

לכבוד יצחק

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sukkos 5786

Fair Weather Friends

RABBI MENDY HERSON (Chabad.org)

You've probably heard about the Jewish holidays' shared theme: "They tried to kill us; we won; let's eat!"

Sure, the joke is inaccurate and shallow. But it brings out a valid point. There's something about crisis that awakens (many) people to higher values, to priorities, to G-d. So, throughout our history, a communal crisis often brought a spiritual awakening; and our joy in triumph was expressed in a holy-day, a day of gratitude to G-d.

On Chanukah, Purim and Passover we were threatened by various peoples, and Sukkot celebrates G-d's protection in the desert's untamed wilderness.

Yes, crises seem to be at the center of our holiday experiences.

What about a day when things seem to be going right?

Even in our personal lives, we may notice how emergencies give us a jarring wake-up call, prompting us to ask G-d for assistance and to reevaluate our priorities. And when there's an appreciable victory, we feel the gratitude.

But what about the other days?

What about a day when things seem to be going right? What about the day when I landed the promotion, my relationships are fluid, my bills are paid? What if it's just a normal day? What of a day with assorted stresses and pressures, but – thank G-d – no monumental crises?

What drives me to G-d then? Do I appreciate G-d then, amidst the success and the "normal"?

Hence Sukkot.

Yes, Sukkot celebrates G-d's protection in a time of extreme vulnerability, in the desert. But there's something more.

Our calendar has a spine of festivals – Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot – which are also framed in agricultural terms: Passover is the beginning of spring and the beginning of the barley harvest, Shavuot is the general Harvest Festival and Sukkot is the "Gathering [of the harvest from the fields]."

The Jews were protected in the desert as soon as they left Egypt, in the spring time. Yet the Torah postpones the celebration until the fall.

Perhaps this is a reason:

As the time for the communal gathering of the crops, Sukkot was, practically speaking, one's opportunity to soak in the rewards of a year's work. It was when you got your "bonus check"; a time when you were feeling good about yourself.

So at that time – specifically that time – the Torah guides us to appreciate G-d's consistent presence and protection. Not amidst crisis, but amidst plenty. When there may be less of an instinctive push.

May this be a year of Sukkot, when we rise to the challenge of appreciating G-d amidst the gifts which are certainly headed our way.

When Less is More

RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER (Ohr.edu)

Last year after some home improvements, I set out to buy some new boards to build the walls of my Succah (the temporary hut that Jews live in for seven days during the Festival of Sukkot). Not only had my Succah area doubled but, due to the way the construction had been done, the original boards that I had always used in the past were now too tall. So off I went to look for some new ones. Living in Jerusalem there was no problem finding cheap Succah boards for sale. In fact, the area that I ended up in seemed to consist of one carpentry shop after another, each storefront graced with a huge pile of boards ready to be carted away and built into someones Succah.

And that is when the trouble began.

Every board was exactly the same height. One of the reasons that they

were so cheap is because they were all of uniform dimensions, mass produced by a machine. Each one cut in exactly the same way and completely indistinguishable from the next. Which meant that for my needs they were all too tall.

At this point it really didn't occur to me that this might end up being a particularly difficult exercise. I approached one of the stores and asked the owner if he could cut boards for me according to my specifications. Nothing seemed to be a problem so I excitedly started explaining to him how many boards I needed and how tall they had to be. At first I rather naively thought that my boards, being about a third shorter than the ones being sold, were going to cost a third less than the going rate for the standard size, so you can imagine my amazement when the storekeeper quoted me a price that was almost double the regular price! Not wanting to pay any more than I had to I asked around in some of the other stores and, more or less, I got the same answer everywhere. It transpires that in the mysterious world of Succah boards less is actually more!

Not having any real alternative, I went back to the first store and made my order. A few days later I returned to collect my newly shortened boards, bring them home and begin the putting them all together.

It was, in my humble opinion, a very beautiful and spacious Succah. We enjoyed every moment that we spent in it. We ate all our meals in it, learned Torah in it, had lots of guests in it and we slept in it each night. My children especially enjoyed lying down on their camp beds in the darkness looking at the twinkling stars that peeked through the "holey" covering serving as a roof.

Late one night while I was sitting in the Succah it suddenly occurred to me that sometimes the world of Mitzvot (Commandments) and the world of Succah boards coincide with each other. We are commanded every year to leave our permanent homes and spend a week in a temporary abode. What is the reason? Among other things it is to instill in us an appreciation that ultimately almost everything in this physical world of ours is transient. That the only commodities that have eternal value are G-d's commandments. We pick ourselves up and leave the comfort and the safety of our homes to spend a week living that concept in its entirety so that when we finally move back into our homes at the end of Sukkot we are supposed to have absorbed that lesson.

Who doesn't want a beautiful residence? The Torah's description of such a dwelling is a house dedicated to fulfilling G-d's commandments. A home to invite guests to and introduce them to the indescribable grandeur of Shabbat and the Festivals. A place that is permeated with gemilut chasadim (kind deeds). That rings with the sound of Torah. Somewhere that serves as a magnet for those who want to taste and experience what it means to truly live the commandments.

What Sukkot and the Succah are teaching us is that to build such a palace requires that we take a "time out" from the physical world so that we can remember where all our blessings really come from. We divest ourselves of some of our material trappings so that we can recognize just how close we really are to G-d. For the whole week of Sukkot we leave the creature comforts behind for the "Spartan wilds" of our Succah and we bask in the knowledge that G-d is watching over us. Why bother? So that when we finally return to our homes it will be with the knowledge that G-d watches over us there as well.

What that means is that in the long run less really does become more!

United We Sit

RABBI LEVI AVTZON (Chabad.org)

Every holiday has a theme. And as is the case with everything Jewish, the nature of that theme is up for debate...

Some will classify Rosh Hashanah as the day when we re-elect G-d; others will define it as the "head of the year," when we make positive resolutions

for the coming year. Preaching at the pulpit, one rabbi will title Yom Kippur as the "day of atonement," while his colleague down the block will categorize it as the day when the soul is at one with G-d.

And they are all correct. Each holiday is multifaceted and can be tackled from as many angles as there are minds. Each Torah law has many explanations, each custom many reasons, and each holiday its own subjective meaning for each individual.

Not only are all the approaches true, but in essence they are all the same. Atonement and oneness are branches of the same tree. On Yom Kippur G-d shines His countenance on the world; this automatically erases all sins, and unites us with G-d. If you dig deep and delve into the details of each holiday, you will find an underlying theme common to all approaches.

Sukkot is no different. You need look no further than the Sukkot study section on this site to see the exemplification of "no two think alike." Different writers tackle the same issue – be it the Four Kinds, the sukkah, the joy, the unity – but each article has its uniqueness, its message, its character. No two are the same.

But at a second – deeper – glance, all the angles can be traced back to one unifying core: Unity. At the core of this holiday is the quest for oneness.

Let's take a look.

We bind four different types of vegetation, each representing a type of Jew, or a specific mode of serving G-d, and shake them together. Unity.

We all sit in the sukkah, unsheltered by our fancy houses and imaginary elitism, everybody squeezing together on a cranky old bench, while leaves fall into the soup and the cold chills us to the bone (okay, I overdid it a bit...). Unity.

We dance together at the Simchat Bet Hasho'evah, my sweaty hand locked in your sweaty hand, no one more important than the other, all joining in the collective joy of "one nation under one G-d." Unity.

Thousands of Chabad rabbis and students go out to the streets in Sukkah Mobiles to meet fellow Jews and offer them the opportunity to shake the Four Kinds ("Please don't shake them too hard!"), grab a bite in the sukkah, and just have a nice friendly chat ("You're from Australia? How awesome! I have a cousin there. Do you know him?"). Unity.

At the core of the almost seven billion human beings walking the beautiful earth is a quest for unity: unity and harmony within ourselves, unity with our fellows and environment, and unity with our Creator. This quest can be covered with dust, concealed by hate and stigma, obscured by ego, and masked by bloodshed—but the quest never dies, and never will die until we bring peace and harmony to our world.

For seven days a year we dedicate ourselves to bringing unity to our world. On this holiday, united we sit.

An Antidote to a World Gone Mad

SLOVIE JUNGREIS-WOLFF (Aish.com)

Who could imagine that the atrocities of October 7th would bring tens of thousands around the world to march in support of such barbarism? Israel is attacked, men, women and children are slaughtered, and innocent victims and wounded are blamed.

Hamas took 250 hostages to Gaza after raping, burning, and killing 1200, yet it is Israel who is being accused of a war that Hamas started. Hezbollah terrorists launched 80,000 missiles, rockets and drones in the last year, and drove 60,000 Israelis from their homes near the border. Hassan Nasrallah, known to be a bloodthirsty terrorist, is killed by Israeli forces while the New York Times paints him as a "powerful orator, beloved, who helped provide social services for Lebanon".

This is the man who proclaimed that if all Jews gathered in Israel it would save Hezbollah and Muslims the trouble of going after them worldwide. He called Jews the "descendants of apes and pigs" and promised to destroy them in the name of Allah. In order to finance terrorism, he saw Hezbollah become one of the largest drug-trafficking and narco-terrorist groups in the world. This is the darling figure being mourned?

Not a week goes by that I do not hear from a student or parent whose child has faced harassment, threats and ugly antisemitism on campus while professors and administrators turn a blind eye. Universities meant to educate have become hotbeds of hatred. Jews are thought of as "privileged", ignoring thousands of years of persecution and racism. Like a cancer, this anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist, new-fangled antisemitism has become vogue amongst keffiyeh-wearing students and professors alike. Our world has gone mad.

Where can we find serenity?

The holiday of Sukkot offers an antidote to the ills we are facing.

SHELTER OF FAITH

The sukkah takes us outside, under the stars. We abandon our homes, our daily comforts, and find protection in the "Sukkah of Peace". In a world where truth and security seem to be vanishing, let us find serenity within the walls of the sukkah.

Sukkot lifts us to a higher world. Sit inside your sukkah and recall the Clouds of Glory that accompanied the Children of Israel in the desert after leaving the slavery in Egypt. As a symbol of their newfound intimate relationship with G-d, they were surrounded by G-d's shelter. The Jewish nation

discovered that they were beloved, raised up from a life of pain and misery. Many of us have been grappling with fear, sadness and anxiety. How did we suffer the worst tragedy since the Holocaust? Are Jews safe in America? Will the next generation endure?

Sukkot reminds us that we each have our own personal Clouds of Glory in our lives. We can recapture that feeling of closeness with G-d. Yes, we are grieving. We have endured the bitter taste of persecution and hatred that has left us reeling. But at the same time, we are standing tall and proud. Our comfort comes not from material things in our homes but from the magic within our souls.

In the midst of all the darkness, we have seen the light of a spiritual awakening. Jews who had never thought about it now adorn their necks with Stars of David. Many have asked to discover Jewish wisdom, join others at a Shabbat meal, or kindle a Shabbat candle for the very first time. A connection has been ignited. Pride comes not from our possessions, but rather from knowing who we are and where we came from.

If we've learned one thing this past year, it's how precious life is. Sukkot gives us the opportunity to leave behind our "stuff" – the material pleasures, the incessant accumulation, the never-ending stream of posts, pings and texts, and to focus on what truly matters in life – the connection with our family, friends and with the Divine.

Think about how many mothers and fathers are waiting for their children to come home. How many sons and daughters cry themselves to sleep imagining hearing their parent's voice? What they would not give for one more kiss, one more hug, and one more chance to say "I love you."

Sukkot is called "the holiday of joy." Our journey this past year has been filled with heartache. While the sorrow remains, we must find room now for solace. The Jewish people are a nation of love. We build our world through lovingkindness. This past year I have met many Jews who may look different from me, think differently from me, but we have discovered that we are family. This has been the experience of countless of people who have opened their hearts to brothers and sisters they never knew existed.

This Sukkot, experience the joy that comes when we are surrounded by the shelter of faith, of trust and of love, when we are connected spiritually as one nation.

The Great Equalizer

RABBI YAAKOV MENKEN (Torah.org)

"You shall dwell in Sukkos for seven days; every member of Israel shall dwell in Sukkos. In order that you know, for all generations, that I placed the Children of Israel to dwell in Sukkos, when I took them out of the Land of Egypt; I am HaShem your G-d." [23:32-33]

In what "Sukkos," or booths, did G-d place the Children of Israel? Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) quotes from the Talmud: this refers to the Clouds of Glory, which surrounded and protected the Jewish nation during their forty years in the desert.

The holiday of Sukkos reminds us that we are not self-reliant. This is the time of year when people pack up and move inside, and (in agricultural communities) celebrate their good harvest — like Thanksgiving in the United States. At exactly this time, G-d tells us that we must move out of our homes, and live underneath an all-natural, unfinished roof that doesn't even fully block the sun. Sukkos is a great equalizer — whether rich or poor, we are all living under the same incomplete roof of "schach."

Instead of celebrating our good fortune, or worrying about a bad crop, we celebrate our unique relationship with HaShem and the protection which He gives us. Like the Jews in the desert, surrounded by the Clouds of Glory, we declare that it is not our houses, our own resources, which sustain us.

While we were sitting in his Sukkah, Rabbi Moshe Silberberg pointed out the following: when the sun is shining, and everything is bright, then we look up — and it doesn't seem as if there is too much schach. It is there, but we do not recognize it so much. But at night, when things are dark — that's when you look up, and you really see the schach.

In the best of times, and even more so in the worst, may we always merit to recognize G-d's protection!

A Look Ahead

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.org)

The history of our nation is linked with Pesach. Many of our mitzvot—mezuzah, tefillin, Shabbat, honest weights, the prohibition of charging interest—are directly related to our Egyptian experience. There is an obligation to recall the Exodus on a daily basis and to relive that event once a year at the Seder. Sukkot seems like a minor festival in comparison.

While we spend weeks if not more preparing for Pesach, Sukkot gets short shrift. With the focus on the introspective days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, our preparation tends to begin a few days beforehand. While the Shulchan Aruch notes that 30 days before Pesach we inquire and expound about the festival, the building of the Sukkah is actually the last law recorded of the laws of Yom Kippur. Only after Yom Kippur is over do we begin building our Sukkah. The supremacy of Pesach is further demonstrated by its much wider observance amongst the general community and the (often excessive) meticulousness with which the observant community prepares for the festival.

The story of the Exodus is described in great detail in the Torah; contrast that to Sukkoth, where the Talmudic rabbis debate why we are actually obligated to sit in the Sukkah. Such a debate arises only because the Torah never actually makes mention of us actually dwelling in Sukkot in the desert. The only reference to Sukkot is the command of the Torah to dwell in the sukkah, with the purpose of its commemoration not clearly spelled out.

Yet in many ways, it is Sukkot that is the more significant holiday.

The holiday of Pesach is rooted in the past: “So that you will remember the day you left Egypt, all the days of your life” (Devarim 15:3). Sukkot, on the other hand, looks to the future: “So that your future generations will know that through Sukkot, I redeemed the Jewish people when I took them out of Egypt; I am the Lord your G-d” (Vayikra 23:43). While we come from a glorious past, the more important quest is to help shape an even more glorious future.

Looking forward should be the natural result of the Yamim Noraim, where our focus has been on the past, the wrongs we have committed over the course of time. Teshuva begins with acknowledging the wrongs we have done in the past, but can only be completed with the resolve to do and be better in the future. As we cannot change the past, we can only pray that our teshuva is accepted; but what will be in the future is, to a large extent, in our own hands.

It is really Egypt that was the birthplace of our nation, and the Torah reminds us over and over again that our sojourn there is meant to teach us to be sensitive to the stranger. We may have originated in Egypt, but our destination is Israel. But it is Sukkot that focuses on the land of Israel, where (thankfully) both the present and the future history of the Jewish people will be made. The Sukkah itself marks our long journey—both past and present—towards the land, and the lulav, etrog, hadas and arava celebrate the bounty of that land.

With Pesach rooted in our past, the Torah commands us to “remember” Pesach; but regarding Sukkot, our future generations must “know” the holiday. It is knowledge that gives us the power and ability to mold our future. While memory is crucial, without knowledge, memory can lead to inertia and frustration with this present that may not match our sometimes-faulty memories.

Our Talmudic sages “codified” many of the laws of chinuch, of education, in masechet (tractate) Sukkah. They were well aware that it is the education we give our children that will determine the success of our future. May we merit educating them well.

The Four Species: A Personality Map of Sukkot

DEVORA LEVY (Aish.com 29-9-25)

Sukkot is a holiday full of joy, gratitude, and connection—and it comes with one of the most visually striking mitzvot in Judaism: the Four Species. Every year, five days after Yom Kippur, we gather the lulav (palm branch), etrog (citron), hadasim (myrtle), and aravot (willow) and wave them in all directions.

The Four Species serves as a deep mirror into our own personalities and the people around us, with each one representing a different type of person—and a different part of yourself.

THE LULAV – THE THINKER

Tall, straight, and unyielding, the lulav is the logical one. Like a spine holding the body together, these thinkers plan, build, and create order in the chaos. They’re the problem-solvers, the spreadsheet-makers, the ones who level the sukkah walls twice just to make sure they’re sturdy. They keep things steady when everything else feels wobbly.

THE ETROG – THE HEART

Shaped like a heart and glowing with vitality, the etrog represents the emotional, passionate people in our lives—and in ourselves. They’re the connectors, the ones who care deeply, love openly, and remind us why relationships matter. They’re the friends who show up with soup when you’re sick, or who get teary-eyed at a wedding. Their warmth infuses life with meaning.

THE HADASIM – THE EXPLORER

The myrtle’s tiny leaves are said to resemble the eyes, always searching, always curious. These are the seekers—the questioners, the learners, the ones who probe beneath the surface to understand the world in all its complexity. They’re the people asking “But why?” at the Shabbat table, or diving into books and ideas, never satisfied with shallow answers.

THE ARAVOT – THE COMMUNICATOR

The willow’s soft, flexible branches are all about expression. These are the storytellers and connectors, the ones whose words bring people together and whose ideas come alive only when shared. They’re the friend who keeps the group chat buzzing, the relative who starts the singing in the sukkah, the person who makes sure nobody feels left out.

A PERSONALITY MAP

Forget BuzzFeed quizzes—Judaism had its own ancient personality test. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 30:12) teaches that each species corresponds to a part of the body: the lulav to the spine, the etrog to the heart, the hadasim to the eyes, and the aravot to the lips. Together, they symbolize the whole person serving G-d.

The species also represent different kinds of Jews. Some shine in Torah learning, others in good deeds; some radiate deep faith, others express sincerity in simple acts. The mitzvah isn’t to wave them separately but to bind them together. Why? Because no Jew is whole without the others.

And on a personal level, the Four Species remind us that none of us is one-dimensional. We’re all a mix of logic, heart, curiosity, and communication. Recognizing this not only helps us understand ourselves but also teaches us to appreciate the people who balance us out.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The magic of the mitzvah is that we never wave these species alone. Each has its role, and only together do they create harmony. Think of a Sukkot meal: the planner who organizes the seating (lulav), the heart who fills the table with warmth (etrog), the explorer who sparks deep conversations (hadasim), and the communicator who keeps the stories flowing (aravot). Alone, each one is incomplete. Together, they make the night.

So this Sukkot, as you wave the lulav and etrog, let it be a reminder that life—and people—are beautifully complex. Celebrate your own mix of logic, heart, curiosity, and expression. Appreciate those around you who bring qualities you lack.

And remember: unity doesn’t come from sameness—it comes from weaving differences together.

The Multiculturalism Debate

RABBI NAFTALI SILBERBERG (Chabad.org)

An ongoing debate in many Western societies today revolves around the value of multiculturalism versus the importance of assimilating the various groups and segments which constitute a society into a homogeneous entity. As is the case with the majority of widely debated issues, both sides of this particular polemic bring valid points and convincing arguments to the discussion table.

On one hand, a society is enriched by diversity and exposure to a variety of cultures, languages and value systems. Coercing elements of society to conform to a particular mold—no matter how splendid that mold may be—is an attempt to stifle the soul of that element, and anathema to a culture that prides itself in allowing freedom of expression. As Kabbalah teaches, true beauty results from the harmonization of diverse colors and flavors.

On the other hand, the smooth functionality of a nation depends largely on a united population that feels a strong kinship with one another.

Diverse segments of a population which are constantly competing with each other make for an unhealthy society. Globally, much violence and strife, and many civil wars, result from tensions between co-citizens of rivaling religions, values or ethnicities. Thus, the acculturation of a nation’s citizens might sound harsh and nationalistic, but is actually the key to a unified society, and ultimately a stable one.

The Jewish nation is also demographically diverse: Ashkenazim, Sephardim, chassidim, observant, not-so-observant, scholars, laymen, men, women, etc. We, too, struggle with the issue of forging a multicultural population into a singular nation. Sociologists attempting to resolve the “melting pot issue” would perhaps be well-advised to examine the Torah’s perspective on *e pluribus unum*.

We are now ushering in the holiday of Sukkot. The two primary mitzvot of this holiday are dwelling in the sukkah and the taking of the Four Kinds. Jewish unity is one of the primary themes of this holiday, and these two mitzvot are symbolic of two approaches to Jewish unity; the sukkah champions the cause of Jewish nationalism and focuses on our nation as a homogeneous unit, while the Four Kinds symbolize the importance of “Jewish multiculturalism.”

We sit in a sukkah in commemoration of the clouds of glory which miraculously encircled the Jewish people while they traveled in the desert. The clouds did not differentiate between one Jew and another—all were equal beneficiaries of their shade and protection. We, too, sit together in a sukkah as a symbol of our unity. We focus on that which unites us—our common values, mission, and souls—rather than that which divides us. We leave behind our differences and unite behind one flag.

The Four Kinds, however, tell a different story. According to the Midrash, the four different species represent different sorts of Jews, spanning the spectrum from the most observant and scholarly to the simplest of our people. Nevertheless we take the Four Kinds and hold them together, because we are one people despite the differences. But as opposed to the sukkah, this mitzvah doesn’t attempt to achieve unity by ignoring our differences; rather it points out the differences, embraces them and secures our unity in spite of them.

This is because unity achieved at the expense of disregarding our unique personalities and strengths is a flawed unity.

Unity achieved at the expense of disregarding our unique personalities and strengths is a flawed unity

It means that the unity is very limited, limited to our shared goals and souls. Our daily lives which are so colored by our unique personalities remain unaffected by the sukkah-style unity.

But without the type of unity advocated by the sukkah, the multicultural

approach of the Four Kinds would not succeed. For without an underlying unifying factor, diverse people have nothing to rally around. The Four Kinds is an endeavor to build on the unity of the sukkah by injecting our individual personalities with our pervading unity; by devoting our assorted strengths, talents and natures to perpetuating the ideals that unite us; by recognizing that the different pieces of the puzzle may look dissimilar, but are all there to complete one picture.

Somebody's a Nobody

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

One of the most joyous customs associated with the holiday of Sukkos is the celebration of Simchas Bais Hashoavevah. In the times of the Bais HaMikdash, a water libation accompanied the customary offerings. Simchas Bais Hashoavevah, literally, the Joy of the Water Drawing, was observed with a most ebullient celebration. It included a marvellously varied array of harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets, among other instruments. The greatest sages and most pious of rabbis performed acrobatics and antics that would have normally been below their dignity. In fact, the sages in Tractate Sukkah 51, note that, "one who has not seen the celebration of the Bais Hashoavevo has never seen true joy."

Rambam (Maimonides) discusses this aspect of exuberance and adds that "one who in his insolence restrains himself from serving Hashem in a joyous manner is a sinner and fool." Yet the Rambam adds a caveat. "But this joy was not performed by the ignorant ones and by anyone who wanted (to dance). Only the great sages of Israel, the heads of Yeshivos and the Sanhedrin, the pious, the elders and men of righteous action would dance, clap, and sing in the Bais haMikdash on Sukkos. Everyone else, men and women would come to watch and listen" (Rambam Hilchos Lulav 8:14).

This passage begs explanation. Why shouldn't everyone, even the most profane of men, sing and dance and make merry in celebration of the L-rd? Further what does the Rambam mean by not including "those who want to dance"?

Ultimately, anyone who ended up dancing, even the most pious of sages, obviously wanted to dance. What, then, does he Rambam mean when he said that this joy was not performed by anyone who wanted to dance? A classic story circulates in all Jewish humor anthologies.

Before the start of the Ne'eilah service, the holiest and final supplication of Yom Kippur, the rabbi rose from his seat and bolted toward the Holy Ark. He spread his hands toward heaven and cried out, "Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, I am a total nothing before you! Please inscribe me in the book of life!"

All of a sudden the chazzan (cantor) ran toward the Aron and joined the rabbi! "G-d Almighty," he shouted, "please forgive me, too, for I am truly a nothing before you!" There is an awed silence amongst the congregants.

The shammas (sexton) then followed suit. He, too, ran up toward the ark and in tearful supplication pronounced, "I too am a nothing!"

Mouths around the congregation dropped open. The President of the synagogue's men's club, Ed Goldstein, a large man, was also caught up in the fervor of the moment. Suddenly, he, too, bolted from his seat in the back, and lumbered toward the front of the shul. With great eagerness he prostrated himself in front of the Ark and cried out at the top of his lungs. "Forgive me Oh L-rd he shouts, for I too am a nothing! Suddenly a shout from the back of the synagogue was directed toward Goldstein's hulk of a figure. It shouted with incredulity. "Harrumph! Look who thinks he's a nothing!"

Rambam teaches us that whoever runs to dance and sing and make himself crazy is not truly lowering himself before the Almighty. If someone inherently likes to cavort wildly, then he is not dancing for the sake of lowering himself before the Almighty, rather he is having a wonderful time. When King David liberated the Aron (Ark of the Covenant) from the Phillistines, he danced in front of it as if he were a lowly slave. When confronted by his wife, Michal, for dancing like a servant, he retorted. "I would make myself even lower before Hashem."

When rejoicing during the festivities we must bear in mind our true reasons for enthusiasm — who we are, and why we dance. Because in order to be a nobody, you gotta be a somebody.

THE JOY OF EXILE

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Since Sukkos is not celebrating a specific event in time – unlike Pesach and Shavuot – why was it set to take place a few days after Yom Kippur and not at a different time?

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 1:653) suggests that Sukkos is the completion of the Yom Kippur cycle. Should the Jews warrant exile for their behaviour in the past year, being forced to live in a Sukkah outside of their houses would take the place of exile.

The question is asked, why do we have a Mah Nishstana on Pesach – where the children ask about the differences at the Seder – and no equivalent on Sukkos? After all, on Sukkos we are actually forced to leave our homes and eat in a temporary shack exposed to the elements? Shouldn't that be sufficient cause for perplexity and questioning? The classic answer is that being evicted from one's home was not

something unusual for the Jewish people. At some stage, every Jewish child would have experienced being driven from their homes, so Sukkos was nothing to see here.

But if Sukkos does represent Exile, why is it a time of joy?

Despite the oppression, the unrelenting attacks, the discrimination and the Jew hatred, we have always been able to escape to the Sukkah and thrive there. We are so comfortable with the Sukkah that it does not even raise an eyebrow. It has become a symbol of our success in the face of diversity.

This why contemporary Jews, despite all that has been thrown at them, do not claim to be victims but survivors, we don't look for handouts but for opportunities to chart our own destinies and excel.

What greater source of joy is there?

News & Views

German Police Arrest 3 Suspected Hamas Operatives Over 'Assassination' Plots Targeting Jews

MATTHEW XIAO (FreeBeacon.com 3-10-25)

German police on Wednesday arrested three suspected Hamas members for allegedly procuring weapons to carry out "assassinations targeting Israeli or Jewish institutions," according to a CNN report.

Prosecutors said the suspects, arrested in Berlin, "have been involved in procuring firearms and ammunition" for the terrorist group Hamas since at least this summer, CNN reported. Authorities have charged the three individuals with membership in a foreign terrorist organization and preparing an act of violence endangering the state.

The suspects—two German citizens and one born in Lebanon—are scheduled to appear in court on Thursday. Their arrests came just a day before Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

During the arrests, officials discovered "various weapons, including an AK-47 assault rifle and several pistols, and a considerable amount of ammunition," prosecutors said.

This is not the first time that German authorities have investigated suspected Hamas operatives. In February, four men arrested in a joint German-Dutch operation went on trial in Berlin, accused of plotting attacks on Jewish institutions across Europe and of working under the direction of Hamas leaders.

President Donald Trump has likewise cracked down on anti-Semitism, which surged in the United States following Hamas's Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel. The Trump administration has withheld billions in federal funding from universities that fail to protect Jewish students on campus and revoked visas of foreign nationals linked to anti-Semitic activity.

Antisemites love to attack on Yom Kippur

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 3-10-25)

On Yom Kippur, a British citizen born in Syria decided to murder Jews gathered outside a synagogue in Manchester.

There is little doubt that he chose this day specifically for that purpose.

But other antisemites were busy on Yom Kippur as well.

The "Sumud Flotilla" scheduled its arrival in Israeli waters to occur on Yom Kippur.

It was also not a coincidence. One ostensibly Jewish member of the flotilla, David Adler, said this explicitly: "I believe that the timing of our flotilla is not coincidental. On the contrary, I believe it is a blessing that we are approaching interception at the onset of Yom Kippur — our annual day of atonement — which calls on us to reflect on our sins, and what can be done to repair them in the spirit of tikkun olam."

In Manchester, the site of the terror attack, there was a mass demonstration in support of the flotilla. They held a "moment of silence" not for the synagogue victims but for the members of the flotilla who were "kidnapped." But the demonstration was planned ahead of time - meaning that Yom Kippur was always planned to be the day the flotilla arrived along with protests.

There were also planned Yom Kippur demonstrations in Edinburgh and London, as well as pro-flotilla protests in Paris, Berlin, The Hague, Tunis, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Krakow, New York, Barcelona (windows smashed), and Athens.

In Italy alone:

In Rome, a procession promoted by student collectives marched from the Sapienza University to the Colosseum. In Milan the State University was occupied, in Lecce that of Salento, in the universities of Bologna and Pisa the Rectorates were blocked. In Padua and Venice classes were interrupted. Also in the capital, tension at the Caravillani art school, which has a shared entrance with a Jewish temple. Three students with megaphones chanted slogans for Palestine and some people who were in the temple walked out. A heated argument ensued, culminating in shoving. Dozens were identified, from both groups.

But those were not the only events that antisemites planned for Yom Kippur.

The University of Maryland Student Government Association passed a sweeping BDS resolution on Wednesday night, at the onset of Yom Kippur.

They had previously tried to pass the resolution on Rosh Hashanah. Don't forget Hamas. While Hamas has not been firing too many rockets lately, they chose Yom Kippur to launch five rockets from Gaza toward the Israeli city of Ashdod.

The Jew-haters remember the surprise attack on the Yom Kippur War, and that emboldens them every year to use the Jewish holiday as the best day for them to attack Jews and Israel.

The Evil Intent to Destroy Israel

NILS A. HAUG (GateStonelinstitute.org 3-10-25)

There are no longer gray areas in the implied intent of major Western nations, such as France, Spain, Portugal, Canada, the UK, Australia and others, to isolate or destroy Israel.

Hamas and associated jihadist murderers are not Israel's primary enemies; rather, Israel's real enemies are its purported allies – those Western powers seeking its demise by legitimizing a terror-dominated Palestinian state alongside, and within, the borders of the world's only Jewish homeland. Ironically, these are the countries Israel is defending as it fights a seven-front war, sacrificing nearly a thousand of its heroic soldiers. Israel is defending these Western nations against an invasion that President Donald J. Trump clearly warned is "not sustainable":

"You're destroying your countries.... Europe is in serious trouble. They've been invaded by a force of illegal aliens like nobody's ever seen before. Illegal aliens are pouring into Europe, and nobody's doing anything to change it, to get them out. It's not sustainable. And because they choose to be politically correct, they're doing just absolutely nothing about it....

"Now they want to go to Sharia law, but you're in a different country, you can't do that. Both the immigration and their suicidal energy ideas will be the death of Western Europe if something is not done immediately. This cannot be sustained. What makes the world so beautiful is that each country is unique, but to stay this way, every sovereign nation must have the right to control their own borders.... as we do now, and to limit the sheer numbers of migrants entering their countries and paid for by the people of that nation that were there and that built that particular nation at the time. They put their blood, sweat, tears, money into that country, and now they're being ruined....

"Proud nations must be allowed to protect their communities and prevent their societies from being overwhelmed by people they have never seen before with different customs, religions, with different everything. Where migrants have violated laws, lodged false asylum claims or claimed refugee status for illegitimate reasons, they should, in many cases, be immediately sent home. And while we will always have a big heart for places and people that are struggling and truly compassionate, answers will be given. We have to solve the problem and we have to solve it in their countries, not create new problems in our countries."

With Europe's major powers recognizing an independent Palestinian state at the United Nations General Assembly on September 23; and with the burden of sanctions to various degrees, coupled with a ban or restrictions on sales of weapons and munitions by hitherto allies, Israel stands almost alone – except for the current US administration.

Raging against Israel are those hypocritical, self-righteous, self-seeking, egocentric, cowardly leaders: Emmanuel Macron (France), Keir Starmer (UK), Anthony Albanese (Australia), Mark Carney (Canada), Pedro Sanchez (Spain) and their ilk, seemingly without an ounce of integrity between them, supporting an avowed genocidal death cult that publicly expresses the desire to murder all Jews, Christians, and other "infidels," and take down the West.

Israel faces enemies from all fronts, not excluding many Israelis. Who stands against Israel's leaders and elected government? Large numbers of mainly leftist-elite Jews, both in Israel and in the diaspora, who seek to topple Israel's duly elected government, while thousands of able draft-age haredi men males of the refuse to join the military – at a time when hundreds of their compatriots have been killed to protect them, their families, and the nation itself.

Islamists around the world in the millions seek Israel's death and destruction; Western leaders do not care if Israel survives or not – and from their recent actions apparently would prefer if it did not. Western leaders, from their actions in selling out Israel's security to its enemies, look as if they do not care if any Jews survive. After all, Europe has few Jews (0.2% of the continent's population) in the overall scheme of things.

Rather than supporting Israel as it fights not only for its own survival but to defend the values of the West, Macron, Starmer, Sanchez, Carney, Albanese and Co. vote for a Palestinian state within Israel – to the detriment not only of Israel's safety and security, but their own. If you do not want to fight the invasions in your own countries, at least stand aside and do not obstruct someone else doing it for you. These feckless so-called leaders even fail to protect their own Jewish citizens from domestic terror. By so acting, and by legalizing Islamic Sharia law, they are oozing toward complete submission to the Islamist hordes they have encouraged to reside in their midst. In this way, as Trump cautioned, they are actively destroying their own nations and Western civilization itself.

The forthright journalist Melanie Phillips queried: "Are these people wicked or just very, very stupid?" Initially, fair-minded people gave these "leaders" the benefit of the doubt. However, with their recent actions against Israel on the world stage, it has become obvious that they cannot simply be written off as stupid or naive. Some are highly educated and intelligent. The only explanation is that they possibly do have evil intent. They did not even bother to make their recognition of a non-existent Palestinian state conditional on Hamas releasing the hostages.

At best they might be regarded as worthless. A supine NATO does not even appear willing to invest anything other than pious words into helping Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky oppose Russia's outright acts of war against Estonia, Denmark and Poland. Their actions are probably designed, as in World War II, just to hunker down against adversaries and appease domestic Islamists, even though these newcomers to Europe have publicly sworn to murder Jews and burn them alive if possible – just as Hamas did to not only to Jews but also to Arabs and others on October 7, 2023.

Insofar as Jews are concerned, the upshot of the compromised consciences of these major European leaders is that, as Israel's Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli made clear:

"The streets of Europe are once again not safe for Jews. Many of its leaders, instead of showing courage, show cowardice. Instead of standing with the truth, they stand with Palestinian propaganda falsehoods. Instead of standing with those who were attacked, they stand with those who launched a barbaric assault."

Naturally, Hamas and other Islamist fanatics are overjoyed at the UN resolution recognizing their terror state of Palestine as independent. In this way they have, in the main, achieved their aims and been rewarded for the murderous onslaught on October 7, murdering defenseless babies, boys, girls, the elderly and infirm, while carting others off to tunnel dungeons as hostages and playthings. The message sent to the terrorists is: Terrorism works, so keep doing it!

"The Palestinian national movement, Fatah and Hamas wings alike, largely has shown itself to be committed to Israel's debilitation and destruction, not to a peaceful two-state solution," notes Israeli columnist David M. Weinberg.

Whereas the Western leaders in question could, once upon a time, be excused as having a degree of "moral ambiguity," this excuse can no longer apply. Obviously, they are not honest brokers. "They want a Palestinian state," wrote Israeli political analyst Avi Abelow in a September 22 column, "not because they care about Arabs, but because they can't stand a proud, strong Jewish state that defends itself."

Turning to address Starmer, Albanese and Carney, Abelow scathingly writes: "Thank you for making it crystal clear that the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia now stand with a genocidal death cult. That they reward the barbaric atrocities of Oct. 7, 2023, with diplomatic prizes. That morality, memory and justice have been officially sacrificed on the altar of Jew-hatred, woke politics and Islamic appeasement.

"Let's stop pretending this has anything to do with peace, rights or law. Starmer's plan is not about 'justice.' It's not about a 'two-state solution.' It's not even about Palestinians. It's about one thing only: Punishing the Jewish people for surviving."

Sadly, suicidally, it is also about appeasing their radical Islamist voters – who will probably reciprocate, as Trump noted, by wanting more.

Despite much of the world harboring animosity towards the Jews, possibly out of envy for having had the audacity, through hard work, to do so well – who else has turned deserts and malaria swamps into a thriving state? – the Jews and their ancestral homeland of Israel shall survive.

Should Israel fear UN resolutions?

MOSHE PHILLIPS (Sept. 29, 2025 / JNS)

The U.N. General Assembly voted this month to endorse a scheme that French Ambassador Jérôme Bonnafont said "lays out a single roadmap to deliver the two-state solution."

Why? Because many world leaders apparently want to punish Israeli voters for keeping Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader they preferred, and his coalition, in office.

But does the U.N. vote really matter at all? Keep in mind that this resolution will have no practical impact since the world body has no way to enforce it. The real purpose of the resolution is to intimidate Israel and its supporters to make more concessions, and not to eradicate Hamas, as has been an official war aim of the Israeli government ever since the terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Should we take this vote seriously? And should Netanyahu, who is himself a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations?

In a dismissive remark in March 1955, David Ben-Gurion, then Israel's defense minister, employed the Hebrew acronym "Um" for the United Nations and added a pejorative, "Um-Shmum." He used the Yiddish idiom to convey casual dismissal during a cabinet debate regarding his plan to take the Gaza Strip from Egypt in response to increasing cross-border terrorist attacks on Israel. He understood that the Jewish state had to act to

safeguard its national security, regardless of whether that made the Jewish state unpopular at the United Nations.

That's why in his time, Ben-Gurion took such steps as the construction of Israel's nuclear reactor in Dimona; the capture and trial of top Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann (condemned by the U.N. Security Council in its Resolution 138 on June 1960, which targeted Israel for a violation of Argentina's sovereignty by Israel for seizing Eichmann who Argentina had been harboring); and the imposition of strict security measures on Arabs within Israel's borders.

Ben-Gurion also recognized the inherent moral weakness of the United Nations. Every country—no matter how oppressive or bellicose—has the same voting power in the U.N. General Assembly as an enlightened, peaceful and democratic state. One country, one vote.

Genocidal Sudan is equal to progressive Mexico.

Misogynistic Saudi Arabia is equal to egalitarian Belgium.

A country where black Africans are enslaved, such as Mauritania, is equal to a country that has rescued black Africans (from Ethiopia and Sudan), such as Israel.

A country ruled by a king, such as Jordan, is equal to a country run by a democratically elected president or prime minister.

The U.N. Security Council is equally problematic. Russia, which has spent years in a war against Ukraine to grab some of its territory, and China, which arms terrorist regimes and genocide-perpetrators around the world, enjoy the same veto power as the other permanent members of the Security Council: France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Furthermore, every country, no matter how oppressive or undemocratic, gets its turn among the Security Council's 10 non-permanent seats.

Many nations cast their votes not on the basis of what is right or wrong or what is just or unjust, but rather, according to their narrow interests, their fear of increases in Arab oil prices or their Marxist principles.

This U.N. resolution on Palestinian Arab statehood is simply a moral farce. Those who voted in favor did not consider whether such a state would be a democracy or a dictatorship; whether or not "Palestine" would endanger Israel; or what the Palestinian Authority's track record reveals about how a Palestinian state would behave. And that's if the P.A. can keep Hamas from expelling it from power.

Such real-world considerations have no place in the absurd, upside-down fantasy world in which the United Nations dwells. That's why whenever some resolution at the world body targets Israel, one thing Israelis and their friends should do is recall the simple wisdom of Ben-Gurion: "Um-Shmum!" Danny Danon, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, has said that "this one-sided declaration will not be remembered as a step toward peace, only as another hollow gesture that weakens this assembly's credibility." He is right.

National suicide should not be an option anywhere

SHMUEL KATZ (JNS.org 30-9-25)

Radical Islam's deceptive double talk, associated with financial and political pressure, combined with a variety of self-serving, malicious allies, is placing the international community on a trajectory of self-destruction, which is supported by ignorant and oblivious populations and leaders.

This introduction may appear very harsh, but unfortunately, the reality is even worse. Today, we can see major leaders of the free world neglecting obvious signs of these dangerous trends.

Instead of uniting to save their own countries from this obvious trouble, these leaders are supporting terror organizations in their efforts to undermine their own societies and are trying to prevent their traditional and reliable partner, the State of Israel, from defending itself from the aggressive and deceptive terror organization, Hamas, and its master manipulators, Qatar, and the head of the snake, Iran.

Hamas has openly and repeatedly announced that it will try it "again and again" to destroy the State of Israel, while Iran calls Israel "the Little Satan" and the United States "the Big Satan."

When Qatar pours billions of dollars into a variety of educational institutions around the world, it is not doing it for altruistic motivations.

When Qatar is showing great generosity in business dealings, it is not doing it to build up a better future for both parties.

When Qatar hosts major leaders of terror organizations, who stole billions of dollars from their own people, it is not doing it out of an obligation to achieve justice.

When Qatar is negotiating in bad faith a pseudo-peace agreement with terrorists, it is not doing it as an honest broker.

When we read carefully between the lines, we can see clearly a carefully planned process aimed at advancing deliberately and deceptively, the ideological goals of the Muslim Brotherhood, to expand the rule of Islam across the globe, at the expense of everybody else.

When the current leaders of Iran are building an atomic infrastructure, they are not planning to develop only an additional source of energy for domestic consumption. They are aiming at building atomic bombs that will provide them with a dangerous military protective umbrella.

When Iran builds long-range ballistic missiles, it is not building them only to target the tiny State of Israel, but to target Europe and the U.S.

When Iran is sponsoring terror organizations across the globe, it is not trying to provide them with benign social services, but is doing so to build up its own international influential network to advance its radical ideology across the globe, including in Asia, Africa, North and South America, Australia and Europe.

When Iran is oppressing their own population and their neighboring states, it clearly shows that nobody is safe from its self-serving, power-hungry ideology.

When Iran is building alliances with China, Russia and North Korea, it is not for peaceful purposes.

As too many countries across the globe are facing a major increase in their legal and illegal immigration of individuals, it is becoming obvious that many immigrants are not willing to blend into the new societies, nor to accept the traditions of their newly-found countries. Instead, they are trying to force their own customs and traditions on their new states.

Responsible leaders should identify this situation as a serious problem and try to address it wisely. I do not know what the reason for this obvious neglect is. Is it related to pure bribery? Is it related to misguided political consideration? Is it related to the physical threat that they are facing? Is it related to promises of eventual future compensation?

One thing is obvious: if we want to have a better future for all, evil must be identified, exposed, marginalized and eventually eliminated.

If we want to assure a peaceful tomorrow, we must pay serious attention to implementing a solid, verifiable education for peace, for at least a full generation. This is especially important in the cultures in the Middle East, where deception and misinformation are being used as constant and aggressive tools to advance certain agendas.

We must make sure that the education for peace is being implemented in all schools, in all media outlets and in all government publications, including those for local and international consumption.

Today, we have ample documentation by reliable sources, such as the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), that shows and translates sermons and other publications where those who read only English can understand the messages that are provided by the various leaders to their own people, which are frequently different from what they share with the international community.

We must be able to also identify, expose, marginalize and eliminate the well-oiled propaganda machine which is pushing false narratives, such as the willful starvation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Israelis, while ignoring serious intentional mass murders in Africa, in the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, in the war between the various fractions in Yemen, or in the Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus and its brutal oppression of the Armenians, the Kurds, the Druze and others.

Although we are dealing sometimes with honorable and reliable brokers, we should not rely on promises by some self-serving deceptive and conniving diplomats and terrorists and let down our guard, as we do not want to wake up one day to realize that we gave away our freedom and our land, to brutal terrorists and to their supporters, from radical Islam, the radical Left or the radical Right.

Unfortunately, a bad peace is often worse than the status quo.

Why Is the 'Free Palestine' Crowd Trying to Kill the Ceasefire?

AVI MAYER (JerusalemJournal.com 1-10-25)

Shortly after midnight between Monday and Tuesday, two hours after the White House press conference in which President Trump laid out the U.S. plan for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and Prime Minister Netanyahu accepted it, Gaza-based political analyst Hussein Jamal posed a question in Arabic to his 32,000 followers on X:

"A question for the people of Gaza only, and I hope only Gazans will answer it: If you were in [Hamas leader] Khalil Al-Hayya's place, and the American initiative was offered to you, would you accept it or reject it?"

"With my eyes closed, I would accept it," responded one user. "The most important thing is to stop this nightmare. People in Gaza can't breathe."

"I would accept it without discussion," wrote another.

"Accept, accept, accept," added a third.

They weren't alone.

A torrent of posts by social media users in Gaza — most anonymous and almost all writing in Arabic — appeared overnight, imploring Hamas to accept the proposed ceasefire and bring the war to an end.

"I call upon the Hamas movement to deliver to us and to the nation the speech of deferred victory, and to accept the proposed American deal," wrote an X user who identified as Dr. Eman and gave her location as northern Gaza. "Save us, please."

"Accept anything — just accept," wrote Adnan in Gaza City. "There's nothing more precious than the people. Call it whatever you want. Enough blood, by Gd."

Some directed their ire at those opining on the proposal from afar.

"Living in a tent — no. Your house got bombed — no. Displaced — no.

Slept on the street — no. Lost someone from your family — no. Got injured — no. Went hungry — no. So why are you giving your opinion on the proposal?” asked Mohammed in Jabalia.

“All your analyses about war, resilience, and negotiation are just empty talk from a place of comfort,” summarized Jamal. “Come live one day under attack in a tent or on the street and then share your analyses.”

As Hamas continues to hem and haw — saying it will “study” the plan and consult with other terrorist groups before giving an answer — an unmistakable rift is emerging between Palestinians in Gaza and those purporting to advocate on their behalf around the world.

After nearly two years howling about the war, branding it a “genocide” and demanding an immediate ceasefire, the global “Free Palestine” crowd suddenly doesn’t seem all that eager to see it end. Rather than enthusiastically embracing the U.S. plan, which has been endorsed by a slew of Arab and Muslim governments, some of Israel’s most prominent and vociferous critics have either fallen curiously silent — or have launched broadsides against it.

“The trap of the century,” declared United Nations special rapporteur Francesca Albanese as she circulated a text arguing that the proposal “should be opposed and rejected.” “No matters [sic] how many hands clap, this plan is in breach of international law,” Albanese added.

“Just more colonial repression and Israeli impunity, guaranteed by the complicit U.S.,” charged former senior UN official Craig Mokhiber, who called Israel’s war against Hamas a “textbook genocide” on October 28, 2023 — a mere three weeks after the October 7 attacks and just one day after Israel launched its ground campaign in Gaza.

“We cannot legitimize this farce,” said Spanish Second Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Díaz, claiming that the proposal “perpetuates the occupation” and “consolidates Israel’s impunity.”

“The Trump-Netanyahu plan for Gaza is cruel blackmail,” wrote Syrian-born French politician Rima Hassan — who famously participated in the June precursor to the current flotilla to Gaza — in a lengthy screed. “This plan does not aim for peace. It institutionalizes the colonial management of Gaza and enshrines the submission to the United States of the states that support it.”

“‘Deradicalisation’ is a sanitised term for neutering Palestinians and forcing them to accept their subjugation,” said former Al Jazeera and Reuters editor Barry Malone in one of more than a dozen furious tweets trashing the plan and its various components. “It is not radical to fight for your freedom.”

The contrast between the emerging consensus among the “pro-Palestine” crowd and the cries of actual Palestinians in Gaza could hardly be starker. And it begs urgent questions about just how deeply the Palestinians’ supposed supporters care about their wellbeing and whether they are simply instrumentalizing — and, at this point, actively trying to perpetuate — their suffering to attack Israel.

Gaza-born Palestinian activist and writer Hamza Howidy may have put it best.

“I opened my feed today to see countless posts by Gazans desperate to see an end to this war by any way possible and the huge disappointment they have after many of those who claimed to stand with them during the past two years [have asked] the Gazans to continue get[ting] killed because they don’t like the Trump proposal to end the war,” he wrote Tuesday morning. “Shame on everyone who used their name and refuses to listen to their needs.”

Inundated by angry responses on the part of many such activists, Howidy later put up a second post.

“Apparently one post about Gazans’ opinions was enough to upset lots of those who worship Hamas and its fantasy of ‘armed resistance,’” he wrote. “Anyway, as my friends in Gaza told me, anyone who wants to lecture them on resistance and what they should and shouldn’t accept should go spend two days in a tent in Gaza amidst relentless bombardment, and then they would listen to them.”

It is notable that the critics of the ceasefire proposal include some of the individuals who first accused Israel of “genocide” and have worked assiduously to popularize the smear over the past two years.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine anyone witnessing an actual genocide and claiming to fight for its victims — say, during the Holocaust — quibbling over the technicalities or optics of a plan to end it and save lives in immediate peril.

That so many “pro-Palestine” activists are openly bashing the U.S. proposal to immediately end the war — and, in some cases, openly calling on Hamas to reject it — raises two possibilities: that they never actually believed it was a genocide at all, or that the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza is secondary to their utility as a cudgel against Israel.

It increasingly seems as though both are true.

The “Free Palestine” crowd would be perfectly content to sacrifice the people on the ground, Palestinians and Israelis alike, on the altar of their forever war against the Jewish state. We must not let them. Now is the time for people of conscience around the world to drown out the hate and

elevate the voices of those who live in this narrow strip of land and want nothing more than to leave this nightmare behind them.

When this war ends — and it will end — it will be despite the “Free Palestine” crowd, not because of them. And we will remember.

Soros Funnelled Over \$80M to Hamas-Linked and Domestic Extremist Groups

FERN SIDMAN (VINnews.com 10-3-25)

In a VIN News exclusive report on Thursday, investigative researcher Ryan Mauro of the Capital Research Center has unveiled a comprehensive and deeply troubling body of evidence linking George Soros’ Open Society Foundations — now jointly operated with his son, Alexander Soros — to organizations that openly support Hamas and engage in activities defined by the FBI as domestic terrorism.

The revelations, detailed in a 90-page report titled Exclusive: Soros’ Open Society Gave Terrorist and Pro-Terror Groups Over \$80 Million, mark what VIN News can confirm is the most extensive documentation yet tying one of the world’s most influential philanthropists to a network of extremist activity both in the United States and abroad.

Mauro originally broke parts of the story during an interview with conservative commentator Glenn Beck, who has long cautioned about Soros’ influence on American politics and global anti-Israel movements. But this VIN News exclusive is the first to provide a full account of Mauro’s findings, which he shared in a detailed conversation with author and commentator Alan Skorski.

As VIN News reported, Mauro’s investigation tracks more than \$80 million distributed since 2016 by Soros’ Open Society Foundations to groups directly or indirectly connected to terrorism. Mauro categorizes the funding into three distinct tiers:

At least \$23.2 million flowed to seven groups identified as engaging in property destruction, sabotage, and other illegal acts the FBI classifies as domestic terrorism.

More than \$50.5 million went to 41 organizations that endorsed or excused acts of terrorism, including Hamas’ October 7 massacre in southern Israel, or maintained ties to foreign terror groups.

At least \$9.3 million supported five organizations that, while publicly condemning terrorism, nonetheless provided material assistance to extremist movements, thus empowering their networks and agendas.

“This is not just political activism,” Mauro told Skorski in remarks obtained exclusively by VIN News. “This is funding that has empowered extremists who openly justify terrorism and promote violence in the United States. The evidence is stark and undeniable.”

Among the most alarming revelations in Mauro’s research, highlighted in this VIN News exclusive, is Soros’ support for the BlackOUT Collective, a group that has openly glorified Hamas’ October 7 atrocities and provided activists with a “direct action” guide encouraging illegal and violent activities.

The guide included instructions for using fake IDs, evading police, destroying property, seizing assets, and blockading critical infrastructure — actions that Mauro says fall squarely under FBI definitions of domestic terrorism.

The VIN News report noted that this document was not produced in isolation. The BlackOUT Collective worked with the Movement for Black Lives, which Mauro calculates received at least \$18 million from Open Society Foundations, and the Dream Defenders, which received \$1.85 million. Together, they utilized materials from the Ruckus Society, a radical activist group, to develop the manual.

“These are not fringe pamphlets passed around underground,” Mauro explained to Skorski in comments to VIN News. “These guides were distributed by organizations that Soros directly funds, openly instructing activists in tactics that qualify as domestic terrorism.”

VIN News’ exclusive report underscores how Soros’ philanthropic empire — long portrayed in mainstream outlets as committed to democracy, justice, and open societies — has increasingly blurred the line between activism and extremism.

“The sheer scale of these transfers is shocking,” Mauro emphasized. “We are talking about over \$80 million, carefully directed at groups that not only hate Israel but are also working to destabilize American society from within. These are not coincidental grants; they are part of a deliberate pattern.”

Mauro’s findings carry global significance. In addition to Hamas, many of the funded organizations maintain alliances with groups affiliated with Iran, Hezbollah, and other actors hostile to both Israel and the United States. The VIN News report highlighted that while Soros has been a controversial figure for decades, this report provides the first comprehensive financial mapping of his foundations’ direct connection to organizations openly aligned with terrorists.

Following Mauro’s revelations, which VIN News can confirm have been circulated among U.S. policymakers, President Donald Trump’s Department of Justice reportedly launched an investigation into George Soros, Alexander Soros, and the Open Society Foundations.

While details of the inquiry remain limited, VIN News understands that

investigators are examining whether Soros' network violated federal statutes regarding material support for terrorism.

"This is no longer simply about influence or ideology," Mauro told Skorski. "It is about potential legal culpability in financing groups that justify or directly engage in terrorism."

Even media outlets typically friendly to Soros have been forced to acknowledge Mauro's work. As the VIN News report noted, The New York Times itself conceded that elements of Mauro's documentation were compelling and demanded scrutiny.

Other mainstream outlets have since picked up parts of the story, though none have published the full detail that Mauro presented in his report. VIN News, however, has obtained direct access to his findings, offering readers an exclusive look at the deeper implications.

The VIN News exclusive also situates Soros' activities within a broader historical context. Critics have long alleged that Palestinian Authority and PLO leadership enriched themselves off Western aid, with figures like Yasser Arafat reportedly amassing fortunes exceeding \$1 billion.

Mauro's findings suggest that Soros' network has become a parallel channel of financial empowerment for groups similarly committed to the delegitimization of Israel and the destabilization of democratic societies.

"This is not philanthropy in the traditional sense," Mauro argued in his interview with Skorski. "This is strategic, coordinated, and designed to empower radical groups that have already proven their hostility to Jews, Israel, and the United States."

VIN News has repeatedly documented the consequences of rising antisemitism worldwide. Mauro's research adds a sobering dimension: some of the most dangerous currents of antisemitism in America and abroad are being fueled not only by Islamist groups or hostile governments but by Western billionaire philanthropists.

Alan Skorski noted that Mauro's findings could explain the surge in pro-Hamas sentiment on U.S. campuses and social media, where students are increasingly exposed to rhetoric that demonizes Israel.

"This is not spontaneous," Mauro responded. "It is the result of years of systematic funding, creating networks and echo chambers where anti-Israel narratives dominate unchallenged. If we fail to understand the financial roots of this movement, we cannot hope to stop it."

As VIN News reported, Mauro is calling for full transparency regarding Soros' financial operations and for Congress to consider new oversight mechanisms.

"The American people deserve to know how billions of dollars are being deployed to empower organizations that justify terrorism," he insisted. "We need accountability, we need exposure, and we need to ensure that those who bankroll hatred face consequences."

Ryan Mauro's groundbreaking research exposes what could be one of the most consequential scandals in modern philanthropy: the funneling of over \$80 million by George Soros' Open Society Foundations to organizations linked with Hamas, domestic extremism, and anti-Israel agitation.

"This is not just about one billionaire," Mauro warned. "It's about a network of influence that has reshaped activism into a force aligned with those who wish to destroy Israel and weaken America from within."

As VIN News continues to follow this developing story, the findings raise urgent questions for policymakers, law enforcement, and citizens alike. If Mauro's evidence is accurate — and growing numbers of media outlets, including The New York Times, now acknowledge its weight — then the Soros empire may soon face its most serious reckoning yet.

THE HEROIC AWAKENING OF OCT. 7

RABBI MIKE FEUER (Oct. 3, 2025 / JNS)

Two years later, Oct. 7 remains a raw day. The murder of more than 1,200 people in shocking and horrific ways, and the kidnapping of 251 more, is not yet the past; it is still a present source of pain. War has claimed hundreds since that awful day, widening the circle of loss and narrowing the space in which healing can happen. There is a need to mourn and be comforted.

Two years later, Oct. 7 is also a day of awe. The collapse of conceptions, the structures of safety and control that held up our understanding of the world, is still beyond what we can grasp. The heroic face of Israel that has emerged is still becoming clear. It's not yet a new world; we are in the chaos that precedes creation.

How do we hold the pain of loss together with the pride of a people awakened? How do we tell the story of such awful and awesome events?

It demands a heroic capacity. Jewish heroism is mesirut nefesh l'man tov, "going beyond the limits of self for the sake of creation's good." The soldiers fighting on the battlefield are giburim, "heroes" and "mighty warriors." To tell the story of Oct. 7 in a way that gives truth to the horror and honor to the sacrifices demands a different type of Jewish hero, the magid, the "storyteller."

The storyteller wields the power of nechamah. Translated as "consolation" or even "regret," nechamah really means to change perspective after the fact. Nechamah is the capacity to transform past suffering into a source of positive identity, to turn victims into survivors and a traumatized nation into a heroic people. And it all begins with how we tell the story.

Life happens to us all. Facing tragedy and pain, the victim avoids responsibility by abdicating power. Who hasn't thrown up their hands and taken strange comfort in the helpless cry: "What could I do?" In contrast, the hero stands square in the face of what comes and asks: "What can I do? How can this terrible situation make me more of the person I can become?" Heroes gain agency by taking responsibility and engaging suffering as a source of growth. Their vision of who they are striving to be and their willingness to ask life-giving questions transform the tragic into the heroic. That is what allows them to transcend limits in the service of the good that can come from even the most terrible situation.

Out of the ashes of Kibbutz Be'eri, Nahal Oz, Nir Oz and the Nova music festival, heroic stories have emerged, and even as the Jewish world mourns, we must honor them. Grandfathers who died for their children, young women who fought alone like Samson to save their friends, lieutenants and major generals who raced toward danger without command. For two years, average citizens have made "going beyond" a way of life.

Officially, more than 50% of Israelis took part in some volunteer effort in the aftermath of Oct. 7, but that number is vastly under-representative. It fails to capture the ongoing flood of home-cooked meals to front-line soldiers, the free mental-health services, the righteous who go from home to home ensuring that no mourner sits alone with their loss. Out of the darkness, a great light has been born. A heroic people have awakened.

It says in the book of Mica (7:8), "Rejoice not against me, my enemy; although I have fallen, I will rise; although I will sit in darkness, G-d is a light to me." At first glance, the prophet is warning our enemies to make no mistake, we may be down, but we are never out. Determination is an essential heroic quality, and Oct. 7 has proven to us and the world that Israel will not break. If we look a little deeper at Mica's words, we can see the secret to this power. His words can be read not just as "although I have fallen" but also "because I have fallen, I will rise."

Falling doesn't keep us from victory, so long as we are determined, it is what gets us there. We are a people committed to light, which means that darkness is a call to heroism. Failures are what summon up the heroic power of mesirut nefesh l'man tov, and our refusal to give up pushes us to go beyond the limits of self for the sake of good.

"Although I will sit in darkness, G-d is a light to me ... " can also be read as "because I sit in darkness" The sages say, "What good is a candle in the noontday sun?"

We cannot appreciate the power of a single flame when we encounter it in a world filled with light. It is only in the darkness that we discover its heroic capacity. So, too, in Israel today.

The darkness, pain and loss of Oct. 7 must be mourned. And the overwhelming light it has summoned up must be honored. Let us tell life-giving stories that heal our wounds and give glory to the people who have emerged through overcoming them.

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

WOMEN AND BERACHOT FOR SUKKOT

RABBI CHAIM JACHTER (KolTorah.org)

Generally speaking, women are exempt from time bound positive Mitzvot - מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמא. Lulav and Sukkah are examples of Mitzvot that women are not commanded to fulfill. If, however, women wish to perform these mitzvot, they are permitted to do so. (The custom, however, is for women not to wear Tallit and Tefillin – see Ramo OC 17:2, 38:3). The question is whether women are permitted to recite a Beracha over these mitzvot. Generally, Ashkenazic women recite Berachot on these Mitzvot whereas Sephardic women usually do not. We will explore the sources of these divergent customs from the Gemara to contemporary sources.

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana 33a records a difference of opinion among the Tannaim whether women may perform a Mitzvah from which they are exempt. Tosafot (שם ד"ה ר' יהודה) demonstrates that the Halachah follows the opinion of Rabbi Yosi and Rabbi Shimon who rule that it is permissible. They cite the Gemara in Chagiga 16b which records that women were permitted to place their hands on the head of the animals they brought as sacrifices (סמיכה) in order to provide women with spiritual satisfaction - נדי לית נחת רוח לנשים. They also cite the Gemara in Erubin 96b which records that King Saul's daughter wore Tefillin, and the prophet Yonah's wife made a pilgrimage three times yearly to the Bet HaMikdash. The Rambam (Tzitzit 3:9) also rules that women are permitted to perform Mitzvot from which they are exempt.

The question is, however, whether women may recite a Bracha when performing Mitzvot they are exempt from. Rambam and other Rishonim, Rashi cited by the Or Zarua 266:2, the Hagahot Maimoniot (הל' ת) on the

aforementioned Rambam, and the Maggid Mishnah all rule that women may not utter a blessing. One of the reasons for this ruling is articulated by the SMAG (Assey 42) who says that since women are exempt from performing the Mitzvot, they cannot recite a Bracha which states וצונו, that Hashem has commanded us to perform this Mitzvah.

On the other hand, the previously mentioned Tosafot cites the celebrated opinion of Rabbeinu Tam that women are permitted to make a Brachah on a מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא. Indeed, many Rishonim share his view (Ramban, Ritvah, and the Ran commenting on Kiddushin 31a. These Rishonim cite various proofs to this ruling, including the celebrated statement in Kiddushin that גדול המצווה ועושה ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה - "That those who do and are commanded to are rewarded more than those who do but are not commanded." However we see that mitzvot performed by those not commanded still have halachic significance, and hence reciting a blessing would be permitted.

The Ran, commenting on Kiddushin (ד"ה צאו) writes that "it is appropriate for women to say וצונו since men are commanded and women have a relationship to these mitzvot, as we see that they receive a reward for performing them." The Ritva adds a reason why women may say וצונו, "because they (women) are part of the Jewish people who are commanded to perform these mitzvot." Tosafot explain that women reciting a bracha on מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא are not reciting the Bracha as a wasted blessing (ברכה שאינה צריכה) and are not in violation of taking G-d's name in vain. They say that because the prohibition of saying an unnecessary bracha is Rabbinic in nature, and hence the Rabbis of the Gemara are empowered to rule that someone may recite a blessing on a Mitzvah they are not required to do. The Rambam, on the other hand, appears to be of the opinion that the prohibition to recite an unnecessary bracha is מדאורייתא in nature (see Rambam's responsa no. 48 in the Blau edition).

Practically speaking, there exists a difference of opinion. Rav Yosef Karo, in the Shulchan Aruch (OC 17:2, 689:6) rules in accordance with the view of the Rambam, that women may not recite a blessing on a מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא. The Rama, however, notes that the practice of Ashkenazic women is to follow Rabbeinu Tam's ruling that a bracha may be recited. This continues to be the undisputed practice of Ashkenazic women to this day.

Sephardic women, however, it would seem would follow Rav Yosef Karo's ruling that a bracha should not be recited. Nevertheless, many Sephardic women do recite a bracha on certain מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא. They follow the approach of the great Sephardic authorities, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (Chida) and Sdei Chemed 40:136 who both encourage even Sephardic women to recite a bracha on some of these mitzvot. Contemporary Sephardic Rabbinic authorities differ regarding this practice. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, strongly urges Sephardic women to follow Rav Yosef Karo's ruling not to utter Berachot on מצוה עשה (יחוד דעת א:סח). Rabbi Chaim David Halevi, Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Tel Aviv, endorses the practice of many Sephardic women to recite Berachot on certain מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא. Rabbi Ezra Basri, a Sephardic Dayan in Jerusalem, told this author that he also believes the practice of these Sephardic women to be correct.

Accordingly, Ashkenazic women recite Berachot on the מצוה עשה שהזמן גרמא which they have a custom to perform, such as Sukkah and Lulav. Sephardic women, though, should consult their Rabbi for guidance regarding whether they should say a Beracha on Sukkah and Lulav.

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