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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)

Eikev 5783

FOLLOW THE LEADER

RABBI BEREL WEIN (Torah.org)

Moshe's discourse to the children of Israel at the end of his life continues in this week's parsha. I think that it has to be said that Moshe presents a "fair and balanced" review of the events that have befallen Israel during its desert sojourn. The good and the bad, the exalted and the petty are all recorded for us in his words. And his view of the future of his beloved people is also a balanced mixture of woeful warnings and of great reward, of unlimited opportunity and of crushing defeats.

As always, he is forced to leave the choice of behavior and direction to the people of Israel themselves but he attempts surely to guide their choices in the right direction through his words and predictions. This is perhaps the greatest quality of a leader – the ability to clearly outline significant choices in life and society and give guidance to one's people to make wise and beneficial decisions.

Leaders who portray only one side of the coin, the bright one– who promise only utopian lower taxes and yet increased welfare programs, peace without sacrifice and social systems of equality and blind justice that do not take into account the realities of human nature – only encourage inevitable disappointment, cynicism and apathy in their people and constituents.

On the other hand, leaders who govern by dire threats, terrible predictions, emphasizing all society's ills and generating only drabness and a bleak view of the future, destroy human initiative in a fog of pessimism.

Moshe, the paradigm of the great and wise leader presents, throughout his discourse here in the book of Dvarim, both sides of the coin.

Unfortunately, over the ages, the Jews have not always chosen wisely. People hear what they wish to hear no matter what the speaker really says. We are prone to misquote, misunderstand, repeat phrases out of context and generally ignore what we do not wish to hear and understand.

Moshe's attempt to portray the great achievements of the desert – and especially of Sinai – and balance them with the reminders of the tragedies and wars that also mark Israel's journey through the desert, had only limited influence on the people. Our sages teach us that the Jewish people simply did not believe Moshe's dire predictions would ever really occur.

G-d simply had too much invested in the Jewish people. It was a forerunner of our modern "too big to fail" philosophy regarding otherwise corrupt financial institutions. So Moshe's darker side of the coin was never really believed by the Jewish people.

They heard only the good – what they wanted to hear – and ignored the rest. There are many Jews today that unfortunately listen to the opposite strains of Jewish life. They despair of our future and our wonderful state. They also only hear what they wish to hear, fueled by a biased and ignorant media and narrow-minded intellectuals. They see no grand future for Israel, the people, the state and the land. A well considered study of Moshe's words and his realistic and balanced message would certainly be in order.

HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF STRING?

AVROHOM YAAKOV

"And it will be because ('Eikev') you will listen to these judgements." (7:12)
 Rashi comments that in using the Hebrew word 'Eikev' (because), that

shares the same letters as the Hebrew for 'heel', the Torah is referring to "the mitzvos that a person crushes under his heel", indicating those actions that people would consider minor or unimportant.

Moshe, in his final monologuing to the Jews is telling them of the importance of even the supposedly insignificant mitzvos.

While commentators debate which 'minor' mitzvos Moshe is specifically referring to here, perhaps the point is not which specific mitzvah is the key, but how we measure the importance of mitzvos.

Our society is all about metrics. If something can be quantified, it can be defined and therefore comparisons can be made.

For example, the concept of success is often measured by the amount of money a person makes. Or perhaps success can be defined as affecting peoples' lives positively. Or it could be raising a loving and well-adjusted family. Or just simply crossing items off a daily to-do list or a life-long bucket list.

It depends how the metrics are applied and they can, and usually are, applied subjectively.

The truth is that we don't know.

Growing up, many of us used to read the stories from 'Talks and Tales' and I remember the story of the poor wagon driver and the rich merchant who once swapped roles to help out others (the wagon driver invited paupers for Shabbos and struggled to feed them, while the merchant lent a hand trying to extricate a bogged wagon) and when their souls ascended to the Heavenly court, they were sentenced to a Redo as they had reversed their intended roles.

Who would have thunk that this was the critical points of their lives? Moshe's lesson to us is that we cannot judge what is or is not important.

OF EATING MEAT AND HONESTY IN BUSINESS

RABBI ELISHA GREENBAUM (Chabad.org)

I had two arguments this week, one with a vegetarian and the second with a businessman. No big deal, I'm always up for a debate. The crazy part was that my position was the same each time and I even quoted the same verse of Torah to prove it.

My vegetarian friend passionately believes that we have no right to eat animals. She claims that it is an act of callous disregard for life and tantamount to murder. According to her, when humans consume animals we sully our consciences and, to use her choice of expression, "engage in speciesism of the worst order."

To eat an animal is to elevate that animal to a higher level of being! might have had to look up an exact definition of the term (kudos to Wikipedia), but I understood what she meant. From her perspective, there is no value differential between species and it is therefore morally indefensible for one species to partake of another. However, I questioned her premise and disagreed with her conclusion.

I believe that G-d created humans as a higher order of being with concomitantly greater responsibilities and privileges. From this perspective, when we eat animals, we're actually doing them a favor.

We eat in order to gain energy from the calories we consume, and then utilize that energy in our daily service of G-d. To eat an animal is to elevate that animal to a higher level of being, while conversely, refusing to eat (kosher) animals is to lose the opportunity of changing their beings for the better.

ETHICS

Not ten minutes after leaving the office where I argued with the vegetarian, after we respectfully agreed to disagree, I found myself wrapped up in an argument about our responsibilities to act morally and ethically in business. The businessman in question, who, for obvious reasons shall remain nameless, freely admitted to crooked dealings in the past and told me that the only thing stopping him from lying on his tax return, cheating his competitors and ripping off the public more often was his fear of getting caught. "It's a dog eat dog world out there," he proclaimed in all seriousness. "And if I don't do it to them, they'll just do it to me."

After silently resolving to never, ever have any financial dealings with him, I tried to explain the moral depravity of his position. I did my best, but unfortunately I felt I had more chance persuading the vegetarian to join me for a steak sandwich than I had convincing the businessman to go legit.

At first, he couldn't even understand the point I was trying to make. From his angle, there are two choices, to stay away from business completely, or go all-in for the kill. I claimed that many businessmen were both honest and successful and the synthesis could exist, but he wasn't even willing to try.

It's a pity because Jews have a greater responsibility to demonstrate morality in their daily interactions. Aside from the obvious duty to do the right thing for its own sake, along with the thousands of unequivocal statements in the Bible, Talmud and other holy texts that require us to act with strict financial rectitude, there are also practical reasons for a Jew to act ethically. Some people out there hate us and are looking for any opportunity to confirm their prejudices. When one of us slips up, we all cop the blame – and we don't need to give the anti-Semites more ammunition.

However, there is even a higher purpose for a Jew to act with honesty. When we are moral and resist temptation, we transform the world from a den of corruption into an earthly paradise. By subsuming our animal instincts and playing by a higher set of rules, we justify our existence and elevate mundane acts of business into G-dly encounters.

In the Book of Devarim (7:16), Moshe continues his words of advice before the Jews cross into the Promised Land. "Ve'achalta et kol Ha'amim" – "you should defeat all the nations," he commanded. The Lubavitcher Rebbe pointed out that the word "Ve'achalta" is literally translated as "you should eat." Far from instructing us in some weird act of Biblical cannibalism, the Rebbe interprets the verse as referring to the need for probity in our financial and private lives.

Just as when eating with the correct intention one elevates the food from a lower to a higher level of existence, so too, when acting with probity in our interaction with others and then giving charity from the proceeds, we transform "all the nations," our businesses and even the world itself, to a higher state of being.

When other people see Jews acting fairly and honestly, aren't cutting lines or embarking on questionable endeavors, they are inspired to live their own lives to a higher calling. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we have the ability to change the world for the better, not by refraining from food or avoiding business, but by making sure that our eating and our business dealings are done for G-d and deserving of His reward.

CAREFUL WHAT YOU THINK!

RABBI LEVI AVTZON (Chabad.org)

In our age of political correctness, many whose occupation brings them close to a microphone on a frequent basis have adopted the supposed truism that "it doesn't make a difference what you think, all that counts is what you say." A silent bigot is a lover of man. A vocal bigot is the personification of evil.

What you have then is a bunch of politicians, media personnel and leaders in all areas who take special courses on how "not to say what you think, rather what is acceptable," and to "never ever verbalize your bigotry for there might be a secret recording device under your chair."

In recent years we have seen quite a few people falling from high places for saying the wrong things at the wrong time. Great careers have disintegrated thanks to "one weak moment." Many pundits and regular fellas are wondering whether people deserve to be pushed off the cliff for just that "one weak moment."

And common sense screams: Really? One weak moment, is that all it was? How about "one weak lifetime," when for years and years the mind was allowed to swim in a cesspool of hate? Isn't it obvious that this wasn't a slip of a tongue, rather an avalanche of the mind?

In the Book of Devarim we find several verses which begin with the words: "If you should say in your heart..."

If you should say in your heart: "These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?" (7:17)

You will say in your heart: "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth..." (8:17)

Moshe is warning the Jews not to entertain feelings of fear and haughtiness in their heart. He warns them not of political correctness – "be careful what you say" – rather, "be careful what you think and feel." And the reason is obvious: a tongue doesn't have a mind of its own; it simply blurts out what sits in the mind. It is the two-year-old child who shares her parents' secret conversations with the world.

Our sages have coined the statement that a person should be "mouth and heart equal." It's not about what you say, as much as it is what you think.

The lesson from all of this?

Racism, hate, bigotry, and gossip should be deleted way before the words take the train to the microphone. For once they sit at the station of the mind it is too late; the train is about to come. And then, there is no turning back.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Aish.com)

Life is a test. We struggle to make a living, to raise our children, to build up our communities. Nothing comes easy, and our test is to deal with the hardships and frustrations in the best way possible.

But what if our livelihood were served up to us on a silver platter? How wonderful that would be! No more worries about how to pay for the children's tuition or the new roof. What if everything we needed came to us like manna from heaven? Would we consider this a test? Hardly. We would consider it a blessing. The Torah, however, seems to say otherwise.

No sooner had the Jewish people come forth from Egypt that they complained (Shemos 16:3), "If only we had died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt when we were sitting beside the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread; now you have brought us out into the desert to let the entire congregation starve to death."

"Behold, I will rain down bread from the heavens on you," Hashem replied (ibid. 16:4). "The people shall go out to collect their daily portion every day, in order to test whether or not they will follow My Torah."

The commentators wonder what kind of test this is. What could be better than having everything you need delivered to your doorstep every day? This is a test? This is a blessing!

Rashi explains that Hashem was referring to the laws that govern the manna. One could not store away any manna for the next day. One had to collect a double portion on Friday. And so forth. This was the test. Would the Jewish people observe the laws of the manna scrupulously?

This test is also mentioned in Parashas Eikev, "The One Who feeds you manna in the desert . . . in order to test you." Sforno explains that the test is to see if the Jews would still follow the Torah when they do not have to worry about their livelihood.

Yes, there is a great test in "bread raining down from heaven." Affluence without effort is a dangerous thing. It comes with a great amount of leisure time and freedom of action. What do we do with that leisure time and that freedom of action? Do we use our leisure time and freedom of action to taste the forbidden? This is the great test of the manna.

We are all aware of the test of poverty. We are all aware of the trials and tribulations of being poor. However, says Sforno, affluence also comes with great temptations. It puts a tremendous responsibility on a person. This is the test of the manna, and it is the test for many Jews in these affluent times.

The Chovos Halevavos writes in Shaar Habitachon, the Gate of Trust, that one of the reasons people, unlike birds and animals, must make a great effort to earn their livelihood is to control the yetzer hara. If we had too much time on our hands, we would be unable to resist the temptations he puts before us. As it is, we are either too busy or too tired most of the time. And even then it is a struggle to resist temptation.

The Maggid of Mezritch once said that when people face troubles, sickness or mortal danger, Heaven forbid, they all become religious. They all come to shul. They pray fervently. They say Tehillim with tears streaming down their cheeks. They give charity generously. But when things are going well, when they are going wonderfully, do they give much thought to the Almighty? This is the test of the manna.

MIND OVER MILKSHAKES

RABBI DR. MORDECHAI SCHIFFMAN (Aish.com)

In a fascinating study conducted at Yale University, participants were each given a 380-calorie milkshake. Half the participants were told it was a sensible, 140-calorie shake, and half were told it was an indulgent, 620-calorie shake. In reality, everyone received the same 380-calorie milkshake.

In a testament to the subjectivity of satiation, the people in the indulgent milkshake group rated themselves as fuller than those in the sensible milkshake group. But the researchers did not just rely on the participants' self-report of how full they felt. The researchers also measured the levels of ghrelin, a gut hormone whose presence is associated with feeling hungry. They found lower levels of ghrelin in the people who thought they were drinking the indulgent shake, even though in reality they ingested the same number of calories!

The researchers conclude that “mindset meaningfully affects physiological responses to food.”

In Parshat Ekev, Moshe informs the Israelites that when they enter the Land of Israel, “you will eat, be satisfied, and bless G-d.” This is the source for the commandment of Birkat HaMazon – to recite blessings after eating a meal that contains bread. The trigger for being obligated in the commandment is the feeling of satiety. Despite the subjectivity of satiation inherent in the verse, the rabbis of the Talmud set specific criteria to obligate Birkat HaMazon (either an olive-sized or egg-sized amount of bread).

Our weekly email is chockful of interesting and relevant insights into Jewish history, food, philosophy, current events, holidays and more...

The Talmud presents an enigmatic Aggadic dialogue between G-d and the angels, where the angels ask G-d how He is able to show favor to the Jewish people (as is implied in the Priestly Blessing), as this does not seem to align with fairness and justice. G-d justifies his decision to show favor by pointing to the fact that even though the verse only requires Birkat HaMazon after being satiated, the Israelites recite the blessings even after only eating an olive or egg-sized piece of bread.

This cryptic passage requires explanation. If the message is the importance of going above and beyond the bare requirements, is there any significance to choosing Birkat HaMazon as the example? Additionally, if the Biblical obligation is triggered only after feeling full, wouldn't it be problematic to recite the blessings if one is not full? Wouldn't this be considered a blessing made in vain (bracha le-vatala)?

Perhaps the significance of reciting the blessing on an olive- or egg-sized piece of bread is not that the Jewish people recite blessings even though they aren't full. Rather, they worked on their attitude and changed their mindset, and as a consequence their biology, as it relates to being full. That is, they trained themselves to become satiated with the smaller amount.

The verse in Proverbs states “a righteous person eats to satisfy his soul.” Our ideal is to eat enough to have energy to serve G-d, not to indulge if there is no physical or spiritual benefit. While we should all consult the relevant health professionals for guidance on what and how much to eat, perhaps the message of the Talmud is that we could work on being mindful of our satiation and adjust our mindset to decrease the amount of food we require in order to become satiated.

THE SUMMARY OF ALL FEAR

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

One of the most discussed verses in this week's portion deals with the fear of Heaven.

Moshe presents the Children of Israel with a simple request fear G-d. Though it may sound simple we all know that it is not. The problem is that Moshe presents the petition as if it were a simple feat. He says, And now Israel, what does G-d want of you? Only that you fear G-d your Lord (10:12). He makes it sound as though the fear of G-d is only a minor matter.

The Talmud in Tractate Berachos asks what we all might ask: Is the fear of G-d such a small thing? The Gemara relates how Rabbi Chanina said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i: The Holy One, blessed be He, has in His treasury nothing except a stockpile of the fear of heaven, as it says, “The fear of G-d is His treasure” (Yeshaya 33: 6). Obviously if fear of G-d is so cherished by the Almighty, it must be very difficult to attain.

The Gemara answers: True! For it was Moshe who said this verse and for Moshe fear of G-d was a small thing. Rabbi Chanina compared it to a person who is asked for a big article, and he has it. Since he has it, then it seems like a small article to him.

I always was bothered by the Gemara. Just because it was easy for Moshe, who says it is easy for us? So why does Moshe imply to the people that fear of G-d is simple. That is easy for him to say. But don't you have to know your

audience and talk to them on their level?

Rav Yitzchok Zilber, founder of Toldos Yeshurun, an organization that re-educates estranged Russian Jews about the heritage that was snatched from them, is known as the Father of contemporary Russian Jewry. A native of Kazan, Russia, Rav Zilber was born just before the Russian Revolution in 1917, but was discreetly taught Torah by his revered father and not only completed Shas several times during his years in Russia, but also taught Torah to many others. During World War II, he was imprisoned in Stalin's gulag where, yet he managed to remain Shomer Shabbos despite the inhumane conditions. He later had to flee from the KGB, which wanted to arrest him for his Torah activities in Russia. In 1972, he emigrated to Israel. As he walked off the airplane on his arrival in Israel and embraced the custom agent.

Chavivi! My dear one! shouted Rabbi Zilber as he gave the man a bear-hug embrace. It is so wonderful to be here and talk to a Jew like a Jew! The man offered a polite smile and a pleasant Shalom.

Please tell me, pleaded Rabbi Zilber with an intensity that seemed to announce a question whose answer would solve all the problems facing Jews for the millennia. For years I am struggling with this problem. Please tell me, how did you understand the K'tzos haChoshen on the sugya of Areiv? (The K'tzos haChoshen is a classical commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, Code of Jewish Law.)

Ma zeh K'tzos haChoshen. (What is a K'tzos haChoshen)? came the reply.

Rav Zilber was puzzled. He tried another query. Maybe you can explain how you understood the Mishne in (tractate) Uktzin in the last chapter.

Mishne? Uktzin? K'tzos? What are you talking about?

Rav Zilber, recalling the difficulties he had trying to teach and study Torah in Russia was mortified. In honest shock, he asked the man. How is this possible? You mean to tell me that you live here in Israel and have the ability to learn Torah. And you don't know what the Ktzos is? You never heard of Mishne Uktzin?

Rav Zilber began to cry.

They say that the customs agent was so moved by Rabbi Zilber's simple sincerity, that he began to study Torah.

Perhaps the Gemara is telling us the simple truth. It was important for an entire nation to see the man to whom fear of heaven was considered the simplest and most rudimentary aspect of life. To Moshe, fear of Heaven was natural. As a leader, he had the imperative to impress the nation, with his sincerity. To us simple Jews, it is important to see someone whose Jewish observance is as simple and graceful as if it is second nature. To us it may be a struggle, but it is imperative that the benchmark of our goals is someone to whom fear comes natural.

In this country, we say anyone can become president. In Moshe's vision, the one he imparts to his people, anyone can fear Hashem.

EVEN MORE MITZVOS

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love HASHEM, your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. (Devarim 11:13-14)

... to love HASHEM: You should not say: “I will learn in order to become rich,” [or] “in order to be referred to as ‘Rabbi,’” [or] “in order that I receive a reward.” Rather, whatever you do, do out of love [for G-d], and ultimately, the honor will come. – Rashi

This is a little troublesome. In the second paragraph of Shema which is posted on every doorway in Jewish homes and which we recite at least twice daily, I detect what seems like a huge contradiction. We are told “to love HASHEM”, and Rashi explains this means not to serve HASHEM for any ulterior motive or reward but rather out of pure love and then the goodness will come. That's great! If that's all the Torah had demanded then, admittedly it would be very challenging but everything would be clear.

In the very next verse and verses the Torah spells out the earthly rewards that will come about as a result of serving HASHEM with love. Have you noticed the problem yet? Why is a reward offered as a contingency for serving HASHEM out of love, and not for a reward? It sounds a little distracting to say the least. Is it a test? Maybe! The Ramchal writes in Mesilas Yesharim that “all matters of this world are tests for a person”. Certainly, the Torah is not inviting us to engage with a pure motive in order that we should invite a test. That can't be the intention here. So, what is?

Another problem is that the sages tell us, “There is no reward for Mitzvos in this world!” We have to understand what this means. It does not mean to

say that there is no benefit for performing Mitzvos in this life. There are uncountable benefits. What it means is that this earthy world does not have an equivalent currency to exchange for the value of even a single incidental Mitzvah.

The Mishne in Pirke' Avos states explicitly, "One whiff of the next world is beyond all of this world!" Rabbi Dessler explains that if one could capsuleize all the pleasures experienced by all the people from the beginning of time until the end of time, it would still not equal one trace of the delights of the next world. There is no scale. We haven't got enough pizza, or mouths, or beds, or sunsets, or musical notes to approximate one small hint of what that ultimate pleasure is. So, what's the answer?

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuva that the Torah is telling us that the physical attainments promised in this second paragraph of Shema are not presented as a reward. Again, a Mishne Pirke' Avos tells us, "The reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah". When somebody does a Mitzvah, we have a custom to bless them, "Tizku L'Mitzvos! – You should merit Mitzvos!" The biggest result of doing a Mitzvah in this world is the opportunity to do another Mitzvah. The seeming reward spoken about here is not a payoff. It is a paving of the way to be able to do more Mitzvos unimpeded. The real reward is something unfathomable in the context of this physical setting.

Maybe now we can appreciate the nature of what is being offered. I heard this idea recently from a seasoned-mature Talmud Chochom, a Rabbi Goldberg. Let us appreciate how precise is the language of the Torah. We are promised that for serving HASHEM with love, "you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil." This is not a cohesive and consistent grouping. Grain is a raw product. Wine and oil are finished products. Why are they listed together? He explained that grain can be stored for a long time as a raw product. Once it is processed into bread then it perishes quickly. Grapes which become wine and olives that are used to make oil in their raw form tend to spoil. They can only be safeguarded for long periods of time as finished products. This blessing offered by the Torah is not a settlement in this world with grain, wine, and oil. We are being granted the peace of mind, the security, and the surety that we can remain dedicated to meriting even more Mitzvos!

News, Views & Opinion

INDIAN POLICE THWART ATTACK ON MUMBAI CHABAD HOUSE

JC REPORTER (JNS.org 31-7-23)

Indian intelligence services have thwarted a planned terrorist attack against Israelis at the Chabad house in Mumbai.

Two Pakistani suspects were arrested by police after they discovered a plot to carry out the attack in the coming days and were in possession of explosives, a drone and Google images of Nariman House, a five-story building in the Colaba area of South Mumbai.

"The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) found some Google images from the accused of Chabad House located at Colaba. They informed us. Accordingly, we have beefed up the security at Chabad House, which already has very high security. A mock drill was also carried out on Thursday at the center and outside area," an officer from the Colaba police station told the Hindustan Times.

The ATS took into custody Mohammad Imran Mohammad Yunus Khan, 23, and Mohammad Yunus Mohammad Yakub Saki, 24, the English-language daily reported on Sunday.

Channel 12 reported on Monday that the "Israeli security system" assisted Indian intelligence services in foiling the planned attack.

The Chabad house was attacked during the November 2008 terrorist rampage across India's largest city.

Pakistani Islamist terrorists wreaked havoc in Mumbai, killing men, women and children in hotels, a train station and on the streets. One hundred seventy-five people died, including nine terrorists, and more than 300 were wounded, in 12 coordinated attacks.

Two of the attackers held several residents of the Chabad house hostage. Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife, Rivka, who was six months pregnant, were murdered along with four other hostages inside the house. '

BOLSHEVIK TACTICS – DOCTORS SLAM MEDICAL STRIKE

LAUREN MARCUS (WorldIsraelNews.net 26-7-23)

A last-minute strike declared by Israel's largest medical union in response to the passage of a judicial reform law sparked backlash among some doctors, who said the move harmed patients and signaled dangerous politicization

of the space.

Dr. Bella Smolin, a senior internist and director of palliative care at Rambam Hospital in Haifa, ignored the Israel Medical Association's order and saw patients as usual on Tuesday.

"I am at peace with my decision because it's forbidden to mix politics and medicine," Smolin told Ynet. "It is impossible to turn medicine into a political weapon."

Smolin told the outlet that she is originally from the Former Soviet Union and that her parents had taught her about the importance of "thinking independently" and "ignoring propaganda." She said that the strategies used by the anti-reform movement reminded her of "Bolshevik tactics."

The medical strike was reflective of the revolutionary Communist idea that no matter the cost, the "end justifies the means." She said that the strike was indicative of a mindset that "all sacred cows can be slaughtered" in pursuit of a political goal.

After witnessing the mass protests and strikes, Smolin – who has a neutral stance on the reform – said she is now afraid "of a [left-wing] dictatorship" coming to power.

Despite medical union leaders' insistence that the majority of doctors are opposed to the reforms and support strikes in order to force a legislative freeze, Smolin is far from alone in her views. According to an O404 report, senior doctors sat down with MK Uriel Bosso, head of the Knesset's Health Committee, for an emergency meeting on Tuesday.

The doctors said they are planning to form a new union, and that at least 1,000 physicians are interested in leaving the Israeli Medical Association following the strike.

DESPITE BIDEN'S PRESSURE, ISRAEL ENDS LEFTIST JUDGES' RULE

DANIEL GREENFIELD (JNS.org 25-7-23)

The vast gap between leftist hysteria and what it's actually fighting can be easily spotted when it omits discussing the specifics of the case. Take the leftist clamor over "book bans." Ask them specifically what books are being banned in the majority of cases, and suddenly they have to defend the graphic pornographic content in books like "Gender Queer."

The Israeli left, political elites and media allies have been howling that Israel's democracy is being destroyed because of democratic judicial reforms that would stop the Supreme Court from wielding absolute power and overturning laws simply because the leftists on the court oppose them. Israeli President Isaac Herzog's U.S. visit was in no small part about undermining the Netanyahu government by propping up a leftist opposition figure. (That was why the Dems, who had previously embraced Rep. Ilhan Omar, rushed to hide away any dissent—not because they were pro-Israel, but because they were anti-Netanyahu.)

Biden has continued pressuring Israel to stop judicial reform.

In a statement to Axios, he called on Netanyahu not to move forward with the legislation, citing concern about its "potential implications."

"Biden urged Netanyahu in a phone call last week to try and get a broad consensus for his judicial overhaul legislation. According to two sources briefed on the call, Biden told Netanyahu he isn't the only one concerned about where the prime minister is taking Israel, many Americans are too," according to the report.

"Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who on Sunday returned from the U.S. where he met with Biden and discussed the judicial overhaul, is making a last-ditch effort to reach a compromise between the government and the opposition on the legislation.

"He has proposed watering down the bill so it will leave the Supreme Court some authority to review government decisions on the basis of reasonableness."

Note the "reasonableness" line.

What it really means is that the Supreme Court is able to overturn decisions reached by elected officials because the leftists on the court (who select their own membership) think they're not "reasonable."

Imagine if the U.S. Supreme Court had unlimited power to take any case and overturn any government decision, not based on the Constitution, but based on its own opinions. Then imagine that the court could select its own members. This is the nightmarish situation in Israel, which the left has done everything to uphold because it keeps on losing actual democratic elections.

When Israel's leftists elites and their foreign allies shriek that democracy is under siege if their courts can't supersede democratically elected officials, what they really mean is that democracy is besieging them.

With the Knesset, Israel's parliament, moving to pass judicial reform, some

of the country's biggest companies announced that they were going "on strike." There was a time when strikes meant workers protesting a handful of entrenched elites—now it's the elites going on strike to protest the workers.

There was no depth to which leftists proved unwilling to sink, including organizing "strikes" in the military and among doctors.

Despite everything, the "reasonableness" standard according to which judges can overturn anything they like on a whim has been partly rolled back.

"The Knesset passed a key piece of the coalition's judicial reform legislation into law on Monday.

"All 64 members of the coalition, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was released from hospital on Monday morning following a procedure to implant a cardiac pacemaker, voted in favor. Opposition lawmakers boycotted the third and final vote.

"The amendment to Basic Law: The Judiciary limits the Supreme Court's use of the so-called reasonableness standard. It bars 'reasonableness' as a legal justification for judges to reverse decisions made by the Cabinet, ministers and 'other elected officials as set by law.'"

That story comes from JNS. Apart from it and Israel National News, the rest of the media coverage has consisted of hysterical propaganda and smear campaigns. That includes even formerly pro-Israel outlets like Israel Hayom and The Jerusalem Post, which are lying, smearing and defending the abusive status quo.

If you don't believe me, here's a sample of the rhetoric that's now routine at Israel Hayom:

"Netanyahu's ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox religious allies say the package is meant to restore power to elected officials. Critics say it is a power grab fueled by various personal and political grievances by Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, and his partners."

Ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox. Not much more needs to be said about Israel Hayom's current leftist orientation.

"The Biden administration considers it 'unfortunate' that the Israeli parliament ratified part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contested judicial overhaul plan on Monday, a White House National Security Council spokesperson said," the paper reported.

That's one way to know it's a good thing.

The bottom line is, ignore the lies and smears in 99% of the media. That includes even the Jerusalem Post and Israel Hayom, never mind garbage like The Times of Israel, and ask what the bottom line is.

The bottom line is judges being able to rule unilaterally.

There's nothing democratic about that. Judicial reform is not an attack on democracy, it's the downfall of a tyranny.

WHY THERE WILL BE NO CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL

JEROME M. MARCUS (JNS.org 25-7-23)

Readers of the mainstream Israeli press see an avalanche of articles and advertisements every day proclaiming that the country is on the edge of civil war and then blaming the right's judicial reform proposals for bringing us there. But we are not there.

One might pause and point out that the claim of causation is known to be false because the protests were planned before the judicial reform proposals were even released. In this respect, the protesters' advocates are no different from PLO head Yasser Arafat, who claimed that the Second Intifada was "caused" by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September of 2000. In fact, we know the terror program was planned in advance. Sharon's visit was simply used to justify it, as if anything could justify the mass murder of civilians.

But I wish to call attention to a different and more fundamental point, which is that the left and the right in Israel do not play by the same rules.

The left, well advised by expensive PR firms, has seized on the Israeli flag as its prop, and justified the intensity of its opposition to judicial reform with the age-old maxim, *אין לנו ארץ אחרת*,—"We have no other country"—to add to their display about their team's irrevocable commitment to Israel. At the same time though, protest leaders—a group coextensive with the high-tech, wealthy, secular, elite—have called for an exit to or reliance on exactly that: other countries. They threaten to leave for other countries; to move their money or their businesses to other countries; to send their children there. And they call for Israel to be stripped of the ability to defend itself unless their views of politics are adopted as binding upon everyone.

The latest example of this is a statement issued on July 20 by Nadav Argaman, the former head of the Shabak (Israel's FBI) that passage of

legislation, barring the courts from striking down Knesset-enacted laws simply on the ground that a majority of one court panel think the law unreasonable, will constitute a breach of the solemn contract between soldiers and the state. Therefore, he claims, the soldier's oath to obey orders and to defend the country no longer applies.

Such a statement by such a man might make one tremble for Israel's future. That is exactly the goal, just as the torrent of articles about hundreds of reserve soldiers who say they will not show up for duty when called might lead one to believe that most of the most important fighters will choose to leave the country defenseless if their demands are not met.

This is false, as is revealed by both recent events, not-so-recent events, and events from long ago. And the driver of these events is a politically incorrect fact that must be confronted: the left and the right don't play by the same rules.

While the *sarvanut*—refusal to serve—of some soldiers has received a wide broadcast from a sympathetic press, it is dwarfed to insignificance by the insistence on serving by tens and tens of thousands of other soldiers who know better. Letters circulated among reservists for one day—one day alone—promising never to refuse orders were signed by more than 60,000 people. In 24 hours. No mention of these letters appeared in any large circulation Israeli newspaper or website so far as I can tell.

But this commitment to the command structure and to that most basic principle of democracy—civilian control of the army—is part of a larger cultural fact: that when the Israeli government doesn't do what the right wants, the right never threatens to turn over the board and walk away from the game.

This was true during the removal of all Jews from the Gaza Strip, which was passionately opposed by the right but ordered by the government. No political leader on the right encouraged soldiers to refuse to obey orders to carry out the directive. As committed as they were to the Jewish communities in Gaza, the right's leaders were far more deeply committed to the State of Israel. And they knew that *sarvanut*—refusing orders, even orders that they were convinced were violations of deep religious principles about the holiness of the Land of Israel—would lead to a civil war that could destroy the state. So they did not refuse and did not encourage refusal. The few marginal figures who did publicly contemplate refusal were dismissed as unpatriotic. And such people were ignored.

We can go back further. In 1944, the right-wing Lehi assassinated a British official in Egypt. In a period known as the *saïsson*, British forces were joined in their retaliation by David Ben-Gurion's Palmach, which rounded up and tortured their opponents in Menachem Begin's Irgun.

Begin's men wanted to retaliate against the Palmach. But he refused to allow it because Begin knew that retaliation would lead to civil war. His men obeyed him. So there was no retaliation.

The same deep wellspring of commitment to the Jewish state is what led Begin to order his men on the Altalena not to fire back when Ben-Gurion's soldiers fired on that ship in the midst of a struggle over who would have control over weapons on board, which had been brought to arm Jews defending the nascent state from those who sought to destroy it. The same principle was at stake, and the same action was taken: Shooting back would threaten civil war. So the right did not shoot back.

So it was then; so it is today and so it will be tomorrow. The right will not shoot back at the left.

In contrast to the menacing, if not outright violent, demonstrations conducted by the left, the right do not try to disrupt the operation of the country. It's not only that they don't try to paralyze the army or use the army to cause the rest of the country to do their will. It's also that they don't try to shut down the country. They don't shut down the airport or the nation's train system; they don't scream at their political opponents in restaurants or disrupt their opponents' home lives or Sabbaths.

The right will also not do something else the left talks about and sometimes does: leave. While they march to the tune of *אין לנו ארץ אחרת*, the left has gone so far as to embrace a BDS campaign against their own country. They have called for the exit of investment cash and for the emigration of what they believe to be Israel's most valuable citizens—themselves—if laws are passed with which they fundamentally disagree. Los Angeles, New York, Berlin (really? Berlin?) are the places to which such Israelis go. They do indeed have other countries. Or at least they think they do.

The right does not do this and, I believe, never will. When the right says *אין לנו ארץ אחרת*, they know it's true. They don't threaten to leave on the ground that their politics are not the dominant politics, and they don't

actually leave for that reason. After all, the right was the losing side of politics for the first three decades of the country's existence. But there was no movement of Jabotinskyites or haredim threatening to move ... anywhere. They were committed to the country (and to their families), which is why they are now the majority.

So the right doesn't fight the way the left does, both because of this deep commitment but also because the right knows it doesn't have to. This is true in part because it outnumbers the left, and because that population gap will only grow over the coming years as the fertility of religious and traditional families outstrips that of secular ones.

It is also unnecessary because the logic of the left's position is clear, and it will be followed: If, in fact, you think that your commitment to the state is merely conditional—I promise to serve only as long as the government doesn't do anything I fundamentally disagree with—then when you really think that commitment is broken you want to leave and you will leave. That's what they say on the left, and there's little doubt that at least some of them mean it.

So they will go. They may be missed by some, but contrary to these worthies' estimation of their own importance, the state will survive.

Still, there is an alternative, which is that they will come to their senses and realize that they were right when they said we have no country other than this one. They will stay. They will realize they must fulfill their commitment to their country. They will live as free people in communities that share their values, and they will participate in the political process here just as minorities do in every democracy.

Of course, there's also a third option: The Israelis who leave for what they think are greener pastures might soon find out that those pastures are not so pastoral. Perhaps they will go out for sushi in LA or to a supermarket in Paris and be reminded why their grandparents found it necessary to create a Jewish state.

Then they will see that they were right when they said we have no other country.

BIDEN USED 'IRAN LOBBY' FOUNDER TO BROKER NEW IRAN DEAL

DANIEL GREENFIELD (Frontpage.com 1-8-23)

The Biden campaign hid the names of its 2020 big money fundraisers until right before Election Day. The list of bundlers who managed to raise at least \$100,000 for Biden included Jamal Abdi: the executive director of NIAC Action. NIAC Action had endorsed Biden and celebrated by tweeting, “our long, national nightmare is almost over. AP has called the race for Joe Biden”.

NIAC is often referred to as the Iran Lobby and was founded by Trita Parsi (pictured above) who had previously created, “Iranians for International Cooperation” which admitted that it existed to “safeguard Iran's and Iranian interests”. Biden however turned over America's “interests” to NIAC.

The Tehran Times, an Iranian regime publication, recently revealed that the Biden administration had been using Trita Parsi, formerly of NIAC, among other pro-Iran activists, as a “broker and middleman” between “Iran and the Democratic administration.”

The Biden had used the founder of an Iran lobby group that had funded his campaign to broker negotiations with Iran. There was no one representing the United States in the New Iran Deal.

Instead, the Biden administration had outsourced renewing the deal to Robert Malley, a longtime supporter of Iran and Islamic terrorism currently under investigation for mishandling classified documents, who had brought in the Iran Lobby including “Ali Vaez, Malley's former right-hand man at the Crisis Group” which is funded by George Soros, along with Trita Parsi, currently working for the Quincy Institute, an anti-American group co-founded by Soros and a Koch brother, to broker it. America's Iran diplomacy had been handed over to Iran and George Soros.

The usual critics of billionaires running the country remained consciously silent about it.

Turning over Iran Deal negotiations to the Iranians and their accomplices like the Soros crew was supposed to speed up the appeasement process by which the Biden administration would turn over billions to the Iranian regime and lift sanctions, but it had miscalculated.

In the comedy of treasors, Malley's motley crew went so native that they were involved in internal infighting in the Iranian regime. Lee Smith suggested at The Tablet that Soros' Crisis Group had gotten too far into bed with Iran's former Foreign Minister Javad Zarif who was feuding with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi. Zarif had been pushing the Biden administration to

quickly revive the Iran Deal before Raisi took over, now he may be sabotaging it to avoid giving a political enemy a win. Iran's infighting is now the biggest obstacle to an Iran Deal.

The Tehran Times, which is run indirectly by Iran's Foreign Ministry, not only gloated over his downfall but emphasized that “Malley's extreme closeness to his unofficial advisers of Iranian origin, which was perhaps his greatest strength and the reason for his appointment to this position in the new American government, has now become his Achilles' heel and caused his downfall.” The message is that Malley, Parsi, Soros and the rest of the Iran Deal gang had taken sides in an internal Iranian power struggle and were no longer welcome in Iran.

This entire corrupt mess in which the United States outsourced its Iranian policy to the Iranians only for the different factions in the enemy government to fight for control of our foreign policy is a devastating indictment of Joe Biden and of his predecessor, Barack Obama, who appointed Malley to top positions and whose negotiating strategy was to give Iran everything it wanted, and of an entire network of Pro-Iran think tanks and lobbies like NIAC, the Quincy Institute and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund which funded NIAC (its latest NIAC grant was unironically awarded to the pro-Iran group for “Saving Iran Diplomacy”) and their media useful idiots.

The Biden administration and its media kept warning that the biggest obstacle to an Iran Deal was Israel when in reality its own diplomats had blown up negotiations with Iran by going native. The Tehran Times articles imply that Malley would not have been welcome in Iran even if he weren't already under investigation.

While we don't know the details of how Robert Malley allegedly mishandled classified documents, the Iranian regime suggests that it was by sharing them with his Iran Lobby allies in an attempt to influence Iran's negotiators. There's no way to know if this is true or not, but it would mean that U.S. classified information became a weapon in an internal Iranian dispute.

This is a step beyond ordinary treason and is a dire warning about the ‘Iranization’ of America's foreign policy toward Iran. The only real question is how high up it goes. Former Foreign Minister Zarif had made a point of meeting with John Kerry and other top former Obama officials to undermine the Trump administration. In the process, Zarif seems to have cultivated the personal loyalty of pro-Iran foreign policy figures which has now backfired on them.

The Iran Lobby was not only persuasive, as the Biden campaign shows, it was also very lucrative. The lobby had begun funding Biden's presidential ambitions as early as the 2004 campaign season after the senator from Delaware had aggressively courted its members.

After September 11, Biden proposed, “this would be a good time to send, no strings attached, a check for \$200 million to Iran.” At a 2003 Senate hearing, he suggested that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons because it felt “isolated”.

In 2007, Biden became one of only 22 senators to vote against designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization and warned that if President Bush took action to stop Iran, he would impeach him. A year later, he told Israelis that they would have to accept Iran's nuclear program and proposed reopening a US diplomatic presence in Tehran. He also suggested cutting off Radio Liberty broadcasts that provided a voice for Iranian dissidents.

Beyond the campaign cash, Iran became the second largest enemy state to intervene in the 2020 election when its hackers conducted a false flag operation in Florida pretending to be Republicans and tried to hack sites reporting election results. What was Iran getting in exchange for all of this? Biden offered billions in indirect sanctions relief and put the Iran Lobby in charge of restarting the Iran Deal that would let the terror state build up its nuclear program.

Only Iranian infighting saved America from Biden's sellout and sabotaged a renewed deal.

What happens to the Iran Lobby now? While Malley continues to be investigated for mishandling classified documents, the Crisis Group and elements of NIAC claim that they support the anti-regime protests though this may have less to do with any newfound love of freedom and is more likely an effort to undermine the current government and help Zarif. The Quincy Institute is focused on defending Russia, China and Islamic terrorists against America, even Malley's son, Blaise, and Trita Parsi want to talk about how mean America is to China.

Zarif has taken to attacking his own government on Clubhouse and

Instagram (apps conveniently outside Iran's control) for refusing to negotiate with America. According to Zarif, Trump had invited him to negotiate, but his government had refused to let him go.

Whether the various allegations and counter-allegations by the former foreign minister, the current foreign ministry and other players are actually true or not matters less than what the collapse of the Iran Lobby reveals about the foreign corruption of our foreign policy.

An easily bribed D.C. political class, politicians, think tanks, activists and the media, was enlisted in the Iran Lobby's cause. Media outlets were overtly bribed by Iran Lobby groups to prop up a deal that would have allowed Iran to go nuclear. Even after Obama had left office, the zombie alliance between an Iranian faction and a D.C. political class lingered on and rotted.

When Biden, the Iran Lobby's original asset finally took office, it used him not to restart the deal, but to sabotage its political opposition in Iran. Biden thought that he was giving Tehran what it wanted, when what he was really doing was giving his donors and bundlers what they wanted. The Biden administration was too fundamentally ignorant to even grasp the distinction or understand that it was turning over our foreign policy to an Iranian faction, not to Iran, and in the process it was also sabotaging the nuclear deal that it claimed to want to restart.

The Clintons sold out America more times than anyone can count, but at least they would have checked to see whom they were selling it to. Not even that much could be asked of Biden or of a post-Obama D.C. political class in which political clichés count as strategy and analysis.

Robert Malley's downfall is devastating to this political class not merely because he mishandled classified information, but because it also humiliates the Iran Lobby and its backers who claimed that they were practicing 'realpolitik' when they didn't even understand who they were backing.

The undoing of Malley and the Iran Lobby shows how ignorant, feckless and corrupt the army of experts, analysts and journalists recruited to push the Iran Deal were all along. The smart set who told us they knew what they were doing, that they were the rational ones, not driven by emotion, that they understood the region better, that they were untainted by foreign influence, and that they were our best hope for peace have been exposed as foreign puppets who blew up their own Iran Deal because they knew so little about Iran and even less about the Iran Lobby.

The Iran Lobby's enablers were traitors, but from Biden on down, they were also fools.

MEET 007: THE CELL WITH A LICENSE TO KILL CANCER

MATTHEW KALMAN (TimesofIsrael.com 28-7-23)

To protect itself against disease, the human body has immune cells that patrol like police officers, entering disease cells and destroying them. But some dangerous cells, including some solid tumors, operate in stealth and cannot be targeted by the body's regular immune system.

Edity Therapeutics, an Israeli startup founded in 2019, reprograms a patient's own immune cells, giving them the ability to hunt down and destroy these cancer cells. It's like transforming regular beat cops into lethal supersleuths.

After successful laboratory tests, Edity plans to start preclinical trials of an immune cell that the company is reprogramming to become a delivery vehicle. These cells will contain therapeutic payloads ready to find and destroy not just cancer cells – but a host of diseases currently without a cure.

If that leaves you neither shaken nor stirred, consider the codename of this avenging angel that could be the next breakthrough in targeted cell therapy: ED 007.

Edity will train ED 007 to identify solid tumors that are not usually recognized by the body's own immune system, allowing them to grow unhindered and metastasize. ED 007 will inflame these tumors, triggering the body's own immune system to kill the cancer. Because the retrained cells are taken from the patient's own body, the threat of rejection and autotoxicity is hopefully eliminated.

"Science allows us to treat any disease in a test tube but there are still many diseases with no cure," says Dr. Michal Golan-Mashiach, Edity's CEO and Founder. "Edity's technology will bring new treatment options to previously incurable diseases, offering new medicines to patients and their families."

The idea of programming a patient's own cells to fight cancer has been successful in patients with blood cancer. Edity is looking to take the next step: using those retrained immune cells, like ED 007, to target more difficult-to-treat solid tumors.

"The challenge is delivering this treatment effectively to the right places

inside our body. Current delivery methods face difficulties in reaching the diseased organ," Golan-Mashiach explains. "Immune cells have evolved over millions of years to seek and detect cells anywhere in our body. At Edity, we were inspired by nature and have engineered immune cells to deliver therapeutics."

Golan-Mashiach has experience tackling big problems.

"My journey started with diagnosing children and babies with terrible genetic diseases," says Golan-Mashiach, who is a graduate of the Weizmann Institute and a seasoned expert in gene editing and genetic screening. Before starting Edity, she founded Applied Genomics after four years at Emendo. With that experience, she is confident that Edity's technology can take the next step.

"Biology is the most advanced technology on Earth, and we aim to harness it to reach where no other therapy has gone before," she says.

Edity's process is simple, but powerful. Patients give a blood sample from which Edity extracts special white blood cells called T cells that are then engineered in the lab to carry the medicine needed for treatment. After a few days, the engineered cells are put back into the patient's body. The medicine is loaded into the immune cells, which then navigate directly to the patient's damaged cells, and begin to repair the diseased tissues.

"We seek to solve the delivery problem in a completely novel way," says Dr. Sharon Avkin Nachum, Edity's VP of Technology. "Our breakthrough was to use the immune system to transfer gene editing proteins and other proteins to cure the disease itself."

Investors in the company include NFX Bio, headed by Omri Amirav-Drory, and Tal Ventures. Edity has also received non diluted funding from the Israel Innovation Authority. Edity is now raising a funding round on the OurCrowd global investing platform.

Edity's trial of ED 007 comes at an exciting time for the field of cellular immune-oncology – a form of cancer treatment that uses the power of the body's own immune system to prevent, control, and eliminate cancer. This growing treatment technique has been highly effective in treating some types of cancer, but they have been ineffective in the majority of solid tumors.

Developing effective treatments for these types of cancers will be a major focus for the field in the coming years. The immuno-oncology market was estimated at \$60 billion in 2021 and is believed to be growing by 15-20% a year. Early-stage immunotherapy companies with proven technology have attracted considerable interest from potential strategic partners and acquirers. Five Prime Therapeutics was acquired by Amgen for \$1.9 billion in 2021, and Trillium Therapeutics was acquired by Pfizer for \$2.26 billion the same year.

Golan-Mashiach heads an expert team including Dr. Assaf Marcus, VP of Translational Science, who previously held positions at the Weizmann Institute, UC Berkeley and AbbVie, and Dr. Ofer Levy, who is VP of R&D, and has 16 years of industry experience in antibody drug discovery, including leading deals with Bayer Healthcare, and Dr. Sharon Avkin Nachum, who is VP technology with more than 15 years of experience in oligonucleotide design, synthesis, analytics, production and CMC, including leading deals with BMS.

With promising early lab tests, and an experienced team in place, Edity has already found strong interest during initial discussions with pharma companies. The company expects to achieve in vivo proof-of-concept within 9 months, followed by a Phase 1 clinical study in the following years.

"There is no other company that has our ability to selectively target and deliver medicines to diseased cells using the immune system," Golan-Mashiach says. "We are pioneering a new frontier in cellular medicines. We are using immune cells as a delivery vehicle, similar to taxi drivers".

Taxi drivers with a license to kill cancer.

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

JEWISH PERSPECTIVES ON MUSIC

RABBI CHAIM JACHTER (KolTorah.org)

The spring and summer are times when there is more time available for leisure activities, including music. Thus, it is appropriate to discuss at this time the propriety of listening to music according to Halacha. The ideas we will share concerning music apply to a great extent to all leisure activities.

BROAD PERSPECTIVES ON MUSIC

Before we explore the Halachic issues concerning it, we should review some basic ideas about music expressed in the Tanach and Gemara. The Bible and Talmud are replete with sources in which music and song play a major role. After the splitting of the Yam Suf, for example, Moshe Rabbeinu led the Jewish men in song, and Miriam likewise led the women. The singing of the Levites in the Beit Hamikdash was of major importance. Our daily prayers make prominent mention of this singing. The Gemara (Megillah 32a) strongly encourages us to sing the Torah we study. Two sources in particular demonstrate that the Torah considers music to be very important. The first source is the fourth chapter of Bereshit (Genesis). The Torah there (verses 20-22) describes some of humanity's first great accomplishments and advances. Included in these advances are the breeding of cattle, the use of iron and copper implements (see the translation of Onkelos), and the development of music. This shows that the Torah regards music as a core achievement of mankind.

The second source is a powerful Talmudic passage that appears on Chagigah 15b. The Gemara (see Rashi ad. loc.) asks how come the great Tanna, Rabi Elisha Ben Avuyah, lost his faith. Why did his great knowledge of Torah fail to protect and prevent him from abandoning the Torah? The Gemara answers that the reason is that "Greek music never ceased to emerge from his mouth." The lesson is obvious. Music has a profound effect on both the individual and the community. The (mostly negative) impact of The Beatles on society during the 1960's and 1970's is a contemporary example of this phenomenon. Music can draw us closer to G-d and His holy Torah or it has the potential, G-d forbid, to lead us astray. With this idea in mind, we are ready to explore some of the Halachic issues concerning music.

TALMUDIC SOURCES

In light of the above, it is not surprising to find that Chazal issued a number of restrictions regarding music. The Mishnah (Sotah 48a) records that when the Sanhedrin ceased to function in Jerusalem, the Rabbis forbade song in the wine houses. The Jerusalem Talmud (9:12) explains the reason for this decree: "At first, when the Sanhedrin was functioning, it was able to impose discipline and prevent the introduction of inappropriate content in song. When the Sanhedrin ceased to function, it could no longer impose discipline, and people would introduce corrupt lyrics into music."

The Gemara (Sotah 48a) continues this theme and declares that the song of the chip workers and the farmers was permitted, but the song of the weavers was forbidden. Rashi explains that the permitted songs were not frivolous; they helped the workers and animals perform their tasks. The weavers' songs were forbidden because they served no constructive purpose; it was an entirely frivolous activity.

The Gemara on Gittin 7a presents a seemingly more drastic prohibition. The Gemara records that Chazal simply forbade listening to all music subsequent to the destruction of the Temple.

RISHONIM – RASHI AND TOSAFOT

The Rishonim debate to what extent the rabbis prohibit the enjoyment of music in the post-Churban era. Rashi (commenting on Gittin 7a) indicates that the prohibition is limited to singing in a tavern. Tosafot (ibid) support Rashi's contention by citing the aforementioned Mishnah in Sotah. Tosafot argue that this source leads us to conclude that the prohibition applies only to playing music in a drinking house. Tosafot also add two important points. First, they state that it is inappropriate to listen to music excessively. Tosafot cite as proof an anecdote that appears in the Jerusalem Talmud (Megillah 3:2), in which Mar Ukba (a Talmudic authority) chastised the Exilarch (Reish Galuta) for listening to music when going to sleep and waking up – i.e., excessively.

Second, they state that music that is played in the context of a mitzvah, such as at a wedding celebration, is entirely permissible. The Rambam (Hilchot Taanot 5:14) similarly writes that it is permissible to play music of a religious nature. The origin of this exception dates back at least to the Geonic era, as Rav Hai Gaon espouses this approach. This exception is codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 560:3) virtually uncontested.

THE RAMBAM'S VIEW

Although Rashi and Tosafot rule fairly leniently on this issue and permit music to be listened to on a moderate basis outside of taverns, the Rambam adopts a much stricter approach. He writes (Hilchot Taanot 5:14) that instrumental music is entirely forbidden (except in the context of religious music), and vocal music without instrumental accompaniment is permitted only if the singing takes place in a context in which wine is not being

consumed. The Tur (Orach Chaim 560) cites a responsum of the Rambam in which he adopts an even stricter stand – even vocal music unaccompanied by instruments and not sung in the content of drinking wine is prohibited.

The dispute between Rambam and Rashi/Tosafot continues to be debated in the Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries, nineteenth century codes, and contemporary authorities.

SHULCHAN ARUCH AND ITS COMMENTARIES

Rav Yosef Karo (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 560:3) rules in accordance with the Rambam's view, but the Rema cites the opinion of Rashi and Tosafot. The Magen Avraham (560:9) cites the Bach, who rules even more strictly than the Mechaber does. Whereas Rav Yosef Karo rules in accordance with the Rambam's view presented in the Mishneh Torah, the Magen Avraham and Bach believe that the Rambam's view presented in his responsum is normative. They rule that music is always forbidden unless it is of religious content and nature.

NINETEENTH CENTURY CODES

This issue continues to remain a matter of controversy between the great nineteenth century authorities. While the Chayei Adam (137:3) and Mishnah Berurah (560:13) cite the ruling of the Magen Avraham and Bach as normative, the Aruch Hashulchan (560:17) seems to adopt a more lenient approach. He does not cite the opinion of the Magen Avraham and the Bach, but he does cite the opinion of the Rema. Whereas the Magen Avraham and Bach are critical of women who sang while doing their work, the Aruch Hashulchan does not criticize them. The Aruch Hashulchan appears to regard the lenient approach of Rashi and Tosafot as acceptable.

CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITIES

This dispute continues to be debated by contemporary authorities. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe 1:160) adopts a fairly strict ruling in this matter. Although he writes that it is not required to follow the most stringent opinion of the Bach and the Magen Avraham, he regards the strict opinion of Rav Yosef Karo to be normative. On the other hand, Rav Eliezer Waldenburg (Tzitz Eliezer 15:62) endorses the common practice to follow the ruling of the Rema (the view of Rashi and Tosafot) that music in moderation is permitted outside a tavern. Rav Yehudah Amital (Rosh Yeshivat Har Etzion) told me that he agrees with this approach. In addition, Rav Moshe (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 3:87) writes that one should not object to one who follows the ruling of the Rama regarding music.

An interesting argument appears in Rav Yaakov Breisch's responsum on this issue (Teshuvot Chelkat Yaakov 1:62). He suggests that this decree applies only to live music and not to recorded music. This ruling has been applied in practice by some individuals to the periods of time in which it is our custom to refrain from listening to music, such as the Sefirah period, the Three Weeks, and twelve-month mourning period for a parent. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein (in his aforementioned responsum and Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:137:2) clearly indicates that he does not subscribe to this approach. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechave Da'at 6:34) explicitly states that he does not permit listening to music. Rav Shmuel David (a contemporary Israeli Halachic authority) writes in Techumin (13:187) that it is very possible that classical music is not included in the rabbinic decree against listening to music subsequent to the destruction of the Temple. He bases this suggestion on the Maharshal (Yam Shel Shlomo 1:17) who writes that listening to music "to hear pleasant sounds or hear something fresh" is permitted. It is similarly reported in the name of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik that music of the sublime (classical music) was not included in the Rabbinic decree. The decree, in the Rav's opinion, applies only to music of revelry.

CONCLUSION

What should emerge from this review of Jewish perspectives on music is that we must take care that the music we listen to is in harmony with our Torah lifestyle and goals. Music with lyrics such as "she don't lie, she don't lie, cocaine" is very obviously incompatible with a Torah Hashkafa and lifestyle. The same can be said regarding all leisure activities. Care must be taken to ensure that one's leisure activities enhance one's relationship with G-d and Torah and do not, G-d forbid, detract from it.

Eikev (Melb) 4/8/23, 18 Av 5783: 5:17pm/6:17pm