCE’ BY JUDEA AND SAMARIA JEWS WERE FAKE

AKIVA VAN KONINGSVELD (JNS.org 9-6-25)

A new report published by Israel’s Regavim Movement NGO on Sunday has found that some 90% of incidents of “violence” attributed to Judea and Samaria Jews in recent years by the United Nations were fabricated.

Regavim’s 128-page research report in English, titled “False Flags and Real Agendas,” scrutinized a database maintained by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which claims to have documented thousands of alleged incidents of Israeli “settler violence” against Palestinian Arabs from January 2016 through April 2023.

An analysis of the 6,285 incidents documented by the U.N. showed that some 90% of the alleged acts in Judea and Samaria did not take place in the disputed territory but in eastern Jerusalem, or were entirely peaceful, such as visits by Israeli Jews to the Temple Mount, Judaism’s holiest site, as well as legal activities such as civilian hikes or infrastructure work.

Filtered for verified incidents of physical violence by Israeli Jews against Palestinians, the list shrinks to just 833 cases over a period of seven and a half years, averaging fewer than 10 incidents per month, according to Regavim.

In addition, the Regavim report found that many of these confirmed cases were also misclassified or involved anti-Israel provocations orchestrated by Palestinian and foreign left-wing activist groups.

Examination of the reports also revealed that “in many of them, it is not settler violence of one kind or another, but rather the opposite: these are terror attacks by Arabs against settlers that ended with the injury or elimination of the attacker,” according to the research document.

Regavim said that the term “settler violence” has been used by global bodies, media outlets and left-wing activists to draw a false moral equivalence between Israel’s presence in Judea and Samaria and Palestinian terrorism.

“For years, we have been told about a ‘serious phenomenon’ of settler violence, but we have never been shown the data that proves that it exists,” Meir Deutsch, Regavim’s director-general, said in a statement.

“After years in which there was no pushback whatsoever against this false narrative, Regavim is presenting the facts, and they must be seen, heard and internalized in Israel and around the world,” Deutsch stated.

The Israel Defense Forces recorded 663 instances of violence by Jews against Palestinians in Judea and Samaria last year, a 34% decrease compared to 2023, when 1,005 incidents were recorded by the IDF.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem recorded thousands of Palestinian terrorist attacks against Jews in 2024, including many in Judea and Samaria.

Palestinian terrorists targeted Israeli Jews in Judea and Samaria at least 6,343 times last year, according to figures published by the Rescuers Without Borders (Hatzalah Judea and Samaria) NGO on Feb. 17.

Twenty-seven Israelis were murdered in Judea and Samaria in 2024, and more than 300 others were wounded, the group said in its annual report.

GOOD RIDDANCE TO GRETA’S GAZA SHIP OF FOOLS

BRENDAN O’NEILL (Spiked-online.com 9-6-25)

So the seafaring stunt is over. The ship of narcissists has been intercepted. Greta Thunberg and her gaggle of self-righteous keffiyeh clowns have been thwarted. They’re on their way, not to Gaza, but to the Israeli port city of Ashdod. One envisions the Med ringing out with wails of ‘HOW DARE YOU’ as Greta and her muppet apostles berate Israel for foiling their messianic mission to save the people of Gaza from evil.

There is nothing that isn’t funny about the collapse of Greta’s white-saviour bullshit. I have especially enjoyed the juvenile bawling of the vain crew. ‘We’ve been kidnapped!’, cried Greta. They haven’t. They’re fine. They are ‘safely making [their] way to the shores of Israel’ and they have sandwiches. ‘This is a war crime!’, yelled one of the sailing saviours as Israeli forces boarded, in tones not dissimilar to Kevin the Teenager when his parents would send him to bed.

There’s the delicious fact that it was Greta that ended up getting aid. That pic of an IDF soldier giving her a plastic-wrapped kosher sandwich is equal parts touching and hilarious. ‘I thought Greta was going to deliver the

humanitarian aid, not receive it?’, as Eve Barlow quipped. The soldier is in full military garb, as befits his role as a warrior against the army of anti-Semites that attacked Israel on 7 October 2023. Greta is wearing a frog hat, as befits her role as patron saint of the faux-virtuous idiot rich kids of TikTok.

Then there’s Israel’s trolling. The Jewish State is ripping the piss out of Greta and I am so here for it. We’ve intercepted the ‘selfie yacht’ of ‘celebrities’ whose ‘sole purpose’ was to ‘gain publicity’, said Israel’s Foreign Ministry. The ‘tiny amount of aid on the yacht [that] was not consumed by the “celebrities” will now be ‘transferred to Gaza’, it announced. Because, believe it or not, you can feed people in a way that does not ‘involve Instagram selfies’. Oh snap. Hold the salt, Israel.

Lunatics on the internet were worried that Israel might bump Greta off. ‘Nothing is too insane for Israel’, including the ‘murder [of] Greta Thunberg’, said soy leftist turned digital hysteric, Owen Jones. Calm down, folks. She’s being memed, not murdered. ‘Greta Thunberg is... safe and in good spirits’, said the official X account of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. ‘The show is over.’ Now that’s how you puncture the bloated self-regard of a sea-going gang of Israelophobes who are so high on their own supply of moral vanity that they really think they can ‘Save Gaza’.

It’s brilliant to see the fizzling out of this summer jaunt to the Med masquerading as a moral crusade. For nothing has ever captured the lazy theatrics and fake virtue of modern activism as much as Greta’s dumb boat did. This so-called freedom flotilla would have done precisely nothing to assist the suffering people of Gaza. That was never really its aim. The ship of fools was always more interested in raising awareness about itself and its moral brilliance than about the needs of Gaza’s civilians.

Indeed, as Greta and Co crossed the choppy Med with their ‘tiny amount of aid’, Evil Israel handed out millions of meals in Gaza. In the first 15 days of its operations, the US-Israeli Gaza Humanitarian Foundation has given more than 10million meals to the needy. You couldn’t write satire like this: 12 woke fainthearts on a boat wail ‘Feed Gaza’ as Israel does exactly that. As Greta and her smug chums bloviated on their boat to any media channel that would listen, Israel did the hard graft of feeding a war-whacked populace. As they took selfies of themselves sobbing into their keffiyehs about hungry Gazans, Israel was giving those Gazans food. They did moral pantomime, for likes on Instagram; Israel did aid, with no thanks at all.

Tell me that doesn’t sum up 21st-century activism. Tell me it doesn’t shine a brilliant light on the self-serving shitshow that is modern ‘leftism’, where the aim is always to accrue greater virtue for oneself rather than to improve the lot of others. As Greta was snapped dangling her legs off the hull of her boat in the glorious sun, young IDF troops were risking their lives guiding food trucks through a warzone. And you want us to cheer her? Forget about it. To some of us, it feels like the people on that boat were primarily interested in rebuilding their moral brand on the rubble of a bloody war. That’s not admirable, it’s sick.

Yet even as we cheer the interception of this ship of pricks, we need to get real about what it tells us about our times. This flurry of keffiyehs in the sea, and the cheering of it by the media elites, confirms that your virtue is now measured by how much you hate Israel. The old omnicauses of climate change and gender bollocks have withered away, to be replaced by the new omnicause of raging against the Jewish State. Hence, Greta has swapped her childish baloney about billions perishing at the altar of modernity in favour of lamenting Israel’s ‘genocide’ and the threat it supposedly poses to us all. You don’t need a PhD on 20th-century Europe to recognise how dangerous it is for the self-righteous of the West to define themselves in direct and furious opposition to the world’s only Jewish nation.

HOW ISRAELI VICTIMS BECAME AGGRESSORS AS ANTISEMITISM RISES

BRENDA KATTEN (Jpost.com 7-6-25)

June 7, 2025, marks 20 months since Hamas initiated the current war we in Israel are experiencing – one that seems without end. Our hostages remain in captivity in the most appalling conditions – a reality verified by those who have been released.

Our brave soldiers – both conscripts and reservists – are asked to return to battle time and again. The painful toll on them and their families is enormous, with too many losing their livelihoods as a result of the damage done to the economy.

New babies are born whose fathers are absent because they are fighting the enemy in Gaza. The death toll of our brave, far-too-young soldiers has reached an unacceptable level.

The psychological damage is beyond comprehension, with this reality applying to men, women, and children, aside from those who are serving in the IDF. For sure, there will not be sufficient psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists to deal with the fallout of this war.

CONCURRENTLY, THE WORLD chooses to forget how the war came about, with the international media projecting the situation as if we in Israel woke up one day and decided to enter Gaza and kill as many civilians as possible – specifically women and children – without rhyme or reason.

It is sickening to view the way United Kingdom's Sky and BBC news channels report on the war, refusing to accord responsibility where it belongs, namely with Hamas.

The world's political leadership, together with those who work for the media, barely mention Oct. 7, 2023 – a Shabbat when we Jews were celebrating Simchat Torah while Hamas terrorists crossed into Israel and barbarically murdered 1,200 Israeli citizens – the majority civilians – sexually abused women, and even murdered an unborn baby in front of its mother.

All this horror was duly (and proudly) videoed by the Hamas mass murderers. Where were the women's organizations worldwide that did not utter one word of condemnation?

How many world politicians and world journalists refer to the catalyst for this war? All we hear is that Israel is committing genocide. How many refer to the hostages kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7, who are being kept in cages with their hands and legs bound together, starved, and living in underground tunnels?

There remains a pertinent unanswered question for all the countries that seem bent on putting the blame for this war on us. How come we Jews – the victims of a barbaric mass murder on Oct. 7 – simultaneously became the aggressor?

HOW IS IT THAT THE VILE MURDER of Israeli men, women, and children became the trigger of worldwide antisemitism, reaching a level that has seen no precedence since the rise of Hitler in the 1930s?

January 1933 saw the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor of Germany, who initiated the laws and policies increasingly restricting the rights of Jews in Germany. On April 25, 1933, a law was passed aimed at excluding Jewish children from public schools.

Seventy-five percent of all Jewish children attended general public schools in Germany. My late husband, who was German-born, was expelled from his school in Bamberg because he was Jewish.

While today Jewish children are not being expelled, what of the increasing fear and discomfort faced by Jewish students on university campuses worldwide? Should we be comparing antisemitism today with what happened in Germany?

The frightening reality is that today's antisemitism might well be considered even more disturbing because it is not confined to one country.

Last month saw the release, at a press conference held in Berlin, of the first annual report of "The J7 Large Communities' Task Force against Antisemitism."

Countries specifically referred to were Australia, Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The report revealed that Australia recorded a 317% rise in antisemitic incidents in 2024. Alex Rychin, co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, stated, "This report presents the most comprehensive analysis."

He went on to say, "When antisemitism is not met with sufficient force, it can escalate into violence."

Canada reported that since Oct. 7, the Jewish community has faced an unprecedented wave of antisemitic attacks. "The challenges facing the Canadian Jewish community are immense," said Noah Shack, interim president of Canada's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

The words of Canada's and Australia's representatives were reflected time and again by the other countries that formed part of this report.

What the report reveals is that antisemitism has reached an unacceptable level throughout the world. This in itself accentuates the vital necessity of having one Jewish state.

Back to the beginning: There are many Israelis, including the writer of this article, who believe it is time to negotiate an end to this war, enabling the hostages, both alive and dead, to return home.

In addition, it is looking increasingly promising that, should this war end, there are some neighboring countries that would contribute toward ensuring that Gaza is no longer run by the murderous Hamas.

In spite of the increasing challenges we Israelis are facing, we are a resilient people. Resilience is what was patently demonstrated by Israel's Yuval Raphael at Eurovision 2025 when singing her song "New Day Will Rise."

Raphael, who survived the Supernova massacre by hiding under dead bodies, delivered a powerful performance that led to an amazing victory for Israel, coming in second place and receiving the maximum 12 points from the public's vote in Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Among these countries are those whose stance on Israel is totally negative.

The public vote was in stark contrast to that of the official Jury vote, where Israel received only 60 points, tying with Ukraine for 14th place.

While currently we Jews, whether here or there, find little reason to rejoice, let us see Eurovision 2025 as a reflection of a reality that not "everyone" is against us. Raphael's success made us smile, and it mirrors a resilience that marks what Israel and its people are about.

Am Yisrael chai.

UBER EATS FOR HAMAS: THE UN'S LATEST HUMANITARIAN SCAM

GLOBAL DISCONNECT (GlobalDisconnect.substack.com 11-6-25)

You know those things that you wish were just fever dreams? Well, thanks to the UN, we now have documented proof that, yes, humanitarian aid intended for desperate Gazan civilians was being delivered straight to the doorsteps of Hamas leadership. Not the displaced families, not the starving children, but the very terrorists responsible for the October 7 massacre.

According to explosive reporting by Israel Hayom, UN World Food Program (WFP) trucks were systematically diverted to Hamas leadership homes and warehouses, like some dystopian Uber Eats for terrorists. Millions of dollars in goods, including communication gear and — you'll love this — cigarettes hidden in aid bags, including aid trucks from UNICEF were smuggled in, enriching Hamas' coffers while the people of Gaza were forced to go hungry.

No wonder Yahya Sinwar hadn't eaten in a few days before Israel introduced him to his long-overdue martyrdom package. He wasn't home for the UN's delivery window. Missed the drop-off. Tough break.

But don't take my word for it — the UN's own spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, admitted on June 5th that the UN hadn't delivered any food to Gazans, despite hundreds of trucks received by them in the last weeks. That's right — hundreds of aid trucks, billions in pledges, and... nothing. Apparently, WFP is "having issues" and are canceling the missions approved by the IDF— maybe it's just hard to find Hamas officials these days when most of them have been turned into red mist.

Frankly, why be surprised the UN has become the Uber Eats of international terrorism, when the International Red Cross proudly serves as a glorified Uber ride service during hostage releases and to transport weapons and terrorists around Gaza. Not to mention making the release of terrorist or better known, "Palestinian Hostages," from prison the ICRC's top priority, since October 7th. Next time you open your favorite delivery app, just remember some people in Geneva get paid six figures to do it for terrorists in Gaza.

And while the UN was busy playing DoorDash for war criminals, they've been working overtime to thwart the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a U.S.-Israeli backed effort that has delivered nearly 10 million meals to actual Gazans since it started operating. Hamas and the UN don't like GHF, of course — too many calories ending up with actual civilians, too few ending up with guys who sign rockets before they land in Gazans heads in hospitals.

Even better, Hamas recently threatened GHF workers, warning them to stop harming the "dignity" of the Palestinian people by, you know... feeding them. And UN's "renounced lawyer" Francesca Albanese screams on how feeding Gazan's is "essential tactic of Israel's genocide." Similar to her nearly crying about how eliminating Sinwar was "not justice" or "The elimination of Hamas is at the heart of [Israel's] genocidal logic." But of course, Hamas didn't target civilians and rape didn't happen, according to Francesca.

Meanwhile, the American and Israeli-backed GHF fights tooth and nail to get real aid to real people while being attacked by terrorists, condemned by the UN and by Western media, while they're too busy quoting Hamas PR releases as "breaking news."

And the UN? They're not only silent about Hamas seizing UN facilities for their own distribution, they're actively sabotaging the only group that's managed to bypass Hamas's theft ring. Literally inventing "14,000 babies will die of starvation in the next 48 hours," and falsely accusing Israel of waging a "ruthless war against children." Not to mention the ICC issuing arrest warrants against Israeli for "using starvation as a weapon of war" based on manufacture "evidence."

I guess you could say Antonio Guterres isn't just preserving "neutrality"—they're fighting to preserve the catering schedule for Hamas. So the next time you hear Guterres wring his hands about "the humanitarian situation in Gaza," remember: he's probably just upset that the delivery drivers aren't finding Yahya Sinwar and his friends.

THE WAR ON CITY-DWELLERS

ROBERT WILLIAMS (GateStonelinstitute.org 5-6-25)

Despite President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and UN executives and bureaucrats doubled down this year at the poorly attended WEF gathering

in Davos – could world leaders possibly be starting to catch on? – and proclaimed that nothing can stop their radical transformation of the world in the name of "climate change."

"We are already collaborating at a scale where no one can stop; not one country, not one leader making a decision, because it's just the right thing to do globally," announced Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All.

"Anyone who steps back ... will create a vacuum that others will fill", said Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The ostensible goal of the climate change project is to get to "net zero" carbon emissions by 2050. To do that, global leaders, led by the WEF and the UN, are apparently planning to radically transform the lives of everyone on the planet except their own.

Their plan, officially launched as the UN "Agenda 21" in 1992, during the UN's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and now renamed "Agenda 2030," – still under the pretext of saving the planet – sets in motion initiatives aimed at controlling every detail of people's lives.

This agenda includes "smart cities" (also known as "15-minute cities") that monitor, track and extract data about citizens' lives. In addition – already in full swing, with mayors of at least 100 cities – all participants in the so-called C-40 "network of mayors of the world's leading cities that are united in action to confront the climate crisis" are working on turning their cities into yet another UN concoction.

The World Economic Forum wrote on its website in 2022:

"As climate change and global conflict cause shocks and stresses at faster intervals and increasing severity, the 15-minute city will become even more critical....

"[T]he "15-minute city" concept—which implies having all necessary amenities within a short walk, bike ride, or public transit trip from one's home—has demonstrated stickiness not just as an idea, but as a powerful tool for action – from Paris to Seoul, from Bogotá to Houston."

As with smart cities, the WEF conveniently used the Covid-19 pandemic, alongside the fictitious "climate crisis," to legitimize the introduction of 15-minute cities:

"[W]ith COVID-19 and its variants keeping everyone (or closer to home than usual), the 15-minute city went from a 'nice-to-have' to a rallying cry. Meeting all of one's needs within a walking, biking or transit distance was suddenly a matter of life and death. The pandemic created an urgency around equitable urbanism that sidelined arguments about bike lanes and other 'amenities' that have roiled communities for years."

The man who claims credit for inventing this "15-minute city" confinement plan is French-Colombian Professor Carlos Moreno. In the 1970s, he was a member of the violent Marxist Colombian M-19 guerillas, before making his way to France, where he now works as an advisor to Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, a socialist, who has pledged to transform Paris into a 15-minute city. Moreno also does not hide that Covid-19 conveniently supplied the perfect excuse to force 15-minute cities on an unsuspecting public, saying in a December 2021 interview:

"Were it not for Covid-19, I think that the conditions for deploying the 15-minute city concept would have been very hard to instigate. But the catastrophe of the pandemic has seen us drastically change how we live – it has forced us to reassess the nature and quality of our urban lifestyles."

The term "15-minute city" was first coined in 2015, at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris. The purpose: To take away your freedom to move by means of your own choice in order to get to "net zero."

"Adoptable to new or existing cities, the model is for a decentralised, polycentric city, moving away from car ownership, freeing up urban space and reducing fossil fuel use," the RIBA Journal noted in its 2021 profile of Moreno. "It promotes diversity, innovation, citizenship and technology for common good."

In a 2023 interview, Moreno also talked about "fostering the radical transformation of Paris," adding:

"The global network of C40 cities have embraced this concept as the new backbone for developing urban policy post-pandemic, for promoting decarbonized mobilities – pedestrian and bike capability, local economy... and the new economic models for developing more mixed cities,"

So, people's cities are being "radically transformed" by a shadowy "global network" of participating cities without residents having any say in what they think about this upheaval. Thirteen US cities apparently already participate in this scheme, including Austin, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington DC.

The C-40 website declares.

"C40 is a global network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities that are united in action to confront the climate crisis.

"Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using an inclusive, science-based and collaborative approach to cut their fair share of emissions in half by 2030, help the world limit global heating to 1.5°C, and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities."

In 2022, the council of the university city of Oxford, in the UK, decided to split the city into six 15-minute districts. According to the UK website Spiked:

"On the surface, these 15-minute neighbourhoods might sound pleasant and convenient. But there is a coercive edge. The council plans to cut car use and traffic congestion by placing strict rules on car journeys. Under the new proposals, if any of Oxford's 150,000 residents drives outside of their designated district more than 100 days a year, he or she could be fined £70." Furious residents went out to protest the measures – to no avail.

Instead of engaging with them, the local council simply cut out the phrase "15-minute city" from its proposal, while openly admitting that they would continue to do the exact same thing.

"If we want to actually engage with people about what the real problems are and what the solutions are, we don't need the phrase 15-minute cities anymore," one member of the council said, adding that the change would make "no noticeable difference to our planning decisions."

Her statement reflects the undemocratic, self-entitled, authoritarian, ideology-driven agenda of the climate change movement. Popular demand, democratic inclusion and the free market play no role whatsoever. It reminds one of China – which is no coincidence. The idea embedded within the concept of the 15-minute city is not a new one – it has been practiced in Communist China since 1949. Tracking people's mobility is – and remains – a way for self-appointed "elites" to efficiently control what they seem to regard as the "great unwashed (and incapable of making important decisions) masses."

"For the communist regime that established itself in Beijing in 1949, mobility was synonymous with disorder," wrote Jean-Philippe Béja, Emeritus Senior Research Fellow at the National Center for Scientific Research and the Center for International Studies and Research at Sciences-Po, in Paris, in 2019.

"Once in power, the Party divided the population into classes to better control it: the members of the 'exploiting classes' were subject to many restrictions, while the 'red' classes were tasked with monitoring them. But by 1958, State control was widespread and travel was limited for all. Yet, mobility gradually became part of Chinese people's daily lives: corporate executives would fly to their hometown on weekends; the middle classes would drive to their country homes; private cars replaced bicycles in the villages. However, far from signaling the end of State control, this apparent liberation came with unparalleled surveillance...

"The means of control have greatly evolved: you no longer have to force people to stay in their village or neighborhood to monitor them. Artificial intelligence, facial recognition, phones...

"I was in China three days ago and when you pay for something with cash, everyone looks at you as if you were from the Middle Ages. No one pays with money anymore: over there, they pay with WeChat or Alipay, through their phone, which is very easily to control. To control people, you don't need to limit mobility anymore. The Party's goal of controlling people hasn't changed, it's been updated."

China has taken smart "15-minute cities" to the extreme. It is using biometric scanners as checkpoints, meaning that neighborhoods can turn into prisons by only being accessible through facial scans. If your "social credit" score is too low, you may not be able to enter or leave. China, increasingly, has also made entering your own apartment dependent on biometric scans with the digital "City Brain" receiving updates on the movements of its citizens, so that it knows where they are at all times. Similarly, the "City Brain" knows what people buy – cash, as mentioned, is no longer used – when they take public transport and so on. Anonymity and the right to privacy has been completely abolished.

Yet this is something that the WEF is pushing for hard and even seems to think is a delightful idea. In 2020, the WEF published an article in which it praised a new Chinese project named Cloud Valley, to be built in southwestern China's Chongqing Municipality as a cooperation between the Danish architecture firm BIG, and the Chinese company Terminus. The WEF presented it as an idyllic scenario in the quoted exchange between the WEF architect and his Chinese partner. According to Terminus founder Victor Ai:

"The project named Cloud Valley, plans to use sensors and wifi-connected devices to gather data on everything from weather and pollution to people's eating habits to automatically meet residents' needs."

BIG founding partner Bjarke Ingels said:

"It's almost coming back to this idea of living in a village where, when you show up, even though it's the first time you're there, the bar tender knows

your favourite drink."

"When our environment becomes sensing and sentient ... we can really open up that kind of seamlessness because the AI can recognise people coming. So it can open the door, so they don't have to look for their key cards."

Chinese state media, praising the project, added that it would "help society achieve carbon neutrality." China, according to a February 2025 report, continues to build coal plants at warp speed. China's construction of new coal-power plants in 2024 reached a "10-year high." However, adding the magic words "carbon neutrality" keeps assuring many Westerners that they are saving the planet. So they keep on buying cheap China's goods and enriching China's military – enabling it to replace the United States even faster as the world's leading superpower and at last to fulfill Chinese President Xi Jinping's dream of finally ruling the planet.

Kosher & Halacha Korner

The following article may be at variance to local Kashrus Agencies. When in doubt, contact your local reputable Agency. In Australia, direct any questions to info@kosher.org.au or visit www.kosher.org.au

PROPER DISPOSAL OF RITUAL OBJECTS

RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT (Torah.org)

Question: As ritual objects get worn out, frayed, torn, etc., and are no longer fit for use, how may one "dispose" of them?

Discussion: "Ritual objects" is a general term which, in halachah, breaks down into a number of different categories. How one should "dispose" of a given ritual object is determined by the category into which the object falls. In the initial breakdown, ritual objects are classified as either kedushah objects, which may not be discarded at all, and used mitzvah objects, which may be^[1].

Kedushah objects are intrinsically holy (such as a Sefer Torah). The category below them, tashmishai kedushah, are objects which serve or beautify the kedushah objects (such as a Torah mantle, which beautifies the Torah scroll). An even lower category is tashmish d'tashmishai kedushah, which are objects that serve or protect the tashmishai kedushah, not the kedushah object itself (such as a plastic tefillin bag, which protects the velvet tefillin bag).

Used Mitzvah objects are objects with which one performed a mitzvah (such as an esrog). The category below them is objects which serve as accessories for performing the mitzvah (such as an esrog box). These are referred to as tashmish d'tashmishai mitzvah.

Question: How may one "dispose" of kedushah and tashmishai kedushah items?

Discussion: It is strictly forbidden to destroy or dispose of items that are intrinsically holy, even when they are no longer fit to be used^[2]. Moreover, even tashmishai kedushah, which are objects that serve or beautify the kedushah object itself, may also not be destroyed or thrown away even when their condition has deteriorated^[3]. Rather, they must be set aside and stored in a safe, secluded, permanent and honorable place — a process called genizah. Since it is not so feasible or practical to find such storage places, especially for larger collections of objects, the halachah permits burying kedushah and tashmishai kedushah in the ground — genizah b'karka^[4]. There are two levels of genizah b'karka, depending on the degree of their kedushah:

Strict genizah: Some objects require strict genizah. These items must be encased and sealed in an earthenware or durable hard plastic casing and buried in a Jewish cemetery, preferably together with or in the vicinity of a grave of a Torah scholar^[5] or in a specially designated section of the cemetery^[6].

Standard genizah: The objects on this list may be bagged in a nylon or plastic bag and buried anywhere (not necessarily in a cemetery), as long as it is a secure place where the objects will not be disturbed^[7]. Nowadays, this type of genizah is generally referred to as sheimos genizah.

Question: Which objects require strict genizah and for which will the standard genizah suffice?

Discussion: The following items require Strict genizah:

An amulet that contains Hashem's Name^[8]

Mezuzah parchment^[9]

Nevi'im, Kesuvim and Megillah scrolls ^[10]

Sefer Torah scroll^[11]

Tefillin, bayis shel rosh (even without parashiyos)^[12]

Tefillin, parshiyos ^[13]

The following items require Standard genizah (sheimos):

An amulet holder (case)^[14]

Aron kodesh^[15]

Bentschers and zemiros booklets ^[16]

Bimah cover — embroidered^[17]

Hashem's Name (handwritten or printed)^[18]

Mezuzah case,^[19] including any plastic or saran wrapper^[20]

Sefer Torah accessories^[21] — atzei chayim, band, bell, crown, mantle, pointer^[22] and silver ornaments

Sifrei kodesh — printed or photocopied^[23], hard or soft cover

Sifrei Kodesh — covers, binding, and bound, blank pages^[24]

Tefillin, bayis shel yad (without parashiyos)^[25]

Tefillin, plastic protective boxes ^[26]

Tefillin bag, velvet^[27]

Torah manuscripts

Question: What are the rules for disposing of used mitzvah objects?

Discussion: Used mitzvah objects include "intrinsic" mitzvah objects, such as a shofar or a lulav, which were previously used in the performance of a mitzvah but are no longer needed — either because the objects are in poor condition or because the mitzvah is no longer applicable. Although a minority opinion holds that these items should receive standard genizah and the Rama praises one who does so^[28], the basic halachah and the prevalent custom follow the opinion that it is permitted to discard these items in a dignified manner. It is forbidden, therefore, to throw these items directly into the garbage. Rather, they should first be wrapped up or placed in a bag, and then put in the recycle bin or together with "clean" trash. Alternatively, they may be burned.

The following items may be discarded, but only in a dignified manner:

Arba'as ha-Minim ^[29]

Hoshanos^[30]

Oil and used wicks remaining from Chanukah menorah^[31]

A Shofar

Sechach

Tzitzis strings (detached from a tallis)^[32]

A tallis gadol (with tzitzis)^[33]

A tallis katan (with tzitzis)^[34]

Question: What are the rules for disposing of tashmish d'tashmishai kedushah and tashmish d'tashmishai mitzvah objects?

Discussion: This lowest category of ritual objects includes those items which are not directly involved in either the kedushah itself or in the direct performance of a mitzvah. The basic halachah holds that once these items are no longer fit for use, or once the mitzvah that they were used for is no longer applicable, they have no significance whatsoever and require no special method of disposal. It is still recommended by many poskim^[35], however, that in order to show honor and respect to a mitzvah, it is appropriate to dispose of these items in a dignified manner only.

The following items may be discarded in any manner, but it is recommended that they be disposed of with respect:

A Kiddush cup ("becher") — used for Kiddush and Havdalah only

A bimah ^[36]

A bimah cover, plastic

A bookcase (used exclusively for sifrei kodesh)^[37]

Candlesticks (used for Shabbos candles) and leftover wicks ^[38]

A Chanukah menorah^[39]

An esrog box

A Havdalah candle

Havdalah spices

A Lulav case and rings^[40]

The nails used to affix a mezuzah case to the doorpost^[41]

The paroches of an aron kodesh^[42]

Succah walls^[43] and decorations ^[44]

A Tallis gadol (without tzitzis)^[45]

A Tallis katan (without tzitzis)^[46]

A Tallis bag, velvet

A Tefillin bag, plastic

1.Megillah 26b.

2.See Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos, Lo Sa'aseh 65; Kiryas Sefer, Hilchos Sefer Torah and Chasam Sofer, O.C. 38.

3.Magen Avraham 154:9.

4.O.C. 154:5, as explained by Noda b'Yehudah, Tanina, O.C. 9; Binyan Tziyon 97; Aruch ha-Shulchan 154:8; Minchas Elazar 3:52; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:38; Tzitz Eliezer 15:8.

5.O.C. 154:5.

6.Marcheshes 1:53; Gesher ha-Chayim 33:3. This is the custom today; see Ginzei ha-Kodesh 15:7.

7.Peri Megadim, Eishel 154:9 (quoted by Mishnah Berurah 154:22). See also Mishnah Berurah 154:13, as explained by Tzedakah u'Mishpat 15, note 65.

- 8.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 6:26).
- 9.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav N. Karelitz (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 15:1).
- 10.Mishnah Berurah 154:22.
- 11.O.C. 154:5.
- 12.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav N. Karelitz (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 6:6). Other poskim require standard genizah only.
- 13.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav N. Karelitz (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 15:1); Kinyan Torah 3:47.
- 14.Mishnah Berurah 154:14.
- 15.O.C. 154:3.
- 16.See Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:135 and Ginzei ha-Kodesh 10:17.
- 17.Mishnah Berurah 154:10-11 — even if it is always protected by a plastic cover; see Piskei Teshuvos 154, note 49.
- 18.See Y.D. 276:9-10 for the seven Names of Hashem which require genizah.
- 19.O.C. 154:3.
- 20.Based on Mishnah Berurah 154:14 and Beur Halachah, s.v. v'davka. See also Mezuzos Beisecha 291:5 and Ginzei ha-Kodesh 6:21-22.
- 21.O.C. 154:3
- 22.Aruch ha-Shulchan 154:5.
- 23.Mishnah Berurah 40:4, 154:7; Chazon Ish, Y.D. 164:3.
- 24.Mishnah Berurah 40:4, 154:9; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Ginzei ha-Kodesh 8:10.
- 25.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav N. Karelitz (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 6:6).
- 26.Mishnah Berurah 154:7 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 7.
- 27.Minchas Elazar 1:27. In addition, anything made especially to honor an item of kedushah, such as an embroidered tefillin bag, is considered tashmischei kedushah even if it does not touch the kedushah itself; see Beur ha-Gra, Y.D. 282:33 and Mishnah Berurah 154:9 and 14.
- 28.O.C. 21:1. Indeed, many people are careful to burn their lulav (together with the chametz) for this reason.
- 29.Mishnah Berurah 21:6.
- 30.Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 664:20.
- 31.O.C. 677:4. It is customary to burn them and not discard them even in a respectful manner.
- 32.O.C. 21:1.
- 33.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 17:13).
- 34.Ibid.
- 35.See Kaf ha-Chayim 297:11 and Ginzei ha-Kodesh 20:5.
- 36.Kaf ha-Chayim 154:12; Tzedakah u'Mishpat 15, note 45. [Although Mishnah Berurah 154:10 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun seems to hold that a bimah requires standard genizah, he contradicts himself in 141:4.]
- 37.Mishnah Berurah 154:9 and most poskim. But some poskim consider a bookcase as tashmischei kedushah, and require genizah. In order to avoid the issue, it is recommended to “redeem” the bookcase, a process detailed in Mishnah Berurah 153:62; see Imrei Yosher 1:45; Chelkas Yaakov 3:162; Tzitz Eliezer 7:7.
- 38.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 19:12).
- 39.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 19:13).
- 40.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 18:20).
- 41.Chovas ha-Dor 1, note 43.
- 42.Mishnah Berurah 154:11.
- 43.Mishnah Berurah 21:6.
- 44.Rav C. Kanievsky (Ginzei ha-kodesh, pg. 270).
- 45.Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ginzei ha-Kodesh 17:13).
- 46.Ibid.

Candles (Melb) Friday 13 June 2025, 18 Sivan 5785 4.50p/5.52p