



Compliments of the Institute of Jewish Studies (founded by [Yankel Rosenbaum](#) HY"D) First Published Adar 5761 Vol 22.42
 Printing in part sponsored by **NLZ Imports, D&A Werdiger, Weis Printing** – email: zichron-yaakov@hotmail.com
 (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)

Pinchas 5783

QUICK TO CRITICIZE

RABBI BEREL WEIN (Torah.org)

This week's Torah portion warns us not to be swept away by current culture, media, and societal popularity, and by those who are quick to condemn others for their thoughts and actions.

When Pinchas killed Zimri and his consort, he was roundly criticized and threatened by the those in Jewish society because of this act of zealotry. When this act occurred, society considered it to be wrong, harmful, and worthy of criticism. Later, in the full light and perspective of the time, this act was not only acceptable, but the obvious path necessary, and, in fact, heroic.

Pinchas' critics mentioned the fact that his own pedigree was uncertain, since, although he was the grandson of Aaron, he was also a product of a woman who was of Midianite origin. Moshe himself was married to a daughter of Yitro the high priest of Midian and did nothing. By what right, then, did Pinchas take it upon himself to commit this double killing?

Implicit in this is the accusation as to who made him the zealot, the enforcer, so to speak, of G-d's will. This was a usurpation of power and status that he arrogated to himself. In short, Pinchas was not to be seen as a hero or as a holy person. But, rather, he was considered the impetuous upstart that committed a double killing without proper sanction or legality. The Torah records that heaven itself intervened to set the record straight, and to clearly support and justify the behavior and actions of Pinchas.

There are so many times in history that this story has repeated itself, albeit always under different circumstances. History turns temporary heroes, beloved in their time, into eternal villains when judged by later historical facts and occurrences. History can also rehabilitate people and ideas that were once scorned, held up to ridicule and contempt, and show how the original judgment, event or person was faulty.

There have been many movements and personalities in the history of the Jewish people who achieved temporary fame and popularity, but who are completely forgotten in the long view that history grants us. And many who were criticized, called obstructionists and out of touch with society, have proven to be prescient and heroic in retrospect.

We are always quick to judge, especially when we have our own preconceived ideas as to what is or what should be. We can look back and see the mistakes of previous generations, of physical and spiritual tragedy within the Jewish world. Yet, somehow, we also continue today to allow our own personal biases to affect our judgment of events, leaders, and ideas. This is one of the most fundamental ideas that we can learn from the reading of this week. It is especially relevant to our current society and its challenges.

NOT MY PROBLEM

AVROHOM YAAKOV

As a reward for his zealous actions that stopped a plague destroying the Jews, Pinchas was rewarded by being elevated to the priesthood, a status that he had been previously denied.

In proclaiming this change of status, the Hashem declared:

"It shall be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of eternal

priesthood because he was zealous for his G-d and made atonement for Bnei Yisroel." (25:13)

Why is Hashem referenced as "his (Pinchas') G-d"? Did Hashem 'belong' to Pinchas?

Chomas Aish explains as follows.

Why were the Ten Commandments phrased in singular and not plural? After all, all Jews from all generations were present at the giving of the Torah in some format. It would have been appropriate to express the Commandments in plural.

The reason is because Torah observance is not a collective responsibility, but a personal one. Each of us has the obligation to do so. Each of us as individuals. We cannot abrogate our personal commitment by placing the responsibility on the leaders, the Rabbis and so forth.

Pinchas, when faced with the grotesque behaviour of Zimri, could have shrugged his shoulders and thought 'not my problem, mate. Let Moshe, the elders, the management team deal with it. I am not even a Kohen.'

Instead, Pinchas took action since Zimri's actions were an affront to all Jews. He took personal responsibility and made it his personal business to resolve.

Therefore, the Torah refers to Hashem as "his G-d".

How often do we shy away from personal responsibility? How often do we say 'not my problem'? How often do we claim to have delegated the issue and wipe our hands.

You cannot delegate away your personal responsibility. And Pinchas understood this.

ABSOLUTE SOUL

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

There is a lesson, meted out in this week's portion that has eternal ramifications upon the theological nature of the Jewish nation. It is a lesson that defines our attitudes toward spirituality and its relevance to modern living.

After Bila'am's failed efforts to curse the Jewish people, he devised another ploy. He advised the nations of Midian and Moav to lure the Jews to sin through salacious activities. Midian complied wholeheartedly, offering its daughters as conspirators in the profanity. The scheme worked. The Jews cavorted with Midianite women, and the wrath of Hashem was aroused. A plague ensued and thousands of Jews died.

In this week's portion, Hashem commands his people to administer justice. "Make the Midianites your enemies and attack them!" For they antagonized you through their conspiracy that they conspired against you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague, in the matter of Peor" (25:17-18). Eventually Jews go to war with Midian.

The issue that may confront the modern thinker is simple. War? Over what? They were not fighting over land. There was no dispute over oil or natural resources. Why such vehemence to the point of physical attack over the incident at Peor? Why call for such physical retribution for an act that caused spiritual sedition through secular seduction?

Rabbi Eliezer Sorotzkin of Lev L'Achim related the following story: In November 1938, before the onset of World War II, some Jewish children had the opportunity to escape from Nazi Germany and resettle in England through what became known as kindertransport. Unfortunately, their were not

enough religious families able to accept these children and other families who were willing to take them were not willing to raise the children with Jewish traditions. The Chief Rabbi of London, Rabbi Yechezkel Abramski, embarked on a frantic campaign to secure funding to ensure that every child would be placed in a proper Jewish environment.

Rabbi Abramski called one wealthy Jewish industrialist and begged him for a donation sizable enough to ensure that the children would be raised in proper Jewish environment. "It is pikuach nefesh!" cried Rabbi Abramski.

At that point, the tycoon became incensed. "Rabbi," he said, "Please do not use that term flippantly. I know what pikuach nefesh is. Pikuach nefesh means a matter of life and death! When I was young, my parents were very observant. When my baby sister was young, she was very sick. We had to call the doctor, but it was on Shabbos. My father was very conscientious of the sanctity of Shabbos. He would never desecrate Shabbos. But our rabbi told us that since this is a matter of life and death, we were allowed to desecrate the Shabbos! He called it pikuach nefesh. Rabbi Abramski," the man implored, "with all due respect. The children are already here in England. They are safe from the Nazis. The only issue is where to place them. How they are raised is not pikuach nefesh!" With that, the man politely bade farewell and hung up the phone.

That Friday evening, the wealthy man was sitting at dinner, when the telephone rang incessantly. Finally, the man got up from his meal and answered the phone.

As he listened to the voice on the other end of the line, his face went pallid.

"This is Abramski. Please. I would not call on the Sabbath if I did not think this was pikuach nefesh. Again, I implore you. We need the funds to ensure that these children will be raised as Jews."

Needless to say, the man responded immediately to the appeal.

We understand matters of life and death, justice and injustice, war and peace, in corporeal terms. It is difficult to view spirituality in those terms as well.

The Torah teaches us that our enemies are not merely those who threaten our physical existence, but those who threaten our spiritual existence as well. Throughout the generations, we faced those who would annihilate us physically and others who would be just as happy to see us disappear as Jews.

What our enemies were unable to do to the Jewish people with bullets and gas, they have succeeded in doing with assimilation and spiritual attrition.

People fail to equate the severity of spiritual disorders with those of a physical nature. They may scoff at a prohibited marriage in the eyes of the Torah, or seek a leniency to absolve themselves from following matrimonial law, yet they will leave no stone unturned in searching for a genetic incompatibility or suspect health issue. The Torah teaches us that the two the physical world and the spiritual world are inseparable. An attack on spirituality, breaches the borders of our very essence, and our response must be in kind. It is essential to know that when we do some serious soul-searching there is really something out there waiting to be found.

GIVE WAR A CHANCE

RABBI BORUCH LEFF (Aish.com)

"War is a crime against humanity."

"There is no such thing as a justified war."

These are statements from pacifists. "Pacifism: Opposition to the use of force under any circumstances; refusal for reasons of conscience to participate in war or military action." (Webster's New World Dictionary)

What is the Jewish view of pacifism? What does peace really mean? This week's Torah portion, Pinchas, instructs us concerning all of these issues.

Since Parshat Pinchas begins in the middle of a story, let's re-cap events from last week's portion, Balak. Many Jewish men were seduced by Moabite women and

acted promiscuously with them. These women also influenced their victims to worship idols. One of the leaders of the men who were seduced, Zimri, of the

tribe of Shimon, desired to publicly declare his support for involvement with the Moabite women. He brazenly committed his lewd, sexual acts in full view of Moshe and the Jewish people. G-d sent a plague, and 24,000 Jewish men, who were seduced, died. Pinchas could not tolerate Zimri's brazenness and promptly killed Zimri and his partner in sin, Kozbi, a Moabite princess. After Pinchas' zealous act, the plague ceased.

G-d begins this week's portion saying to Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Ahron, the Priest, turned back my fury from the Jewish nation when he zealously avenged my vengeance among them. This is why I did

not consume the Jewish nation in My vengeance. Therefore, say: Behold, I give him (Pinchas) My covenant of peace." (Bamidbar 25:10-12)

We know that G-d administers reward and punishment with the device called 'measure for measure.' The punishment or reward must fit the crime or good deed.

In this case, Pinchas' act of zealousness is rewarded with peace. Is that measure for measure? Do we usually associate a peaceful person with being a zealot?

G-d is teaching us a fundamental lesson about war and peace. Wars are necessary at times. There is such a thing as a justified war. As Kohelet 3:8 states, "There is a time for war."

G-d is saying to Moshe, "Tell Pinchas that his zealousness is peace." Peace does not mean a passive lack of war. If peace is a passive lack of war there is no way that through Pinchas' violent act of killing he achieves peace. Peace is a state of being in which there is a closeness, a relationship, a way of dealing with each other. It isn't just that I don't bother you and you don't bother me; that's not peace. It's that we live together and work together and have a unity, a commonality that all of us are part of a whole.

In Hebrew, the word for peace, shalom, is derived from the root shalem, which means whole or complete. Peace is a cooperative, symbiotic relationship, where both parties care for each other, help each other, and ultimately perfect each other. Two people who hate each other and never speak to each other, but never fight either, cannot be said to be at peace with each other. Marital harmony and domestic tranquility does not mean the simple lack of screaming and yelling in the house. It is a state of being in which your spouse genuinely shares in your triumphs, strengthens you when you are down, loves, adores, and cherishes you. (This is why it is a misnomer to refer to the 1979 Camp David agreement with Egypt as a 'peace' treaty. At most, it is a ceasefire. The rhetoric of hatred and contempt by Egypt for Israel, and anti-Semitism in the Egyptian press has never ceased. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has never even visited Israel, except to attend Yitzchak Rabin's funeral.)

Since peace is an active force rather than a passive lack of war, ultimately anything that disturbs and destroys this state of true peace must be removed in order for true shalom – peace – to exist. That is why Pinchas, through his zealous act, actually creates peace. Pinchas stops the plague against the Jewish people and through aviolent act of war brings peace.

It is very often necessary to create peace only through what seems to be an act of violence. One must remove those things that disturb the harmony and that create tensions between peoples in order for peace to exist. And it is not always possible to remove the items that block peace through non-violent means.

Does anyone seriously think that the Nazis could have been dealt with non-violently? Can Osama bin Laden be dealt with non-violently? Ariel Sharon has always said that the path to peace in the Middle East must begin with decisive military action against the terrorist infrastructure. Only once violence, as an option, is rooted out can peace be achieved. One can even argue similarly for Harry Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which brought peace in ending WWII. We have seen the famous picture of the mushroom cloud which killed approximately 400,000 people. Was Truman's act of war justified? Consider the following:

"In a meeting on 18 June the Joint War Plans Committee gave Truman projected death rates ranging from a low of 31,000 to a high of 50,000, and a projected American causality rate (deaths, injuries and missing) of 132,500. During fighting in the Pacific, from 1 March 1944 to 1 May 1945, the Japanese were killed at a ratio of 22 to 1. Thus, if we use an estimate of 40,000 American deaths, we can extrapolate 880,000 Japanese deaths -- for a combined total of 920,000 deaths. Although death rates for Hiroshima and Nagasaki vary widely, none are even half this high. Thus we can conclude that if an invasion of Kyushu had been necessary, and the Japanese were killed at a rate comparable to previous fighting, then the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki actually SAVED lives."

(Barton J. Bernstein, "Understanding the Atomic Bomb and the Japanese Surrender: Missed Opportunities, Little-Known Near Disasters, and Modern Memory," Hiroshima in History and Memory, ed. Michael J. Hogan [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p.45)

If all people in the world were committed to achieving a real peace, one which involves a cooperative, symbiotic relationship, perhaps pacifism could be a viable movement. Since this is not the case, we must often destroy violently those things that create tensions between peoples in order for peace to

exist.
In the real world, wars usually bring ultimate peace, not pacifists.

DON'T BE FRUMER THAN THE SHULCHAN ARUCH

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Torah.org)

The pasuk in this week's parsha says, "Harass the Midianites and smite them. For they harassed you..." (Bamidbar 25:17-18). The Ribono shel Olam tells Moshe that he should take revenge from the Midianites for what they did to Klal Yisrael. The Medrash Tanchuma comments on this: "One who rises up to kill you—preemptively kill him. Rav Shimon says, 'How do we know that someone who causes his friend to sin is worse than someone who kills his friend?' It is because when someone kills another person, the victim still has a portion in the World-to-Come. However, when someone causes his friend to be sinful, he causes the friend to lose both this world and the next world.

The Medrash continues: Two nations approached the Jewish nation by sword (attacking us physically, but not spiritually) and two other nations approached them by attempting to entice them to sin (attacking them spiritually). Mitzrayim and Edom attacked us physically, but Amon and Moav attacked us spiritually. By the former nations we are commanded "Do not hate them" (Devorim 23:8). By the third generation following their conversion, we are allowed to intermarry with them (Devorim 23:9). However, concerning those who caused us to sin, it is written "Neither an Ammonite nor a Moavite shall enter into the Congregation of Hashem, even in the tenth generation they shall not enter into the Congregation of Hashem, forever." (Devorim 23:4)

Ammon and Moav are on the "Enemies List" forever, because they did something far worse than trying to kill us physically. They tried to seduce us. They tried to take away our Olam HaBah. Therefore, the Ribono shel Olam rejects them eternally.

The Medrash continues and says that someone who has mercy on an Ammonite will end up suffering. He will come to shame, to wars, and to troubles. If the Torah rejects them and places them "off limits" then we are not allowed to show them kindness or to be nice to them. This is an old principle: Don't be frumer (more religious) than the Torah. The Medrash gives an example of someone who had mercy on an Ammonite and, as a result, suffered terribly: Dovid HaMelech. As it is written: "And Dovid said I will do a kindness with Chonan son of Nachash, as his father did with me..." (Shmuel II 10:2)

Nachash was the King of Amon, and at one point he did a favor to Dovid (Shmuel I Chapter 11). Dovid HaMelech now wanted to repay the favor, so when Nachash died, he sent messengers to be Menachem Avel (extend condolence wishes to the mourner) to this Ammonite. The Medrash relates: "The Holy One Blessed be He said, 'You have transgressed My Word to not inquire about or be concerned about their welfare. And you showed them acts of kindness. 'Don't be overly righteous!' (Koheles 7:16)''.

What happened to Dovid as a result of this gesture? We won't go into all the details of a long and complicated story in Tanach, but to make a long story short, when the messengers of Dovid HaMelech arrived at the palace, they were treated brutally, stripped down to the waist, and half their beards were cut off to mock them.

This is the point of the Medrash: A person should only do what the Torah says, and not try to improve on the Torah's morality. If the Torah says about the Ammonites and Moavites "Don't seek their welfare or their benefit," we should follow the Torah and not be more "religious" than the Word of G-d. TheseferOtzros haTorah brings a fantastic incident: When Rav Moshe Feinstein was a Rav in Luban, Russia, there was a Jew in the city who was a moser. A moser is a person that snitches to the government against Jews. (One has to realize that this incident took place in the 1930s, under the Stalinist Government. The Communists were at their height of power and were terrible to the Jews.) There were unfortunately Jews who were members of the Communist party, and they would snitch on other Jews to get them into trouble with the Soviet authorities.

The moser died and he left a letter to the Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) in which he confessed that he had been sinful during his life, and stated that now prior to death he regretted those actions. He bemoaned the fact that he was responsible for having Jews arrested, sent to Siberia, and killed. Out of shame and repentance, he stated that he wished to achieve kappara (atonement) after death for his actions, and hence requested of the Chevra Kadisha that they not give him a proper Jewish burial. He requested that his body be mutilated and abused. "I don't want to have a tahara—just roll me in the gutter as a kappara for what I did in my lifetime."

The Chevra Kadisha came to the Rav of Luban, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and showed him this "Last Will and Testament" of this Moser, and asked for his advice. Rav Moshe paskened that they were not allowed to treat a Jewish body disrespectfully, and that they had to bury him with a tahara and with all the honor and dignity accorded to any Jewish person being buried. He ruled that no person is the master over his own body, and this person had no right to make such a request. "What is going to happen to him after death is between him and the Ribono shel Olam, but we cannot take the law into our own hands and do this to another Jew because it is against the Din (Jewish law)."

The Chevra Kadisha tried to argue with Rav Moshe, repeating what an evil person this fellow was. Rav Moshe persisted: "This is what it says in Shulchan Aruch. You need to follow the Din. Don't be frumer than the Torah."

The Chevra Kaddisah buried the fellow, perhaps not with "full military honors," but with normal Kavod HaMeisim (dignity due to the dead). A few days after the burial, the watchman at the cemetery reported that officers from the Russian Government came and insisted that the body be exhumed. The watchman was not in a position to tell the government officers "Sorry, we don't do that type of thing."

They dug up the grave. They opened the coffin. They looked at the body. They closed the coffin. And they reburied him. Before they left, the watchman asked if they could give him an explanation about what just happened. They told him what happened: Before this moser died, he sent a second letter. He sent a letter to the government stating that he could demonstrate how much the Jews hate the Communist authorities. "They are not going to give me a proper Jewish funeral because I was a friend of the government."

Lo and behold, when they opened the coffin, they saw that he was buried k'das u'k'din (according to Jewish law) and that the allegation in the letter he sent them was in no way true. The moral of this story is: Keep what is written in Shulchan Aruch. Shulchan Aruch states what we are supposed to do. We should not try to outsmart the Shulchan Aruch, and we should not try to be frumer than the Shulchan Aruch. "Al te'hee Tzadik Harbeh" — 'Don't be overly righteous!' (Koheles 7:16).

THE TALKING LOTTERY

RABBI BORUCH COHEN (Chabad.org)

The twelve tribes of Israel were such mighty warriors that one shudders at the thought of them bickering over a piece of beachfront real estate.

Fortunately, such a possibility is precluded by the passage in this week's Torah reading (26:55–56) which describes the procedure for the division of the Holy Land.

The land was divided by lottery: the names of the twelve tribes were written down and placed in one box, and the coordinates of the twelve territories into which the land was divided was placed in a second box. Then, pairs of lots—one from each box—were drawn. A Temple priest was there to prophesy each pick, ensuring faith in the lottery's divine accuracy. To top it off, the lottery tickets themselves miraculously announced each pairing. No one questioned the results.

Secure in their mission, the tribes set forth to settle the land with gusto. The Jew destined for the mountains climbed to great heights; the Jew in the forest felled mighty trees; the Jew in the valley brought forth fine fruit; the Jew near the sea sailed in search of distant trade.

A similar lottery is administered to the soul before leaving heaven and coming down to this world. Each soul is paired with a particular "parcel of land," a unique destiny, a lot in life. The match is divinely ordained.

Sometimes (particularly when we hit the rough spots in our lives) we may lose faith in the lottery's divine accuracy. Our gusto may flag. This week's Torah portion reminds us that our soul is on a divine mission with a unique destiny to fulfill—to settle and develop a particular "parcel of land" with acts of goodness and kindness. The knowledge that this is a match made in heaven fuels our confidence, commitment and excitement in tackling our portion in life.

HOW WAS YOUR DAY IN SCHOOL?

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

HASHEM said to Moshe, "Go up to this mountain and see the Land that I have given to the Children of Israel, you shall see it and you shall be gathered unto your people, you too, as your brother Aaron was gathered in..." (27:12-13)

Essentially Moshe is being told that he will die as his brother Aaron had just died and it is time to prepare a replacement. What we call death is described

as being “gathered unto your people” or “gathered in”. This is not the first time we have such a description of what dying is.

It sounds like there is some kind of family reunion that awaits Moshe. It’s fascinating. We are left curious wondering why is there not more mentioned about the “next world”?! It seems death as described here is only a departure from this realm. In that case there really is no such thing as death, or is there? Why is there such a premium in Torah law and life on creating and affirming and saving life in this world? What makes the loss of life so tragic? What makes the living of life so precious?

There are a number of important approaches to explain why the Torah does not speak in detail about the next world. The Rambam explains that it is a spiritual realm that we have no vocabulary or frame of reference to comprehend what it really is because we are creatures of a physical world. It would be like trying to discuss colors with a blind person who has never seen the light of day. I heard it explained once that it is like trying to explain fire to a fish. Surely, a fish can see some light filtering through the water as he approaches the surface and he can feel some warmth as well but he cannot know the true magnitude of the sun’s light or fire’s heat. His natural environment, water precludes the possibility of him understanding what fire is really all about. The only time he will be able to grasp it is when it’s too late, when he is caught, filleted, and on the grill, and so the verse says, “no man will see Me and live...” (Shemos 33:20)

One approach of the Chovos HaLevavos is that the reward of Olam Haba is not a quid pro quo. It’s not a business deal. It’s a relationship with HASHEM. He explains, the Next World is dependent upon the extent to which one activated his “Duties of the Heart”. Imagine a husband coming home with a beautifully wrapped diamond ring on his wife’s birthday. The ring is worth many thousands of dollars. Instead of humbly presenting the gift with a thoughtful note or an endearing, sincere declaration, he slams the gift angrily on the table and shouts in a brutish tone, “You like diamonds? Here a diamond! See if this makes you happy.” No doubt his wife will go running into the bedroom and blockade the door for safety. Why!? He gave such a big diamond!?! It was expensive and it was wrapped perfectly!? We know the answer. The attitude was sour. The personal part of the presentation was heartless. The Talmud tells us, “HASHEM wants the heart!”

The name for the Next World tells the whole story, “Olam Haba”. It is “the world that comes”, literally. It is not another world in another place. It is a realm that reveals, expands upon, and explains what we did in the hidden world in which we live.

The death that Moshe would merit like his brother Aaron (and Miriam too) is called the Misa she Neshika – “the kiss of death”. This is not the mafia’s version of the kiss of death. Tractate Brochos tells us that there are 903 types of death based on the Possuk in Tehillim, “L’Maves Totzaot” – “To death there are goings out”. The numerical value of Totzaot is 903. The harshest one is called Askara. It is like extracting thorns from wool. The body and soul are so enmeshed that as Neil Sedaka sang, “breaking up is hard to do.” The lightest form of death is “al pi HASHEM” by the mouth of HASHEM, the kiss of death. It is like pulling a hair out of milk. One of my Rebbeim asked, “Since when is the body compared to milk and the soul to a hair? It should be the other way around.” He explained that that is exactly the explanation. The soul is milk and the body is a hair. To the person who lived as a soul with a body in this world, death is like when the bus door opens up and a child sees his adoring father standing there waiting for him. He goes running off with excitement into the loving embrace and the kiss of his father. “My son how was your day in school?

THE SEEKER

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit...’” (27:18)

What is the essential ingredient of greatness?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelewitz, zatzal, one of the great Torah scholars of the previous generation, was once visiting his uncle, Rabbi Avraham Yafin, zatzal, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Nevardok Yeshiva. As they entered the Beit Midrash (study hall), Rabbi Shmuelewitz asked Rabbi Yafin, “Who is your sharpest student?” Discreetly, Rabbi Yafin pointed out a certain pupil. “And who is the most studious?” Rabbi Yafin showed him another. “And who has the greatest breadth of knowledge?” Rabbi Yafin indicated yet a third. “And who,” said Rabbi Shmuelewitz finally, “is the best student?” Rabbi Shmuelewitz was surprised when Rabbi Yafin indicated none of the previously mentioned students, but another one entirely.

“He is my best bachur (young man),” said Rabbi Yafin.

“But until now you didn’t mention him,” said Rabbi Shmuelewitz. “What makes him the best?”

Rabbi Yafin looked at Rabbi Shmuelewitz and said, “This one is a seeker.”

In the ascent to greatness, the most precious quality that a person can have is the desire to seek, to pursue truth with ceaseless and tireless longing.

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit....’”

The Sforno explains the phrase, “a man in whom there is spirit,” to mean “prepared to receive the Light of the Face of the Living Hashem.” The Sforno compares Yehoshua to the artisans who crafted the Mishkan and its vessels in the desert. About them, Hashem said, “And into the heart of all wise of heart, I have placed wisdom.” (Shmot 31:6)

The closest those artisans had come to the extremely skilled work needed to construct the Mishkan was carrying cement to build Egyptian treasure-cities. How were they able, with no previous experience, to fabricate something as beautiful, delicate and spiritually precise as the Mishkan?

To be “wise of heart” means to be prepared to receive "the Light of the Face of the Living Hashem.” It means being dissatisfied with the knowledge that one has already. It means to want more. It means to want Hashem’s radiance to illuminate our minds. Whatever those craftsmen lacked in experience was more than made up for by their overwhelming enthusiasm to build the Mishkan.

When the Torah lists the heads of the Jewish People who were sent to spy out the Land of Israel, it lists them according to their importance. Yehoshua appears fifth in that list. Hashem chose him to be the leader of the Jewish People precisely because he was a seeker and wanted more.

When Moshe ascended to the supernal realms, Yehoshua waited for him at the foot of Mount Sinai for forty days. Yehoshua took no tea breaks, no days off. Even though he could have rushed out to meet Moshe and resumed his learning as soon as Moshe returned, Yehoshua was not prepared to waste those few precious extra moments between the camp and the foot of the mountain.

Such is the nature of a seeker.

Oh, by the way, I almost forgot. That student who Rabbi Avraham Yafin described as his “best bachur” became better known as the Steipler Gaon, one of the greatest halachic arbiters of his generation.

IMAGINE EVERY DAY A HOLIDAY

RABBI LEVI AVTZON (Chabad.org)

Our day is comprised of a mesh of constants and variables. Getting out of bed every day: a constant. What time we get up: a variable.

We eat constantly (if only we didn’t!), but what we eat varies. Most of us surf the net daily, but how long our eyes are glued to the screen depends on our level of boredom.

In Judaism, as well, we have the constants: daily prayer and study, ethical behavior, kosher, and boring speeches. And we have the variables: holidays, ceremonies, Yom Kippur, a guest speaker.

Isn’t change preferable over the predictable? Can we all agree with the teenage motto, "Normal is boring"?

So who needs constants? Why don’t we have a holiday every day? (My younger brother would love that.)

Many years ago, G-d had a home in Jerusalem: the Holy Temple. Throughout the day, animals, flour, oil and fowl would be offered on the altar. No two days were the same; one day someone brought an atonement offering, the next day a wealthy tycoon came with a thousand animal donation, followed by a beggar who came with a meager handful of flour. Unpredictable.

Amid all the change was a pillar of stability: the Tamid sacrifice. Tamid actually means constant, and every morning the Tamid (part one) would inaugurate the Temple service, and the Tamid (part two) would wrap up the hectic day. Nothing was offered before the morning Tamid or after its evening counterpart.

We each have a Holy Temple inside of us. We each need our Tamids, our constants.

Change is great, but only within the framework of stability. Too many variables in life, like the "celebrity life," put one on the front cover of tabloids. There have to be certain aspects of life that are etched in stone. Your commitment to your marriage, children, ethics, G-d, your health, the world.

Once you have stability as your bedrock, then, by all means, shake the applecart, take a vacation, do something abnormal (like calling up a friend from high school), buy an unusually beautiful pair of tefillin. Live it up.

After all, having no variables in life can lead you to count the pieces of cereal in your bowl, living as an automaton in a human laboratory.

News, Views & Opinion

IT'S TIME TO DISMANTLE THE UNITED NATIONS

MELANIE PHILLIPS (JNS.org 29-6-23)

The malevolent scapegoating of Israel by the United Nations has long been a scandal.

These abuses are regularly highlighted by tireless U.N. watchdogs such as Hillel Neuer, the executive director of UN Watch, and Anne Bayefsky, president of Human Rights Voices and director of Touro's Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust.

Last week, Neuer testified before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee. He described how Israel is routinely demonized by the U.N. General Assembly, the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Neuer also revealed that, in retaliation for exposing this bias, the head of UNHRC Eric Tistounet has been running an antisemitic dirty tricks campaign against him.

After hearing this, the chairman of the hearing, Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) expressed outrage and promised to take up this harassment with U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in order to put a stop to it.

The problem with the United Nations, however, is far more fundamental.

In May 2021, after Israel took military action in Gaza against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which had been firing thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians, the UNHRC created a commission that targeted not the attackers but their Israeli victims.

The commission's scope is vast and one-sided, covering the "root causes" of the Middle East conflict and alleged "systematic discrimination based on race." Unprecedentedly, it has no end date—because the U.N.'s animus towards Israel is never-ending.

The UNHRC appointed Navi Pillay as head of the commission. Pillay had previously called for sanctions against "apartheid Israel"—the signature big lie of Israel-haters. The second commissioner, Miloon Kothari, had ranted about "the Jewish lobby." The third commissioner, Chris Sidoti, had said that "accusations of antisemitism are thrown around like rice at a wedding."

The commission has now released a report that widens its scope still further, attacking not only Israel but also its defenders, including private individuals and non-governmental organizations "worldwide."

The U.N.'s campaign of double standards against Israel, ignoring or sanitizing attacks against it while damning it falsely as a human-rights abuser, goes on week in, week out.

The U.N.'s resident representative in Jerusalem, Norwegian diplomat Tor Wennesland, recently made a series of willfully distorted, inflammatory and disgusting statements. Ignoring the barrages of rocket attacks from Gaza directed at Israeli civilians earlier this year, Wennesland condemned Israel's remarkably precise military strikes against PIJ leaders as "unacceptable" because of the few civilian deaths that were unavoidably involved.

In an even more egregious attempt to avoid referring to Palestinian Arab terrorism, Wennesland referred to Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee, who were shot dead at point-blank range in their car by Palestinian terrorists, as having been killed "by perpetrators in a car with Palestinian plates."

Last December, Wennesland tweeted that he was "horrified" that a Palestinian terrorist, who had attacked an Israeli soldier and border police officers, was killed in what he called a "scuffle." He sent "heartfelt condolences" to the terrorist's "bereaved family."

Recently, the United States, United Kingdom and 25 other U.N. member states objected to the Pillay commission, which they said was "further demonstration of long-standing, disproportionate attention given to Israel in the council, and must stop."

That was a welcome move. However, the United States and the rest of the free world should be going much further. They should be saying that the United Nations itself isn't fit for purpose.

This is because the world body contained the seeds of its own corruption right from the start.

The United Nations was created after the Second World War as an institution that would bring the world together to promote peace and justice. Yet most countries are not democracies and do not uphold human rights. So, by definition, any such world body was unlikely to promote peace

and justice and more likely to promote the opposite.

So it has proved.

Last year, the U.N. General Assembly condemned Israel in no fewer than 15 resolutions compared to 13 for the rest of the world together, with just one resolution on Iran, one on North Korea and one on Syria.

As Neuer observed, the U.N. gives most of the world's worst human rights abusers a free pass. More surreal, abusers such as China, Cuba, Qatar and Pakistan actually sit on the UNHRC.

Last month, the UNHRC appointed to the chairmanship of its social forum the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world's most dangerous terrorist state, which beats women to death for failing to wear approved head coverings and hangs gay people from cranes.

Yet the only country with a standing agenda all to itself at the UNHRC is Israel—the sole upholder of human rights and democracy in the Middle East. From 2006, the council has adopted more resolutions on Israel than on Iran, North Korea and Syria combined.

Last year, the UNHRC appointed Francesca Albanese as a special rapporteur on "Palestine" with a mandate to investigate only Israel's supposed violations.

Albanese is not an honest broker. She has repeatedly equated Palestinian suffering with the Holocaust, falsely accused Israel of war crimes and genocide, and in 2019 wrote that America was "subjugated by the Jewish lobby." Last year, she told Hamas, "You have a right to resist."

In May the U.N. commemorated "Nakba Day," the propaganda term the Palestinian Arabs have given to the date on which the State of Israel was founded. It invited the head of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas to address it.

He used that platform to repeat the P.A.'s murderous lie that Britain and the U.S. had decided "for their own colonialist purposes" to establish "another entity in our historical homeland" because they "wanted to get rid of the Jews and enjoy having them in Palestine—two birds with one stone."

As for the WHO, Neuer observed that every year its annual assembly deviates from surveying global public health to hold a special debate singling out Israel. There is no such focus on Syria, where hospitals are repeatedly bombed by Syrian and Russian forces; nor on North Korea, which has one of the worst health systems in the world. On the contrary, the WHO recently elected North Korea to its executive board.

As ever, the deranged onslaught upon Israel stands proxy for the endangerment of the world itself.

A WHO mission to study the Covid pandemic's origins in China announced in February that the possibility that the virus had escaped from a laboratory needed no further investigation. The mission had been put under pressure to reach that conclusion by Chinese scientists who made up half the team.

The United Nations has been impotent over China's systemic abuses of its population and over Russia's war against Ukraine. Who can be surprised? Both China and Russia have places on the U.N. Security Council with veto power. The United Nations places foxes in charge of its hen house.

In a similar vein, Iran, which is racing towards developing nuclear weapons to further its war on the U.S. and its intention to wipe Israel off the map, has been made vice president of the General Assembly.

Even more grotesquely, Iran has been made rapporteur of the General Assembly's Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Committee. This is despite its persistent violations of the Security Council resolution banning its ballistic-missile program and its refusal to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The United Nations isn't just anti-Israel. It is morally corrupt at its very core. As a result, it doesn't just victimize Israel and empower its attackers. It doesn't just betray its charter commitments by endangering the wider world.

By supposedly promoting global peace and justice but actually promoting those dedicated to war, terror and tyranny while demonizing their victims, the world body has also knocked the free world off its moral compass.

That world will only stand a chance of regaining its balance if it walks away from the United Nations and creates an alliance of democracies instead.

UN AND ARABS WHITEWASH ATROCITIES OF BASHAR ASSAD, INSTEAD BLAME – GUESS WHO?

BASSAM TAWIL (GateStoneInstitute.org 4-7-23)

The League of Arab States (LAS), which represents 22 member countries, has spent several decades issuing statements of condemnation against Israel. Each time Israel launches a counterterrorism operation in response to Palestinian terrorism, including rockets fired from the Gaza Strip towards

Israel and shooting, stabbing and car-ramming attacks, it is denounced. The Israeli government is also condemned by the LAS each time it approves the construction of housing units for Jewish families in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The same League of Arab States, however, has no problem embracing an Arab president whose regime has killed hundreds of thousands of Arabs, including Palestinians and Syrians, since the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, 4,214 Palestinians have been killed; another 3,076 Palestinians are being held in prisons belonging to the Syrian regime, while another 333 others have gone missing, according to the Action Group For Palestinians Of Syria, a London-based human rights watchdog group that monitors the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria. About 400,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have been displaced as a result of the war, The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) revealed.

"The majority of the 438,000 Palestinian refugees remaining in Syria have been displaced at least once within Syria – with some having been displaced multiple times – and over 95 percent of them remain in continuous need of humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs.... Up to 280,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria are currently displaced inside Syria, with a further 120,000 displaced to neighboring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and increasingly, to Europe. There are 31,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Many of them have been pushed into a precarious and marginalized existence due to their uncertain legal status and face limited social protection."

Last year, the United Nations Human Rights Council estimated that 306,887 civilians were killed during the civil war in Syria. Syrian opposition groups estimate that a total of 613,407 people were killed in Syria. The most violent year of the conflict was 2015, when about 110,000 people were killed. Half of the war's victims died between 2013 and 2015, according to the Council.

The League of Arab States, remembered for its rejectionist 1967 "Three No's" resolution (no to peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel), has effectively whitewashed Syrian President Bashar Assad's atrocities against his own people and Palestinians. In May, Arab foreign ministers agreed to reinstate Syria's membership in the LAS after its suspension more than 10 years ago. Later, Assad was invited to attend the LAS Summit in Saudi Arabia's port city of Jeddah.

Assad, in his speech before the Arab heads of state, ironically expressed hope that the summit would mark "the beginning of a new phase of Arab action for solidarity among us, for peace in our region, development and prosperity instead of war and destruction."

Here is an Arab leader, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Arabs and the displacement of millions more, preaching about "peace, development and prosperity."

Saudi Arabia played a significant role in welcoming the Assad regime back to the League of Arab States. The Saudis have shown that they prefer to make peace with Assad than normalize their relations with Israel. Drastically cooling years of diplomatic efforts, the Saudis insist that until a Palestinian state has been established, the kingdom will not normalize ties with Israel. If the Saudis are so concerned about the Palestinians, why are they rushing to embrace an Arab dictator whose regime has killed thousands of Palestinians?

Days after Syria was welcomed to rejoin the LAS, the very same organization called on the international community to "intervene to end Israel's violations against Palestinian children and ensure the protection of their rights."

Before Syria was officially welcomed back to the LAS, Assad was invited to the United Arab Emirates where he was received by Emirati royalty with full honors as "a group of honor guards lined up to salute his excellency."

It is not as though Assad has expressed any contrition whatsoever or admitted an iota of responsibility – whether currently or throughout his rampage of atrocities against his own people. "I did my best to protect the people. I cannot feel guilty when you do your best. You feel sorry for the lives that have been lost. But you don't feel guilty when you don't kill people. So it's not about guilty," he claimed, astonishingly, in an Barbara Walters interview in 2011.

With no apparent preconditions for Assad, the League of Arab States is turning its back on more than 500,000 dead Syrians, nearly seven million Syrian refugees, and 13 million displaced Syrians.

There had not been any significant repercussions for Assad until then US

President Donald Trump authorized the bombing of Syrian chemical weapons facilities in 2018 and signed the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act legislating international sanctions against Syria's murderous regime in 2019. The UN adopted "special procedures" resolutions decrying "unilateral coercive measures" in September 2014 (about three months after Assad's farcical reelection and attempted image rehabilitation), and again in October 2020 (almost immediately following the US's institution of the Caesar Act sanctions). It seems odd that a human rights body such as the UN would need to take "special procedures" to countermand a "civilian protection act."

Along with these procedures, the UN appointed Alena Douhan as Special Rapporteur for assessing the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Douhan, in her reports to the UN, rails against the negative impact of sanctions on Syria, but seems less specific about humanitarian issues and more concerned with defining legal terminology:

"Unilateral coercive measures have been defined by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions 27/21 and 45/5. These encompass economic and political measures imposed by one or a group of States to coerce another State into subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights, with a view to securing some specific change in its policy."

This would be the very definition of sanctions. According to Douhan, the sanctioning countries, including the US, would be interfering in Syria's right to murder its own people en masse. That would, indeed, be attempting to secure a very specific change in its policy. Wouldn't not chemically burning entire villages of civilians to death be a better human rights policy?

Unsurprisingly, the UN seized upon Douhan's policy-making prowess to tack the subject of "Unilateral Coercive Measures" (UCMs) onto Israel. Douhan requested reports from Palestinian NGOs such as "Palestinian Centre for Human Rights," which warmed to the newly minted legal terminology and promptly submitted reports such as, "Impact of Israeli Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Right to Health of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

According to the UN's Douhan, in yet another report, it is not Assad who should be held accountable and punished with sanctions. It is not Assad who has destroyed Syria's infrastructure with bombing, murder, and overall devastation, but rather:

"Israeli settlements... in the occupied Syrian Golan.... [have] limited the Syrian population's access to land and water, in violation of their rights to adequate housing, food and health.... The report also contained recommendations [that]... The international community should put in place punitive measures to put an end to these crimes. All dealings with settlers, settlements and the incumbent Prime Minister [Netanyahu] should cease."

The UN's concern over the Syrian people's rights to land and housing is commendable, but where was its outcry when Assad gave a quiet 30 days' notice to the seven million refugees scattered across the Middle East and beyond to prove ownership of their homes and property or to forfeit ownership? Assad's "Law 10" land grab, where, Salon Syria reports, his government "...liquidate[d] their titles and seize[d] their holdings.... using the law to seize the homes of opposition supporters and give them to its own support base [including selling them to foreign investors]," was met with not a whisper of protest by the UN.

Diametrically opposed to its tacit approval of Assad's land-seizures is the UN's obsession with the Palestinian refugees and their "right of return." Although UN resolution 194 would ostensibly pertain to the right of all refugees to return to their land of birth, if they will "live at peace with their neighbors," there seems to be little effort in pursuing this in practice for Syrian refugees.

The UN's prioritizing the Palestinian refugees over the seven million Syrian refugees is incomprehensible, stinks of hypocrisy and seems yet another symptom of how corruptly the UN betrays its own sanctimonious determinations.

Why doesn't the UN open an entirely new agency solely for Syrian refugees as it did for the Palestinians through UNRWA?

That move, though, seems highly unlikely in light of this year's UN World Refugee Day report. Four of its six paragraphs railed about, "the Nakba - the event that shattered Palestinian lives... for generations, tracing back to 1947... As the largest and most protracted displaced population since World War II" – thereby completely negating the Syrian refugees, as well as many others.

According to Amnesty International:

"In 2019, more than two-thirds of all refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar. Syria has been

the main country of origin for refugees since 2014 and at the end of 2019, there were 6.6 million Syrian refugees...."

The Palestinians were not even mentioned.

The Syrians are one of many peoples taking a backseat to Palestinians. An Arab News headline from last month reads: "Sudan war uproots 2.5 million, UN says, as bodies line Darfur streets." The ensuing article says: "The UN has spoken of possible 'crimes against humanity' in Darfur, where the conflict has 'taken an ethnic dimension.'"

The Sudanese regime responsible for the ongoing massacre, for instance, sits, along with a majority of non-democratic states, on the UN Human Rights Council.

The UN freely admits that:

"The League of Arab States (LAS) shares a common mission with the United Nations (UN): promoting peace, security and stability by preventing conflict, resolving disputes and acting in a spirit of solidarity and unity.... building their engagement through capacity-building exercises and staff exchanges. The Security Council also has sought to strengthen interaction with the LAS...."

With such chummy comradery between these two organizations, including interchangeable staff, it is not a wonder that the UN has strategically placed despotic regimes in its councils and – as demonstrated in resolution after resolution – taken such an aggressively biased stance against Israel.

Mirroring the UN's bizarre version of events and culpability, only three months before embracing the murderous Assad, the Assistant Secretary General of the LAS denounced "the international community's silence and apathy toward... the occupied Palestinian territories.... [holding] prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu fully responsible for...an Israeli siege for more than a week.... the international community [must]... utilize all means to put an immediate end to the Israeli regime's blatant aggression," Iran's Tasnim News reported.

After 12 years of what then US Secretary of State John Kerry in 2013 called the "moral obscenity" of Assad's "indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, the killing of women and children and innocent bystanders by chemical weapons," the UN decries sanctions against the Assad regime, and the Arab League embraces Assad with great honor and not a word of censure.

The outrageous hypocrisy and double-standards of the Arab countries and the UN is astonishing – and unacceptable. The League of Arab States pretends to care about its fellow Arabs, while its good friend, the UN, purports to care about human rights.

"Why has this [UN] Council chosen silence?" UN Watch's Hillel Neuer asked. "Because Israel could not be blamed. Because, in truth, the despots who run this Council couldn't care less about Palestinians, or about any human rights. They seek to demonize Israeli democracy, to delegitimize the Jewish state, to scapegoat the Jewish people. They also seek something else: To distort and pervert the very language and idea of human rights."

BIDEN'S ANTISEMITISM CZAR CONDEMNS ISRAEL, NOT ANTISEMITES

DANIEL GREENFIELD (JNS.org 4-7-23)

In the early days of June, Deborah Lipstadt, Biden's antisemitism czar, flew to the United Arab Emirates and condemned Israel's government while claiming that she worries that the Netanyahu government's defense of Jews against Islamic terrorism might worsen antisemitism.

This was exactly the kind of excuse for antisemitism that the new White House strategy on antisemitism that she was touting was supposed to stop. Instead, the antisemitism czar promoting the antisemitism strategy was falling into the same kind of behavior.

Since the release of the Biden administration's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, Lipstadt appears to have condemned three foreign governments: Israel, Hungary and Russia.

Lipstadt blasted Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, accusing him of "rhetoric that clearly evokes Nazi racial ideology," for criticizing Muslim migration into Europe.

Was Lipstadt functioning as the envoy to combat antisemitism or Islamophobia?

She also condemned Russian ruler Vladimir Putin for suggesting that Ukraine's Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelensky "is not Jewish, that he is a disgrace to the Jewish people."

Lipstadt condemned three countries. One of them was Israel. During this same period, the Palestinian Authority, which is funding the terrorists who have already killed 24 people in Israel this year, continues to praise the killers, describing them as "heroic martyrs".

"Why shouldn't we burn the ground under the Jews' feet?" a member of the Palestine Islamic Scholars Association had asked. "Our young men in Palestine and abroad crave to drink your blood. By Allah, we are thirsty for your blood."

Lipstadt apparently didn't think this sufficiently evoked Nazi ideology to bother condemning it.

The pattern here is fairly obvious to spot. The antisemitism envoy's condemnations have less to do with Jews than with defending some sort of leftist cause.

Lipstadt also complained that Elon Musk's attacks on George Soros were antisemitic.

It's not that Lipstadt is always wrong, it's that her condemnations tend to be selective politically motivated attacks pre-approved by leftists and in defense of leftist personalities or agendas.

Lipstadt is not really there to fight antisemitism, but to enlist the fight against antisemitism in the larger leftist rolodex of causes. And then maybe occasionally she will be allowed to condemn an episode of leftist antisemitism, like that of Roger Waters, without drawing too much of a backlash.

What has Lipstadt accomplished in the fight against antisemitism?

The ADL announced that the Associated Press had agreed to change the spelling of 'anti-semitism' to 'antisemitism,' thus solving the problem once and for all.

"When you fight prejudice & hatred, you don't win many battles. But we won this one. Bravo AP," Lipstadt tweeted.

Lipstadt is really here to sell the Jewish community on the idea that the Biden administration is dedicated to fighting antisemitism. She has been hard at work conducting briefings for assorted establishment Jewish groups like the JCRC of Boston and the National Council of Jewish Women, which had previously announced that it would keep working with the Women's March despite its antisemitism.

But the administration has more than one mouth on antisemitism. And it talks out of both of them.

While Lipstadt was selling Jews on the administration's antisemitism strategy, Douglas Emhoff, Vice President Kamala Harris's husband, joined an army of academics, think tankers, activists, politicians, writers and billionaires flying into Colorado.

This year the Aspen Festival wanted to talk about antisemitism, and Emhoff, the "Second Gentleman," appeared on a panel titled, "The Resurgence of the 'Oldest Hatred': The Effort to Combat Anti-Semitism," moderated by antisemitism expert Katie Couric.

Emhoff had previously dismissed any discussion about antisemitism and Israel, claiming, "I'm just focused on antisemitism" and that students want to "feel a part of a broader coalition in dealing with hate." Israel, implicitly, would just get in the way of uniting Jews and leftists against antisemitism.

Lipstadt wasn't at Aspen. Instead, the other White House representative was Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, an Obama administration vet.

Also present was Erik Ward of Race Forward. Ward is a black activist who had worked for the Southern Poverty Law Center and had defended Black Lives Matter against accusations of antisemitism. His previous discussions of antisemitism liberally quoted leftist anti-Israel activists and utilized the Nexus definition of antisemitism concocted by anti-Israel activists and which had received equal billing in the White House's antisemitism strategy.

Neither Emhoff nor Sherwood-Randall mentioned Israel. And no one at the White House was willing to even go on the record on where it sees the line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism: the key break between the traditional International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and the Nexus one.

An anonymous White House official refused to go on the record and referred a Jewish Insider reporter to the "text" of the strategy.

"It addresses this exactly the way that we want to do so," the anonymous official claimed. "We are sticking with the approach that we've had on this matter, and we're moving forward with all the agency actions to try to make a real difference in people's lives."

The circular statements and the refusal to go in-depth are not the marks of a policy the administration wants to promote, but one that it is seeking to hide. The strategy was the result of an uncomfortable compromise between advocates for the Jewish community and the left.

It was this compromise that led to only indirect mentions of an Islamic attack on a synagogue in Texas, or other forms of antisemitism beyond

white supremacy. It was also this compromise that led the antisemitism strategy to give the Nexus definition of antisemitism second billing after the IHRA one. And while compromise is part of politics, Lipstadt, the antisemitism czar, and other apologists have repeatedly misled the Jewish community about what's actually in it.

"The strategy says the United States government embraces the IHRA definition," Lipstadt claimed. But the strategy also says that it "welcomes and appreciates the Nexus Document" created by anti-Israel activists. And louder than words has been the silence of Emhoff and White House officials on the question of antisemitism and Israel.

While the Biden administration uses Lipstadt to sell the Jewish community on the antisemitism strategy, it sends off Emhoff to talk to liberal elites about antisemitism without mentioning Israel.

Can you have an antisemitism strategy that is half antisemitic?

The inclusion of CAIR, an Islamist antisemitic group, and of the Nexus definition, comprise the antisemitic side of the antisemitism strategy, but the real kicker has been the lack of substance on the side that is supposed to actually be fighting antisemitism.

The anti-Israel left succeeded in getting a seat at the table when defining antisemitism, while the Jewish community has been sold more self-serving delusions from a communal establishment that specializes in pretending to be insiders while accomplishing nothing.

Lipstadt has been content to act as an administration attack dog rather than to follow antisemitism wherever it leads. Worse still, she has misled Jews into thinking that the Biden administration is ready to do the same thing and to fight antisemitism from Islamists and leftists.

It's not.

ISRAELI SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY MOLECULE PREVENTING DENTAL CAVITIES

JEWISH NEWS SYNDICATE (JNS.org 29-6-23)

Scientists at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheva and their colleagues at Sichuan University in Chengdu and the National University of Singapore have identified a naturally occurring molecule that reduces the biofilm that produces plaque and causes cavities.

The researchers found that the molecule 3,3'-Diindolylmethane (DIM), also known as bisindole, disrupted biofilm formation by 90% and therefore bacteria such as *Streptococcus mutans* were not given a chance to grow and attack enamel.

The findings were published earlier this month in the journal *Antibiotics*.

"The molecule, which was found to have low toxicity, could be added to toothpastes and mouthwashes to greatly improve dental hygiene," said lead author Professor Ariel Kushmaro of the Avram and Stella Goldstein-Goren Department of Biotechnology Engineering at Ben-Gurion. Kushmaro is also a member of the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology and the Goldman Sonnenfeldt School of Sustainability and Climate Change.

The study was conducted with Kushmaro's student Yifat Baruch along with Dr. Karina Golberg and Professor Robert S. Marks, as well as Qun Sun of Sichuan University and Karina Yew-Hoong Gin of the National University of Singapore.

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

THE HALACHIC INTERNATIONAL DATELINE

RABBI CHAIM JACHTER (KolTorah.org)

In Parshat Bereishit, we find the Torah's definition of a day.

וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד
morning, behold a day." When the definition of a day is viewed from a global perspective, the issue becomes more complex. One of these complexities is the need for an international dateline. This discussion will focus on halachic perspectives on the international dateline.

The phenomenon of the international dateline may be illustrated as follows (as explained by Rabbi David Pahmer). By convention, all countries of the world have agreed to begin each new day at midnight. Since it is not midnight all around the world at the same instant, the new day does not begin simultaneously in all places. When it is midnight in New York, it is only 11 PM in Chicago, and 9 PM in Los Angeles. That means that it becomes Friday in Chicago an hour after it does in New York, and in Los Angeles three

hours after N.Y.. Several hours later, it becomes Friday in Hawaii (at Hawaiian midnight) and several hours later Japan follows suit. Eventually, Pakistan, Israel, and France will all begin Friday in turn. After several more hours, it will again be midnight in New York. Does that mean that it will then become Friday?! Surely not, since 42 hours earlier, Friday already set in! Somewhere we must stop saying that it becomes Friday at midnight and say that it now becomes Saturday at midnight. It has been universally accepted to designate as the International Dateline an imaginary line that extends from the North Pole to the South Pole, exactly 180 degrees from Greenwich, England.

Although the halacha recognizes the need for a dateline, it has its own criteria for determining exactly where that dateline is located, which may not coincide with the arbitrary line accepted internationally. The phenomenon of frequent worldwide travel has brought this question to the forefront of halachic discussion, and dozens of articles and entire books have been written exclusively on this important topic written by Rabbi Binyamin Tuemim-Rabinowitz. A review of the literature in English was written by Rabbi David Pahmer (*Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Spring 1991, pp. 60-83) and a thorough review of the topic in Hebrew appears in the recently published twenty-third volume of the *Encyclopedia Talmudit*. Although Rabbi Menachem M. Kasher writes in his book on this topic that there are thirteen opinions on this issue, we will summarize three of these perspectives.

1) Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher (the editor of the famous work *תורת שלמה*), in his book, *קו התאריך*, argues that since there is no explicit Talmudic source for the dateline any arbitrary point is acceptable. Hence, it is permissible to follow the universally accepted international dateline, located 081 from Greenwich, England. Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (the late Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, considered to be one of the outstanding halachic authorities of this century) agrees with Rabbi Kasher's conclusion (*Teshuvot Har Tzvi* I).

2) Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky (one of the outstanding halachic authorities of the previous generation, who resided in Jerusalem) is the main proponent that the dateline should be located 180° from Jerusalem. He writes in his book, *היומם בכדור הארץ*, that the reason for this is that the Torah views *ארץ ישראל* and Jerusalem as the center of the world (see *יחזקאל י"ב* (ירושלמי ראש השנה פרק ב' and *ל"ח:י"ב*). Therefore, the international dateline from a Jewish perspective should be located 180 degrees from the center of the world - Jerusalem.

3) Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (the Chazon Ish, one of the great scholars of this century who resided in Bnei Brak) ruled that the halacha considers the dateline to be 90 degrees from Jerusalem, Israel, based on the manner in which many Rishonim (Baal Hamaor, Kuzari, Ritva, Ran) understand a passage in *Rosh HaShana 20b*. They interpret it (as explained by Rabbi David Pahmer) as follows: If the astronomical new moon (molad) occurs slightly before noon (Israel time), then the Beit Din may declare that day as Rosh Chodesh. If the Molad occurs any time after noon, then the next day is Rosh Chodesh. The Gemara further states that this is a consequence of the requirement that we cannot declare Rosh Chodesh unless the newly sanctified Rosh Chodesh will last a full twenty four hours. For example, if the molad occurs in Israel three hours after night fall on Wednesday night (that is, three hours after the beginning of Thursday, since the Jewish day begins at night) the Bet Din can still declare Thursday as Rosh Chodesh, because it is not yet Thursday in New York. Similarly, if the Molad occurs in Israel eight hours after nightfall on Wednesday, then Thursday is still acceptable for Rosh Chodesh, because it is not yet Thursday in California. How long can we continue this pattern? The Gemara in *Rosh HaShana 20b* designates noon (Israel time) as the latest time for which any locale has yet began the new day. Now, noon is eighteen hours after nightfall, which means that there is still a region in the world where Rosh Chodesh has not yet begun, and that is the farthest west we can travel for which is true.

Accordingly, the Chazon Ish (in an essay entitled *שמונה עשרה שעות*, which is printed at the conclusion of *Hilchot Shabbat* in the commentary of the Chazon Ish on Moed) concludes that more than eighteen hours west of Israel is the dateline, and the next day, six hours ahead of Israel.

Some authorities, including Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's uncle), accepted the argument of the Chazon Ish and follow it strictly, setting the dateline 90 degrees east of Jerusalem. There is some practical difficulty with this opinion because the 90 degree line runs through Siberia, China, and Australia. The Chazon Ish, however, believes

that אין מחלקין היבשות, "we do not divide continents." That means that if any part of a landmass falls within 90 degrees east of Jerusalem, then this entire landmass is considered by the Halacha as if it was within 90 degrees east of Jerusalem. Accordingly, the dateline conforms to the coastline. For example, although part of Australia is west of the 90 degrees line (from Jerusalem), all of Australia would still have the same Halachic status of being in the same day as Israel. Practically speaking, the Chazon Ish's opinion matches the international standard with regard to the major landmasses of Australia, China and Russia. Other areas, as we will soon see, pose a greater problem.

In summary, some argue that Halacha accepts the internationally recognized 180 degrees line from Greenwich, England, others place it at 0° from Jerusalem, others place it at 90 degrees from Jerusalem, and the Chazon Ish places it 90 degrees from Jerusalem, but asserts that the dateline conforms to the coastline.

There are great Halachic ramifications to the issue as Japan and New Zealand lie to the west of the secular international dateline but to the east of the 90 degrees line. According to the Chazon Ish, Shabbat in Japan and New Zealand should be observed on what these countries refer to as Sunday. On the other hand, Hawaii lies to the east of the international dateline but to the west of the 180 degrees line from Jerusalem. Accordingly, Rabbi Tukachinsky rules that Shabbat in Hawaii should be observed on what is generally regarded as Friday.

Regarding how one crossing the "dateline" should act, there is a difference of opinion among contemporary Rabbinical figures. Some Poskim counsel avoiding the question altogether by avoiding travel on Fridays and Sundays. Other Rabbinic authorities rule that one may follow the custom of the established Jewish communities of Japan and New Zealand to observe Shabbat on what is regarded as Saturday. It would follow that those who wish to travel to the areas in question should consult their Rabbi for Halachic guidance regarding this complex issue.

Pinchas (Melb) 7/7/23, 19 Sivan 5783: 4:53pm/5:55pm