פס"ד

לכבוד יעקב

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Matos massei 5786

Are You a Kosher Duck?

RABBI ELIEZER SHEMTOV (Chabad.org)

One source of anxiety and anguish is uncertainty about where one should be. Should I stay where I am, or try to move forward? Should I be content with my situation, or never be satisfied? Which is better — ambition or acceptance?

Is what I have enough? Is what I do enough? Can I rest without guilt?

An interesting answer is embedded in the very names of this week's combined Torah portions, Matot and Masei. Matot, means "tribes"; Masei, means "journeys." Matot opens with Moshe addressing the heads of the tribes, and Masei begins with a recounting of the 42 journeys the Jewish people made during their 40 years in the desert on the way to the Promised Land.

Leaving the actual content aside, the contrast between the two names is itself striking and instructive.

The Torah uses two words for "tribe": mateh (plural: matot) and shevet (plural: shevatim). Both also mean "branch." The difference: a shevet is a branch still connected to the tree, or freshly cut and still flexible. A mateh is a branch that has been detached, dried out, and hardened.

Isn't it strange, then, to pair a name suggesting rigidity and rootedness (Matot) with one that suggests constant movement (Masei)?

Herein lies the key to answering the question we posed at the outset. There is no contradiction between stability and movement. In fact, each depends on the other. Stability should not be confused with stagnation, and growth has nothing to do with instability. On the contrary: genuine growth is possible only when grounded in stability. Constant movement without roots produces neither stability nor real growth.

This apparent conflict arises often when people feel they must choose between their ancient traditions and the changing values of the modern world. Many frame it as a choice between stagnation and progress: "Do I hold on to the traditions of the past, or move with the current of the present?"

But is that really the choice? Must we disconnect from our roots to enter the future?

The dual name of this week's parshah suggests another perspective: the two are not opposites but complements, even mutually dependent. Real progress is possible only from a strong foundation. Without roots, there is no genuine progress, only floating. You may have the sensation of movement, but you are being carried by the current, not generating movement yourself.

A halachic example comes to mind.1 For meat to be kosher, the animal must come from an acceptable species and must be healthy. One criterion for health: if an animal has fallen from a height, we check whether it might be fatally injured. For a four-legged animal or a chicken, the check is whether it can walk a certain distance without difficulty. For a duck, there is an additional option: it is placed in a river. If it swims against the current, it is healthy and kosher. But it is also kosher if it swims with the current — provided it moves faster than a stick placed alongside it. This shows it is not merely being carried by external force, but is generating its own movement. The true sign of progress is when you can move forward under your own power. Movement driven by external currents is more a symptom of personal stagnation.

THE ROOT OF ANTISEMITISM

RABBI NOAH WEINBERG (Aish.com)

"G-d spoke to Moshe, saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered unto your people.' Moshe spoke to the people saying, 'Arm men from among yourselves for the legion that they may be against Midian to inflict the vengeance of G-d against Midian.'" (Bamidbar 31:1-3)

After 24,000 Jews died in the plague that resulted from the Midianites' ensnaring the Jewish people in the sins of immorality and idolatry, it was time for retribution. G-d refers to it as "nikmas Bnei Yisrael", vengeance for the Jewish people. Yet Moshe changes the language and summons the people to take "nikmas Hashem", revenge for the Almighty against Midian.

Rashi, noting the discrepancy, explains that if someone attacks the Jewish people it is as if he is attacking the Almighty Himself. The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 22:2) elaborates:

Moshe said, "Master of the universe, if we were just like any other nation they would not hate us and they would not come after us. It is only on account of the Torah and mitzvot that You gave us that they come to destroy us. Therefore, the vengeance is for You." Accordingly, Moshe instructed the Jewish people "to inflict the vengeance of Hashem against Midian."

Moshe is saying that if we were Amish or Shiites, no one would care what we do, and they would not harm or kill us. The only reason they seek to destroy us is because Hashem gave us the Torah and mitzvot. The nations of the world hate and attack the Jewish people because deep down, they wish to attack the Creator of the universe, who gave His Torah and mitzvot to the Jewish people. In doing so, He attached Himself to them: Yisrael v'Oraysa v'Kudesha Brich Hu, chad hu – the Jewish people, the Torah, and the Holy One, Blessed is He, are one (Zohar, Parashas Acharei Mos 73a).

Torah is the expression of G-d's will. When you learn Torah you are connecting to Hashem, and when you perform mitzvot, you are drawing closer to G-d, because you are becoming like Him. Torah and G-d are inextricably linked.

The Jewish people are the manifestation of G-d's will in this world. We have a bris, a covenant, with the Almighty that began with Avraham Avinu and transformed the Jews into G-d's chosen people. We are the nation responsible to reveal His reality to the world, to be a light unto the nations and teach the world how to live with G-d. That covenant bonds us to G-d, making us one.

Hating Jews, Hating G-d

Why do they hate the Jews? Theories abound to explain antisemitism. But the Talmud (Shabbos 89b) gives the true explanation: The moment G-d gave the Torah at Mount Sinai, the hatred of the non-Jews toward the Jewish people was ignited. At Sinai (which is related to sinah, hatred) the Jewish people became the bearers of G-d's absolute standard of morality for all of humanity. Consequently, if someone wants to liberate himself from the all-encompassing moral demands and obligations delineated by the Torah, they attack the messenger – the Jews – who represent this Divine standard of morality in this world. The physical target may be the Jews, but the real enemy is G-d.

Our archenemy, Adolf Hitler, may his name be obliterated, openly acknowledged the uniqueness of the Jews as a people. We were his mortal enemy because we represented Hashem's morality as embodied in the Torah. Hitler viewed National Socialism as a new world order, a way to create mankind anew.

Hitler said, "They refer to me as an uneducated barbarian. Yes, we are barbarians. We want to be barbarians; it is an honored title to us. We shall rejuvenate the world. This world is near its end." (Hermann Rauschning, Hitler Speaks p. 87)

He recognized that the Jewish people – who introduced to the world the concepts of monotheism, love your neighbor, help the poor and the infirm – were his primary obstacle in achieving his world vision. Hitler declared: "The struggle for world domination will be fought entirely between us —

This document contains words of Torah and should be treated with respect. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 85:2

between Germans and Jews. All else is facade and illusion. Behind England stands Israel, and behind France, and behind the United States. Even when we have driven the Jew out of Germany, he remains our world enemy." (Ibid, p. 242)

He told his people: "Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing man from the restraints of an intelligence that has taken charge, from the dirty and degrading self-mortifications of a false vision known as conscience and morality, and from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a very few can bear." (Ibid, p. 222)

And Hitler understood full well the source of this conscience and morality. He said: "The Ten Commandments have lost their validity. Conscience is a Jewish invention; it is a blemish, like circumcision." (Ibid, p. 220)

Who was Hitler's real enemy? Was it the Jewish people who placed shackles on humanity? No, it was the Almighty Himself. G-d obligates us to care for each other, not to murder, not to be immoral. The moral conscience that we have "inflicted" on humanity is from G-d. Hitler was obsessed with eradicating the Jews because he hated the G-d that we, as His people, represented in this world.

Self-Hating Jews

It is not only non-Jews who can harbor antisemitic sentiments; Jews can, too, and for same underlying reason: They resent the Almighty. This is not the only reason for internecine hatred, but it is definitely a common one.

Rabbi Michel Twerski relates that he was once on a plane, dressed in his Chassidic cloak and round black hat, as usual. A Jewish woman sitting near him turned to him and said, "You are an embarrassment to the Jewish people, a disgrace. It is people like you who think they are still living in the Middle Ages that cause all of the anger and anti-Semitism toward us."

Rabbi Twerski was astounded to be attacked this way, and by a Jewish woman no less, but he did not miss a beat. In his customary calm demeanor, he said to her, "Pardon me, ma'am, but I'm Amish."

"Oh! I'm terribly sorry!" she said. "I hope I didn't hurt your feelings. Of course I respect people who respect their heritage. Please forgive me!"

If he is Amish, then his traditional garb and customs are perfectly okay. But if he is a Jew respecting his tradition and observing the commandments, that is unacceptable, because people intuitively understand that he represents the Master of the universe, Who has given us the Torah and mitzvot. This non-observant woman viewed the Torah's commandments as a burden, a threat to her sense of freedom; Rabbi Twerski's presence therefore made her defensive and antagonistic.

The opposite is also true. Someone who appreciates the Jewish people and the Torah they represent is someone who loves G-d. And someone who loves G-d and His Torah will go out of the way to love his fellow Jew. Indeed, the Jewish people, the Torah, and G-d are one.

They Paved Paradise and Put Up a Parking Lot

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Hashem instructs Moshe to wage war against Midian in punishment for their attack on the Jewish people. At the same time, Moshe is told that after the war he will pass the leadership to Yehoshua and leave this world.

Despite knowing that this mission would usher in the end of his life, Moshe immediately organizes an army to confront the Midianites.

The Torah states:

"From the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe were handed over for the army, twelve thousand armed for battle." (Bamidbar 31:5)

Why does the Torah emphasize that the soldiers were "handed over"?

Rashi, citing the Midrash, explains:

"This teaches how beloved the shepherds of Israel were to them. Previously, when Moshe feared for his life, he said, 'They are almost ready to stone me' (Shemos 17:4). Yet when the people learned that Moshe's death was linked to the campaign against Midian, they were reluctant to go. They had to be 'handed over' against their will."

The Jewish people understood that once the war was completed, Moshe's mission in this world would come to an end. Out of their deep love and appreciation for their leader, they did not want to participate in an event that would hasten his passing.

This highlights a profound truth about human nature: we often do not fully appreciate what we have until we are faced with losing it.

As we grow older, we wish our parents were still with us to offer guidance and wisdom when life becomes challenging. We long for the opportunity to relive precious moments with our children when they were young, or to revisit the excitement and innocence of our own youth. We cherish memories of the day we found our life partner and wish we could recapture those feelings once more.

Too often, we only recognize the true value of people, opportunities, and blessings after they are no longer available.

The Jewish people were given the rare privilege of advance notice that Moshe would not accompany them into the Land of Israel. For a brief time, they were able to fully appreciate the greatness of their leader while he was still with them.

We are not granted the ability to see the future. Therefore, the lesson of this episode is clear: we should strive to appreciate the blessings in our lives today—our family, friends, mentors, and opportunities—while we still have them. Gratitude should not be reserved for memories; it should be a daily practice, allowing us to recognize and cherish the gifts Hashem has already placed in our lives.

Promises

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.org)

Promises, promises. We are used to hearing them being broken, especially when they are made by our political leaders. Parshat Mattot begins by detailing the laws of nedarim and shevuot, vows, oaths, and the obligations to keep one's word. Interestingly enough, unlike most of the laws of the Torah which are addressed to B'nei Yisrael, these laws of speech are addressed to roshei hamattot, the "tribal heads" of the Jewish people. Moshe realized that it is leaders who must be especially careful about making promises, promises they are prone to break.

The importance of not only what is said, but how it is said, is demonstrated in the dialogue between Moshe and the people of the tribe of Reuven and Gad. Leaders of the two tribes approached Moshe requesting that they be allowed to stay with their possessions and not be forced to settle in the land of Israel. Moshe retorts, "Why should your brothers go out and fight while you stay here?" Eventually, a compromise was worked out whereby they were allowed to remain in the Diaspora, with the proviso that they would join the "Israeli army" and fight alongside their brethren until the land of Israel was conquered.

The commentaries have pointed out that the initial request of the tribes of Reuven and Gad contain the word mikne, cattle, a total of four times; and not insignificantly, the first and last words of their request is the word mikne. While references to cattle and other monetary possessions abound, one word that is conspicuously missing is that of Hashem, G-d. Of course, secularism and materialism are not unrelated. People whose main concern is money surely have no time to think about G-d and the demands He makes regarding the proper way to allocate one's monetary resources.

Perhaps even sadder is the fact that, even while acknowledging that they must bear their fair share of the military burden, the tribes of Reuven and Gad stated the following: "We will build enclosures for our sheep here, and cities for our children." Sheep before children. It is so unfortunate that many have not learned this basic lesson and are all-too-willing to sacrifice the quality of their family life just to have a few more possessions. While the tribes of Reuven and Gad did agree to shoulder their fair share, it was a just a means to an end. Their ultimate goal was to live a life of luxury. Responsibility, commitment, spirituality, and empathy were foreign concepts to them. Moshe, of course, tried to convey the proper priorities a Jew (and every human) should have by reversing the order to "build ...for your children and folds for your sheep." He also inserted the name of G-d no less than nine times, emphasizing that our focus must be on spirituality rather than materialism.

Despite forty years of devoted leadership, there were still many who did not share the basic premise that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in order to create a society based upon the principles of the Torah in the Land of Israel. Perhaps earlier in his "career", Moshe would have reacted angrily to this demoralizing request instead of negotiating a compromise plan. The enthusiasm of youth leads one to believe that one can change the behavior and attitude of all. As one "matures", even the greatest of leaders recognizes that no matter his efforts, many will not be receptive to the messages. It is this realization that allows leaders to continue to try to reach those who want to listen and learn without being discouraged by their "failures". Once Moshe realized this, he was ready to impart his final message to the Jewish people, a message that forms the bulk of Sefer Devarim.

Let us join forces with those who yearn for guidance from great leaders, following the dictum of Yossi ben Yoezer in Pirkei Avot that "we should drink thirstily from their words".

The Expanding Land of Israel

RABBI AVROHOM ALTEIN (Chabad.org)

The Torah relates how the Jews were attacked by the nations that lived on the east bank of the Jordan River. The Jews fought back, and after winning the war, they were left with a vast tract of land outside the originally-intended borders of Israel.

This land was good grazing land. Two of the twelve tribes, Reuven and Gad, owned a large number of sheep. They decided to settle on the east bank of the Jordan rather than continue on to Israel's mainland with the other Jews. Moshe was angry. He argued that the other Jews would infer that the real reason that Reuven and Gad would not continue onto Israel was because they were frightened of being killed by the powerful Canaanites. That fear would spread, and soon all the Jews would panic and refuse to settle in Israel.

In order to alleviate that concern, Reuven and Gad promised to join the other Jews on their journey into Israel, and, in fact, to lead the Jewish army in conquering the land. Only after the other Jews were securely settled

would Reuven and Gad return to their land on the east bank. Moshe accepted their pledge, and he gave the land east of the Jordan to Reuven and Gad. He also awarded a part of that land to a portion of the tribe of Menasseh—even though they had never asked for it!

This is a peculiar thing. If Moshe was upset with Reuven and Gad because he considered it wrong for Jews to settle outside of Israel proper, why would he then thrust the land on the family of Menasseh?

But in truth, Moshe was not upset at Reuven and Gad for choosing to settle on the east bank; he was only concerned that the other Jews would interpret their decision as a lack of courage and that fright might spread. Once that issue was resolved, Moshe was no longer concerned.

In fact, there was actually a very noble and idealistic reason to settle the east bank. The Torah tells us that the Land of Israel was meant to expand with time to include the surrounding lands. Eventually, Israel expanded all the way up to the Euphrates. And in the era of the Messiah, the holiness of the Land of Israel will encompass the entire earth!

When our Sages say that the borders of Israel will expand, the intention is not for material gain. Rather, the purpose is that the spiritual values that Israel embodies will eventually inspire people around the world.

Israel was intended to be a country where Jews can take the noble ideas about life contained in the Torah and translate them into real life.

It is a tough challenge to introduce the world to the value system of Judaism, because our goals are so divergent. The world's motto is "Time is money"; a Jew lives by the motto "Time is (an opportunity to do) mitzvot."

Reuven and Gad made a first stride in spreading the holiness of Israel to the outside by converting the east bank of the Jordan River into part of the Holy Land. It is up to us to continue that job. If we will be model human beings and good Jews, we too will spread "the mindset of Israel" and be an inspiration to the entire world.

Piloted by the Past

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel who left the land of Egypt in their legions, under the charge of Moshe and Aaron. Moshe recorded their goings out for their journeys according to the word of HASHEM, and these were their journeys for their goings out. (Bamidbar 33:1-2)

It would seem that there are two types of journeys being spoken about here. One is "their goings out for their journeys" and the other is "their journeys for their goings out". The first one is "under the charge of Moshe and Aaron and according to the word of HASHEM. What then is the second one referring to?

There are two particular trees that are spoken about in the Garden of Eden, one is the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What is the difference between these two trees and the practical application to us? The Tree of Life is in reference to the Torah. It maps out for us a way of living, how to happily navigate through this life and reach the bliss of Olam Haba. The Talmud refers to this approach as "the long way which is the short way". There is a requirement of labor and study and dutiful obedience but in the long run, it is a fruitful path. When assembling anything, it always helps to have instructions. The more complex the item the bigger the user's manual. A bicycle is a page or two and a car is already a thicker book. How about the Book of Life?! How full and rich and sophisticated must that be!?

Shlomo HaMelech writes in Mishlei (3:5-6), "Trust in HASHEM with all your heart and do not rely upon your understanding. Know Him in all your ways, and He will make your paths straight." What are his instructions for life listed here? Don't rely on your own assessments but rather to trust in HASHEM wholeheartedly. Do the right thing at each moment. and then you will have created, with HASHEM, a beautiful picture. Life is like a paint by number painting. "Plan A" produces results that are well beyond our wildest and limited imaginations. This is the objective way to engage the subjectivity of life.

The second tree is the School of Hard Knocks. It is driven by experimentation and chock full of trials and errors. It's a whole other way of learning. The tuition for this school is temptingly low. In fact, it is zero. It costs nothing up front, however, in the end it is very expensive. This is the subjective way to arrive at objectivity and it may cost us years and decades of life, valuable relationships, health, and more, to discover what could have been learned much earlier. This is "the short way which is the long way".

Sometimes a kid will be sent to my office. He will enter very upset. I will ask him to wait and then, when he is more at ease, I will ask him what happened. I am usually met with a barrage of claims about how everyone is to blame and it's not his fault at all. I then calm him down by telling him, "You are not in trouble!" His facial expression immediately relaxes and normalizes. I will explain, "I honestly don't know what happened. Not only are you not in trouble, but today could be a great day, if we learned from what just happened. This may be the reason you came to school today or this year. However, if you fail to learn something, then you are in trouble but not with me. You are in trouble with your-self. This problem will likely repeat itself again and again throughout your life until you figure out what you need to learn. It is probably better for you to learn it here and now and with me helping you rather than after a lifetime of denial. Now let's figure this out together. Slowly, now, what happened?"

It is said that the most successful person is not the one who makes the fewest mistakes but rather the one who learns the most from his mistakes. I once took my whole family on a boat trip. I was the captain of that excursion, and I required "a crash course". (not a very inspiring term) I learned that a boat steers unlike a car. The rudder is moved in the back and the boat moves in the opposite direction. A car steers from in front and goes where the wheels point. Sometimes we look into the future and often we are piloted by the past.

A Map Of The Soul

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel who went out of the land of Egypt..." (33:1)

The Torah is not a history book. It is a guide to the inner structure of physical reality — and of the soul.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the 42 journeys in the Torah portion of Masei are not only the historical journeys of the Jewish People in the wilderness, but also a spiritual map of each individual's life. From birth — symbolized by Egypt — to the final journey into the World to Come, each of us goes through our own 42 stations. Sometimes we're climbing; sometimes we're stuck. Sometimes it feels like we are going backwards. But every stop is part of the plan.

The Torah uses the phrase "These are the journeys" — not "these are the encampments" to emphasize that essence of life is movement, not the resting. We are not defined by where we paused, but by how we moved forward afterward.

Life is a journey, and growth only happens in motion.

These journeys were dictated "by the word of Hashem." The Divine Presence guides each of our steps — even the detours, even the failures. Every stage has its purpose. There is no such thing as being "off the path," provided that we allow the journey to bring us closer to Hashem.

Perhaps that's why the Torah lists even the seemingly "negative" places — the complaints, the rebellions. Because in truth, those low points are also milestones of growth. Teshuva, return, is always available — and often our deepest spiritual development comes precisely in those difficult encampments.

The Torah portion of Masei reminds us: We are each on a journey — unique, winding, and often mysterious. But with emunah, with faith, we can trust that every step — from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael —is a part of a Divine choreography leading us from our beginnings toward our ultimate destination.

The Accidental Murderer

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

He told the police it was an accident. He had never intended to kill or hurt anyone; it was the farthest thing for his mind. All he wanted was some wood for his fireplace because it was so cold outside. He had taken his axe and gone out to chop wood. Little did he know that the blade was a little loose. Little did he know that the blade would fly off when he lifted the axe high over his head and brought it down with all his might. Little did he know that the blade would whiz through the air like an arrow and lodge in the heart of an innocent passerby. It was such a shock, and he was so sorry. But what was he to do? It was just an unfortunate accident.

So what does the Torah tell us about such a man? How are the courts to deal with him? Should we just shake their heads sadly and move on? Or should he have to suffer consequences?

The Torah tells us that such an accidental "murderer" is to be banished for life to one of the six Cities of Refuge, specifically designated safe havens that protect him from reprisals by his victim's relatives. Only if the Kohein Gadol, the High Priest, should pass away during the period of his confinement may he go free.

How are we to understand this law? After all, what did this hapless fellow do already? He had not intended to kill anyone. He had not even known that anyone was in the vicinity. He had just swung the axe with perfectly innocent intentions, and the blade had flown off and killed someone. Should his whole life be ruined for such a small thing? Does he deserve to be banished for the rest of his days?

Furthermore, why should his banishment depend on the survival of the High Priest? Why should he be put in a position that almost forces him to pray for the death of the blameless High Priest?

The commentators explain that the human mind is extremely intricate and complex. People often do or say things for reasons they themselves cannot even fathom. Deep in their subconscious, they may harbor long forgotten resentments or insensitivities that still trigger negative actions and behaviors.

The Torah expects us to root out these hidden malignant tendencies. The Torah expects us to probe, purify and cleanse our souls. If a person can wield a defective lethal weapon in the open, there is something wrong with him. Somewhere deep inside, he has a callous disregard the safety of

human life and limb. For if he really cared, he would have lifted that axe as if it were a flaming torch. He would have inspected it carefully and looked around to make sure the coast was clear before swinging it.

That is why the Torah describes him as a "murderer." In a sense, he really is a murderer. That is also why the Torah makes his confinement dependent on the survival of the High Priest. When this "murderer" finds himself praying for the death of the High Priest, the epitome of innocence, he will finally come face to face with his dark side. He will realize that he really does have homicidal tendencies. Only then can the process of self-appraisal, introspection and rehabilitation begin.

A student came into his dormitory late at night. He closed the door behind him, and the door slammed shut with a loud bang. The student turned around, and there stood the headmaster glaring at him with disapproval.

"How can you slam doors in the dormitory so late at night?" he asked. "Doesn't it mean anything to you that people are fast asleep? Don't you care about other people?"

"Of course I do, sir. I certainly didn't want to slam the door and make noise. I just closed the door, and it slammed shut. It wasn't my fault."

"Tell me, my young friend," said the headmaster, "if your ailing father had been sleeping in one of this rooms, do you think the door would have slammed shut?"

The student fidgeted. "I don't think so," he admitted.

"I don't think so either," said the headmaster. "When you really care, the door closes gently."

In our own lives, we are driven by so many complex and varied motives. The lesson of the accidental murderer teaches us to probe and examine even our seemingly altruistic actions and seek the hidden motives. If we discover that the motives are indeed pure, we can be sure that the actions are worthwhile.

Kohein-in-Waiting

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

There is a fascinating law in this week's portion. The Torah tells us that one who kills accidentally must be banished to a city of refuge. The Torah refers to an accident that is tinged with a bit of negligence, not a total mishap or a death tainted with intent. The cities of refuge were the home of the Levites, whose life's mission was service to others. Thus a lesson in care and concern during the murderer's stay would elevate of his soul.

The Torah tells us very unique terms of release. The killer was to stay in the city of refuge until the Kohein Gadol (High Priest) died. Of course, the scene among his Levite neighbors, who were the protégés of the Kohein Gadol mourning the loss of their beloved leader, would put the murderer's joy of freedom in perspective. It would be almost impossible to be exuberant with his own release amongst the thousands of residents mourning their leader – and that would be another lesson, before his new life in society.

But the Torah identifies the Kohein Gadol, whose death results in the killer's release, in a strange way. "He (the killer) shall remain (in the city of refuge) until the passing of the Kohein Gadol who he anointed"(Numbers 35:25). The Talmud in Makos is baffled by the words who he anointed. It somewhat implies that the killer had to do with the Kohein's anointing – and that just cannot be. After all wasn't the Kohein anointed way before the accident occurred?

The Talmud answers. True. This verse implies that if, after the time of the accident but before its judicial resolution, a new Kohein Gadol is anointed, then the killer only is released after the new Kohein's death. The Talmud asks why? This new Kohein Gadol was not around during the accident? True he was appointed before the verdict, but he was appointed after the death occurred. Why is he somehow involved the verdict of the accused? Why is his death the redeeming factor for the accused? Why is he punished? The Talmud answers that if there was a trial during the new Kohein's tenure, he should have prayed for the welfare of the accused. He should have interceded and prayed in order to mitigate a verdict of exile. Therefore, if the verdict came in his tenure, the man is released with his death.

It is quite difficult to understand. How is an incoming Kohein Gadol, during the most exciting and prestigious period of his career expected to worry about the verdict of a man, he has never heard of, who is accused of manslaughter.

Rabbi Chaim Kanievski, of B'nei Berak, Israel, the son of the Steipler Gaon of blessed memory, is known for his amazing breadth of Torah Knowledge which is only paralleled by his great diligence in Torah study. With the passing of his father more than a decade ago, people from all walks of life line up in front of his home seeking answers to complex Torah and personal questions.

But his greatness and wisdom were known to hundreds in the yeshiva world for many years.

Many years ago, as a student in the Ponovez Yeshiva, I heard an amazing story. A young man came to Reb Chaim with a long list of questions. Reb Chaim seemed a bit preoccupied but the visitor insisted in asking the questions, to which Reb Chaim responded, one by one.

Suddenly Reb Chaim began tidying himself up and put on a recently pressed kapote and new hat, and asked the young man's indulgence. He had to go somewhere but he allowed the visitor to accompany him. The younger man did, peppering him with questions the entire way.

They walked a few blocks until they reached a wedding hall. Upon entering, Reb Chaim embraced the groom with a warm hug and kiss and apologized for the delay. Reb Chaim sat himself among the prestigious Rabbonim who graced the dais as they prepared the marriage documents. The persistent questioner was almost oblivious to the scene and continued to ask as more questions and eliciting responses. Reb Chaim tried to juggle the needs of the groom while trying to accommodate the visitor who had besieged him with problems.

But the persistent questioner received the shock of his life when, as the music began, heralding the march to the badekin, where the groom, flanked by his father and father-in-law, met the bride and covered her face with the veil. The groom rose from his seat and immediately his future father-in-law took hold of his arm. The groom's father took hold of the other arm. But before he did so, the groom's father turned around and apologized to the stranger who he had been talking to for the last hour or so. He said that would be unable to help him until after the ceremony. And then Rabbi Kanievski nodded Mazel Tov to the hundreds of well-wishers and began the procession to his own son's wedding!

The Torah tells us that the Kohein Gadol-elect, waiting to be anointed to the most spiritual position in Judaism has a responsibility to worry about the welfare of the common man – even those accused of manslaughter. He should worry about his welfare and the verdict on his life. There is no greater inauguration to the responsibilities of priesthood than the concern for every single one of us.

News & Views

UN's Human Rights 'Experts': Biased, Bought and Paid For

ROBERT WILLIAMS (GateStoneINstitute.org 3-7-26)

A recent report by UN Watch, "How Politicized UN Rapporteurs are Subverting Human Rights," found that 13 of the "special rapporteurs" of the United Nations Human Rights Council, supposedly the UN's top human rights experts, "have abandoned the role of independent monitors and are advancing politicized agendas that erode the credibility of the international human rights system."

This report matters; the UN's special rapporteurs wield substantial influence. According to the report:

"While their findings are not legally binding, they can significantly shape public debate, influence UN discussions, and inform how governments, media, and civil society interpret a wide range of policy issues and alleged human rights violations. Their reports are widely treated as credible and authoritative by institutions such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, as well as by governments, media outlets, universities, and civil society actors worldwide."

As of 2021, 140 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights referred to reports by UN special rapporteurs. The number is staggering. The report continues:

"[Special Rapporteurs] are treated by leading institutions as neutral experts and are regularly invited to address prestigious international forums and academic institutions. Significantly, the UN affiliation enables them to leverage that authority across social media and international media appearances, where their statements are presented as reflecting the voice or expertise of the United Nations."

"Neutral"?! This inversion of reality is a huge problem. What so many of these UN rapporteurs do could not be more sordid: Almost all of them harbor what UN Watch calls "systemic anti-Western ideological bias," many of them explicitly refrain from criticizing the world's most authoritarian states, and they are obsessed with demonizing Israel. Many of them have been bought by the world's most authoritarian states.

Special rapporteurs Ben Saul and Alena Douhan, for instance, have both received generous funding from Communist China.

According to UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer:

"[N]umerous of the so-called UN human rights experts who get quoted every day by Reuters, the New York Times and other major media... are taking money direct funding from China, Russia and Qatar. I'll give a few examples. Ben Saul, he's a law professor at the University of Sydney. According to UN documents in 2024 he received $150,000 from China for his activities. And surprise, surprise, he's the expert on counterterrorism. He's never said a word to condemn China for putting a million Uyghur Muslims into camps in the name of counterterrorism. He hadn't... a word to say about that. Instead, he attacks Israel and America every single day.

"There's another UN expert, her name is Alena Douhan. She received $1.3 million from China, Russia and Qatar. And guess what? She wrote reports praising shielding, apologizing for China, Russia and Qatar. She went on a Chinese-organized video saying everything is fine with the Uyghurs. She visited China to say everything is fine with the Uyghurs, blame the West. And she took $1.3 million.... Extreme ideological bias in some cases financial corruption in other cases it's an ideological extremism with no

accountability."
Francesca Albanese, "Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories," is one of the most extreme examples of how rotten the UN human rights system has become. According to Neuer:
"We know the extreme case of Francesca Albanese who's the de facto spokesperson for Hamas, spreads Hamas lies. There's no accountability. We made complaints. The chair of the UN Committee is himself a human rights expert who himself took $50,000 from China."
Reem Alsalem, a Jordanian woman who is "Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls," is also among the most problematic human rights "experts" of the UN. Nearly three years after October 7, she continues to deny that Israeli women were sexually assaulted and raped by Hamas and other Gazan terrorists during their invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023. Not only that, but in a March 2024 interview, Alsalem even claimed with a straight face that she had not heard about missiles being fired on Israeli cities by Hamas from the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah from Lebanon.
"No Palestinian applauded rape in Gaza. No independent investigation found that rape took place on the 7th of October," Alsalem lied in November 2025 -- even though UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten released a 23-page report in March 2024, which concluded that there was "clear and convincing" evidence of systematic sexual violence committed by Hamas operatives against Israeli women both on October 7 (much of it filmed by the terrorists themselves) and later against hostages held in the Gaza Strip.
In April, Amsalem repeated her lies, saying that the sexual violence against Israelis on October 7 constituted "misinformation" used by Israel to "justify genocide."
Amsalem received $70,000 from Saudi Arabia in 2024, and the next year $100,000 from the Gulf Cooperation Council, which comprises Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Last month she defended receiving the funds by claiming "that the contributions were disclosed under UN transparency rules, administered by the UN human rights office, and did not influence her work," according to UN Watch.
Alice Jill Edwards, "Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," on the other hand, has been praised by UN Watch for her efforts to document and speak up about the atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7, 2023. Unfortunately, her colleagues tried to bully her into silence. According to UN Watch:
"U.N. special rapporteur Alice Edwards—one of just two experts to sign a statement on the October 7 atrocities—says: 'There was a campaign [by other rapporteurs] to prevent that letter going out. Weeks of being bullied and deterred from writing it, telling me everything in it was false.'"
Speaking on a panel at University College London on June 9, 2026, Edwards said:
"That letter is a set of allegations of what happened on October 7; it was only signed by the Special Rapporteur on summary extrajudicial killings and me. Some other special rapporteurs and working groups had wanted to sign on, but they also had been bullied by others not to sign on, and there was this concerted effort for this letter not to put on record some allegations that had been received. There was a campaign to prevent that letter from going out. There were weeks of being bullied and deterred from writing it and telling me that everything in it was false."
Edwards also visited the Israeli communities that had been attacked, met hostage families, and watched the footage filmed by the terrorists themselves during the massacre. "I understand I'm the only Special Rapporteur who has ever requested to go to the Israeli mission to see the video and the documented evidence," she said.
The contents of UN Watch's report have received no coverage in mainstream media. No human rights NGOs have taken the least interest, nor has any politician, except for one: Lord Alton of Liverpool, who is chair of the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights, asked the UK government for its assessment of the report's damning findings about the 13 UN special rapporteurs and whether it supports UN Watch's calls to hold the them accountable and ban outside funding for them. He received a response that was more than embarrassing, but extremely telling about the kind of governments that have ascended to power in the West. Baroness Chapman of Darlington, Minister of State (Development) answered in a written statement:
"The UK continues to welcome the crucial role played by the United Nations' network of special rapporteurs and experts in several countries and regions around the world, as well as on specific issues of concern. However, in order to maintain the confidence of the international community in those roles, it is important that each rapporteur or expert upholds the highest standards of independence and objectivity, and we will always make clear when we believe any individual has fallen short of those standards."
Oh, really?

THE UN WROTE A BLOOD LIBEL AND GAVE IT A DOCUMENT NUMBER

THE JEWISH VOICE (TJVNews.com 6-7-26)
On June 23, in Geneva, the United Nations accused the Jews of deliberately murdering children.
If that slipped past you, don't blame yourself. It ran for a news cycle and moved on, and that's the design: the accusation travels, the scrutiny never catches up. This is the scrutiny catching up, and it deserves your full attention, because the UN isn't even pretending anymore.
I haven't paraphrased and I haven't exaggerated. The report says "Israeli soldiers," of course, because the lie updates its vocabulary every few centuries while never once updating its content. And if you think "Israeli soldiers" and "the Jews" name different defendants, stay with me, because the people who have already bled for this accusation never wore a uniform. Notice, too, that the claim isn't that children die in wars, which has been true of every war ever fought, but that Israeli soldiers hunt them on purpose. The accusation runs to 94 pages, with a chairman, a press conference, a document symbol, A/HRC/62/CRP.2, and a set of recommendations pointed squarely at international courts and tribunals. What those pages do not contain, from the first to the last, is a single verified instance of an Israeli soldier deliberately targeting a child.
You'd think that would be a problem for a report whose entire title concerns the deliberate targeting of children. It isn't, because the report was never built to prove the claim. It was built to certify it.
I read all 94 pages of this thing. I don't recommend the experience. Let's start with the law, because the report certainly doesn't. The law of armed conflict turns on intention. It asks who was targeted and why, whether the object of a strike was a combatant, a military objective or a civilian, and what the commander knew when the decision was made. It's built that way for a reason: in a war fought inside cities, against an enemy in civilian clothing firing from apartment blocks, effects alone cannot tell you whether a death was a crime or a tragedy. The report inverts this entirely, reasoning backwards from effects from its first page to its last. Children were killed, therefore children were targeted, therefore the targeting was deliberate, therefore the intent was genocidal. Every link in that chain is asserted and not one of them is demonstrated. A first-year law student would lose marks for it. A UN commission gets a press conference.
Then there's the testimony, and where it came from. It was gathered in a territory run for nearly two decades by a totalitarian terrorist organization with an entire ministry devoted to information control, and the report treats it like sworn depositions collected in Zurich. What these accounts establish, at most, is that a child was hurt or killed, which nobody disputes and nobody should be able to read without grief. What they cannot establish, and never attempt to, is the one thing the entire report claims to have found: the intention of the soldier behind the weapon.
And then there's the omission that gives the game away. There's exactly one party to this conflict with a confirmed, filmed, self-published record of deliberately targeting children. On October 7 its men wore body cameras so the deliberateness would never be in doubt, and its own television network broadcast the results with pride. In this report, that party appears mostly as weather. Hamas built the battlefield, dug it under the nurseries, staffed it in civilian clothes and started the war in children's bedrooms, and the commission investigating the deliberate killing of children in this conflict somehow lost the only footage.
If you want to see what the deliberate targeting of a child actually looks like in this war, his name was Ariel Bibas and he was 4 years old. His brother Kfir was 9 months old when men carried him out of his home in Nir Oz on October 7. The boys were murdered in captivity weeks later, not shot but killed with bare hands, and their bodies were then mutilated to imitate airstrike damage. The forensic findings are public, sitting in the UN's own document system, shared with governments around the world to verify. Hamas told the world an Israeli airstrike killed them, and news desks on five continents typed it up. Understand what happened there. The men who strangled two babies blamed the Jews for their deaths and staged the evidence to match. That isn't something resembling the blood libel. That is the blood libel itself, murder the children and accuse the Jews, performed live inside this commission's own reporting period.
So the report doesn't survive 10 minutes of honest reading, which brings us to the only question actually worth asking: who writes a document like this?
THE INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel was created by the Human Rights Council in May 2021, and it's unique among the UN's commissions of inquiry in one respect. The commissions on Syria, on Ukraine and on Ethiopia all had defined mandates, while this one has no termination date. It's the only permanent tribunal the United Nations has ever built, and it happens to be aimed at the world's only Jewish state. That is not a coincidence, and the commissioners saved us the trouble of proving it.
Four years ago this month, commissioner Miloon Kothari explained in an interview that criticism of the commission was being driven by social media

"controlled largely by the Jewish lobby," and wondered aloud whether Israel should be a UN member state at all. Eighteen countries, the European Union and the Secretary-General's office condemned the remarks as antisemitic. A month earlier, in an official proceeding, his colleague Chris Sidoti had offered that Jews throw around accusations of antisemitism "like rice at a wedding." The chair, Navi Pillay, had publicly urged governments to "Sanction Apartheid Israel" before her appointment, then defended both men, dismissed the antisemitism concerns as a diversion and described Israeli security concerns as "a fiction." And do you remember the hot mic? There's no reason you should; it barely survived a news cycle. In June 2023, before a press conference in Geneva, Pillay and Sidoti were caught on a hot mic, laughing together about how they'd run out the clock to avoid answering questions about their bias. They laughed. These were the three people the United Nations selected, out of all the jurists on earth, to sit in permanent judgment of the Jewish state. All three signed the commission's genocide finding, and a year ago this month, all three resigned.

It should have ended there. It didn't, and what happened next made me angrier than everything else in this story combined. In November 2025 the Human Rights Council reconstituted the commission: a new chairman, the retired Indian judge Srinivasan Muralidhar, a new member, the Zambian jurist Florence Mumba, and one familiar face. Chris Sidoti, the rice-at-a-wedding commissioner, didn't resign so much as get reissued. The same Council president who accepted his resignation letter reappointed him four months later, and he sat on the panel that wrote June's report, still investigating the people he mocked for calling him antisemitic. And that report states plainly that it applied the same methodology and standard of proof used in all of its previous investigations, the methodology built and operated by a chair who had prejudged the verdict and two commissioners whose views on Jews you have just read. Nobody cleaned house. They renewed the lease.

Two of the men left. The method got tenure, and the third man came with it.

NONE OF THIS SURPRISED ME, and here's why it shouldn't surprise you. Everyone thinks the lie that Jews murder children is a rumor, a dark folk superstition that bubbles up from ignorant mobs. In 900 years it's never once worked that way.

In 1144 a boy named William was found dead outside Norwich, and nobody thought anything of it until a monk named Thomas of Monmouth arrived and spent years assembling a chronicle proving the Jews had crucified him. The mob didn't invent the story; the mob couldn't read. The monk wrote it, the Church canonized it, and only then did the killing start. In 1475 in Trent, a bishop's tribunal armed with confessions extracted under torture returned a formal verdict that turned a drowned toddler named Simon into a saint and the town's Jews into ash, and a century later the Church entered him into the official liturgical calendar, certifying the lie a second time. In Damascus in 1840 it was a governor's court and a French consul. In Kiev in 1913 it was a tsarist prosecutor with a case file, indicting Mendel Beilis for the ritual murder of a child. And in New York in 1975 it was the General Assembly itself, adopting Resolution 3379, Zionism is racism, by recorded vote.

Nine centuries, and the pattern has never broken. The blood libel does not travel mouth to mouth; it travels stamp to stamp. The mob has never invented it. Clerks invent it, and the mob reads the paperwork.

That's what A/HRC/62/CRP.2 actually is. It isn't an investigation, because an investigation can reach more than one conclusion and this commission's conclusion was installed with its mandate in 2021. It's a notarization. The commission has been explicit that its findings are meant for the International Criminal Court and other judicial institutions, which means the oldest lie in the world now arrives at The Hague pre-stamped, numbered and formatted for citation. Thomas of Monmouth needed years to produce his chronicle. The modern version ships as a PDF.

Israel's ambassador called the report a political blood libel disguised as a UN document, and he's right, but the phrase undersells it, because the blood libel was never disguised as official documentation. Official documentation is what the blood libel has always been.

I know how these pieces usually end, and I nearly wrote it, because the comfort is real: every institution that ever certified this lie is rubble. William of Norwich's shrine was dismantled and his cult is extinct. In 1965 the Church abolished the cult of Simon of Trent and declared the Jews of Trent innocent, five centuries late, on the same day it issued Nostra Aetate. The Beilis jury, 12 subjects of the tsar with the empire's full weight pressing on the scale, acquitted, and four years later that empire no longer existed. In 1991 the General Assembly revoked its own resolution, an act without meaningful precedent in its history, an admission that the last time it certified this lie it got it wrong. The certifier always ends in disgrace, and if I stopped there you'd close this tab feeling proud, and I would have wasted your evening.

Because the dates tell a second story, in the space between each stamp and each ruin. The chronicle was canonized and the massacres came after, Jews slaughtered across England for generations while William's shrine did brisk business. Fifteen Jews of Trent burned within the year, and the Church's apology took 490 years to arrive. The Beilis acquittal didn't unpoison Kiev, and Resolution 3379 stood for 16 years while "Zionist" was spat like a curse in classrooms and cabinets on every continent. The ruin always comes, but the blood comes first, and the gap between the stamp and the ruin is where the blood is.

The ink on this one is two weeks old, and the mob is already reading. You've heard it yourself this summer, "the UN found," "the UN confirmed," at the dinner table, in the group chat, from the podium. Two Israeli embassy staffers were shot dead on a Washington sidewalk by a man who believed exactly this about Jews, and elderly marchers walking for the hostages in Boulder were set on fire by another. Nobody handed those men a medieval chronicle. They had read the modern paperwork, and the modern paperwork has a press office.

And mark the order of events, because it acquits nobody. The embassy staffers were murdered in May of last year. The marchers were set on fire in June of last year. The commission published this report 13 months later. They watched the libel kill Jews in American streets, in real time, with the whole world watching, and their answer was to issue another one. An institution that keeps stamping permits after seeing what the permits do is not being careless. It has told you what it wants.

And the machine hasn't paused to take a bow, because this report is only its second-newest product. On June 18, five days before it was published, the Secretary-General's own Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reposted a claim from an activist arrested in Britain on terror charges: that Israelis were dropping cluster munitions disguised as children's toys into Lebanon. The booby-trapped toy, vintage stock from the oldest warehouse there is, amplified from an official UN account by the very official charged with protecting children in war. This past week, Guterres expressed his full confidence in her. Of course he did. Stamped on the 18th, published on the 23rd, defended in July. The machine isn't a historical exhibit. It's running as you read this.

And this, finally, is the answer to the question every Jew has been asking this year, in Melbourne and Manchester and Manhattan and here at home in Beit Shemesh. Why does the hostility feel licensed? Why does the coworker feel entitled, the professor feel righteous, the marcher feel moral? Because they are licensed. Antisemitism at this scale is never freelance. It's always required a respectable institution to sign the permit, and the most respectable institution on earth has been signing them on a standing mandate since 2021. The hatred you are feeling has a paper trail, and you have now read it.

So I'm not going to tell you that history will handle it, because history's way of handling it has a body count.

THIS TIME THE CORRECTION HAS TO come before the blood, for the first time in 900 years. That takes three decisions, and they run in descending order of power and ascending order of importance.

Kill the mandate. The Human Rights Council built the only permanent inquisition in the UN system, and the same Council can vote it out of existence. Every democracy sitting on that Council should force that vote and make every member state put its name on the record.

Refuse the laundry. A judge at The Hague who accepts a prejudged conclusion as evidence becomes a certifier himself, and the methodology that convicts Israel's soldiers today will convict America's and Britain's tomorrow. The states funding those courts should say that plainly before it happens, not after.

Name the paperwork. This one is yours, and it's the smallest job and the most important one. The next time someone hands you "a UN report found that Israel deliberately targets children," you know what you're holding, and it isn't evidence. It's a monk's chronicle with a document symbol, and the stamp only works on people who don't know what it is. Say so, out loud, at the table, by name.

The Jewish people outlived the monk, the bishop, the consul and the tsar, and the Jewish state outlived the resolution. We'll outlive A/HRC/62/CRP.2 as well, I promise you that. But outliving has always had a price, and it is paid every time in the same place.

The stamp is two weeks old. The gap is now.

THE HOSPITAL WARD BECAME A FRONT IN THE WAR AGAINST JEWS

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 7-7-26)

Weeks before Sydney's Bondi Beach attack, an international trauma medicine conference in Perth was set to feature Dr. Elon Glassberg, the former head of the Israeli military's medical corps, sharing the protocols that gave the Israeli army the lowest battlefield mortality rate in military history. Anti-Israel doctors and nurses groups threatened mass pickets. The organizers folded, and the conference was cancelled. Australian trauma specialists lost the chance to learn techniques that could have saved lives at Bondi itself — a cost one Adelaide trauma doctor, interviewed for a major investigation by Megan Goldin in The Australian (paywalled), says his own colleagues paid weeks later.

That is the shape of the story Goldin lays out over more than thirty

interviews with Australian doctors, nurses, and midwives: an industry-wide activist campaign, running since October 7, 2023, that has repeatedly put ideology ahead of the patient in front of the practitioner. It is a chilling article that did not get enough publicity.

The pattern started with symbols. Doctors and nurses wore "river to the sea" pins on shift and plastered hospital corridors with a Star of David crossed out in red. At Melbourne's Alfred Hospital — a facility built in part on tens of millions of dollars from Jewish philanthropy — one such sticker ended up on the bedside wall of a dying elderly Jewish patient, in the last hours of his life.

The online conduct got worse than the stickers. Physicians posted Nazi caricatures relabeled with the word "Zionist" instead of "Jew," a substitution one Jewish pediatric neurologist in the piece calls a way of dressing up old hatred as new virtue. A prominent doctor described Jews mourning at a Bondi memorial vigil as "genocide supporting Zionists." Facebook groups that once existed for parenting advice turned on Jewish members who so much as mentioned the 251 hostages held in Gaza, or the mass rape and slaughter of October 7 itself.

Then the activism reached the bedside. Two nurses at Sydney's Bankstown Hospital were filmed describing what they would do to an Israeli patient who came through their doors — footage serious enough that police became involved. After it surfaced, Jewish patients across the country began hiding their religion on hospital admission forms. Charlotte Frajman, the daughter of an Auschwitz survivor, calls having to conceal her faith on a medical record a line she never expected to face in Australia.

The suspicious pattern shows up in cannula insertions — the ordinary act of placing an IV line. Frajman describes a nurse who took four attempts and left her bruised for weeks, after visibly registering her religion on his screen. Orit Brand, at a different Melbourne clinic, endured eight failed attempts before a different staff member was called in and succeeded immediately, without pain or bruising. Hospital protocol caps failed attempts at two before a colleague takes over; nurses at both hospitals confirm that cap was ignored. A mental health nurse who now counsels antisemitism victims calls the needle a nearly perfect weapon: it leaves a practitioner able to say, with total deniability, that the vein simply wouldn't cooperate.

The mistreatment extended to obstetrics and psychiatric care. A Jewish woman recovering from a C-section at a Sydney hospital was left overnight in a pool of blood with no pain relief while her newborn cried in the bassinet beside her. A Jewish ICU patient in Adelaide was given a bedside lecture by her own nurse denying the Holocaust and denying October 7. A Queensland psychotherapist posted online that Israelis were "not fit to live." A university psychiatry academic compared food-line queues in Gaza to gas chambers.

Regulatory failure compounded the clinical one. AHPRA, Australia's national health practitioner oversight body, took nearly three years to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and now faces a campaign from more than 1,400 healthcare workers demanding it reverse that decision. In the meantime, the agency's own numbers — 124 antisemitism complaints against 97 Islamophobia complaints since mid-2023 — obscure a documented double standard: midwife Sharon Stoliar drew more than fifteen complaints for objecting to a doctor's post quoting Hitler on "the Jewish question," while AHPRA closed the file on that doctor without action. Perth physician Deborah Cohen-Jones was formally cautioned by AHPRA for a social media post; the post in question compared a masked pro-Palestinian protester to a Klansman, after two Israeli embassy staffers were murdered in Washington. Stoliar, who isn't herself Jewish, was separately called "Jewish mafia" online and told her grandmother had been raped by Hitler in hell.

None of this occurs in a vacuum stripped of the war's brutality on both sides. But the piece is careful to note what the activist narrative leaves out: Hamas ran command bunkers inside Gaza hospitals, launched its October 7 assault partly from vehicles that departed hospital compounds, and held hostages inside them — one of whom was murdered by hospital medical staff. Palestinian Islamic Jihad's own misfired rocket, not an Israeli strike, caused the al-Ahli Hospital blast in the war's first days, a fact that took only hours to establish and made no difference to the doctors and nurses who marched through Sydney and Melbourne in scrubs chanting about Israeli hospital bombings.

The through-line across every incident Goldin documents is simple: a 2,500-year-old medical principle, that the patient's interest comes before the practitioner's politics, gave way the moment the patient was Jewish. A regulator that spent three years failing to say so plainly is now being lobbied, by more than a thousand of its own licensees, to say so even more quietly.

'Then they heard Hebrew'

TANIA SHALOM MICHAELIAN (JNS.org 3-7-26)

Fifty years after "Operation Entebbe," Gadi Ilan still doesn't first remember the gunfire. Or the explosions.

Or even the moment he saw his commander, Lt. Col. Yonatan ("Yoni") Netanyahu, commander of the elite Sayeret Matkal (General Staff Reconnaissance) unit and the older brother of current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, struck by enemy fire.

He remembers the hostages.

"If there is one thing I need to single out about the operation," Ilan told JNS in an exclusive interview marking the 50th anniversary of "Operation Entebbe," "it's the scene of the hostages when we broke in."

On July 4, 1976, Israeli commandos flew more than 2,500 miles to Uganda to rescue more than 100 hostages held by Palestinian and German terrorists at Entebbe Airport. The mission became one of the most celebrated hostage-rescue operations in military history.

For seven days, the hostages had lain on the floor of the old terminal at Entebbe Airport. They had barely slept. They had watched armed terrorists and Ugandan soldiers come and go. The deadline set by the hijackers would expire the following morning. Many believed they would not survive the night.

Then the explosions began.

"They instantly believed the time had come and they were about to die," Ilan recalled. "They tried to cover their children, or just their own faces. Then they saw soldiers bursting inside wearing Ugandan uniforms, which they knew all too well after seeing them throughout the week."

For one terrifying instant, they froze. Then they heard Hebrew.

For the hostages, rescue arrived not with the sight of Israeli soldiers, but with the sound of their own language.

"All of a sudden, they started hearing us shouting in Hebrew, directing them to keep lying down and telling them we had come to take them home."

Fifty years later, it is still their faces that return to him first.

HE WAS 21 YEARS OLD in July 1976, one of 33 Sayeret Matkal commandos chosen for the assault force that would spearhead one of Israel's most daring military operations. Sitting inside the black Mercedes that would later become synonymous with the operation, designed to resemble the vehicle used by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, he and his teammates were among the first soldiers to storm the terminal and free more than 100 hostages held by Palestinian and German terrorists.

He speaks less about heroism than responsibility. Less about history than about people.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the operation, declassified Cabinet protocols released by the Israel State Archives on June 26 shed new light on the agonizing deliberations that preceded the rescue mission. They reveal a government weighing negotiations alongside military action until almost the very last moment.

But official records cannot capture what it felt like inside the terminal.

Ilan can.

"We realized this was a very different mission right from the moment we came back to the base and heard about it from Yoni," he said.

The soldiers had already gone home. Their military service was drawing to a close when they were suddenly called back to base.

None of them imagined Uganda.

Even after boarding the C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, many remained convinced the mission would never happen.

Back in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government was still debating whether to negotiate with the hijackers or authorize an operation that would send Israeli commandos more than 2,500 miles into hostile territory.

The aircraft took off anyway.

The plan was to fly as far as Ethiopian airspace with enough fuel to turn back if approval never came.

'If we don't do it, nobody else will'

Before the planes departed from Sharm el-Sheikh in Sinai, then under Israeli control, Netanyahu gathered the commandos one final time.

"He gave a commanding speech of motivation," Ilan recalled. "He summarized it with the words, 'If we won't do it, nobody else will.'"

Nearly five decades later, it is still the sentence that stays with him.

The second leg of the journey lasted about seven hours.

The Hercules flew low for much of the route to avoid radar detection. Inside, the cargo hold remained almost completely dark.

Having barely slept for the previous day and a half, Ilan climbed onto the hood of the Mercedes and fell asleep.

"The loud, boring noise of the C-130 was like a sleep machine," he said with a laugh.

He slept through the moment the government finally approved the mission. Someone woke him about an hour before landing.

As Entebbe drew closer, Netanyahu quietly walked the length of the aircraft.

There were no grand speeches.

He simply stopped beside each of the 33 commandos, shook every man's hand and wished him good luck.

Looking back, it is another powerful image Ilan has never forgotten.

EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWED unfolded in just 53 minutes.

The Hercules touched down shortly after 11 p.m.

Its rear ramp opened.

The Mercedes rolled onto the runway, flanked by two Land Rovers.
For a few moments, the deception worked.
Then Ugandan soldiers near the control tower challenged the approaching convoy and opened fire.
"The silent approach had exhausted itself," Ilan said.
"There was no more surprise."
The commandos leapt from the vehicles and sprinted toward the terminal.
Inside were four terrorists guarding the hostages.
Outside, Ugandan troops had begun returning fire.
The greatest fear had always been that the terrorists would start executing hostages the moment they realized Israeli forces had arrived.
Instead, the assault team reached them first.
Within moments, all four terrorists inside the terminal were dead.
Only then did Ilan allow himself to look at the people lying on the floor.
"Once we secured the hall, understanding that we had killed the terrorists there, meaning no harm could be done to the hostages anymore, and realizing that the great majority of the hostages were alive and well, our tense posture suddenly fell away."
What replaced it surprised him. Relief gave way to humor.
One bewildered hostage looked up and asked him how they were supposed to get home.
"Did you bring a plane?" she asked.
Even now, Ilan smiles at the memory.
"I told her, 'What do you think? You want to walk home? It's a bit far.'"
For a fleeting moment, amid the gunfire and confusion, people laughed.
Outside, the fighting continued. Israeli forces secured the airport while engineers destroyed Uganda's Soviet-made MiG fighter aircraft to prevent pursuit.
Somewhere during those frantic 53 minutes, Ilan saw Netanyahu struck by enemy fire. He knew immediately that his commander had been hit. What he did not know was that the wound would prove fatal.
Netanyahu was evacuated aboard one of the Hercules aircraft and later died of his wounds en route to Nairobi. He was the operation's only Israeli military fatality, and the mission, originally named "Operation Thunderbolt," was later renamed "Operation Yonatan" in his memory.
Four hostages, Jean-Jacques Maimoni, Pasco Cohen, Ida Borochovitch and Dora Bloch, also lost their lives as a result of the Entebbe hijacking
Yet when Ilan thinks back to that night, his thoughts return not to the battle outside, but to the silence that followed inside the terminal.
"Their faces," he said quietly. "I still see their faces."
YONI NETANYAHU HAD COMMANDED Sayeret Matkal for only a few months before the operation. Ilan and his teammates were among the unit's most senior soldiers, he admits with a smile, and they were not inclined to make life easy for their new commander.
There simply wasn't enough time for that relationship to grow.
The operation that made Netanyahu a national symbol also claimed his life.
Today, Ilan believes Israelis know the military hero. Fewer know the man behind the uniform.
"Yoni was, in addition to being a professional and outstanding soldier, a spiritual person," he said. "Israelis became aware of that when his poems and thoughts were published after his death. Still, I believe that side of him remained more in the shadow."
Ironically, "Operation Entebbe" is not the mission that left Ilan with the deepest scars. Long before Uganda, he had already taken part in two hostage rescue operations that ended very differently. In May 1974, Palestinian terrorists seized a school in Ma'alot in the Galilee, killing 25 hostages, including 22 children, during the rescue attempt. The following year, terrorists seized Tel Aviv's Savoy Hotel, killing eight civilian hostages and three Israeli soldiers after detonating explosives inside the building. Ilan participated in both operations.
"I don't really have post-traumatic memories from Entebbe," he said. "We had been through more traumatic events before."
Entebbe, he said quietly, "went very smoothly."
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY, when asked what history has overlooked, Ilan doesn't mention the Israeli commandos.
Instead, he speaks about the crew of Air France Flight 139.
When the non-Israeli passengers were released several days before the rescue, Captain Michel Bacos and his crew were offered the opportunity to leave.
They refused.
Knowing they might never leave Uganda alive, they chose to remain with their Jewish and Israeli passengers until the very end.
"For me," Ilan said, "their bravery has always been overshadowed."
NEARLY FIVE DECADES LATER, another hostage crisis unfolded.
This one, Ilan watched from Texas.
On Oct. 7, 2023, his younger daughter was visiting Israel with her American boyfriend. They were staying in the country's south, near Eilat.
"I woke up and had 10 missed calls," he recalled.
At first, he assumed Hamas had launched another round of rocket fire. Only gradually did he realize Israel was facing something entirely different.
His daughter made it safely to his apartment in Netanya before returning to the United States two days later.
Others were not so fortunate.
Many people have drawn comparisons between Entebbe and Oct. 7. Ilan does not.
"I was careful not to equate the Entebbe hostages with those of Oct. 7," he said. "The reality is completely different."
Entebbe lasted days. The hostages taken on Oct. 7 endured captivity measured in months and, for some families, years.
"The times and circumstances were so different," he said. Then he paused.
"We were also lucky."
He recalls what the pilot of the Hercules aircraft reportedly told Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin after landing back in Israel.
"G-d worked overtime today."
Yet despite everything that has changed over the past half century, Ilan believes one principle has remained constant. Israel does not abandon its people.
Asked whether that commitment feels any different today than it did in 1976, he answered without hesitation.
"Not at all. It is the same promise. The same commitment. The same devotion."
For Ilan, preserving that story has become a responsibility of its own.
A decade ago, he joined fellow veterans in publishing Entebbe Declassified, a collection of first-hand accounts written by every participant in the operation, from commandos to pilots. Published by HaMasder, the Sayeret Matkal veterans' association, the book helps support the organization's work with at-risk youth, veterans and, since Oct. 7, wounded soldiers, trauma survivors and the widows of unit members.
Asked what he would say to the young commando climbing aboard a Hercules transport aircraft on July 3, 1976, Ilan doesn't mention history, heroism or sacrifice. His answer is as practical as the act of heading to Uganda on a secret mission because it was simply the right thing to do.
"I'd say, 'Go do the job. And come back in one piece.'"

Kosher & Halacha Korner

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Why Make a Siyum During the Nine Days?

RABBI YEHUDA SHURPIN (Chabad.org)

I noticed that many make a point of making a siyum—a celebration for the completion of a tract of Talmud—during the nine days when we mourn over the destruction of the Temple. Isn't this counterintuitive? Shouldn't we be sad during this time, not seeking out different ways to celebrate and rejoice?

REPLY

It is forbidden to eat meat during the Nine Days. However, meat may be served and eaten as part of a festive meal celebrating a mitzvah such as a circumcision. Another such festive meal is a siyum, celebrating the completion of a significant portion of Torah. Thus, some make a siyum, which then opens up a "loophole" for them to eat meat.
However, there are many who follow the practice of the students of the Baal Shem Tov, and are particular to participate in a siyum during the Nine Days, but have the custom not to eat meat afterward. To understand this, let's first explore the Jewish view on mourning in general.

EXCESSIVE MOURNING

According to Jewish law, excessive mourning is prohibited. Thus, one is not supposed to add to the time-honored mourning customs, nor may one extend the mourning beyond the mandated time period. For example, it is appropriate to cry intensely within the first three days of the burial, sit shivah for seven days, observe certain elements of mourning for 30 days ("shloshim") and, if one loses a parent, to engage in certain elements of mourning for 12 months. However, one may not extend any specific element of mourning beyond its allotted time.1
As Jews, we believe that death is not final, and eventually we will all be reunited with our loved ones. To a degree, excessively mourning and falling into despondency belies that belief.
The same is true about mourning the destruction of the Temple.
Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro of Dinov, known as the Bnei Yissachar, points out that the Talmud states, "Just like when the month of Av begins, we decrease rejoicing, so too when the month of Adar begins, we increase rejoicing,"2 Yet, he notes, the Talmud only outlines the ways we decrease in joy in the month of Av, but never describes how we increase it in the month of Adar. He explains that this is precisely the point. When it comes to mourning, one may only decrease his joy and mourn in the specific ways outlined in Jewish law. Certainly, one is supposed to be sad and cry over the destruction of the Temple, but one may not, heaven forbid, despair. Not only does over-excessive mourning give off the impression that one has

given up all hope and faith in the final redemption and rebuilding of the Temple, but bringing oneself to outright depression is considered a sin.3

We are commanded to "serve G-d with joy,"4 and this applies even to a time of mourning. One cannot lose all hope and become despondent.

REVEALING HIDDEN GOOD

We can now understand why we make a siyum during a time of mourning. The Nine Days are a time of divine judgement and severity, and making a siyum on learning a section of Torah adds joy, as the verse states, "The orders of the L-rd are upright, causing the heart to rejoice . . ."5 By adding in joy (in a permissible manner), we help reveal the hidden good behind the destruction.6

This idea of the hidden good behind the destruction of the Temple is articulated in the Midrash this way: "The lion [Nebuchadnezzar] came in the month of the lion [Av, which has the constellation of Aries] and destroyed the lion [the Temple], in order that the Lion [G-d] should come in the month of the lion and rebuild the lion [Jerusalem]."7 In other words, the whole destruction came about so that the Temple would be rebuilt—bigger, better and longer-lasting than before.

The notion that the joy of a siyum weakens the powers of evil and destruction is actually hinted at in the very name of the ministering angel of the nation of Edom (Esau), whose descendants (the Romans) destroyed the second Temple and cast our nation into exile.

This angel is usually referred to simply as ס״ם ("Samech Mem") since we normally refrain from saying the names of angels, but the angel's full name is סמא״ל, which is an acronym for סיום מסכת אין לעשות—"A siyum shouldn't be made." Thus, this angel of destruction's very name hints at the fact that he doesn't want us making a siyum—which is precisely why it is an excellent idea to make one!8

WHEN TO MAKE A SIYUM

If the purpose of the siyum were merely to allow consumption of meat, there would be no need to make a siyum on Shabbat (when eating meat is permitted) or on 9 Av (when all food is forbidden).9 Yet, the Rebbe advocated that a siyum be made on those days as well.

Furthermore, there are those (notably the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch10) who have the custom not to eat meat at siyumim made during the 9 Days, but nevertheless specifically make or participate in a siyum at this time. Additionally, the Rebbe said that, if possible, one should try to participate in a siyum until the 15th day of Av, since some aspects of the destruction continued until that day.11

When the siyum is viewed not as a loophole for meat consumption but a portal to a deeper, spiritual joy that breaks through the bounds of sadness, this all makes sense.

May the merit of learning and making a siyum stand in our good stead and result in the ultimate siyum, the conclusion of this long and bitter exile, with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the holy Temple!

Footnotes

1) Talmud, Ta'anit 27b.
2) Talmud, Taanit 29a.
3) Shaar Yissachar, Chodesh Adar 2.
4) Psalms 100:2.
5) Psalms 19:9.
6) Sefer Hasichot 5751, vol. 2, p. 708.
7) Yalkut Shimoni, Jeremiah 259.
8) Shaar Yissachar, Chodesh Taamuz - Av 8
9) A siyum on the 9th of Av would be made on material permitted to be learned on that day, such as the tractate Mo'ed Katan which deals with the laws of mourning. Sefer Hasichot 5751 vol. 2 p. 708.
10) See Sefer Haminhagim - Chabad p. 46
11) Sefer HaSichot 5751 vol. 2 p. 733

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This document contains words of Torah and should be treated with respect. See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 85:2