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

Yisro 5785

JOIN THE WINNING TEAM

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

And Yisro, the chieftain of Midian, father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and for Israel, His people, that HASHEM had taken Israel out of Egypt. (Shemos 18:1)

And Yisro...heard: What news did he hear that [made such an impression that] he came? The splitting of the Red Sea and the war with Amalek. — Rashi
 What a great testament to the greatness of Yisro! He came to join the Jewish People after hearing the incredible news about the miraculous exodus from Egypt. He decided to become part of the Jewish Nation. What could be more noble? Now, wait a second! I thought that we don't accept converts in the times of Moshiach. (Yevamos 24:B) We're not looking for fair weather fans that jump on board when we've won the world championship. It's too late by then. You have to join during the struggling years and tough times to be considered a true devotee. How can we not suspect Yisro's motive here and at least pause to wonder about his sincerity?!

Now, was Yisro the only one that heard about these events? No! The whole world was affected by the splitting of the sea. Everyone was aware that HASHEM was doing battle for the Jewish People. During the Shira, the Song at the Sea, they sang, "Peoples heard, they trembled; a shudder seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chieftains of Edom were startled; [as for] the powerful men of Moab, trembling seized them; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted. (Shemos 15:14-15)

It would seem that the rest of the world was quaking in their boots. They were beyond frightened by the implications of HASHEM taking up the cause of the Jewish People and granting them supremacy.

So, now the question is, what was their next move? Why didn't they all run into the desert and join the Jewish People like Yisro? The Meor Einayim says that there is "hearing" and there is "hearing". Some only hear the words but fail to act while others, few others, understand the import of the message, take it to heart, and respond responsibly.

When a fireman or a Hatzala member gets a call, they jump into action without hesitation. They know what that alarm, what that signal means. Everyone else watches them or shrugs their shoulders or ignores it altogether. It's not speaking to them.

When Avraham Avinu was visited with these words from HASHEM he too went immediately into action mode, "... Lech Lecha – Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you..." (Breishis 12:1) The Ramban asks an almost obvious question on these initial words. Why is there no explanation why HASHEM is talking to him? Suddenly, he is in the spotlight of history. Sure, we have loads of information in the Oral Torah about Avram's youth and his search for G-d, courageously destroying idols in his father's shop, and his willingness to go into a fiery furnace rather than submit to idolatry. These events are not explicitly spelled out. Why was he worthy of being spoken to by HASHEM?

The Sefas Emes offers a stunning explanation to this question. He quotes a Zohar that states, "Woe to those people who sleep in their caves, while Avraham Avinu of Blessed Memory, heard and accepted." The Sefas Emes sees a profound implication in that Zohar. He says that those words "Lech Lecha" that launched our national mission, were not only said to Avraham. It was announced then and is announced constantly ever since to everybody, and this was the great praise of Avraham that made him worthy.

The fact that he heard and responded makes it as if HASHEM was speaking only to him.

Many, in their caves, are not in the listening mode. Some hear but are unresponsive. Avraham heard and was responsive. HASHEM is saying to the whole world constantly to keep moving, begin, do better, come closer, but that message is only for those who hear it well and respond responsibly.

When Yisro heard about the splitting of the sea and there was still fierce opposition from Amalek, while everyone else is still on the sidelines, he understood, "the game is not over yet". Then he decided, he better join the winning team.

FIND GLAMOUR IN THE GRIND

GITTY STOLIK (Chabad.org)

Do you feel stuck in a rut? Do you ever fantasize about making a bold change in your life, perhaps starting a new career or moving to another city? Whether it's our domestic chores, the daily challenge of homework with children or the endless list of things that need fixing, by the time a day is over, we're exhausted. Novelty seems far away.

There's a wonderful children's story about a discontented stonecutter, whose backbreaking job it was to hack at a stone mountain all day with his heavy axe. What an inconsequential occupation, let alone a life's mission. He didn't want to chop at mountains; he wanted to move mountains! He wanted to be a mover and a shaker! A somebody. And—he wanted an easier ride. This stonecutting was exhausting labor.

One day, a chariot transporting a mighty monarch passed by. "Ah," thought the stonecutter, "to be a king—what a dream! It's easy and so-o-o glamorous." As he fantasized how wonderful and stimulating that role would be, presto! His wish became a reality, and he was suddenly sitting in a royal, splendid coach. How powerful and mighty he felt, issuing commands to his subjects—until the sun started to beat mercilessly on him. He realized the sun was mightier than he, and he wished to become the sun. Poof! He became the sun, beaming its powerful rays toward the earth.

But his quest to be the ultimate "someone" did not end there. He became the clouds that blocked the sun, then the powerful wind that was able to blow away the clouds, then the mountain that was able to stand its ground against the wind, until . . . a stonecutter came along and began to chisel away at his mountainside. When he realized what power the simple stonecutter wielded, power over the great big mountain, he decided to become—a stonecutter. He was back where he had started—but not really. There was new vigor in every chop and new glamour in every chip. Every small action was making a huge difference.

It's tempting to fantasize about a better life. We'd love to dodge our own reality, our never-ending workload, the monotony of our existence. We dream of escaping, some exciting new means of self-fulfilment. And something easy. Who wants to work hard, anyway?

The world is a very exciting place, but if we don't think that what we're doing is any big deal, if we fail to see the redeeming value of our daily routine, we can become jaded and seek out fun-filled fantasies. We're dazzled by things that have high visibility and make a public splash; we're impressed by titles and multiple letters after one's name. Our rational sight is clouded by the glitz and glare, while authentic Judaism is swept aside by the winds of "progress."

Being out in the public eye, being conspicuous, noticed and wowed over is not the source of our distinctiveness. Were the cameras flashing when Moshe came to the rescue of the daughters of Yitro (Yitro) at the well? When the relieved daughters returned home and recounted how a stranger

had delivered them from the shepherds' malevolent mischief, Yitro asked them, "Where is he (Ayo)? A person of this caliber would be a good marriage candidate for one of you."

His query was an echo of an earlier verse in the Torah. "Where is she (Ayeh Sarah)?" the three angels asked about Sarah, their hostess in the desert. "Where is Sarah, in whose merit the world is blessed?"

Moshe's "no-show" reminded Yitro of Sarah. Moshe did not follow Yitro's daughters home, and so did not receive praise and recognition for his heroic act. This was an extraordinary trait of modesty, Maharal explains. Yitro realized that the stranger must be a descendant of the woman who prepared a beautiful repast for her guests but did not feel any need for recognition. Sarah remained inconspicuous, doing the ordinary everyday things that exceptional people do. It was enough for her to be in the right place at the right time.

The presumption that "to be noticed proves that I'm a somebody" is a fallacy. There's a better, more effective way to be celebrated. Every act that we do with the correct intention is special. And G-d cherishes every one of those acts, no matter how trivial—forever.

For G-d values modesty. He values one who is focused on inner qualities, not externalities, accolades and attention.

What is most hidden is ultimately the most sought after.

HOW TO INSPIRE OTHERS

RABBI AVRAHAM KOVEL (Aish.com)

How do we stay grounded after achieving spiritual heights? And perhaps the greater challenge: how do we share these transformative experiences in a way that truly inspires others?

These questions, as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago, find their answer in an unexpected moment just after the giving of the Torah.

The Torah tells us that Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, joined the Jewish nation in the desert after hearing about the miracles G-d performed in Egypt. While this appears at the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Rashi explains it actually occurred the day after Moshe returned with the second set of tablets. Consider the context: Moshe had just spent three sets of 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai in direct communion with G-d, receiving a divine download of unimaginable proportions. He returned carrying the mission to teach G-d's infinite wisdom to three million Jews. One might expect him to be too overwhelmed for visitors.

Yet instead of brushing him off, Moshe does the exact opposite - he lays out the metaphorical red carpet:

"Moshe went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. Moshe then recounted to his father-in-law everything that Hashem had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and how G-d had delivered them." (Exodus 18:7-9)

Moshe's intimate attention to his father-in-law might seem surprising. Shouldn't he be beyond such mundane interactions?

Nothing could be further from the truth. True spiritual growth doesn't distance us from others—it brings us closer. This wisdom flows from a foundational principle: humanity bears the Divine Image.¹ Therefore, the deeper our connection with the Divine, the greater our appreciation must be for His children. This is why our greatest Torah leaders never retreated to mountaintops. The Rambam exemplified this perfectly: while producing works of eternal wisdom, he served both as leader of the Egyptian Jewish community and as the Sultan's physician, showing how spiritual greatness expresses itself through deeper engagement with both one's own community and the broader world.

The Roadmap of Inspiration

Let's take this conclusion a step further: Given that Moshe just had the most powerful spiritual experience imaginable, his interaction with Yisro must serve as the masterclass in imparting spiritual elevation. When we examine the text closely, we discover that each of Moshe's actions was precisely calculated, forming a seven-step framework for transmitting our highest revelations with genuine connection:

1. "Moshe went out" - He left his comfort zone and took the initiative
2. "He bowed low" - He demonstrated respect
3. "And kissed him" - He gave love and affection
4. "Each asked after the other's welfare" - He displayed humanity and empathy
5. "And they went into the tent" - He provided hospitality and physical nurturing
6. "Moshe then recounted (וַיִּסְתָּר)..." - Then, and only then, he delivered an inspiring and moving account of the Exodus in order to draw Yisro

close to Torah

One crucial step remains—the seventh step that transforms the previous six into a complete whole, much like Shabbat elevates the six days of the week:

7. "And Yisro rejoiced over all the kindness that G-d had shown Israel when He delivered them from the Egyptians. And Yisro said 'Baruch Hashem! (Blessed is G-d!)' - He steps back and lets Yisro internalize the message on his own.

When we've experienced profound insights or spiritual revelations, our enthusiasm might tempt us to launch straight into sharing these deep truths. But the Torah reveals a crucial principle: the most powerful wisdom can only be conveyed through genuine connection. People don't care about how much we know until they know how much we care. These seven steps show us exactly how to bridge the gap between having wisdom and making an impact

MAKING THE EXTRA EFFORT

A story from recent years brings these seven steps to life: Danny grew up in a religious Jewish family in Brooklyn, but his search for meaning led him far from home - to Montana's Blackfoot Indian Reservation. There, he became a hunter and formed deep bonds with the Native American community. His quest for truth brought him to a renowned Sioux elder who, after two weeks of profound conversation, offered unexpected guidance: 'Seek the truth of your heritage.' Moved by these words, Danny returned to New York, ready to rediscover his Jewish roots.

His search for guidance led him to Rabbi Freifeld, who answered his call on the first ring and, upon hearing of Danny's interest, invited to his home. When Danny arrived, the Rabbi showed him in, gave him refreshments, and urged him to get comfortable.

"Where do you live, Danny?" he asked gently.

"In Montana."

"What do you do in Montana?"

Knowing that hunting is primarily against Jewish law, Danny braced for impact, responding, "I hunt."

The Rabbi's eyes lit up and he leaned forward, his voice filled with wonder. "What do you hunt?"

The Rabbi proceeded to question him enthusiastically about his passion for an hour. At the end of their discussion, the Rabbi invited Danny to come to the Yeshiva the next morning. When Danny arrived, he saw a packed study hall, and the Rabbi sitting in the front holding a baby who was about to receive a circumcision.

Suddenly, Rabbi Freifeld looked up and located Danny at the back of the room. He sent for Danny and gave him a place of honor at his side. Later that day, Danny started in a beginner Talmud class with Rabbi Freifeld as his teacher. Over the next few months, in addition to his studies, Danny spent many hours with Rabbi Freifeld discussing nature, Native American culture, and life in general.

A year later, while meeting with the Rabbi in his office, the Rabbi was called out for an emergency. Danny began perusing the Torah books in the office. A flash of color hidden under the desk drew his attention and curiosity. When he pulled out the book, he stopped and stared in shock. The book, checked out from the library, was a dossier of Native American culture and customs; the information that the loving Rabbi needed to connect with his student to show him just how important he was.

From Sinai to today, this divine wisdom remains unchanged: the path to inspiring others begins not with what we know, but with how deeply we care. As you encounter opportunities to share your wisdom with others, let these seven steps guide your approach. You'll be amazed at how much more receptive people become when you first create genuine connection.

REMINDERS OF EXILE

RABBI YISSOCHOR FRAND (Aish.com)

Both of Moshe's sons were named as reminders of the trials and tribulations he had experienced during his lifetime (Shemos 18:3-4). "The name of the first was Gershom, because he said, 'I was a stranger in a strange land.' The name of the other was Eliezer, because the Lord of my father helped me and rescued me from Pharaoh's sword."

Why did Moshe choose these names?

The Pardes Yosef explains that Moshe wanted to ensure that his children grew up with a sense of reality. Growing up in the placid environment of Midian, they could easily have developed a false sense of security. What were these children lacking? They lived with their parents in comfort and peace. They had grandparents. They were respected and honored. Their lives were as near to perfect as could be, but there are no guarantees in life. Jewish children have to be prepared. They have to be aware that they are always in exile, that persecution, hunger, chaos, terror can appear suddenly out of nowhere. Everything can change in one day.

By choosing these names for his children, Moshe was reinforcing this

message in their hearts. Look at me, he was saying. I used to be a prince in Pharaoh's palace. I had everything imaginable. I was a child of privilege. Then everything turned over, and I had to flee for my life, and if the Lord of my father had not rescued me, Pharaoh's executioner would have killed me. The Pardes Yosef brings the story of the Jews of Spain as an illustration. There was a time when the lives of the Jews in Spain were close to perfect, a true golden age. They were secure, respected and prosperous. They lived in a warm and beautiful land. Their leaders, such as Rav Shmuel Hanagid, were the honored advisers of kings and sultans. The Torah flourished in their midst. And then things changed. Forces hostile to the Jewish people gained supremacy. The Jews lost favor. Terrible pogroms broke out, and a century of turbulence ended with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 on Tishah b'Av. Could anyone living during the golden age have imagined it would come to this?

Had the Pardes Yosef lived to see the Holocaust, he could have brought an even better illustration of the tables turning on the Jewish people. Things may have been very good for Jews in Germany in the 19th century, but they were still in exile, as time would so painfully tell.

Here in America, we also live under the illusion that we are no longer in exile. This is truly a wonderful country, a merciful country, a blessed country, and may Hashem protect and watch over this country forever. My father, Mr. David Frand, of blessed memory, a true and honest Jew, would buy United States Savings Bonds when they were paying 3.5 percent. "Can't you get a better return on your money?" I once asked him when I was still a youngster. My father told me that the United States took him in when he was running away from Frankfort in 1939, and he felt obligated to acknowledge the favor by buying government bonds even at rates as low as 3.5 percent. That is how we must feel about this country. And yet, there are no guarantees.

The Talmud relates (Bava Basra 73b) in the name of Rabbah bar bar Channah, "We were once traveling on a boat and saw what turned out to be a fish. It was so huge that sand collected on its back, and we thought it was an island. We got off the boat and stepped onto this supposed island. We baked and cooked. But when it got too hot for the fish, he rolled over, and we fell off. Had we not been close to the boat, we all would have drowned." According to the Maharsha, this story is a parable. We are all adrift on the stormy sea of exile, and suddenly we see an island. We think we have found a safe haven. We cook and bake and buy houses and made weddings and bar mitzvahs. We have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and everything is wonderful. And we say, "We are no longer in exile. We are in a land flowing with milk and honey." And then the island turns over and we realize we have been sitting on the back of a fish all along. And now we consider ourselves fortunate if only we do not drown in the sea of our exile.

MAKING TORAH WORK

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Despite the story of the singularly most momentous occasion in world history being told in this week's parsha, the Torah starts with a seemingly unimportant (in comparison) story – Yisro and his critique of his son-in-law, Moshe.

Yisro sees Moshe trying to do everything himself and realises that Moshe is risking burnout and short selling the people.

He suggests that Moshe delegate dealings with people – appoint officers to deal with ten people, others to handle fifty, a further level for hundred and yet another level for a thousand people. Moshe would sit at the top and deal with the cases that could not be resolved by lower four levels of judges and mediators.

But anyone who knows Jews, knows that they would not stand for it.

As the joke about Israel goes, everyone is a President, every Jew is special and all would demand that only the top person, only Moshe, could be the person to hear their issues.

Yisro's solution was that despite their claims of special 'protectzia', everyone had to go through the process. They could not bypass a rung. And Moshe couldn't do the same. He would only handle the challenging issues once they had worked their way through the levels. The whole thing was a system and everyone had to play their part for things to work.

And that indeed is the key prerequisite to Torah observance. There are no 'special relationships', no bypassing, no going straight to the top. Torah requires people to follow the correct process.

Yisro's solution actually is the only way that Torah and mitzvot work for a people.

MOST FAVOURED NATION

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

The portion of Yisro contains perhaps the most popular of all Biblical treatises The Ten Commandments. But the portion contains much more than commandments. It also contains Hashem's elocution defining his

people as the most treasured in the world. What makes Jew chosen? Before giving the Torah to them, Hashem enunciates the prerequisites. "And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world" (Exodus 19:5). Note: Judaism's exclusivity is not dependant on birthright alone. It is dependant on commitment to Torah and Mitzvos. It is not a restricted club, limited only to those who are born as Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it is also exclusive to those who commit to observe, whether, of Asian, African, or European descent. Thus, the Torah clearly states that those who hearken and observe the covenant are worthy to be a beloved treasure.

What needs clarification is the final statement, "for Mine is the entire world." What difference does that make in the context of commitment, and Hashem cherishing those who choose His path?

An old Jewish Bubba Ma'aseh serves as a wonderful parable.

Sadie Finkelstein lived in an apartment on New York's Lower East Side for about 50 years. Her son, David, had made it big in the corporate world as cosmopolitan businessman, wheeling and dealing, traveling to places as far-flung as the Himalayas and Russia's Ural Mountains. Of course, he shopped the finest Paris boutiques and European stores on his excursions to the more civilized portions of the world.

For his mother's 75th birthday, David decided to send her a gift of the finest Russian caviar and France's most exquisite Champagne. From his hotel suite in Paris he had the items shipped with one-day delivery, the Champagne and caviar on ice!

A few days later, David called his mother up. "Ma," he asked, "did you received package?"

"Sure, I received package," his mother said. She did not seem impressed

"Well how was it?" David asked in anticipation.

All he heard was a sigh. Then a pause. "To tell you truth," said Sadie "The ginger ale was a very sour and the blackberry jelly tasted to salty."

What makes a treasured item? What defines glory? If one is locked in his apartment and sees not the world, his treasures may be relegated to crackers and shmaltz herring. One may say, the Jews think that their culture is Divine, but they live in a myopic world. Hashem says, "No!" "You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world"

In proclaiming the Jewish people as the most beloved treasure, Hashem adds, "I know every culture, I saw every diamond, I own all the gold and all the precious jewels, and yet there will be no greater treasure to me than they who observe my laws and commandments!"

In choosing His people, the Almighty explicates, that he has proverbially tasted all the world's delicacies. He has seen all the world's glory. He has seen every fascinating custom and gazed at every civilization. His celestial palate has taste for the most Heavenly and Divine delicacies. Then He defines the Jews as the greatest treasure in a world that belongs solely to Him! That means we are a treasure among whatever archeologists, historians, sociologists, feel is priceless. We are a treasure amongst treasures!

The Almighty who lacks for nothing enjoys nothing more than the joy of His dearest people those who are chosen because they have chosen.

SOUNDS OF SINAI

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

It's been said that if you talk to G-d, you're a religious person; if G-d talks to you, you're crazy.

I guess that means I'm crazy. G-d talks to me—not as frequently as He should, but fairly often.

I might be arguing with my wife—that same tired argument that we've had a hundred times already—when something inside me says, "Hey, just a minute. Maybe look at it her way, for a change?"

Who said that, me? I don't talk that way to myself!

Or I might be walking along a sunny street, thinking my usual thoughts—the balance in my bank account, or what to have for lunch—when I'm struck with a deep sadness, a sudden yearning for something higher, something more meaningful. Who said that, me? I don't say things like that—not since I was twenty years old, anyway.

Our Sages tell us that "every day a Heavenly voice issues forth from Mount Sinai" calling for a return to the truth of truths. Asked Chassidism's founder, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov: What is the purpose of this voice, if no one hears it?

But we all hear it, answered the Baal Shem Tov. Every time that we are struck with an unexpected thought that pushes us in the right direction—unexpected because it is totally out of character for us, and a complete departure from our present frame of mind—that means that our inner ear has picked up an echo of the Divine voice calling from Mount Sinai.

Whether or not you make it a habit to talk to G-d, you should listen to Him talk to you. It'll be the sanest moment of your day.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife...” (chapter 20)

Have you had the following experience? You’ve got your eye on the newest iPhone or the newest Toyota Sienna, or, if you’re really well-heeled, the latest Rolex. You start to pray the Shemoneh Esrei, the silent standing prayer, you bend forward, say Baruch Atah... and into your mind floats a picture of this beautiful gold Rolex Seamaster Oyster Limited Edition. Baruch Atah HaRolex! You’re obsessed. An embarrassing portion of your waking life might be spent fantasizing about that new car or that new watch that you really want to buy.

Rabbi Elyahu Dessler identifies the two root motivations of our personalities: the desire to give and the desire to take. The desire to take is unique in that it’s not really about the object of desire, it’s about fulfilling the desire itself. It’s about the desire to possess. Therefore, once you get whatever it is, it loses that pristine gleam very quickly. The desire to take is a “green-eyed monster that mocks the meat it feeds on.” It can never be satisfied, because as soon as you have your new Rolex, well, you’ve got it now, right, and so it loses that delectable allure, and then sometime later, the next obsession takes hold, and so on and on. Does this sound familiar?

It says in the Book of Proverbs: “All the days of a poor man are wretched, but contentment is a feast without end.” When you’re happy with what you’ve got, your life is a never-ending feast, but when you look over your garden fence at your neighbor’s Sienna, or his family successes, and you compare all that with your own, your entire life will likely be miserable.

There are many modern challenges that a person needs to overcome in order to feel truly satisfied. In particular, it is important to be careful about what we feast our eyes on. To be truly satisfied with our lives, if we are careful where we look and what we desire, then we have a much greater chance for life to become a never-ending feast.

News, Views & Opinion

WE SWORE ‘NEVER AGAIN,’ YET HOSTAGES RETURN SKELETAL AND TORTURED

ZVIKA KLEIN (Jpost.com 8-2-25)

The faces are haunting: Or Levy, Eli Sharabi, and Ohad Ben Ami. Gaunt and hollow, their bodies frail, tell the story of 491 days in Hamas captivity. Sunken eyes, protruding bones, and skeletal frames ring an instant bell for Israelis and Jews everywhere: survivors of the Holocaust, the Muselmann of the concentration camps, and those who starved to the brink of death.

But when these hostages came home precisely 80 years after the fall of the Nazi regime, the world’s response was unimaginably detached.

The BBC, ever selective in its moral outrage, conveniently omitted their suffering from its homepage. CNN, on the other hand, saw fit to highlight the “emaciated” condition of Palestinian prisoners released in exchange-prisoners who, it must be said, received three meals a day, medical care, and family visits. The comparison is not only absurd; it is obscene.

Let’s set the record straight. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails are not hostages; they are convicted criminals, many guilty of terrorism and murder. Their detentions follow trials, evidence, and due process – luxuries Hamas does not grant its captives.

Comparing their conditions is a crime.

Palestinian prisoners in Israel receive complete medical care, dental services, and nutritious meals. They are not starved, beaten, or deprived of basic human needs. Every Palestinian prisoner is entitled to family visits monitored by the Red Cross.

Israeli hostages in Gaza? They were locked in darkness, without contact with their loved ones. Some of them were operated on without anesthesia; others had heavy injuries for more than a year without any medical treatment.

The Palestinian prisoners can object to their detention in Israeli courts and with the help of lawyers. Hostages in Gaza had no rights, no trials – only the mercy of their captors.

You would be surprised to hear that Palestinian prisoners have access to books, television, newspapers, and, in some cases, even higher education programs. The Israeli hostages, meanwhile, were wasting away in underground dungeons, deprived of sunlight, human dignity, and proper medical care, let alone clean water and air.

To equate these two realities is an insult to morality. Those parroting Hamas’s propaganda about prisoner mistreatment should spend a single

night in Hamas captivity – if they are lucky enough to survive it.

HAMAS PARADED OUR HOSTAGES before their release, forcing them to stand on a stage in front of a crowd of jubilant Gazans. The cruelty was calculated. Hamas terrorists made sure the world saw Israeli suffering as a spectacle before begrudgingly handing them over to the Red Cross.

And speaking of the Red Cross, they are allowed to visit Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, while not one Israeli hostage met with them throughout their entire time in captivity. And yet, some in the international community still buy into Hamas’s narrative of victimhood, of “humanitarian suffering” in Gaza, as if those holding hostages in cages and underground tunnels can ever be cast as the oppressed.

Where are the human rights organizations? Where are the protests by the same voices that, at one time or another, joined in rapid succession to loudly condemn Israel? They are mute, unconcerned with Israeli victims unless the tragedy can somehow be contorted to become part of a Jewish state condemnation.

The return of Or, Eli, and Ohad should ring as a kind of wake-up call. There are still 76 hostages left in Gaza, some of them dead, all of them subjected to inhumane conditions. The haunting images of these released captives make one thing clear: Every moment they remain in Hamas’s grip is another moment of irreversible physical and psychological damage.

And yet, as Israeli families weep for their loved ones, as a nation wrestles with the horror of these images, politicians continue to play their games.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid seized the moment to accuse Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of failing to act sooner. Simultaneously, Netanyahu vowed retaliation, his government issuing vague promises of “appropriate action.” But where is the concrete plan? Where is the strategy to bring them all home, alive, before they are too far gone?

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar put it bluntly: “The pictures don’t lie: The Hamas terrorists and the Gaza residents look great. The Israeli hostages look like Holocaust survivors.”

Indeed, the contrast could not be starker. The hostages’ skeletal frames stand as a living indictment of Hamas’s barbarism, an undeniable crime against humanity. The fact that some still equivocate, still seek to “both sides” this horror, is a stain on the conscience of the world.

We must be clear: Hamas does not take hostages. It takes human lives and reduces them to bargaining chips. Never Again is now. And if Israel does not act decisively, if the international community does not finally recognize this evil for what it is, we risk failing those still trapped in the depths of Gaza.

They must be freed before it’s too late.

Stephen Pollard

No one can now deny the evil that is Hamas

Anyone seeing the pictures of emaciated Israeli hostages surely must finally realise what the Jewish state has been up against

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR, HAMAS, ISRAEL, MIDDLE EAST, ANTI-SEMITISM, GAZA

STEPHEN POLLARD (Telegraph.co.uk 8-2-25)

Two weeks ago the world commemorated the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In the years since 1945 the images of the inmates have become part of the fabric of history, documenting the evil of which some of our species are capable.

We may now be used to seeing them, but the pictures of starved, emaciated bodies, barely more than skeletons, have never lost the power to shock.

As a former editor of the Jewish Chronicle, I have had both to report and to confront anti-Semitism.

The battle against Jew hate has become the driving force of my professional life. Sometimes it has felt as though the Jewish people were banging our heads against a brick wall – such as when the response of so many self-described “progressives” to the barbarity of October 7 has been to demonstrate not against the barbarity but against the victims of that barbarity.

In that context, I have spent time asking myself if the scenes in Gaza and the terrible state of the latest hostages to be released might cause them to indulge in some self-reflection, or even a sense of shame that they have been marching in support of the terrorists who inflicted this evil.

I doubt it. These are the people, after all, who we have now learnt applied to the police at 2.50pm on October 7 2023 for permission to march against Israel the following week – making their application while the massacre was still in progress.

The footage of Eli Sharabi, Ohad Ben Ami and Or Levy could have come straight from 1945.

The only difference was the presence of their Hamas captors; the Nazis had fled the camps by the time they were liberated.

Hamas, on the other hand, stood proudly by as the emaciated, almost crippled bodies of the hostages were forced by their captors on to a stage

to take part in the latest of the terrorist organisation's sick propaganda stunts.

I am not religious. But I know that evil exists and we have once more seen it on display.

Or Levy is just 33 years old. His only crime was to have gone to a music festival and to have been Jewish. Hamas murdered his wife and starved him for 491 days. There is only one word for the people that did this to him: evil. Ever since October 7 we have heard glib platitudes from around the world about "peace", about reaching an accommodation with Hamas and about Israel needing to accept a "two-state solution".

But there will be no peace – indeed, there should be no peace – when that necessitates accepting the presence of evil.

As Israel's president, Isaac Herzog put it: "This is what a crime against humanity looks like. The entire world should look at Ohad, Or and Eli – who returned from the hell of 491 days in captivity, painful, emaciated and wounded, and were used in a cynical and evil ritual by damned murderers."

Throughout the war brought on by Hamas's massacre we have been told by much of the media – and by Hamas's useful idiots protesting on the streets and on campus – that the real criminal is Israel.

Look at the aid shortages! The simple fact is that, far from blocking aid, Israel has gone out of its way to facilitate its arrival in Gaza.

But just as Hamas deliberately uses Palestinian civilians as human shields for its propaganda so it can accuse Israel of targeting civilians, so too it both blocks aid from being distributed (often destroying it) and seizes it for its own use.

If you want to see what real targeted starvation looks like, look at the pictures of the Israeli hostages.

'TRANSFER' PUSH ENJOYS BROAD CONSENSUS IN ISRAEL

SHIMON SHERMAN (JNS.org 7-2-25)

Two weeks ago, the idea of "transfer" was as close to politically incorrect as possible in the context of Israeli politics.

"Transfer" is an umbrella term in Hebrew, referring to a family of policies, varying in their breadth and implementation, but unified in one characteristic: the movement of Arab populations out of contested areas as a method of resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Left-wing politicians have dismissed the policies as "messianic" or a form of ethnic cleansing. Right-wing politicians have dismissed the idea as impractical or have refused to advance it through sheer political inertia.

However, after almost a year and a half of attack and retreat in Gaza, of thousands of rockets, terror attacks, ballistic missiles, exploding pagers, assassinations, hostage deals and terrorist releases, we found ourselves at the history-shifting moment when a United States president, of all people, put the "transfer" policy back on the political map.

In a joint press conference on Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump announced his administration's intention to "take over the Gaza Strip."

Trump unfolded his vision to remove the entire population of Gaza "to several other countries," after which Gaza would be leveled, cleared of rubble, and turned into an international economic development.

"This proposal has tremendously shifted the Overton window. People who were recently afraid to even broach the possibility of 'transfer' are now talking about it absolutely openly," Martin Sherman, a senior researcher at the Israeli Defense and Security Forum, told JNS.

(The Overton window is the range of subjects and arguments politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time.)

Certain corners of Israel's news punditry responded with shock at Trump's proposal, apparently confused as to why he did not receive the memo that you are not allowed to discuss the idea of 'transfer' in polite society. However, according to recent polling, Trump is more in line with the Israeli street than many of the talking heads who have been bashing the new proposal.

'A PRACTICAL PLAN'

A Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) poll published on Feb. 3, before the White House press conference, showed that a majority of Israeli Jews thought that the proposition "Arabs from Gaza should relocate to another country" was a "practical plan that should be pursued."

According to the study, 52% of Israeli Jews thought the plan was both realistic and positive, while 30% of Israeli Jews thought the plan was "not practical, but desirable." Meanwhile, 13% of Israeli Jews said the plan was "a distraction," and only 3% of Israeli Jews thought that the plan was "immoral."

When broken down by political affiliation, there is a clear growth in support the further right down the spectrum you travel. JPPI found that 81% of right-wing Israelis, and 57% of center-right respondents, thought that transfer was an actionable solution to the Gaza crisis. Meanwhile, even

among left-wing respondents, only 27% said the idea was immoral.

A poll by Israel's Channel 13 shows that the support may have gone up since the press conference on Monday. According to the study, 93% of Likud voters, 98% of Religious Zionism Party voters, 88% of haredi voters, and 100% of Yisrael Beiteinu voters support Trump's plan. Even center-left voters from the Yesh Atid and National Unity parties support the plan at the rate of 74% and 80%, respectively. When comparing this to polling data from the mid-2000s, one can see an almost 30-point rise in support for "transfer."

To summarize, the idea of "transfer" broadly, and Trump's proposal specifically, boasts one of the broadest levels of consensus on any issue in Israeli politics.

Beyond being popular, many commentators believe "transfer" is the only practical solution to the Gaza crisis.

"For a long time, Israel has been faced with a difficult dilemma: either there will be Jews in the Negev or Arabs in Gaza, but there cannot be both," Martin Sherman explained. "If the Jewish state is to continue to exist, Gaza must be vacated of its population."

"All of the alternative proposals on the table so far are just reruns of old failed ideas that led us to October 7. They're all predicated on the yet-to-be-proven idea that somewhere out there is a Palestinian leader who has both the will and the authority to impose some form of peace agreement on the wider population. There's never been evidence of such an option existing. We have been operating under this false assumption for the past 40 years," he said.

Sherman further pointed out that the movement of the civilian population is an entirely normal direction in times of military conflict, and that the forceful containment of Gaza's civilian population was a deeply unprecedented decision.

"Wherever there has been warfare, whether it's in Syria or Ukraine, you see civilian populations fleeing the combat. Only here in this one case in the world has the population been trapped where the battles are happening and the entire world has just refused to let them go," Sherman said.

LT-COL. (RES.) MAURICE HIRSCH, director of the Palestinian Authority Accountability Initiative at the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA), expanded on this point, calling the refusal to let Gazans leave "disgraceful."

Hirsch explained that the current policy of refusing to let Gazans leave was problematic purely on humanitarian grounds.

"The first question when considering 'transfer' is do you actually care about the Gazans. According to possibly embellished U.N. reports, between 75% and 80% of the homes in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. There are thousands of unexploded munitions lying around the entire area. There's no water, no electricity, no utilities, no shops. To put it simply, the Strip is uninhabitable."

'FOR EVERY HOSTAGE HARMED, ISRAEL WILL TAKE 5% OF GAZA'

BENTZI RUBIN (Jpost.com 11-2-25)

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said that Israel has full backing from former US President Donald Trump for a policy linking Gaza annexation to harm inflicted on Israeli hostages and reiterated his opposition to drafting Haredim into the IDF while speaking at the Institute for Haredi Strategy and Policy on Monday,

Smotrich argued that Israel should cut off electricity, water, and humanitarian aid to Gaza while warning Hamas that "every hostage who is harmed" would result in Israel applying sovereignty over "5% of Gaza." He reiterated, "We have full backing" for this policy, citing Trump's support.

Smotrich suggested that Hamas be presented with a clear ultimatum: "Once the war resumes, all the released terrorists must be re-arrested. This would take very little time, and a very simple message must be conveyed: for every hostage harmed, on that same day, we will apply sovereignty over 5% of Gaza. Another hostage, another 5%, and we have full backing from President Trump on this matter."

Rejecting any halt to the war, he emphasized, "There is currently a debate about whether the war can be stopped. The war cannot be stopped just before the complete destruction of Hamas."

Meanwhile, security officials said that they are preparing for the possible re-entry of the IDF into Gaza. "At the same time," they noted, "the IDF today has the capabilities, knowledge, experience, and understanding that, given an order from the political leadership, it can within hours capture parts of Gaza, including re-securing the northern Gaza area, the Netzarim corridor, and maneuvering in the southern part, including Khan Yunis."

"Nothing pains our enemies more than land. They only understand force. They don't care about tens of thousands of casualties and destroyed buildings—that's what needs to be done," Smotrich continued.

"Issue an ultimatum, completely halt the absurdity of humanitarian aid, electricity, and water. Gather all Gaza residents into one area, maintain

minimal control, and remove them to a different future.”

DISCUSSING THE RECENT HOSTAGE DEAL, he criticized the country’s vulnerability during negotiations: “During the deal period, the entire country was in distress every time Hamas’s military wing spokesperson said something. A sovereign, normal, life-seeking state responsible for the health and security—both physical and mental—of its citizens cannot live like this. Do you think anyone in the Gaza border communities can live long-term under a threat where every statement, every piece of intelligence, every doubt immediately raises the alert level and cancels events? Can anyone live like that?”

He reiterated Israel’s war objectives, saying, “We defined the war objectives on the night of October 7—the complete destruction of Hamas, politically and governmentally, and ensuring that there is no threat from Gaza toward Israeli citizens. We cannot live with such a threat just a stone’s throw from our communities. What has been done is a grave mistake.”

In conclusion, he declared, “Gaza will once again become part of the State of Israel because it is our land, and that is the only way to ensure the safety and security of Israel’s citizens.”

TERRORISTS RELEASED BY ISRAEL LEAVE PRISON AS MILLIONAIRES

DAVID ISAAC (JNS.org 6-2-25)

Many terrorists released by Israel are millionaires, flush with cash from years of receiving monthly Palestinian Authority “pay for slay” stipends, an analysis by a Jerusalem-based watchdog group revealed on Wednesday.

Palestinian Media Watch posted a list of all 734 terrorists scheduled for release from Israeli prisons in the first phase of the hostages-for-ceasefire agreement with Hamas, together with their “salaries”—the dollar amounts each terrorist received from the Palestinian Authority’s so-called Martyrs’ Fund while incarcerated.

In total, the terrorists received \$141,837,087, or more than half a billion shekels. Of those, 316, or nearly half, received more than a million shekels. (Palestinian Media Watch created a program to crunch the numbers, inputting all the relevant P.A. criteria—crime, marital status, number of children, etc., to determine the size of their stipends.)

“It’s a tremendous force driving terror,” Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch’s founder and director, told JNS.

First, it signals to Palestinians that these terrorists weren’t working in a vacuum, but were acting in the name of the P.A.

Second, the wealth places the terrorists in an honored position in Palestinian society, in fact, “Palestinian terrorists are the most honored people in Palestinian society,” he said.

“When they’re introduced, and in interviews, even years after they were released from jail, they’re called Asra [“Prisoner”]. That’s their title. It’s like an ambassador. It’s actually similar to POW [prisoner of war]. They have a different word for criminal prisoners. For the P.A., they’re legitimate fighters, even if they killed women and children,” Marcus said.

“In another society, if a criminal goes to jail for murdering someone, he’s ashamed about it. In the Palestinian Authority, they go around with a crown on their heads,” he said.

The P.A.’s ongoing “pay-for-slay” program demonstrates that Israel’s efforts to curtail it have not succeeded. In July 2018, Israel, which collects tax and tariff revenue of behalf of the P.A., passed a law withholding those funds equal to the amount the P.A. paid to terrorists. The law aimed to put an end to the practice.

The P.A. declared that payments would go on. P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas said in October 2019, “The Martyrs and their families are sacred, [and so are] the wounded and the prisoners. We must pay all of them. If one penny remains in our hands it is for them and not for the living.”

Abbas has made good on his pledge. Marcus told JNS that the P.A. has not paid its employees their full salaries—“at one point they skipped a whole month, which they’ve never made up”—to ensure imprisoned terrorists were paid in full.

“What’s outrageous, of course, is a person who’s living at home, working, who’s got five or six kids and needs the money—his salary you’re cutting to 70%. But the prisoner who’s getting everything—all his food and everything taken care of by Israel—that’s the one who’s getting 100%. So it’s just a message of values,” Marcus said.

In response, Palestinian Media Watch spearheaded a campaign in 2020 together with the IDF to effect a change whereby much of Israel’s Anti-Terror Law would be applied to Judea and Samaria, “rendering banks liable to punishment for facilitating P.A. terror salaries.”

It worked to a degree. It sent the P.A. into crisis as it realized its banks would be exposed to international terror financing laws. “According to the official statements that we got, 33,000 bank accounts were closed,” Marcus said.

As a temporary workaround, the P.A. paid the terrorists’ families through the post office. (The families complained about the indignity of having to wait in line to receive their stipends, Marcus noted.)

Then the P.A. opened a special bank dedicated solely to receiving the funds from the P.A. “The only thing that this bank does is pay terrorist salaries,” he said.

Marcus’s suggestion is to arrest anyone in the P.A. involved in the “pay-for-slay” program, even if that means arresting the entire staff at the P.A.’s Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs.

“They should all be arrested, put in jail, charged. And that would stop it very quickly,” he said.

USAID SENT OVER \$18 BILLION TO ISLAMIC TERROR STATES

DANIEL GREENFIELD (Frontpagemag.org 7-2-25)

“It is really, really a sad day in America,” Rep. Ilhan Omar declared at a rally by Democrats outside USAID headquarters protesting President Trump’s reconstruction of the aid agency.

It wasn’t a sad day for America, but it was so for Somalia.

Over the last two years, USAID had funneled \$2.3 billion in “humanitarian assistance” to Omar’s native Somalia. Last year it reported a request for \$1.6 billion in aid and even with the Biden administration on the way out the door, it sent an additional \$29 million in December 2024.

USAID support for Somalia had doubled under the Biden administration and with \$3.3 billion from USAID allocated in the last 5 years, the end of the USAID gravy train for the Islamic terrorist state of Somalia must have been a painful blow for Omar, who is very close to the Somali regime. Former Somali Prime Minister Hassan Khaire had reportedly celebrated that “the interest of Ilhan are not Ilhan’s, it’s not the interest of Minnesota, nor is it the interest of the American people, the interest of Ilhan is that of the Somalian people and Somalia.”

It’s unknown if any of Omar’s Majerteen clan members benefited from the billions in American money, but considering the prominence of the clan in Somali politics, it’s likely to be the case.

Somalia, along with other Islamic terrorist entities, including the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hamas in Gaza, were among the top beneficiaries of USAID cash.

USAID boasted of having sent \$2.1 billion to Gaza and the West Bank since the Hamas attacks of Oct 7. In 2024 alone, \$917 million was programmed for the terrorist areas occupying Israel.

USAID provided over \$3.7 billion to Afghanistan since the Taliban took over with \$832 million in the previous fiscal year alone. The money was so unaccountable that USAID refused to cooperate with the U.S. Government’s Afghan War watchdog tracking money going to terrorists.

Even while the United States of America was at war with the Houthis, the Iran-backed Islamic terrorist group firing on US Navy vessels, USAID continued to direct billions of dollars to Yemen.

In 2024, USAID announced a \$2.7 billion aid request for Yemen and allocated \$753 million. In the last 5 years, USAID provided an estimated \$3.4 billion in aid to an enemy terror state.

Other Islamic terrorist states that have heavily drawn on USAID include Pakistan which harbored Osama bin Laden, but benefited from \$600 million in the last 5 years. While some American towns and cities lacked clean drinking water, USAID labored to build plants for Pakistan’s majority Muslim population even while it engaged in the persecution of Christians.

USAID spent over \$700 million on Iraq during the last 5 years even though the country has long since been governed by Iranian puppets whose militias have been firing on American soldiers.

\$3.4 billion was directed to Syria over the past 5 years by USAID even as it was caught in a civil war between Shiite Islamists aligned with Iran and Sunni Islamists aligned with Al Qaeda.

USAID allocated \$1.1 billion to spend on Lebanon even as the country was run by Hezbollah.

While USAID is unable to function in Iran, between Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, over \$8 billion was sent to Iranian puppet regimes even without counting the money spent on Gaza.

In total, USAID had spent some \$18.5 billion on Islamic terror states over those 5 years.

This is not a full list of USAID spending in Muslim countries, but only those countries whose governments are closely interlinked with terrorists, sponsor terrorist groups or serve as puppets of terror groups and states. Some of these countries are actively in a conflict with the U.S. They include countries responsible for the murder of American soldiers and terror attacks in the U.S.

USAID has sent \$9.3 billion to Islamic terror states collectively responsible for killing over 3,000 American soldiers. Not only did Islamic terrorist states and groups kill us, but in the ultimate obscenity, we have rewarded them

with millions of dollars for each of our murdered soldiers.

The reconstruction of USAID under the full umbrella of the State Department rather than as a ‘super-NGO’ advancing anti-American interests across the globe has been met with outrage by Rep. Ilhan Omar, Rep. Jim McGovern, Sen. Chris Murphy and other longtime shills for Islamic interests in America who worry that the money for Islamic terrorists won’t be there anymore.

But we ought to ask if sending \$18 billion to Islamic terror states is helping our national security.

USAID has provided massive amounts of funding for the UN and NGO ‘non-profits’ which operate inside terrorist areas with little to no oversight. Special exemptions have been handed out to allow distributors of ‘humanitarian aid’ to partner with and do business with terrorists.

Including some of the Islamic terrorist groups that America is still at war with.

USAID’s partnerships with foreign governments, and with large unaccountable organizations including the UN and the World Bank, have raised concerns of money laundering. The revolving door between USAID personnel and some of the non-profit and for-profit groups who all profit from it has also raised questions about the legitimacy of those arrangements. And USAID’s active efforts to deny information about its activities to SIGAR, the U.S. government’s Afghan war watchdog, as well as to the incoming Trump administration, makes it a rogue agency.

It may never be fully known how much of our foreign aid went into the pockets of Islamic terrorists, but the USAID freeze and consolidation under the State Department can help make sure that the aid pipeline stops being a way to fund the Islamic terrorists killing Americans.

IT WAS NEVER ABOUT A CEASE-FIRE

SETH MANDEL (Commentary.org 7-2-25)

After 16 months of “well maybe the protesters really do just want a cease-fire” and “let’s give them the benefit of the doubt that they aren’t just twisted pro-Hamas sickos,” we can now acknowledge what we all knew to be true from the beginning: They’re just twisted pro-Hamas sickos.

According to documents obtained by the Telegraph, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign contacted London police while the Hamas rampage of Oct. 7, 2023, was in full swing. Their request: Permission to hold a public rally.

“By the time the PSC spoke to the police, Hamas had taken hostages and killed hundreds of people across towns and villages next to the Gaza Strip,” the Telegraph reports. “Videos had also circulated on social media, showing terrorists taking Israeli hostages to Gaza on motorbikes.”

The PSC reached out to the police before 1 p.m. on the day of the attack. It was at a time when the public already knew the attack was under way and some of the gruesome details, but before Israel could even contemplate a military response. The attack and the search for infiltrators went on for two days. During that time the PSC was planning its event.

Let there now be no doubt: This was a celebration rally. Like other such demonstrations in the West, Londoners were joyously reveling in acts of barbarism against Jews that hadn’t been seen since the Nazis. The police confirmed the timing to the Telegraph with a statement: “The Met was contacted on Saturday Oct 7 at approximately 12.50pm via telephone call and informed of the intention to protest. The Met committed this to our systems on the same day and are satisfied being contacted by telephone was a sufficient means in which to notify the MPS as the event was taking place seven days after notification.”

It’s good to have confirmation, but we should remember that we already knew this about protests in the United States as well. Chicago saw hundreds march downtown on Oct. 8, the day after the attacks. No one would even bother to try and claim that such an event was spontaneous, right? That march was in the pipeline as soon as it became clear what Hamas was doing.

Oct. 8 also saw an “all out for Palestine” rally in Dallas and a demonstration in Athens, Georgia, which organizers said was to mark the fact that “the Palestinian people, yesterday, fought back successfully against Israeli occupation.”

The lesson: Some were honest, some weren’t—but the protest movement that began that hellish weekend was a movement celebrating the massacre and sexual torture of Jewish men, women, and children.

Let me repeat: The protest movement that began that weekend. Not simply the protests that weekend, because the ones that followed weren’t any better. Remember, the Telegraph story is about a demonstration that took place a week after the attacks—but was coordinated in the middle of the first day of the attacks.

These weren’t “cease-fire” protests. They didn’t stop after the first cease-fire and they haven’t stopped since the signing of the current cease-fire. Instead, they pivoted. A couple days ago there was a protest at

the University of Washington with a prominent banner that said “Free all Palestinian prisoners,” a reference to the murderers and others in Israeli prisons serving time for terrorism-related offenses.

No, it was never about a cease-fire. One of my favorite photos from such protests was taken at a demonstration last year. Marchers are holding a sign that says “Cease-fire Now” over a banner that says “By Any Means Necessary.” In the minds of the protesters, slaughtering Jews and a cease-fire have always been linked, because the cease-fire was just for Israel. Nobody in that photo wants peace, that much is obvious.

Now, were there occasionally a few people here and there who attended Gaza protests because they were genuinely concerned about the welfare of Palestinians? Sure, such people do exist (although I don’t know why they’d show up to a tentifada protest that is clearly just a terrorism pep rally). But this “protest” movement was born on Oct. 7, 2023, because it liked what it saw that day. We didn’t need more proof, but we have it anyway.

“Throughout the war, the Gazans were not allowed any kind of refuge in any other country. The entire world talked a bunch about helping Gaza, but no one took them in and no one forced Egypt to open its border. The Turks and the Jordanians opened their borders for Syrian refugees but for the Palestinians, the doors were closed,” Hirsch told JNS. “If you care about the well-being of the Gazans at all you have to provide them with an alternative for a better life,” he added.

Both Sherman and Hirsch further agreed that it was likely possible to get a significant amount of the population out with Hamas still operating in Gaza. (Hamas has in the past killed and tortured Gazans who have acted in ways that the group felt were counter to their interests.)

Hirsch said, “I think it’s likely possible to move the Gazans out without first destroying Hamas. There is a massive difference between Gazan support for Hamas when they have no alternative and are being held prisoner by Hamas and the international community. If they had a different choice, the math would change. Hamas would have substantial difficulty preventing movement of the population.”

Sherman added that in his view, “Hamas was too weak militarily to prevent such a movement.”

With calls for “transfer” from Gaza on the rise, a similar shift in approach seems around the corner for the terrorist infestation in Judea and Samaria. Sherman said that the current situation in Judea and Samaria is deeply volatile and likely to explode in violence similar to what was seen on Oct. 7 from Gaza.

“It’s just a matter of time,” he said. “It is clear that we are facing similar threats from Judea and Samaria as we did from Gaza, and it is likely that similar solutions may be applicable there.”

TRUMP SANCTIONS HAGUE COURT OVER ISRAEL PROBE

ANDREW BERNARD (JNS.org 6-2-25)

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court on Thursday over its investigation of Israel for alleged “war crimes” in Gaza and its decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The order includes a declaration of a national emergency to respond to what it describes as the court’s “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”

“The ICC’s recent actions against Israel and the United States set a dangerous precedent, directly endangering current and former United States personnel, including active service members of the Armed Forces, by exposing them to harassment, abuse and possible arrest,” the order states. Neither the United States nor Israel are members of the court, which is a stand-alone entity in The Hague and is not a part of the United Nations. Both Washington and Jerusalem have argued that they are outside the tribunal’s jurisdiction.

In November, the court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, then the Israeli defense minister.

The sanctions order imposes “tangible and significant consequences” on court personnel, including a block on property and assets, and a ban on entry into the United States for sanctioned individuals and their families.

The centrality of the U.S. dollar in banking and the frequency with which foreign banks transact with their U.S. counterparts means that the imposition of American sanctions typically freezes the accounts even of foreign nationals with foreign currency deposits held in foreign banks if those banks are connected to the global financial system.

Trump’s order does not list any individuals to be sanctioned, though it mentions a “person listed in the annex to this order.” The White House has not yet published that annex.

The order also calls on the U.S. secretaries of treasury and state to provide a list of additional people to be sanctioned within 60 days.

"It's unfortunate that Chuck Schumer decided to protect the ICC from sanctions as this kangaroo court targets U.S. soldiers and does Hamas's bidding. But I'm grateful that President Trump is acting," said Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.). "Another promise made and kept by President Trump." Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) stated that Trump's "bold executive action" sanctions a court that "is a rogue organization with a corrupt prosecutor, who has violated the spirit of the law regarding prosecutions against Israel's prime minister and former defense minister."

"Israel is not a member of the court. The ICC has gone off the rails by exercising jurisdiction over a country that is not party to the Rome Statue. I fear they will not stop at Israel," Graham added. "Under the legal theory being used against Israel, it is very conceivable the ICC will one day come after an American president and defense secretary for allegations of war crimes made by adversaries."

Trump's executive order is "a necessary deterrent to protect American military personnel and others," Graham stated. "These sanctions will be a strong signal to the world regarding the legitimacy of the court's actions against Israel."

Yinam Cohen, the consul general of Israel to the Midwest, hosted a panel in Chicago about the Hague court on Thursday.

"This court has falsely equated Israel, a democratic state with its own robust legal system, with Hamas, a globally recognized terror organization," Cohen stated. "We are pleased with the current administration's support on these issues."

Trump's executive order is similar to the sanctions described in the Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, which failed to pass the Senate in January after all but one Democrat voted against the measure.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) argued that the sanctions package was overly broad and could negatively impact American companies that contract with the Hague court.

A slew of long-standing emergency-power laws grants the president broad authority to impose sanctions without the need for new legislation, however.

In 2020, Trump sanctioned two ICC officials over the court's investigation of alleged U.S. war crimes in Afghanistan.

Former President Joe Biden removed those sanctions in 2021.

Kosher & Halacha Kerner

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

FOOD PRODUCED BY NON-JEWS: BISHUL AKUM

RAV DAVID BROFSKY (Etzion.org)

In previous shiurim, we discussed the halakhot of pat akum and chalav akum, two categories of food produced by non-Jews that Chazal forbade for consumption. We saw two reasons for these prohibitions. On the one hand, the gemara explains that Chazal prohibited milk produced without supervision out of concern that it had been adulterated by non-kosher milk. On the other hand, the gemara attributes the prohibition of pat akum to "chatnut," the fear of excessive socializing and even intermarriage with non-Jews.

We noted that these different reasons might explain the discrepancies between the two issurim. For example, while chalav akum prohibits the utensil in which it is cooked (noten ta'am), pat akum does not. Clearly, the rabbis viewed chalav akum as an inherently prohibited substance (issur cheftza), since the issur itself is based upon the concern of a prohibited mixture. Pat akum, however, which Chazal prohibited for social reasons, is NOT seen as an inherently prohibited substance (but rather as an issur gavra) and therefore cannot prohibit a utensil.

This week we will explore the laws of bishul akum, while attempting to determine the reason and nature of the prohibition.

SOURCE AND REASON FOR BISHUL AKUM

The gemara (Avoda Zara 37B – 40A), after attempting to attribute the prohibition of bishul akum to a biblical source, concludes that bishul akum is prohibited "mi-derabbanan ve-kra esmachta be-alma" (the prohibition was legislated by the rabbis, but they made a textual connection in the Torah to support their enactment in the Torah).

Why did Chazal prohibit food cooked by non-Jews?

Rashi (38a s.v. mi-derabbanan) explains that a "Jew should not be accustomed to eat and drink with a non-Jew (etzlo) as he may come to feed him impure (non-kosher) food." According to Rashi, the prohibition of bishul akum is intended to prevent the consumption of non-kosher food.

Tosafot (38a s.v. ela) cite Rashi's explanation and disagree, explaining that the prohibition results from the fear of "chatnut" - socialization and intermarriage.

If so, then we may already point to a debate regarding the reason for bishul akum, whether it stems from kashrut concerns or the fear of intermarriage. Based on the rationale we employed in previous shiurim, it should follow that this debate between Rashi and Tosafot will have practical ramifications regarding the status of utensils used by a non-Jew to prepare food. According to Tosafot, the issur of bishul akum should be viewed as an "issur cheftza" and will thus extend to the utensils, as well. Rashi, by contrast, should permit the utensils, since in his view the prohibition is merely intended to prevent excessive socialization with non-Jews, and may thus be viewed as an "issur gavra."

Though we have no concrete evidence as to the opinions of Rashi and Tosafot on this matter, we can point to other rishonim who indeed appear to debate this issue.

The Tur (Y.D. 113), for example, cites the Rashba who maintains that bishul akum may prohibit utensils, as "everything the Rabbis enacted is similar to their Biblical counterpart" ("kol de-takun rabbanan ke-ein de-oraita takun"). He therefore warns that one's non-Jewish servants should not cook for themselves in the Jew's home as this may prohibit continued use of the kelim.

The Tur then proceeds to cite his father, the Rosh, as ruling leniently in this regard, claiming that Chazal were certainly not SO stringent with respect to bishul akum. The Ra'a, who agrees with this ruling, explains that since this prohibition is based upon the concern of "chatnut," there is no reason to prohibit the utensils.

The Shulchan Arukh (Y.D. 113:16) cites both opinions, and adds that even the more stringent view allows one to "kasher" earthenware ('cheres') used for bishul akum by immersing it in hot water (hag'ala) three times.

While the acharonim (see Arukh Ha-Shulchan Y.D. 113:50) seem to adopt the more stringent approach, we shall see that bishul akum may very well apply to only specific foods and to specific people.

Interestingly, elsewhere (Avoda Zara 35b s.v. ve-hashelakot) Rashi himself explains that bishul akum is prohibited because of "chatnut," implying that he accepts BOTH reasons.

Furthermore, the Rambam (see Peirush Ha-Mishnayot 2:6) explains that "these things, such as their [non-Jews'] bread and cooked foods and the like, were only prohibited in order that we should distance ourselves from them and not come in our mingling with them to be lax (hefkerut) regarding prohibited things. This is what they meant by 'chatnut'."

In other words, the Rambam ALSO implies that the issur stems from a broader concern, and that the term "chatnut" refers to numerous prohibitions, and not just intermarriage.

"WHO MADE THE FOOD?" - SLAVES AND SERVANTS

Seemingly, we might suggest that if the prohibition of bishul akum is linked to "chatnut," then under certain circumstances, bishul akum may not be applicable.

For example, some rishonim cite an opinion that permits food cooked by non-Jewish slaves (avadim u-shefachot). However, they disagree as to the reason underlying this leniency. The Ramban (see Teshuvot Ha-Meyuchasot Le-Ramban 284), in response to Rabbenu Yona, justifies the practice of allowing non-Jewish slaves to cook for Jews, as "there is no issur for these slaves, which are our property, as work performed by a non-Jewish slave is considered a Jew's... One is warned not to allow them to work on Shabbat, and they ARE NOT CONSIDERED NON-JEWS ('leitei bi-khal nokhrim'); therefore, the prohibitions do not apply to them..."

In other words, since a non-Jewish slave is actually not legally considered non-Jewish, given that he is obligated in certain mitzvot, the prohibition of bishul akum does not apply to food cooked by them. According to the Ramban, then, this leniency evolves from the personal status of avadim; the context, however, plays no role in this leniency.

The Rashba (see Teshuvot Ha-Meyuchasot Le-Ramban 149), by contrast, cites an opinion which maintains that a non-Jewish slave's (avadim u-shefachot) food is not prohibited since the prohibition of bishul akum applies only when the gentile willingly cooks for a Jew, out of his or her affection for him. A slave, however, cooks whether or not he or she wants to, and therefore the reason of "chatnut" does not apply. The Rashba concludes that one should not rely on this leniency.

This reasoning, also cited by the Ra'a (Bedek Ha-Bayit Bayit 3 pg. 94b) in the name of Rav Yitzhak Ben Rav Manoach, and by the Levush (Y.D. 113), attributes the leniency to the absence of the concern of "chatnut" in this situation. In other words, the context of the cooking will determine whether or not the prohibition should apply.

Interestingly, a practical difference between these two explanations arises in the case of "hired help" (shefachot sekhurot). Does the leniency regarding slaves apply as well to hired servants?

The Shulchan Arukh writes that "there are some who permit OUR servants, and others prohibit even be-diavad." The commentators on the Shulchan

Arukh question what the term "OUR servants" means, and ask whether it refers to slaves or to hired servants. Both the Shakh (Y.D. 113:7) and Taz (Y.D. 113:3) explain that the Shulchan Arukh refers to a paid helper working in a Jew's house, rather than an actual slave.

In any case, we clearly see that according to some views, the specific context within which the food is cooked may dictate its status. We will return to the Shulchan Arukh's ruling shortly.

A NON-JEW COOKING IN A JEW'S HOME

Recall that some authorities suggest that when the gentile cooks for himself, rather than out of affection for the Jewish recipient, the prohibition of bishul akum does not apply. Some rishonim go even further, suggesting that bishul akum should NEVER apply when the food is cooked in the home of a Jew.

Tosafot (Avoda Zara 38a s.v. ela) cite the opinion of Rav Avraham ben HaRav David (Ra'avad) who maintains that bishul akum is prohibited only when the non-Jew cooks the food in his or her house. If, however, the food is prepared in the house of a Jew, it is permitted.

Rabbenu Tam disagrees, insisting that we do not distinguish between the house of a Jew and of a non-Jew, and that we must always be concerned "that he will not be careful," even in the house of a Jew. It is not clear whether Rabbenu Tam felt that we must be concerned that he may adulterate the food, or that we STILL fear inappropriate socializing – even in the Jew's home.

As mentioned, the Shulchan Arukh (Y.D. 113:4) cites two opinions regarding "OUR servants." The Rema writes that "be-diavad one may rely upon those who are lenient." The acharonim explain that this post-facto leniency is based either upon the Ramban (see Shakh) or the Ra'avad (see Taz). Therefore, while le-chatchila one must not allow a non-Jewish employee to cook in his house, be-diavad the food may be permitted.

The question of non-Jewish help is complex and relates to a number of issues, including the type of foods prohibited by bishul akum, as well as to the minimal Jewish involvement in the cooking process which may permit the food. We will return to this point numerous times throughout our series on bishul akum.

COMMERCIALY PRODUCED FOOD

Last week we noted that the Ra'a (Bedek HaBayit Bayit 3 pg. 94b) questions whether food cooked by a non-Jew for his livelihood in a factory or other commercial cite not used for dining, rather than for a specific person, may be permitted. Since in this case we need not be concerned about "ikruvei da'atei" - warm feelings of camaraderie between the cook and the customer, perhaps the prohibition should not apply. He concludes that one may be MORE inclined to rule leniently when it comes to commercially baked bread, as we are generally more lenient regarding pat akum.

This opinion was never cited by the Shulchan Arukh, or by other major halachic works. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (see the teshuva authored by Rav Neta Greenblatt with Rav Feinstein zt"l's approval, printed in Mesora vol.1 pg. 94) cites a debate from the previous generation as to whether bishul akum poses a problem for commercially produced sardines. He concludes that even if one employs a "lo pelug" and prohibits bishul akum even when there is no concern of "ikruvei da'atei," when the cooking is done in an irregular manner, such as by a machine, then there is certainly no concern for "chatnut" and the prohibition of bishul akum would not apply.

Incidentally, the policy of the Orthodox Union (according to Rav Menachem Genack, cited in the aforementioned journal) is to rely upon this leniency only regarding bread (pat palter), and not for cooked foods.

SUMMARY

This week we discussed the reasons for, and nature of, the prohibition of bishul akum. We also questioned whether the context in which the food was cooked, or the general role of the person who cooked the food, should impact upon the issur. We concluded that while le-chatekhila, the prohibition applies in all circumstances, be-diavad, the food may be permitted if it was cooked by a non-Jewish worker in the home of a Jew.

Candle lighting Yisro (Melb) 14/2/25 17 Shvat 5785 8.02p/9.00p