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EMANCIPATION FROM MODERN SLAVERY

RABBI DR. BENJI LEVY (Aish.com)

Parashat Bo contains the fateful moment when Pharaoh frees the Jewish people from centuries of servitude. But don't they simply continue to serve, even if now G-d is the Master? Perhaps there is a difference.

G-d, through Moshe, encourages the Jewish people to be optimistic and they almost disregard His words: "but they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and hard work." (6:9)

The Torah attributes the lack of confidence in Moshe to their load of intense work.

Previously, when their hard labor took its toll and they request some time off. Pharaoh acknowledges their request but increases their workload:

On that day Pharaoh ordered the taskmasters over the people and its foremen, saying, 'you shall no longer give straw to the people to manufacture the bricks as yesterday and before yesterday; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the quota of bricks that they were making yesterday you shall impose upon them - do not reduce it...' (5:6-7)

Not only do they still have to fill the required quota in the same amount of time but they have to actually make the bricks with which they need to build. This cruel strategic move denies the Jews the head space or time to even think about the world outside of their backbreaking labour.

Today's Westernised society often compels people to work so hard that often people become slaves to their work. What begins as the innocent intention of earning enough money to provide a comfortable lifestyle for one's family soon leads to a desperate climb atop the corporate ladder of success. People grow to be so engulfed in the hunt of excess that they begin to lose sight of priorities and forget the more important things in life at the cost of time with family and the pursuit of other endeavours. Instead of people working to live, they begin to live for their work.

Pharaoh knew that by dictating a more demanding workload, the Jewish people would lose sight of the more valuable facets of life. Often we think of ourselves as free in today's modern world. But even we, as free people, are to a certain degree enslaved to ideas and the pursuit of success. Personal drive, self-induced pressure and competition have become the Pharaoh of today, the master we serve.

Since we will all become a slave to something, we must choose what we serve. To be a servant of G-d is to be free from the confinements of this world, helping us to achieve the self-awareness that acknowledges and transcends our limitations by identifying with that which has none - the Infinite. Those who serve an existential Master are never really bound by the physical world, as their true essence lies in that which will, so to speak, outlive them. By serving our Creator, we are liberated from the constructs of society that sometimes guide us along a path to self enslavement. To be a servant of G-d - an eved Hashem - is the means by which we can elevate ourselves from Homo sapiens into human beings, serving not as a restrictive title, but a key to emancipation.

Inside the Monster

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Torah.org)

Once upon a time there was a small village nestled in a valley in the shadow of a mountain haunted by an evil giant. Each morning the people in the village would wake up and start to run for their lives. But no matter how far they ran, the terrifying figure still loomed above their heads, glowering and threatening.

One day, a wise and courageous man came to the village. Instead of running away, he started climbing up the mountain. The people were afraid, but they trusted in him and followed him. He led them to the very feet of the giant, opened a secret door in the monster's big toe, took them up a winding passageway to its belly, and showed them how the thing works: the pulleys that move the thundering arms, the noise machine that produces the terrifying yells. Then he yanked a few wires out of their casings, and the whole thing disintegrated to dust.

The puzzling thing is that by the time we get to the Torah reading of Bo (Shmot 10-13), we've spent the first nine chapters of the Book of Shmot trying to get away from Pharaoh. "Let My people go!" Moshe repeatedly demands from the Egyptian sovereign in the name of G-d; each time he's rebuffed, only to be sent back with another "Let My people go" message from G-d and another Divine promise that His people will, indeed, be able to go in the end.

What's puzzling is that the name "Bo" means "Come" and the Torah reading is so named after the phrase "come to Pharaoh" in its opening verse. A strange name indeed for the Parshah in which the long-awaited Yetziat Mitzrayim ("Going Out of Egypt," or "Exodus" in the Greek) of the Israelites finally takes place.

(The names of the Torah's 54 Parshahs always derive from a word or phrase in the Parshah's opening words. But it also always works out that this name expresses the theme and central significance of the Parshah. So it's certainly puzzling that the Parshah in which we finally get away from Pharaoh should be named "Come [to Pharaoh]"...) But sometimes the only way to get out is to come deeper in. The Zohar explains that the Divine command "Come to Pharaoh" was an invitation to enter into the very essence of Pharaoh. "G-d brought Moshe into a chamber within a chamber, to the... supernal and mighty serpent from which many levels evolve..."

As long as we view it from the outside, the evil giant on the mountain will remain big, bad and terrifying — no matter how far we run. But as soon as we subject it to the light of inner knowledge, the whole thing disintegrates to dust.

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TECHIVAS HAMEISIM FOR EGYPTIANS

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Torah.org)

At the beginning of Parshas Bo, Moshe and Aharon tell Pharaoh "...For if you refuse to send forth My people, behold, tomorrow I shall bring arbeh (a locust swarm) into your border. It will cover the eye of the land so that he will not be able to see the land; and it will consume the remaining residue that was left to you by the hail, and it will consume all the trees that grow for you from the field. They will fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all Egypt, such as your fathers and your grandfathers have not seen from the day they came onto the earth until this day." (Shemos 10:4-6).

The Sefas Emes derives an inference from this last pasuk: The pasuk says that the parents and grandparents of the Egyptians never saw such a plague of locust until this day. The Sefas Emes says that the Ribono shel Olam brought back their parents and grandparents who already died, in order that they should be able to witness the plague of arbeh. They never saw such a locust plague until this day, but today they did see such a plague! We thus have an instance of techiyas hameisim (resurrection of the dead), not for tzadikim (righteous people), but for resha'im (wicked people), in order that they witness this terrible plague that befell their children and grandchildren. The Sefas Emes further references an oft-quoted passage

from the Zohar in Parshas Pinchas which states that when a person makes a simcha (e.g. – a chassanah, a bar mitzvah, etc.), the neshamos (souls) of the parents and grandparents who are no longer in this world, come, in some sense, to the simcha to witness and ‘participate in’ the joyous family occasion.

The Sefas Emes makes the interesting observation: The Ribono shel Olam takes the neshamos of the parents and grandparents of Yiden from Gan Eden and brings them to the simcha so that they should be able to witness the joyous event of their descendants. On the other hand, the Ribono shel Olam took the resha'im – the parents and grandparents of the Egyptians, who also made Klal Yisrael suffer so much, not in order that they should see and enjoy the simcha of their children and grandchildren, but so that they should see and ‘participate in’ the suffering of their children and grandchildren.

The Sefas Emes explains “how this works”: Regarding Klal Yisrael, the Almighty is “metzaref machshava tova l'maaseh.” (Hashem links our good intentions with actions.) He considers a good thought as having been consummated, even though in reality, it was never accomplished. However, with the goyim, Hashem is “metzaref” their “machshava ra'ah l'maaseh”. He holds them responsible for having acted wickedly, even for their evil plans that were never executed.

The Sefas Emes says: When a person makes a chassanah and he takes his children down to the chuppah k'das Moshe v'Yisroel (according to Jewish law and custom) and the parents are good and the children are good – part of the credit is due to the ‘machshavos tovos’ (good thoughts) that the parents and the grandparents invested into their children. The Ribono shel Olam says “They have a part in this chassanah. The reason this next generation is able to bring their dear children down to the chuppah is because of all of the ‘machshavos tovos’ that the parents and grandparents implanted in their children. Even if those thoughts and aspirations were not all fully fulfilled, the “machshava tova” was there, HaKadosh Baruch Hu joins a “machshava tova” to action even if the action was never fully consummated.

The reverse is true regarding the goyim. The Egyptians and their ancestors were all part of this evil plot to destroy Klal Yisrael. Their “machshava ra'ah” (evil thought) was a cause of this suffering. The Ribono shel Olam says: You caused this to happen? You implanted these wicked tendencies in your children? You are going to see the “nachas” of them suffering from the arbeh.

The Stroke of Midnight

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

Egypt was in ruins, utterly devastated by the first nine plagues. The cities were reduced to piles of rubble, with dead and wounded everywhere. Bloated carcasses of livestock littered fields denuded of crops and vegetation. The rivers and irrigation ditches were polluted and lifeless. Now it was time to administer the coup de grace. The tenth and final plague, the death of all the firstborn, would sweep away the last vestige of resistance in Egyptian hearts, and they would finally release the Jewish people from bondage.

As the time of the Exodus draws near, Hashem instructs Moshe to warn Pharaoh about the impending death of all the Egyptian firstborn “at the stroke of midnight.” Moshe, however, made a small revision in this statement when he transmitted it to Pharaoh. Instead of saying “at the stroke of midnight,” he tells Pharaoh that the firstborn will die “near midnight.”

Why did he do this? The Sages explain that Moshe was concerned the Egyptian astrologers might be somewhat less than accurate in their time-keeping. It was thus possible that the plague would indeed commence precisely at the stroke of midnight but that the astrologers would think it was a few minutes before or after midnight. Pharaoh might then be encouraged to mock Hashem’s might by accusing Him of being off in his timing and continue to resist. Therefore, in order to defend the honor of Hashem, Moshe told him the plague would take place “near midnight.”

It is utterly amazing that even at this point Pharaoh would find it in himself to continue to deny the power of Hashem and refuse to let the Jewish people go. How could a mere few minutes on the clock lead him to ignore the overwhelming evidence of his shattered country and the ubiquitous corpses of the firstborn, just as Hashem had warned?

There can be only one explanation. The total irrationality of the human ego under attack. Faced with total humiliation and defeat, Pharaoh sought desperately for the merest straw to grasp, no matter how insubstantial, no matter how irrational. As long as there was even the slightest flaw in the execution of the plague, he could delude himself into believing he could be ultimately victorious, if only he did not lose heart. Reason and good sense had absolutely nothing to do with it. No matter how absurd continued

resistance appeared to wiser heads, he would refuse to capitulate.

While listening to the traffic report on the radio, an elderly woman heard that a car had entered the wrong way on an exit ramp of a major highway and was traveling against the flow of traffic. Suddenly, the woman realized that her husband was driving on that very highway.

In a panic, she called him on the car phone to warn him.

“There’s a crazy guy driving the wrong way on your highway,” she asked. “Watch out for him.”

“One crazy guy?” he screamed back into the phone. “There are hundreds of them, all coming towards me.”

In our own lives, we have the tendency of going to great lengths in our own defense, like the man driving down the wrong side of the highway and calling everyone else crazy. Rather than admit to our own shortcomings and limitations, our natural inclination is to justify our actions and positions, even at the cost of viciously attacking opponents and detractors. If we were to stop and consider the wisdom of such a reaction, we would have to admit that it is irrational to defend an erroneous position rather than admit our error and go on. We would also have to face the possibility of damaging relations with spouses, families, friends or associates, or otherwise inflicting gratuitous damage. But the ego is a harsh master, and only when we gain control of it can we be said to be truly free.

Oy Vey!

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

“Don’t get mad,” said the philosophers of the eighties, “get even.”

I am not sure if the objective of the ten plagues was for the Almighty to get even with the nation that had enslaved His people. Certainly there are Midrashic sources that correlate the ten plagues as direct punishment for Egyptian crimes against the Jewish people. (Tana D’vei Eliyahu Chapter 7) So perhaps we might say that the Jewish people got even.

There is, however, no scriptural reference to the fact that they got mad. In fact, each time Moshe went to Pharaoh a serene and calculated negotiation occurred. “Let My people serve Me,” Moshe commanded. When Pharaoh refused his obstinance was met with a clear and calculated threat. “If you refuse to allow the people to leave, I will send the following plague in you land.” And so it went. Sometimes a plague immediately followed a warning, other times plagues came with no warning at all. When Pharaoh found Moshe and arranged for a cessation of the scourge, Pharaoh reneged on his commitment soon after. Moshe became frustrated, perhaps he even became impatient, but there was no anger until the final plague. Then, he not only got even, he got mad.

Moshe warned Pharaoh with the words of Hashem, “At about midnight, I will go out in the midst of Egypt and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.” (11:4) Though Moshe detailed the ramifications of the plague he was greeted with an apathetic response.

Finally the Torah tells us, that “Moshe left Pharaoh in burning anger” (Shmot 11:8) Why, only then did Moshe storm out in a rage? Was he not accustomed to the callous recklessness of the Egyptian leader? What irked him during the last encounter more than any of the previous ones?

The great physicist Albert Einstein escaped the Nazi inferno to find a haven in the United States. During World War II his letter to President Roosevelt initiated the effort that spurred the creation of the atomic bomb. His theory of relativity was a prime factor in its development, and Einstein knew the destructive power that his ideas could potentially release. When Einstein heard in an August 6, 1945, radio broadcast that an atomic device was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, he reacted with stunned silence. After a moment of sombre reflection he only found two words to say. “Oy vey!”

Rabbi Shimon Schwab explains that Moshe had patience with Pharaoh up to a point. Throughout the ordeal, the reckless king’s obstinate decisions caused a great amount of discomfort to his people. Even when his advisors pleaded, “How long will this man [Moshe] be an obstacle, let them [the Jews] serve their G-d,” Pharaoh refused. His recalcitrance brought plagues of pestilence, boils, locust, and darkness — in addition to blood, frogs, and lice. All of these afflictions were vastly uncomfortable — but not fatal. Even the fiery hail did not harm the G-d-fearing Egyptians that sought shelter.

The last, the Plague of the First Born, had the most devastating ramifications. It meant the deaths of thousands of Egyptians “from the firstborn son of Pharaoh to those of the maidservant who was behind the millstone.” It was devastation so powerful that the Torah says that “such has never been and will never be again.” (11:6)

Pharaoh was able to stop the imminent destruction with one simple word — “Go.” Yet he chose to remain steadfast in his denial, bringing the downfall of his people and the death of innocents. And that callous and reckless behavior infuriated Moshe, whose compassion for the simplest of beings earned him the right to be the leader of the Jewish nation. The stark contrast displayed by his nemesis appalled him to the point of rage. The

Torah commands us, “do not to hate the Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land.” (Deuteronomy 23:8) The Torah’s attitude toward a nation that held us captive is even more compassionate than that of its own leaders. Barbaric leaders egging on many simple people throughout the world, to act in a self-destructive manner are reminiscent of the Pharaoh who destroyed his own family to save his ego. It’s enough to make anybody — even the most humble man who ever lived — very angry.

A SHARED HATRED

AVROHOM YAAKOV

The time for the ultimate plague has arrived. G-d instructs Moshe to announce what will happen.

So says G-d, “Toward midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians, and every [male] first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones, and all the first-born of the cattle. And there shall be a loud cry in all the land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again ...

“Then all these courtiers of yours shall come down to me and bow low to me, saying, ‘Depart, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will depart.”

And he left Pharaoh’s presence in hot anger. (11:4-8)

Reading the pronouncement, one can understand that the firstborn of Pharaoh and the Egyptian overlords would be affected. But why include the firstborn of the slaves? They were materially no better off than the Israelites?

Rashi (11:5) explains based on the Midrash (Tanchuma Bo 7) that “... they too, treated them (the Israelites) as slaves and rejoiced at their misery.”

THE EXODUS from Egypt is not only a story of redemption but of understanding enduring patterns of hatred.

Anyone witnessing the riots and protests over the past few years, see a variety of ‘victim’ groups seemingly working together under the banner of intersectionality. Though each group has a unique challenge, they seemed to find common cause in attacking the only Jewish state in the world, while championing cultures that would normally oppress them.

Ironically, the only Middle Eastern country where these protesters would be allowed to live peacefully would be in the Jewish state. Elsewhere, they would be executed for their lifestyle or opinions.

If such diverse and self-contradictory groups can band together, why would the slaves in Egypt pretend to lord over the Israelites, to the point that their firstborn were included in the final plague?

R’ Moshe Sternbuch explains that anti Semitism is so innate to the human condition that even those being oppressed rejoice when Jews are attacked. They are happy to see Jews persecuted even if they gain nothing from the exercise.

While the slaves in Egypt had little in common with the Egyptian ruling class, they did share their hatred of Jews.

The inclusion of the Egyptian slaves in the final plague is not only an indictment of hatred, but a lesson in clarity. When suffering becomes a source of joy, it ceases to absolve. The Torah demands that even the oppressed examine their moral choices. For Am Yisrael, this is both sobering and strengthening: sobering, because hatred may come from unexpected places; strengthening, because it reminds us that our fate is never in human hands. The same G d who distinguished between Egypt and Israel on that night continues to watch over His people—then and now.

Controlling Time

RABBI RON JAWARY (Aish.com)

As free people, the first mitzvah shows that we control our own time and destiny.

The first mitzvah the Jewish nation received as they made the transition from slavery to freedom was that of establishing the Jewish calendar (Shmot 12:1). It’s interesting that even before arriving at Mount Sinai and receiving the Torah, we had to know one thing: in order to be free and in control of our destiny, we have to be in control of our time.

As slaves, the Egyptians controlled every minute of our lives. Now, as free people, we needed to know that we control our own time and destiny, and are able to use our time in any way that we see fit. Yet after teaching us this lesson, the Torah immediately tells us to do something meaningful, to do a mitzvah. That might be why the Talmud teaches us never to put off the privilege of doing a mitzvah because we may never have that opportunity again.

A person should view his time as one of his most valuable assets, and to understand that every act we do – no matter how small it may seem – could, in actuality, be the most important thing we do all day.

Alarm Clock

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.org)

“And Pharaoh awoke, he and all his officials and all the rest of Egypt. There was a great cry, as there was no house where there was no death” (12:30). If the Torah says that Pharaoh awoke, it must mean that until then, he had been sleeping. Clearly, the Torah is not interested in telling us the bedtime habits of Pharaoh or, for that matter, anybody else. All information in the Torah is there to teach us some kind of a lesson, be it ethical, legal, or inspirational. Thus, biographical information about our founders is often lacking. What did Avraham do until he was seventy-five? What happened to Yosef after Yaakov died? What was Moshe doing in Midyan for so many years? These questions were not deemed significant by the Torah; whereas the fact that Pharaoh was asleep one night is!

And truly, it was very strange. “Moshe said to Pharaoh, in G-d’s name: ‘Around midnight, I will go out in the midst of Egypt. Every firstborn in Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh sitting on the throne... there will be a great cry of anguish throughout all of Egypt’” (11:4-5). How could Pharaoh sleep knowing what was to befall his country? Could it be that after nine plagues, he still did not believe the warnings of Moshe? Did he think he could sleep his troubles away? Was he resigned to his fate?

It is hard to imagine that a human being possessed of an iota of sensitivity could sleep after a death sentence had just been proclaimed on his nation, let alone his own child. This, unfortunately, is the way of the wicked. Human suffering means little to them as long as they can cling to power. They are blinded to the consequences of their actions and to reality in general.

And maintaining his own power was the heart of Pharaoh’s regime. “He said to his people, ‘the Israelites are becoming too numerous for us. Come, let us outsmart them, lest they join our enemies during war time’” (1:10). Like any typical dictator, Pharaoh needed a scapegoat on which to deflect blame for the problems of his regime. The Israelites had been living in Egypt for hundreds of years—as Egyptians. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not an acknowledged part of their heritage, nor was the rite of circumcision practiced. First and foremost, they were Egyptians. They had become so assimilated that when Moshe finally liberated them, 80% stayed behind. Yet, in the eyes of Pharaoh, they were immigrants, and waving the canard of dual loyalty would rally the people around them. Problems? Blame the Jews!

While one may start by attacking “foreigners”, inevitably the lust for power leads to the murder of one’s own people. “Pharaoh then gave orders to all his people: ‘Every boy who is born must be cast into the Nile’” (1:22). Our sages tell us that Pharaoh was concerned, lest a child be born who would one day overthrow his despotic regime of high taxes, slavery, and subjugation. Nothing and nobody would take the throne away from Pharaoh. Fighting to the death is not a modern concept; and blindness to reality caused by an oversized ego is nothing new. Did Pharaoh really think the people would obey this horrifying command? Such mundane questions were not of concern to Pharaoh. The people would be made to obey. While babies were being thrown into the Nile, Pharaoh was relaxing in bed. It was only when his own son lay dead in front of him that Pharaoh was really awoken from his sleep. Reality had finally begun to sink in.

“Pharaoh sent for Moshe and Aharon during the night” (12:31). Not surprisingly, when his regime was literally crumbling before his eyes, Pharaoh wanted to negotiate. Unfortunately for him, that window of opportunity had long since passed. And even more unfortunately, Pharaoh learned nothing from his experiences. With the Jews gone, and the “Inspector” no longer looking for blood on the doorposts, Pharaoh felt secure enough to ignore the results of previous “battles”. His false sense of security led him to take his top troops and chariots on a suicide mission. Unlike his predecessor who—awoken from his sleep—summoned Joseph for the benefit of the country, this Pharaoh remained in his own dream world as he clung to power and world dominion. Today, there are many leaders who follow in his footsteps. Let us hope and pray that they wake up soon.

Would You Bring a Sheep into your House?

RABBI ELISHA GREENBAUM (Chabad.org)

There is an old myth about an impoverished Jew who visited a rabbi to complain about his desperate circumstances: house full of kids, too much mother-in-law and not enough food or bedding to satisfy any of them. The story goes that the rabbi advised him to bring his farmyard animals into the house for a while, so that when he finally receives permission to eject them, he would appreciate the space and quiet.

(Incidentally, I never understood the legend. How was the pauper helped by the advice? He’d learnt that it could always get worse? So what? Did this knowledge in any way alleviate the actual chronic overcrowding? If you saw someone hitting his head against the wall just so he could report how good it feels to stop, would you automatically conjecture that this was a man following rabbinical advice or would you be more likely to assume that he’d

forgotten to take his medication?)

In this week's Parshah we read how the Jewish slaves were commanded to bring a sheep into their hovels, keep it there for four days, and then slaughter it and smear some blood on the doorpost. Now I never grew up with animals around the house (Mum, if you're reading this, it's not too late to buy the dog we used to nudge for...) but my understanding about livestock is that they make less than perfect houseguests. Even if G-d had wanted the Jews to prepare a sacrifice for Him, surely he didn't need to afflict them four days in advance?

Obviously the justification for their indoor animal husbandry was more than just helping the Jews appreciate their blessings. Like much of Judaism this was an exercise in conspicuousness. We brought sheep into our homes specifically so that our non-Jewish neighbors should witness and wonder.

The Egyptians used to worship sheep. To take their god, the object of their veneration and their icon of protection, and publicly announce one's intention to eat it took a special kind of conviction and courage.

We, too, are often called on to capture and slaughter the sacred cows of contemporary society. To live a life of religion and morality, to project faith in the face of the overbearing popular culture, demands strength of purpose and self-belief. This ability to stay true to one's convictions, rejecting the slings and arrows of trendy tyranny, is an ability we inherited from our forbears.

Just as their courage for G-d, exhibited in a foreign land, proved them worthy of redemption, so too will we walk firm in our ways for now and until eternity.

ONE JET OF WATER

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (ohr.edu)

“It happened on that very day: Hashem took the Children of Yisrael out of the land of Egypt, in their legions” (12:51)

One spark can start an inferno, and one jet of water can put it out.

During the recent terrible fires in Los Angeles, 65-year-old John Carr defied evacuation orders to save the home that had been passed down to him by his parents.

He said, “The house was built by my mother and father in 1960. And I lived here my whole life. There's a lot of memories here. And I think I owed it to them as well to try my best to save it. Some things in life are worth fighting for. I was hosing the house down and getting ready, and when the houses started to burn, I didn't see one single fire truck out here at all. Zero. If they had some fire trucks, just put a squirt here, a squirt there, and kept an eye on things, all these houses would be here.”

One small jet of water can put out an inferno – but only at the beginning.

The gemara in Sukkah: Rabbi Yehudah said: “In the future, Hashem will take the evil inclination and slaughter it in front of the Tzadikim and the Resha'im, the righteous and the wicked. Both the Tzadikim and the Resha'im will cry; the Tzadikim will cry when they realize that the evil inclination they overcame was like an enormous mountain; the Resha'im will realize that what they failed to overcome was like a tiny thread of hair, and they will cry, ‘How were we not able to conquer such a small thread of hair?’”

The uncontrollable inferno of the evil inclination starts off with a little spark. All one needs is one or two jets of water to put it out. But only in the beginning. If one doesn't stamp out that fire at the start, it will grow and engulf the person.

The Torah calls Egypt, “The nakedness of the land.” (Ber. 42:9) Egypt was an entire culture dedicated to the pursuit of infinite variety and potential. By definition, such a society is incapable of, and scorns, fidelity. When Hashem took the Jewish People out of Egypt, He took us out of a worldview that glorifies immorality.

If John Carr was prepared to fight for his legacy, his house, his memories, how much more we, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, should be prepared to fight for ours.

Carr said there were no fire trucks in the area. He was on his own. You know, that's our world today. Relatively few people care about holiness in the world.

But the Jewish nation does, and we're preserving generations. We're preserving a legacy infinitely more valuable than any house. We have to do for ourselves and the world what John Carr did for his house. We have to stand up and rescue a world, burning, out of control with physicality.

It only takes “a small jet of water.”

News & Views

From Greenland to Israel: What TO expect from allies

JONATHAN S. TOBIN (JNS.org 20-1-26)

At first, it seemed as if it was just one more example of President Donald

Trump trolling his critics. When, following his re-election in 2024, the president revived the idea of the United States acquiring Greenland by one means or another, most of his supporters probably didn't think he was all that serious about it.

But in recent weeks, as his demands that Denmark sell the Arctic land mass escalated, it became clear that he wasn't kidding. His threats that America might punish NATO allies with tariffs if they didn't go along with the scheme or that the United States might even take Greenland by force have turned the question of the ownership of one of the least green places on earth into a foreign-policy crisis.

Rather than just a function of what critics consider his megalomania and instinctive authoritarianism, control of Greenland is an important issue that requires serious examination. More than that, the discussion raises serious questions about not just how to value allies but what the United States has a right to expect from them. This applies not just to U.S. relations with NATO but to what America can expect from Israel, as well as what, in return, Jerusalem should expect from Washington. Meanwhile, NATO countries are wringing their hands and bewailing what they consider to be Trump's bad behavior.

BAD OPTICS, IMPORTANT QUESTION

The spectacle of Trump and other administration officials bullying little Denmark has gone over badly abroad. And for Trump's domestic critics, who are already acting as if his enforcement of immigration laws marks the end of democracy, if not Western civilization itself, outrage about his Greenland policy is just one more reason for them to view him with disgust. It may be difficult to look beyond the bad optics of picking on the Danes or the question of whether a dispute about Greenland is worth risking the possible destruction of the NATO alliance. But it turns out that Trump's concerns about the strategic importance of the massive ice-covered island are not frivolous. Nor is it outrageous for him to think that leaving it in the hands of the Danes while the United States is obliged to pay for its defense, as well as the rest of the West, is unfair.

That was the upshot of one of a flurry of New York Times articles aimed at skewering Trump's position. In it, the liberal newspaper conceded that in an era of cyber warfare and development of the Arctic driven by sophisticated technology and concerns about the future of the ice that covers most of it, Greenland really is vital to the security of the West.

Despite the obsessive concerns of environmentalists about the polar icecaps, the world hasn't paid much attention to the fact that the Arctic has become the scene of a new “great game” rivalry between the United States and its allies on the one hand and the Chinese and the Russians on the other. The article also claimed that Trump had an “exit ramp” he could easily take to end the controversy. Since an existing treaty gives America the right to build bases there, Washington could just go ahead and do so with Denmark's blessing, and spare Europe and the world from further tensions.

Yet as the piece makes clear, although Denmark and other NATO nations that have spent the last weeks huffing and puffing about Trump's bad manners in raising the question of Greenland's future, these countries have no intention of contributing to dealing with what even the Times agrees is the danger posed by Russian and Chinese aggression in the Arctic.

Benefiting from America and complaining about it

In other words, they expect the United States to do in Greenland what it has essentially done for the rest of Europe since 1945: pay for its security and meekly accept that the beneficiaries of its largesse get to complain about Americans pushing them around.

Much of the coverage of the controversy centers on some of the less than flattering aspects of Trump's bluster about a country that is more ice than green, such as the report that he sent a text to Norway's prime minister, saying since he had been denied the Nobel Peace Prize (which is awarded by the Oslo-based Nobel Committee and not the Norwegian government), he doesn't feel obligated to play nice with Europe.

But when placed in the context of the necessity for the West to invest heavily in security in Greenland and the long record of prosperous NATO countries letting the American taxpayers pay the bill for their defense, Trump's demand seems less unreasonable.

So, if the Times and the other Trump critics are going to wax lyrical about the way Trump's rhetoric and potential actions could break up the NATO alliance, it might be a good time to ask what should be expected from America's allies, other than smoldering contempt for the president.

‘AMERICA FIRST’ MODEL ALLY

That's why the Greenland controversy sheds insight on why the U.S.-Israel alliance —despite the carping about it from those who hate the Jewish state and resent the \$3 billion in aid it receives from Washington—is actually far more equitable in many ways than the much-lauded NATO alliance.

The price tag for U.S. military assistance to Israel does remain high. And yet,

to put it in perspective, it is a fraction of the hundreds of billions of dollars that Washington has sent to Ukraine in the last four years. Israel would be wise to reduce and eventually phase out the aid completely since it is a political liability to the Jewish state and its supporters.

But what those Israel-bashers who moan about billions going to Israel that they think should be spent at home forget is that almost all of the money is spent in the United States, not overseas. In that sense, it's as much an aid program for U.S. arms manufacturers and their employees as is for the Jewish state.

It is money well spent in terms of the advantages it brings. It enables Israel to purchase weapons and ammunition that are vitally needed to maintain its strategic advantage over its foes and to fight long wars such as the battles against Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists. Israel's victories in those battles also benefit America, which is the ultimate target of its Islamist foes. And the arms that Israel buys in the United States are then improved by Israel's technological prowess. The joint projects the two countries have worked on have not only enabled our nation to have a viable missile-defense program, but the intelligence shared by Israel with Washington offers invaluable advantages.

More than that, Israel is an ally that is prepared to defend itself. It just needs help procuring the weapons it requires to do so.

By contrast, the NATO nations have been relative freeloaders for many decades, sitting back and letting Americans pay for their defense, and even stationing troops and bases in Europe to ensure that it remains free. Rich Western European countries like Denmark have enjoyed the umbrella of U.S. security since World War II and have only occasionally reciprocated the assistance by actions that show they are ready to share the burden.

While, thanks to Trump's advocacy on the issue, many NATO allies are now paying for more of their defense, the current situation remains one in which America is still largely subsidizing European defense, despite heightened regional concerns because of Russian aggression against Ukraine. And rather than that assistance doled out in legislation labeled as "aid," much of what U.S. taxpayers give to Europe is hidden in the U.S. defense budget, making it harder to see just how indebted these nations are to their generosity.

By contrast, and as Vice President JD Vance said in a speech last year, Israel is the ideal American ally from an "America First" perspective. He spoke of how it is "on a per capita basis one of the most dynamic and technologically advanced countries in the world." That is beneficial to the United States because, as he noted, it gave America "missile-defense parity" with its foes. More than that, he said, it was fair to ask what America should want from its allies.

"Do we want clients who depend on us, who can't do anything without us? Or do we want real allies who can actually advance their interests on their own with America playing a leadership role," Vance said. As he made clear, Israel fits his definition of "real allies," while the NATO countries do not.

THE FUTURE OF NATO

That's why all the European posturing about divorcing from NATO and the United States because of the dispute over Greenland is just hot air. If the countries involved wanted to pay for their own defense, they could do so. However, it's painfully obvious that most of them consider even minimal contributions to the effort to deter Russia and China to be unreasonably burdensome. What they want from America is for it to keep quiet and continue to fork over funds for their security, including the massive investment needed in Greenland.

Trump thinks that's not fair. And he's not wrong to view it that way.

Does America require sovereignty over Greenland to ensure that the Arctic doesn't become a Russian or Chinese lake? Not necessarily. But if the Europeans aren't going to pay their fair share for defending it, then it's not crazy for Trump to say that Denmark should just sell it.

Prior American governments have sought to purchase it, going back to the postwar Truman administration and even to the 1860s (when Secretary of State William Seward vainly sought to buy it, but then settled for getting Russia to sell Alaska). So, depicting the request as just vintage Trumpian insanity is misleading, even if the manner in which the president has pursued it is hard to defend. On the flip side, if he wasn't blustering and making threats about Greenland, would the Europeans even listen to his arguments?

Regardless of how this matter is resolved, the dustup over Greenland should serve as the starting point for a serious discussion about what alliances mean in the 21st century. NATO served a vital purpose during the Cold War. But as the debate about Greenland and the Europeans' reluctance to either support its development as a security hub or to sell it to the Americans illustrates, it increasingly seems more a tribute to the past than an essential element of U.S. security in 2026. By contrast, Israel, which does not have the advantage of being a member of NATO—and all the rights and

privileges that go with it—is more important to U.S. defense than ever.

Buzzwords and false allegations are human rights inversion

ALAN BAKER (Jpost.com 21-1-26)

Thousands murdered and brutally subjugated in Iran. Thousands of non-Arab ethnic groups butchered in Sudan. Massive death tolls in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Myanmar violently represses its Rohingya and other minorities. Mass atrocities by Boko Haram and other extremist groups in Nigeria. Extrajudicial killings of civilians in Tanzania. Massacres of Christians in churches and hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

But Western media outlets, social-media platforms, UN and human rights committees, political leaders and parliamentarians, incited university students, and ignorant show-biz celebrities spout accusations against Israel of genocide, apartheid, starvation, and disproportionate military actions.

Such paragons of humanitarian virtue claim to defend human rights and advocate for Palestinians, but glaringly ignore everyone else and deny the rights to which Israel and its citizens are entitled. They ignore genocidal violence and terror by Palestinian and Islamist fanatics, which is incited by Palestinian leadership and supported, encouraged, and financed by Iran, Qatar, and Turkey.

No less glaring is the fact that the Western world chooses to forget the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023 – the rape, torture, burning, and butchery of thousands of Israelis and foreigners; the taking of hundreds of hostages; and the use of Hamas's own civilians as human shields.

What should be a universal moral standard of human rights has become a cynical and transparent political weapon, directed against Israel.

POPULAR BUZZWORDS AGAINST ISRAEL

Popular buzzwords – "genocide," "apartheid," "colonialism," "racism," "starvation," and "indiscriminate destruction" – are the lingua franca of this propaganda fixation against Israel. They are chanted at demonstrations, repeated in Western parliaments, and echoed in politicized international courts.

A well-financed system of brainwashing, funded by Qatar, Iran, and Turkey, feeds this narrative, which is eagerly absorbed by a woke-inspired international chorus of useful idiots in Europe and the West.

The allegation of "genocide" is particularly offensive and contrived. It was coined in 1944 by the Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin in response to the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Jews and was criminalized in the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. Today it is cynically repackaged and applied against Israel, most prominently in South Africa's absurd claims at the International Court of Justice. Thus, a legal instrument intended to punish genocide, as well as a once-respected international court, have been turned into political weapons.

This genocide accusation willfully misinterprets the convention's definition, while those accusing Israel conveniently ignore explicit genocidal calls to eliminate Israel "from the river to the sea," which heralded Hamas's October 7 "Al-Aqsa Flood" attack. No proceedings have been initiated against those inciting or supporting genocide against Israel and the Jewish people.

THE APARTHEID CLAIM

Equally contrived is the buzzword "apartheid," copy-pasted from South Africa's repressive system of institutionalized racial segregation. The UN-driven attempt to label Israel an apartheid state traces back to the 1975 General Assembly's politicized resolution branding Zionism as racism – later revoked in 1991 but never erased from the public narrative.

It resurfaced at the 2001 Durban Racism Conference and continues to fuel campaigns to delegitimize Israel and justify sanctions modeled on those once imposed on South Africa.

This propaganda ignores Israel's multi-racial, pluralistic democracy, where Arab citizens enjoy constitutional equality, freedom of expression, and full political representation. Israel's security restrictions on Palestinian movement and access in parts of Judea and Samaria are not racially based, but a legitimate response to ongoing terror and incitement by Hamas and other groups.

FALSE STARVATION CHARGE

The allegation that Israel pursues a policy of starvation in Gaza is another false charge, promoted through manipulated Hamas statistics and willingly amplified by Arab and foreign media, UN bodies, and even the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in his arrest warrant against Israel's prime minister.

Hardships faced by civilians in Gaza stem from the conflict situation – including chaotic handling of aid by international bodies and the systematic commandeering of trucks and cargo by Hamas, which sells supplies at inflated prices in local markets.

A controversial August 2025 study by the UN-affiliated "Famine Review

Committee” fueled this narrative, despite being widely criticized and discredited for methodological flaws and data manipulation. Israel enables rapid and unimpeded passage of relief into Gaza, as reflected in UN and World Food Programme statistics on functioning food markets and the availability of humanitarian goods.

Accusations of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and destruction by Israel in Gaza, disseminated by the Hamas disinformation machine, are readily amplified by sympathetic politicians and media. In reality, the Jewish state undertakes significant efforts, consistent with international humanitarian law, to warn civilians and remove them from combat areas – even as Hamas deliberately embeds its terror infrastructure and operatives in homes, schools, hospitals, high-rises, and an extensive tunnel network beneath civilian neighborhoods. International law explicitly prohibits such use of human shields. Property used for acts of terror constitutes a legitimate military target.

To fixate on flawed accusations against Israel while ignoring genuine, massive atrocities elsewhere is to repeat ominous historical precedents. This inversion of human-rights values, aimed solely at singling out Israel, should be obvious – but sadly, it is not.

THE HOLOCAUST, WITHOUT JEWS

RAFAEL MEDOFF (JewishJournal.com 19-1-26)

You wouldn’t think Vladimir Putin, the BBC and the National Education Association have much in common. But in recent weeks, they have demonstrated that they share a peculiar understanding of the Holocaust—one which omits the Jews.

Putin last week announced the establishment of a “Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Genocide of the Soviet People” by the Nazis during World War II. The actual victims of that genocide, Europe’s Jews, were not mentioned in Putin’s description of what the Nazis did.

Not that this is anything new for the Soviet dictator. Back in 2005, Putin spoke at the site of the Auschwitz death camp about Soviet soldiers who died while liberating Poland from the Nazis, and about other Russians who were killed in World War II. But no mention of the Jews.

Coincidentally, the BBC last week aired a television program about the Kindertransport, which brought 10,000 children from Nazi territory to Great Britain in 1938-1939.

Somehow the writers and producers forgot to mention that nearly all the children were Jewish, and were fleeing antisemitic persecution. According to the London Jewish Chronicle, actress Helen Mirren, who appeared in the program, did mention the word “Jew” — but it was edited out.

Meanwhile, on this side of the Atlantic, the National Education Association — the largest union of public educators — has been circulating a similarly revised version of the Holocaust.

The NEA’s annual handbook contains a description of the Holocaust as having claimed the lives of “more than 12 million victims of different faiths, ethnicities, races, political beliefs, genders, and gender identification, abilities/disabilities and other targeted characteristics.”

The “12 million” figure was calculated by combining the fatality numbers among various people who suffered in the war, but who were not targeted by the Nazis for mass annihilation. And, incredibly, the NEA never mentions the actual victims of the genocide, the Jews.

All of this is painfully reminiscent of the way in which President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration omitted Jews from their references to the Holocaust — even as the mass murder was still raging.

The Roosevelt administration’s statement announcing a conference in Bermuda in 1943 to discuss the Jewish refugee crisis emphasized: “The refugee problem should not be considered as being confined to persons of any particular race or faith.”

Senior American, British and Soviet officials met in Moscow later that year to discuss the war effort. Afterwards, they issued a statement threatening postwar punishment for Nazi war crimes against “French, Dutch, Belgian or Norwegian hostages ... Cretan peasants ... [and] the people of Poland” — but not Jews.

President Roosevelt did not use the word “Jews” even in his 1944 statement commemorating the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt — a revolt by the Jews against the Nazis.

In early 1944, officials of the U.S. War Refugee Board prepared a draft of a statement that they wanted the president to send to the people of Axis-occupied countries, warning them not to collaborate in atrocities against Jews. But White House aides informed the Board that President Roosevelt “wanted the statement rewritten so as to be aimed less directly at the atrocities against the Jews.”

The final version deleted a reference to Jews being murdered “solely because they were Jews.” It also removed three of the statement’s six references to Jews. And it added three introductory paragraphs naming

various other nationalities who were suffering because of the war.

In September of that year, the War Refugee Board ran into a similar problem with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in.

The Board drafted a leaflet which it wanted U.S. planes to drop over Europe, warning civilians to refrain from participating in Nazi atrocities against Jews. But Eisenhower insisted on deleting the leaflet’s reference to Jews. The final version urged readers not to “molest, harm or persecute” any of the “great many men” who were being held by the German authorities, “no matter what their religion or nationality may be.”

Arthur Szyk, the famous artist and Jewish activist, charged that the persecution of Europe’s Jews was being “treated as a pornographical subject — you cannot discuss it in polite society.”

There was a reason behind the Roosevelt administration’s policy of downplaying or denying the Jewish identity of Hitler’s victims. FDR and his advisers were concerned that if they publicly recognized that the Jews were being singled out, then “the various [Allied] Governments would expose themselves to increased pressure from all sides to do something more specific in order to aid these people,” as one State Department official explained in an internal discussion.

Obviously the motives of today’s Holocaust-revisers are different from those of the Roosevelt White House. But whether today’s distorters are motivated by callousness, political convenience, or simply ignorance, the result is the same — the Jews are still regarded as unmentionable.

How António Guterres turned ‘international law’ into a weapon against Jews

DUVI HONIG (Jpost.com 21-1-26)

When UN Secretary-General António Guterres claims that the United States prioritizes its power over international law, he is not defending justice. He is projecting the moral collapse of the institution he leads.

The question the world must now ask is not about American power, but about Guterres’s abuse of power. Under his leadership, “international law” has been distorted into a political weapon – one used obsessively against Israel, while terrorist organizations and authoritarian regimes are excused, enabled, or elevated. That is not neutrality. It is not law. And coming from the head of the United Nations, it is a disgrace.

Let’s examine the facts.

The UN General Assembly has passed more resolutions condemning Israel than all other countries combined, including Iran, North Korea, Syria, China, Russia, and Venezuela. This is not rhetoric; it is a matter of public record repeated year after year. No other democracy, and no other nation under constant terrorist attack, is treated this way.

The UN Human Rights Council has maintained a permanent agenda item – Item 7 – dedicated solely to Israel. No other country is singled out in this manner. This alone should disqualify the council from being taken seriously as a human rights body.

Under the UN system, Iran – a regime that executes dissidents, tortures prisoners, oppresses women, arms Hezbollah and Hamas, and openly calls for Israel’s destruction – has been entrusted with leadership roles, including chairing UN forums related to human rights. That is not hypocrisy; it is moral obscenity.

At the same time, Hamas – a US- and EU-designated terrorist organization that murders civilians, kidnaps children, uses hospitals and schools as military infrastructure, and fires rockets indiscriminately at population centers – is repeatedly sanitized in UN language as a “party to the conflict,” while Israel’s right to self-defense is questioned, constrained, and condemned.

This inversion is not accidental. It is systemic.

EXPOSING THE UN’S MORAL INVERSION

Guterres has not merely presided over this corruption; he has normalized it, defended it, and amplified it. In doing so, he has used his position to advance an ideological agenda that singles out the Jewish state for delegitimization while shielding those who commit the most egregious human rights violations.

Anti-Zionist obsession at the United Nations has become indistinguishable from antisemitism in practice. When the world’s only Jewish state is uniquely targeted, denied the right of self-defense, and subjected to standards applied to no other nation, the conclusion is unavoidable. Israel does not wage war against civilians. Hamas does.

Israel builds bomb shelters. Hamas builds tunnels under children’s bedrooms.

Israel warns civilians to evacuate. Hamas forces them to stay.

Any legal framework that erases these distinctions is not international law; it is propaganda.

International law was meant to restrain barbarism, not protect it; to defend

human life, not terror infrastructure; to uphold truth, not political theater. By weaponizing international law against Israel and tolerating terror in the name of false balance, Guterres has disgraced the office he holds and accelerated the United Nations's descent into irrelevance. The world deserves better. The victims of terrorism deserve better. And the Jewish people, who know all too well where institutionalized bias can lead, deserve better. History will remember who stood for justice, and who turned law into a tool of moral inversion.

PA Admits Its True Goal: Israel 'Is Doomed to Perish'

EPHRAIM D. TEPLER AND ITAMAR MARCUS (Algemeiner.com 19-1-26)

The Palestinian Authority (PA) consistently indoctrinates Palestinians to believe that Israel's demise is inevitable and is an inherent form of justice.

This message is delivered by senior PA leaders and is reinforced repeatedly across official PA media, including news programs, children's education, political commentary, poetry, and international forums broadcast to the Palestinian public.

This doctrine has been articulated again recently by Abbas Zaki, a senior Fatah leader and member of the Central Committee, the PA's ruling party: *Fatah Central Committee member Abbas Zaki: "In the end, the winner is the one who remains on the land ... and those who will remain are the ones with the idea, the idea that says there is no escaping the fact that this land will be liberated, and that the land of peace cannot be based on revenge. Israel is doomed to perish."*

[Arabi 21, London-based Arab news website, Jan. 9, 2026]

Zaki's statement presents Israel as a temporary presence and Palestinians as the enduring owners of Israel's land, so that justice will ensure Israel's disappearance. This is a foundational belief promoted systematically by the PA.

PA/Fatah education teaches children to see Israel as temporary:

"Palestine fell under the Zionist occupation [in 1948], which continues today ... The occupation will cease to exist just as what was before it ceased to exist ..."

"All of the invaders were defeated, and Palestine returned to be free and Arab."

"[Israel] the evil occupation state ... this artificial state ... It is artificial because it is foreign ..."

"The liberation of Palestine will only be achieved through armed struggle."

"The Zionist invaders will go to the garbage can of history."

"Palestine will be liberated and purified from the occupation's defilement."

"Palestine is destined for full liberation ... from the yoke of Zionist colonialism"

"Algeria's experience [of the French leaving] assures that the Jewish settlers in Palestine will disappear in the end."

[Fatah's Waed Magazine for children ages 6-15]

On official PA television, Israel's demise is conveyed as fact.

PA TV narrators repeatedly describe Jewish presence as a transient colonial episode destined to end, with this specific script reiterated every two years on average:

Official PA TV narrator: "The illegal immigration of the Jews to Palestine: The beginning of the illegal immigration to Palestine was in 1837 ... The Jewish immigration to the land of Palestine continued as part of a colonialist Zionist plan led by the world powers at the time ..."

But history has never let the colonialist remain, and the occupiers have always left in the end. One day they [the Jews] too will return to where they came from."

[Official PA TV]

The same doctrine is embedded in PA cultural programming. On official PA TV, Gazan poet Adel Al-Ramadi recited a poem listing past rulers of the land — Greeks, Romans, Persians, Crusaders, and British — before concluding that Jewish rule will meet the same fate:

Gazan poet Adel Al-Ramadi:

Do not believe that the land will not return

How much has this land been occupied!

How much defilement!

How many soldiers have trodden upon it!

So where are the soldiers?

Where is the rule of the Greeks over us?

Where is the rule of the Tatars?

Where is the rule of the Romans?

Where is the rule of the Persians?

Where is the rule of the Crusaders?

Where is the rule of the English?

Where are the soldiers?

One day you will grow up and ask:

Where is the rule of the Jews?

[Official PA TV, Dec. 7, 2025]

By placing Jewish sovereignty alongside former rulers who disappeared, the poem teaches that Israel's rule is merely another temporary phase awaiting its end.

Official PA TV amplifies this message by hosting guests who present themselves as analysts, while repeating the same conclusion:

Tunisian journalist Khaled Krouna: "This entity [i.e., Israel] was planted in the region to be a policeman for the interests of the world's powerful forces ... Now the services it [Israel] can provide, after its failure has become apparent, after its army only scares cowards ... the cost of maintaining it is much greater than the benefits its existence can bring to the superpowers."

In time, they themselves will disown it and leave it to its fate, and its fate is to fall into the hands of the Palestinians. Its fate is to disappear."

[Official PA TV, Capital of Capitals – Tunis, Nov. 19, 2025]

The same theme is projected internationally and broadcast back to Palestinian audiences. Speaking at the United Nations and shown on PA TV, Arab League spokesman Mohamed Nasr declared:

Arab League Spokesman at the UN Mohamed Nasr: "The occupation [i.e., Israel] – no matter how much its violence intensifies – will cease to exist, while the Palestinian state will become a reality."

[Official PA TV, Dec. 1, 2025]

Across senior leadership statements, education, historical narration, poetry, political analysis, and international advocacy, the Palestinian Authority delivers a unified talking point to its people: Israel is temporary, Palestinians are permanent, and time itself will erase Israel's existence — a doctrine that Western governments continue to ignore while proposing to restore the PA as a governing force in Gaza.

REGIME DISMISSES 'DEATH TO THE DICTATOR' AS 'LET'S GO BRANDON'

DAVE SWIDLER (PreOccupiedTerritory.com 15-1-26)

State-run media continued today to spin a narrative that downplays the danger to Ayatollah Khamenei and his minions, twisting slogans calling for the end of the "Islamic Revolution" into anodyne cheers.

"Javid Shah!" screamed the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in more than one hundred locales across Iran. "Long live the Shah!" – referring to the crown prince of the family who led the country until the Islamic Revolution drove them out in 1979. Regime reporters, however, rendered the cry as "Happy Birthday Sayyed Ali."

In the deft hands of the regime's rhetoricians, "Death to the Dictator" has become "Let's Go Brandon," and the footage of outraged, fed-up Iranians overwhelming law enforcement thugs are "cheap fakes."

"It's just a stutter," insisted President Masoud Pezeshkian. "The biggest scandal anyone can point to is a tan suit."

As the nationwide uprising surges into its fourth week, ignited by economic collapse and regime brutality in late December 2025, officials deploy a playbook of deflection eerily reminiscent of elder statesman denialism. "The Supreme Leader is sharp as a tack," proclaimed IRIB anchors, dismissing viral clips of Khamenei's rambling speeches as "deceptive edits" or "jet lag from his busy schedule." Never mind the crowds in over 120 cities, from Mashhad to Tabriz, chanting "This year is the year of blood—Seyyed Ali will be overthrown," while torching portraits and clashing with riot police.

Pezeshkian, in a primetime address, waved off reports of thousands of protester deaths—verified by local activists—as "unverified anecdotes" from "bad actors." "He's had a cold," the president explained of Khamenei's apparent frailty, echoing excuses for frozen moments and confused wanderings. State media reframes barricades in Tehran's streets as "peaceful gatherings," and molotovs hurled at Basij militiamen as "fireworks mishaps." "No one saw him fall," insisted a spokesman regarding footage of security forces retreating under assault, labeling it a "cheap fake" manipulated by "Zionist bots."

Pro-monarchy fervor intensifies, with exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi hailed as a beacon for transition. Slogans like "Woman, Life, Freedom" and "Neither Gaza nor Lebanon—my life for Iran" reject the regime's proxy wars draining the treasury amid 45% inflation. Yet hardliners claim demonstrators are merely "tired after a long day," not seething over corruption and repression. Internet blackouts and mass arrests—over 2,000 detained, per HRANA— are spun as "routine maintenance" and "voluntary discussions."

Regime mouthpieces continue to insist that behind closed doors, the Supreme Leader is "engaged, thorough, and fully in command."

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

Correcting The Ba’Al Koreh

RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT (Torah.org)

Every adult male⁽¹⁾ is obligated to hear a portion of the Torah read from a kosher Sefer Torah every Shabbos. While this is an ancient obligation dating back to the days of Moshe Rabbeinu,⁽²⁾ it is considered a Rabbinical mitzvah.⁽³⁾ Initially, there were various customs as to the length of the portion to be read every Shabbos,⁽⁴⁾ but eventually it became universally accepted to complete the entire Torah each year, beginning from Shabbos Bereishis and ending on Simchas Torah.⁽⁵⁾

The reader must read every single word of the weekly parshah. Even if one word was omitted, the reading must be repeated.⁽⁶⁾ This is true even if the missing word did not in any way alter the meaning of the phrase or verse.⁽⁷⁾ The ba’al koreh should read each word clearly, with the proper accentuation (mileil and milra), vocalization (nikud) and cantillation (trop). In order to read the Torah properly he must prepare thoroughly⁽⁸⁾ so that the reading will “flow out of his mouth.” The reading itself should not be hurried, lest he swallow a word or a letter.⁽⁹⁾

The reader must be careful to read every word from inside the Torah, and not recite any words from memory. But as long as he saw every word, it does not matter if he did not look inside when actually reciting each word.⁽¹⁰⁾

CORRECTING THE READER’S MISTAKES

It is important for the ba’al koreh to read carefully so that he makes no mistakes, not even small, insignificant ones. But if he did make a mistake, there is a difference of opinion among the Rishonim if he must be stopped and corrected or not. The Tur⁽¹¹⁾ is of the opinion that as long as the word was recited, even if it was seriously mispronounced, it does not matter and the reading is valid. There is no requirement to go back and correct the mistake, and indeed it may be prohibited to do so since it will needlessly embarrass the ba’al koreh who will appear incompetent or ill-prepared. Rambam, however, disagrees and maintains that even the smallest mistake should be immediately corrected.

Shulchan Aruch seems to make a compromise between the two views. Whether or not the ba’al koreh needs to be corrected when mispronouncing a word depends on the type of mistake he made. A “major” mistake requires correction while a “minor” mistake does not: therefore, the ba’al koreh should be publicly corrected only for a “major” mistake. Privately, however, the reader is rebuked for his lack of preparedness or inattentiveness to detail.⁽¹²⁾

The issue to decide, therefore, is what constitutes a “major” mistake and what is considered a “minor” mistake. Rama maintains that if the mistake alters the meaning of the word it is considered “major”, but if it only affects the trop or the nikud then it is considered “minor”. The latter authorities debate what, exactly, the Rama meant, as there are various opinions as to what constitutes an altered meaning and what does not. In the final analysis there are three group of mistakes: major, minor and midsize. Major mistakes include:

When a word is completely misread; e.g., bereishis is read berushies or barshyias, etc.

When the nikud of a word is pronounced in a manner which alters the translation of the word. For example, the word chalav with a komatz (milk) is read with a tzeirei (fat), or the word ya’aseh (he should do) is read yie’aseh (it should be done).

When the trop is completely wrong, to the degree that the reader combines two unrelated words or phrases, or separates two words or phrases which should be read together. The trop indicates not only the musical note on which the syllable or word should be sung, but also the punctuation of the pasuk, as the Torah has no punctuation marks. For example, one could read all of the constants and vowels of the first pasuk in the Torah correctly, and still mangle the trop so that the pasuk would read: In the beginning created, Hashem the, heaven and earth.⁽¹³⁾

According to some opinions, when the mileil or milra is read completely wrong, to the degree that it alters the meaning of the word; e.g., the word bahah (milra) means ‘she is coming,’ (present tense) while the same word accented bahah (mileil) means ‘she came’ (past tense).⁽¹⁴⁾ Similarly, the word binah can mean either ‘understanding’ or ‘perceive’, depending on which syllable is accented, binah or binah.⁽¹⁵⁾

But several contemporary poskim maintain that this type of mistake is not considered a major mistake. In their view, the exact meaning of the word is decided by the context in which it is written; the meaning is not altered by the improper accentuation of the word.⁽¹⁶⁾

As stated earlier, Shulchan Aruch and most poskim⁽¹⁷⁾ rule that major mistakes should be rectified immediately. The ba’al koreh, therefore, is stopped mid sentence – even if he said the Name of Hashem⁽¹⁸⁾ – and told to correct his pronunciation.⁽¹⁹⁾ Even if the mistake is realized after the aliyah is over, or even after the entire parshah is finished [but before the final blessing over the Torah is recited],⁽²⁰⁾ the word must be repeated and corrected.⁽²¹⁾

This ruling of the Shulchan Aruch is the accepted practice in most congregations. Note, however, that several poskim⁽²²⁾ disagree with the Shulchan Aruch and rule in accordance with the Tur that once a mistake was made, even if the meaning of the word was altered, it need not be corrected.⁽²³⁾

Minor mistakes include:

Misreading of vowels which does not alter the basic meaning of the word, e.g., the word “eis” with a tzeirei under the aleph instead of segol (es); the word “kol” with a cholom instead of kal with a kamatz; the word “lecha” with a kametz instead of lach with a sheva⁽²⁴⁾; the word “aretz” with a kame tz under the aleph instead of eretz with a segol. There are many more such examples, and they account for most of the errors that the average ba’al koreh commits.

Misreading of the trop which does not alter the basic meaning of the verse. e.g., failure to stress the revii note over the word v’haretz in the second pasuk of this week’s parshah.

The procedure concerning minor mistakes is clear: all of the poskim are in agreement that the reader is not corrected; he is allowed to continue.⁽²⁵⁾

We have mentioned earlier that when there is no requirement to correct mistakes, it may very well be prohibited to do so, since correcting the ba’al koreh publicly embarrasses him. It is puzzling, therefore, why many congregations do not conduct themselves properly and correct even minor mistakes when they should not do so. There are two possible explanations (limud zechus) for their behavior: 1) The ba’al koreh has made it clear to the rabbi or officers of the shul that he does not mind being corrected and does not consider it an embarrassment; 2) If the ba’al koreh is paid for his services, it may be permissible to correct him for even minor mistakes since he is hired to do a perfect job.⁽²⁶⁾

Midsized mistakes are significant changes in the pronunciation of the word or even in its exact translation, but not to the degree that it alters the basic meaning of the phrase or the verse. These include⁽²⁷⁾: When a letter is omitted, e.g., the name Aharon, which contains the sounds of an aleph and a hay, is read as Haron (with a patach), omitting the aleph.⁽²⁸⁾

When a letter is added, e.g., the word Mitzrim (Egyptians), written with one yud, is read as if it were written with two yuds (Mitzriyim). While these two words are pronounced slightly different, they have the same meaning. When a letter is added as a prefix, e.g., the letter vov is added to a word, “v’im” (and if) instead of “im” (if).

When two letters are inverted but the mistake does not alter the meaning, e.g., the word keves is mistakenly read as kesev. Both words refer to a sheep.⁽²⁹⁾

Regarding these types of mistakes there are two views. Some are of the opinion that they are not significant and do not need to be corrected. The ba’al koreh may continue reading [though he is rebuked privately].⁽³⁰⁾ Others maintain that these types of mistakes must be corrected immediately and one must follow the same procedure as when a major mistake is made.⁽³¹⁾ While individual shuls may rely on the first view and allow such mistakes to go unchecked, many congregations have adopted the second, more stringent view. It is left to the rabbi and officers of each shul to establish their own standard for Kerias ha-Torah.

FOOTNOTES:

1 While some authorities maintain that women are also required to hear Kerias ha-Torah, the accepted custom is that listening to the Torah reading is not a woman’s obligation; Mishnah Berurah 282:12; Aruch ha-Shulchan 282:11. See Halichos Bas Yisrael 2, note 77*.

2 Rambam, Tefilah 12:1.

3 Mishnah Berurah 282:2.

4 See Megilah 29b that in Eretz Yisrael the custom was to finish the Torah once every three years. See Emes I’Yaakov, ibid. for the apportionment of the weekly reading segments based on a three-year cycle.

5 Rambam, Hilchos Tefilah 13:1. See Igros Moshe O.C. 4:23 and 4:40-5 who explains that once this became universally accepted, it has turned into a full-fledged obligation.

6 O.C. 137:3 and 282:7.

7 Beir Halachah 142:1.

- 8 Even a ba'al koreh who is familiar with the parshah should review it at least twice; Aruch ha-Shulchan 139:2.
- 9 Mishnah Berurah 142:6.
- 10 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 12:8). See Igros Moshe O.C. 3:19.
- 11 O.C. 142. The Tur quotes this view in the name of the Ba'al ha-Manhig, and according to most opinions, this is the Tur's view as well.
- 12 Rama O.C. 142:1. While Rama does not specify the details of how the ba'al koreh is rebuked, the Tur and Beis Yosef imply that the rebuke should not take place publicly so as to not embarrass the reader.
- 13 Mishnah Berurah 142:4.
- 14 As explained by Rashi, Bereishis 29:6. See Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 690:20 (concerning Megilas Esther) who mentions this example.
- 15 Reb Chaim of Volozhin in Keser Rosh (40).
- 16 Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky (Karyana D'igerta 1:138); Harav Y. Kamenetsky (oral ruling quoted in Emes l'Yaakov O.C. 142:1); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum quoted in Halichos Shelomo 12:24). See Dikdukei Shai, pgs. 160-165, for an explanation of this view. Note, also, that all the major poskim who discuss the laws of correcting a ba'al koreh do not mention this type of mistake as one that must be corrected.
- 17 Chayei Adam 31:31; Mishnah Berurah 142:4 and Beir Halachah; Aruch ha-Shulchan 142:3-4; Kaf ha-Chayim 142:2.
- 18 Chayei Adam 5:2; Mishnah Berurah 142:4; Sha'arei Rachamim on Sha'arei Efrayim 3:18. See Tzitz Eliezer 12:40 and Halichos Shelomo 12, note 79.
- 19 Preferably, he should start again from the beginning of the pasuk or – at the very least – from the beginning of the phrase (within the pasuk), see Mishnah Berurah 64:5 and Tehilah l'David 64:1 (concerning Kerias Shema). See also Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-32 (concerning zeicher and zecher).
- 20 Chayei Adam 31:31 and Beir Halachah 142:1.
- 21 See Mishnah Berurah 142:2 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun for the correct procedure.
- 22 Bach O.C. 142; Eliyahu Rabbah 142:2, Siddur Derech ha-Chayim (15); Da'as Torah 142:1. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan 690:20.
- 23 While this view is not the accepted practice, the poskim rely on it if the mistake was realized after the final blessing on the Torah was recited.
- 24 Most often this depends on where in the verse the word appears and/or what the trop is. There is no alteration of meaning. Sometimes, however, lach is written for a nekeivah and lecha is written for zachar; in that case the meaning is altered.
- 25 As mentioned earlier, he is reprimanded in private.
- 26 See Eishel Avraham O.C. 142 who suggests a similar idea.
- 27 Based on Mishnah Berurah 142:4 and Beir Halachah.
- 28 See Pri Megadim 142:1 who writes that the same applies to reading Avraham instead of Avram or vice versa.
- 29 See Mishnah Berurah 143:26.
- 30 Mishnah Berurah 142:4 and all the poskim mentioned earlier who rule in accordance with the Tur against the Shulchan Aruch.
- 31 Pri Chadash 142, Beir ha-Gra 142, Chayei Adam 31:31, Aruch ha-Shulchan 142: 3-4; Kaf ha-Chayim 142:2.

Candles (Melb) Friday 23 January 2026, 6 Shvat 5786 8.22p/9.24p