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 Nechemia ben Menachem Mendel, Yaakov ben Menachem Mendel)

Vayakhel 5784

FROM NICE TO NASTY AND BACK

RABBI AHARON LOSCHAK (Chabad.org)

A friend of mine recently told me about a fellow with whom he regularly studies Torah. This particular gentleman is quite wealthy, and to his credit, generously supports a large number of Jewish institutions. My friend knows him as a kind, caring, and committed man.

Recently, while they were learning over the phone, my friend could sense that his study partner seemed particularly bushed. "Yeah, it's been a long day," he agreed when prompted. "I had to really dish it out to quite a few people at the office today."

This caught my friend off guard.

"You know me as a kind, gentle guy," he continued. "But at work, I am ruthless. No one gets by me, and if necessary, I will destroy any competition that stands in my way. It's exhausting."

I don't think he's the only one.

VAYAKHEL BEGINS A NARRATIVE journey that will continue through two parshiyot in which we review all the details of the desert Tabernacle. But first, we read about Moshe gathering the people and reiterating the laws of Shabbat:

Moshe called the whole community of the Children of Israel to assemble, and he said to them. . . Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity, a day of complete rest to G-d." (35:1-2)

Many ask: Why is the first clause, "Six days work may be done," necessary? The point is to convey the mitzvah of Shabbat, so why bother talking about the six preceding days? Moreover, resting on the seventh day is indeed counterintuitive, but working the other six most definitely is not, so why even mention it? Isn't it obvious?

IN ACTUALITY, the words about the workweek are not so much an introduction to the following words about Shabbat, but a follow up to the preceding words of "Vayakhel ...".

To explain.

The opening words of the Torah portion tell us how Moshe assembled the Jewish people to give them these instructions, lending the parshah its Hebrew name, "Vayakhel—and he gathered." Now, what is "gathering" all about? That's simple enough: unity and harmony between people. The unity is pronounced in our case, for if you look closely at the verse, Moshe didn't just gather the heads of household, or a learned few, but "the whole community of Israel." It was a nationwide gathering, highlighting sharing and equality.

It is in this context that the next words, "six days work may be done," are particularly relevant. You see, a common mistake people make is to reserve the spirit of "Vayakhel," of sharing and harmony, for times like Shabbat, when we are more spiritually inclined and there's little competition. In such settings, sure, why not? Let's be friends!

But when it comes to the rest of the week, when we're all in our respective workplaces, there's no place for Mr. Nice Guy. A person must be competitive, cutthroat, and ruthless. After all, it's a dog-eat-dog world, and if you're not keeping ahead of the pack, you'll lose. "The workweek is not the time and place for Vayakhel, for unity and equality," they say.

By inserting the extra words, "Six days work may be done," right after the

description of Moshe gathering the people, the Torah is telling us that the spirit of "Vayakhel" carries over not only to Shabbat when we rest, but also to the six days when we work.

THIS "SHABBAT-SIX DAYS" DIVIDE IS ALL TOO COMMON.

Walk into any shul on an average morning, and you'll see all kinds of people praying, learning, chatting over a cup of coffee, and rubbing shoulders with one another.

But when the prayer books are closed and the suits and ties are on in the office, a different person emerges. All of a sudden, the person you shared that coffee with in the morning is competition, and you'll cut him down at the first opportunity.

Others feel the need to assume an air of "boss," and think that they can't afford to share a kind word or joke in the break room. It'll chip away at their machismo and hurt their success.

And the Vayakhel divide can creep up in other parts of your life, too.

Think about it: You have no problem being nice to your neighbors, sharing recipes, a spare egg, and inviting them over for a Sunday barbecue every once in a while. Your kids go over to each other's houses, and you're more than happy to have a beer or coffee together when things are quiet.

These are non-competitive, "Shabbat-like" settings that don't really take anything off your back, so you're happy to share. Vayakhel comes easy.

But when that same neighbor asks you to share a business contact, or the number to your babysitter, or tries to confer with you on a small matter regarding their tax return (you're an accountant after all), then you're not so nice anymore.

"I can't share my contractor's number with them! What if he gets too much work and isn't available when I need him?"

"If I share my babysitter, they'll certainly pay her more, and then I'll be on the hook for a raise!"

"I can't answer this accounting question—it's my business! He should be paying me for such advice."

Thoughts like these are undeniably common, but that doesn't make them appropriate. Such thoughts only occur when making the mistake that Vayakhel applies only to Shabbat.

So here's a handy reminder: Vayakhel applies everywhere—including the "six days work shall be done."

This essay is based on Torat Menachem, vol. 39, p. 204.

SHABBOS: TABERNACLE OF TIME

RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS (Aish.com)

Let's start with a fun Torah riddle: Some mitzvot we perform through the act of eating (e.g. matzah on Passover), while other mitzvot we perform by thinking (e.g. Torah study). Some mitzvot we perform by speaking (e.g. the Shema), while others we perform by hearing (e.g. blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashana). But there are certain mitzvot we perform by immersing ourselves totally – i.e. where our body is completely surrounded by the mitzvah. Try to guess what they are before reading on...

FOUR IMMERSIONS

There are four mitzvot that involve total bodily immersion:

1. Sukkah – on the holiday of Sukkot, the mitzvah is to be completely enveloped by dwelling in a Sukkah.
2. Mikveh – at appropriate times, we completely immerse ourselves in the purifying waters of the Mikveh.

3. Land of Israel – it is a mitzvah to be physically located in the Land of Israel.

These three are similar in that they are all immersions in a particular place. The fourth answer? Shabbos.

When Shabbos comes, we immerse in a new dimension, a dimension of time. In this way, Shabbos is qualitatively different. Rather than a holy place that we must travel to, Shabbos is a holiness that comes to us, once a week, every week. And while we can always walk away from a Sukkah or leave the Land of Israel, Shabbos has a stability and permanence that transcends the limitations of space. It's an anywhere-in-the-world, expense-free vacation. No travel agent required.

BUT WHAT IS "HOLINESS" ANYWAY? In Hebrew, kedusha has the connotation of separate and distinct. We make Kiddush on Friday night to distinguish between Shabbat and the weekdays. And Kiddushin, the word for marriage, is so named because the one I marry is designated for a unique status, vis-a-vis every other person in the world.

Holiness, no matter which form it takes, is a metaphysical substance which our souls can perceive. A few years ago, I had just returned to Israel from a two-month trip to America. I flew back to Israel one Wednesday, and had not been off the plane for more than a few minutes, when I saw someone pick up a pen and begin writing. Instinctively I said to myself, "Hey, we don't write on Shabbos!" Then I realized it was Wednesday.

Puzzled, I came to comprehend that the experience of arriving back in Israel had given me a surge of holiness – and I'd intuitively associated it with the feeling of Shabbos. The form may have been different, but the substance was the same. For as Israel is holiness in space, Shabbos is holiness in time.

SHABBOS AND THE TABERNACLE

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Moshe gathers together ("Vayakhel") the Jewish people and tells them the following:

"You may do melacha during the six weekdays, but the seventh day shall be holy for you...do not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling-places on the Shabbos day." (35:2-3)

Immediately following this, the Torah describes the tasks necessary for building the Tabernacle – the single holiest site in Judaism. In fact, the remaining 100-plus verses of our parsha are a lengthy, detailed description of the Tabernacle construction. Why does the Torah so starkly juxtapose building the Tabernacle with the mitzvah to observe Shabbos?

Because Shabbos and the Tabernacle are one and the same. They are both links to a transcendent dimension. During the Jewish people's 2,000 years of exile from the land following the destruction of our Holy Temple, Shabbos served as our sanctuary, the place to restore and refresh our perspective in a world often hostile to Torah values. As it is said: "As much as the Jews have kept Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jews."

BUT THE CONNECTION between Shabbos and the Temple is much deeper. In the verses quoted above, the Torah forbids "melacha" as a violation of Shabbos. This is puzzling because except for the reference to igniting fire, nowhere else in the Torah is there any definition of "melacha." Imagine Moshe coming down from Mount Sinai and telling the people not to do melacha - under penalty of death. The first thing I'd want to know is: What's melacha?!

The Talmud (Shabbos 73a) explains: The Torah juxtaposes Shabbos and the Tabernacle to teach us that those activities used to construct the Tabernacle, are the very same activities that are forbidden on Shabbos. For instance, since the Tabernacle involved sewing, we don't sew on Shabbos; since it involved cooking, we don't cook.

Sounds arbitrary? Hardly. The kabbalists explain the connection as follows: Since G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, in our effort to emulate G-d we must likewise rest on the seventh. But in what way did G-d rest on the seventh? We first need to know what creative acts G-d did during the six days.

Here is where the Tabernacle is key: The Tabernacle represents a microcosm of the universe – a distillation of all the energies, patterns and resources found in the material world. Betzalel, chief architect of the Tabernacle, understood the blueprint for its construction only because he understood the code of Creation. In fact, the name Betzalel means "in the shadow of G-d."

Therefore as the microcosm of creation, the activities performed in constructing the Tabernacle exactly parallel those acts performed by G-d (so to speak) in creating the world. Since the Tabernacle involved writing, we emulate G-d's rest by not writing on Shabbos.

Prohibited Shabbos activities – "melacha" – are different from a secular

definition of "work." Because on Shabbos we don't refrain from "exertion," we refrain from "creative acts." For example, it may be permitted on Shabbos to carry a heavy box from the basement to the attic, but at the same time it is forbidden to strike a match. Moving the box involves no change in the creative state of the object, whereas lighting the match clearly does.

THE EFFECT IS PROFOUND. On Shabbos, as we cease to create, we no longer feel the need to compete with the world around us.

The Torah specifically chooses "igniting fire" as its lone example of melacha, because it epitomizes the divisive, combusive energies Shabbos seeks to avoid. Instead of imposing our will upon the world, we are in harmony with it. We don't drive a car, work an animal, or even pluck a blade of grass.

On Shabbos, we are all kings. We take advantage of the extra spirituality infused in the Shabbos day to focus on our spiritual goals, which we express through prayer, learning Torah, festive meals, and time spent with family and friends. That is why our parsha is called "Vayakhel," meaning unity. For one day each week, there is no competition. There is only flow.

BESIDES A COMMUNAL PEACE, Shabbos brings personal peace as well. Six days a week, modern man is locked in a cycle of cell-phone, pager, e-mail, and fax. Shabbos is our chance to step back and momentarily release ourselves from the grip.

Many years ago, I was interviewing a famous rock star at the height of his career. (Sorry, no names.) "Tell me," I asked him, "What is the single greatest part of being a rock star? Is it the fame? The money? The world travel?"

He thought for a moment and said, "The best part about being a rock star is going on stage every night."

Very insightful, I thought. "So tell me," I asked, "What's the best part about going on stage every night? Is it the adoring crowd? The thumping music and bright lights? The incredible party atmosphere?"

With all sincerity, he looked at me and said, "The best part about going on stage every night is that no one can reach me on the telephone."

Here is a man who had everything – money, fame, honor. And all he wanted was a break.

For the Jew, Shabbos is our break. It empowers us – not to discard our workaday world – but to retain our ability to be independent from it. Shabbos gives balance and perspective to our lives and to our week. Just as a cube's six sides receives form and substance from its solid center, so too, the six days of our week are balanced by Shabbos, the inner dime.

AND IT IS SHABBOS which holds the key to the Jewish future.

The Talmud (Shabbat 118b) reports: "If all Jews were to observe just two Shabbos' properly, the final redemption would occur."

Why is it necessary to observe two Shabbos' properly? Why isn't one enough?

There is a world of difference between the first Shabbos and the second. A Shabbos observed in isolation would surely be spiritually uplifting, but this is not the type of Shabbos which would lead to redemption. More than a single day, Shabbos must "spill over" into the ensuing week, elevating all our actions and thoughts.

Shabbos is not the end of our week, rather it is the midpoint and source of energy. The second Shabbos, approached after a week so influenced, is completely different. It marks a spiritual apex, not a spiritual island. This is the type of Shabbos whose observance will bring about redemption. This is the Shabbos of a week, and a world, uplifted. (see Kedushas HaLevi, Ki Sisa 31:13)

And this is the great and permanent peace for which our people yearns.

At sundown this Friday, take a minute and try the following exercise: Clench your fists tight for 60 seconds. Then let go. That, my friends, is Shabbos.

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

RABBI PINCHAS AVRUCH (Torah.org)

After eleven chapters of narration of directions for the components and vestments of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), the construction finally began.

“From Moshe’s presence they took the entire gift that the Children of Israel had brought for the work for the labor of the Sanctuary, to do it...All the wise people came, those performing all the sacred work, each of them from their work that they were doing.” (Shemos 36:3-4) The mitzvah (Divine command) to build a Mishkan was given, according to Sforno and other commentaries, as a vehicle to restore G-d’s presence amongst the Jewish people following its removal due to the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, the design instruction and construction process occupied the eight and one half months from the sin of the Golden Calf – on the seventeenth of Tammuz,

three months after the departure from Egypt – until the assembly and dedication of the Mishkan – on the first of Nissan, just before the first anniversary of the Exodus (see Bamidbar 7:1).

A mere four months and eight days after its dedication, on the ninth of Av, the Children of Israel were already poised to enter the Land of Israel (see Devarim 1:21), at which time they would have entered Israel under Moshe’s leadership, the Messiah would have come, and the one and only Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple) would have been built immediately. But that day was the original “Tisha B’Av”: the spies had just returned from the Land of Israel and the Jewish nation had just accepted the slanderous report offered by ten of the twelve messengers (see Bamidbar 13 & 14). In the end, the Jews were punished with another 39 years of wandering throughout the wilderness, and they would spend 440 years in Israel before Shlomo HaMelech would finally build the Bais HaMikdash.

But they did not know that when they built the Mishkan. The Mishkan was built – utilizing tons of materiel, from precious metals to exotic textiles – with the assumption that it would be used for a matter of months. Moshe solicited the services of hundreds of volunteers for many months of continuous labor, for an edifice with a useful life of a half a year. How could such a mammoth expenditure of time and resources be utilized for such a short-term benefit?

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that the Jewish nation was simply fulfilling the mitzvah of “they shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them” (Shemos 25:8). No one can possibly know the Divine value attributed to any one mitzvah in contrast to any other and we are charged to approach simple mitzvos and complicated ones with similar interest and gusto, demanding that we not cheapen mitzvos simply because they appear easier or fleeting.

Our sages compare mitzvos to precious stones. A diamond cutter will work with great patience and deliberation to perfect an object he has no intention of keeping. Hours will be spent planning the cut and executing it with precision, assuring that the finished product is a priceless gem and not a clump of carbon. All the efforts are an investment in one moment – the sale. The Jewish people well understood the spiritual diminution caused by the Golden Calf. They appreciated the import of every mitzvah – another unique opportunity to forge a connection with the Divine – and how this mitzvah was specifically geared to that end. All of the effort, thousands upon thousands of hours of labor and all of the materiel, were simply an investment in one simple objective – “so that I may dwell among them”. The anticipated useful life of the Mishkan may have been short-term, but the benefit of this mitzvah – like every mitzvah – was eternal!

MORE OR LESS

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

In a magnanimous show of unity, men and women of all tribes of the nation converge their hearts, minds, and pockets to complete the Mishkan. In the next two Torah portions, the Torah summarizes the accomplishments of the nation by detailing the work that was done by Betzalel and his host of artisans and craftsmen who were filled with Heavenly spirit.

Moshe declares the success of the campaign and the generosity of the donors by announcing, that “the work (and contributions) had been enough for all the work, to do it — and there was extra” (36:7). Not only was there enough for the completion of the task there was extra.

But many commentaries are concerned about Moshe’s seemingly strange expression of completion. “There was enough, and there was extra.” After all, if there was enough, then there was not extra. And if there was extra then it should not be called enough! The Torah could just well have stated, “There were extra contributions of work and material for the work that was needed.”

It seems that only by having more than enough, by only having extra gifts, there was actually enough. Is that possible?

President John F. Kennedy loved to tell the story of a political battle for the mayoralty of the small manufacturing city of Fall River, Massachusetts.

The candidates scoured the industrial community for support, each pledging prosperity, growth, and increased productivity. But general promises would not persuade the voters. The candidates scoured the community, talking to citizens as if each vote would truly decide the election. They were right.

It was the tightest race in Massachusetts’s history. During the vote counting the candidates sat nervously with their supporters awaiting the final tally. It took days to declare, and weeks to finally confirm, that the winner of the mayoral race was actually decided by one vote! But the winner’s jubilation was muted only days after the results were declared.

You see, everyone in the town reminded him, “It was my vote that got you elected!”

The Sichos Tazdikim explains that Moshe wanted the proud accomplishment of building the Mishkan combined with humility, despite the enormity of the accomplishment. Had there been exactly enough gold, silver, copper, and other materials contributed in order to complete the construction, then perhaps a false sense of pride may have crept in.

If it were not for me, some may have thought, “there would be no Mishkan!” “I gave the contribution that turned the tide!” Everyone would have pinned the success on his or her copper or silver or gold.

The only way this false pride could be avoided was if there was a bit more given to the cause than actually was needed. Only then, would you have not only a Mishkan, but an edifice bereft of individual haughtiness. Therefore, only when there was more given than was actually needed, did Moshe feel that he truly had enough!

When we face extreme situations, and we contribute to their positive resolution, it is important to realize that we are only messengers. If Hashem wants success it will come without us as well.

In that vein, our contribution will be even more pure, for it will have every good attribute and will only be missing only one ingredient. It will be missing a false sense of conceit. It will not only be enough, it will be more.

I WAS WRONG

RABBI SHAUL ROSENBLATT (Aish.com)

Moshe first instructs Betzalel to build the vessels of the Tabernacle, and then to build the Tabernacle itself. Betzalel, a much younger man (according to some, only 13 years old), replies that surely it makes sense to build the structure first. Who makes furniture before they have a house in which to put it?

In the ancient world, to disagree on a public matter with the reigning Head of State was not such a clever idea. In challenging the head, you'd usually lose your head. However (and we see this many times with Moshe), the opposite occurred. Moshe admitted he had made a mistake and publicly bowed to Betzalel's opinion.

It takes tremendous strength of character to be able to admit, especially in so public a forum, that you made a mistake. All too often, the burning desire of our egos to be the one who is right overtakes our desire for truth. It's so easy to defend an opinion, only because it is ours, long beyond the time we know it to be incorrect.

It's sad that one of the greatest phrases in the English language, "I was wrong," is so rarely used. In admitting you were wrong, the sense of personal integrity is hugely empowering and uplifting. And far from undermining your credibility in the eyes of others, it actually helps establish it.

"I was wrong" is always a fantastic phrase to use (and nowhere more so, by the way, than in a marriage. In a certain way, it's more of a pleasure to be wrong than to be right. When you are right, you have proven a point and made someone else feel uncomfortable. When, however, you accept that you are wrong, you have not only learned something new, but you also experience the uplifting trait of humility.

Obviously, there is no need to admit to being wrong if you really are right. However, admitting to being wrong when you are wrong is a wonderful experience. Moshe had no fear of being wrong. He recognized that no human being was infallible, and when he made his mistakes, he owned up, fixed what he had done wrong, and got on with the job at hand.

Life is far too short for us to try to prove that we are right all the time. If we learn to be happy recognizing our mistakes, it will save us a great deal of energy battling futile causes simply to defend our pride. Train yourself to say the words, "I was wrong," so that when you need to, it's easy to say. You may even come to enjoy it!

OWN IT

AVROHOM YAAKOV

One of the main problems that face our society is the lack of devotion to task. For almost everyone at job or work, it is just a job. Little or no commitment. Success or failure is only determined by the paycheck. Come 5pm and all responsibility ends.

“And Bezalel made [the Ark].” (37:1)

Rashi explains that “Because he gave himself over to the work more whole-heartedly than the other wise men it is called after his name (his name alone is associated with the act) (Midrash Tanchuma, Vayakhel 10).”

The Torah is providing us with answer to success at anything we do, be it

work, family or life.

Betzalel gave himself over.

He made a commitment to the task, not to the pay, not to climbing the corporate ladder, not to seeking credit for the job. He committed to getting the job done.

And that is why Betzalel is forever known by his efforts with the Mishkan.

Are you fully committed to your job, family, religion or whatever you hold dear?

WINDOW OR MIRROR

RABBI MENACHEM FELDMAN (Chabad.org)

The Jewish people were eager to donate. The project, the building of the Tabernacle in the desert, was a symbol that, despite the pain of betrayal with the Golden Calf, the relationship had been restored and strengthened. G-d desired to dwell in the midst of the Jewish camp.

The people donated enthusiastically: bracelets; earrings; rings; blue, purple and crimson wool; linen; goat hair; red-dyed ram skins; tachash skins; silver and copper were some of the items that were gifted.

There was, however, one item that Moshe refused to accept.

The Torah describes that the women contributed even more than the men. They even brought their mirrors to be used in the sanctuary. But Moshe refused to accept the mirrors. A mirror, he argued, is the antithesis of the sanctuary. A mirror is used to adorn the externality of the person; it intensifies a person's pride and narcissism. A mirror is pure vanity and superficiality, a tool for self-worship. It has no place in the service of G-d.

Moshe saw the mirror as an enemy. Here was a tool designed to, at best, focus attention on the self rather than on the Divine, and at worst, a tool to create destructive lust and seduction.

Moshe sought to create a transparent "window"; he sought to teach people how to view the world as a window through which one can see the awesome power of the Creator. The mirror, blocking the light and reflecting the vision back to the viewer, was the polar opposite of everything Moshe stood for.

G-d disagreed.

The Midrash describes how G-d explained to Moshe that not only should the mirrors be accepted, but indeed they were more precious than all the other gifts. For it is precisely the mirror that represents the purpose of creating the sanctuary, and more broadly, the purpose of creation itself.

G-d explained to Moshe that the mirror could be just as holy as it could be destructive. Desire and temptation could be, not ego-driven, but rather an expression of intense holiness. As Rashi explains:

Even these [mirrors] they did not hold back from bringing as a contribution toward the Mishkan, but Moshe rejected them because they were made for temptation [i.e., to inspire lustful thoughts]. The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, "Accept [them], for these are more precious to Me than anything because through them the women set up many legions [i.e., through the children they gave birth to] in Egypt." When their husbands were weary from back-breaking labor, they [the women] would go and bring them food and drink and give them to eat. Then they [the women] would take the mirrors and each one would see herself with her husband in the mirror, and she would seduce him with words, saying, "I am more beautiful than you." And in this way they aroused their husbands desire and would copulate with them, conceiving and giving birth. (38:8)

Every creation on this earth has a soul, an energy, which can be used for both good or evil. Ironically, the more potential this energy has for good, the more destructive it can be. The reverse is just as true: the more destructive the force, the deeper the goodness and enlightenment can be when it is transformed or channeled.

The mirror captures a deep truth. When glass is covered with a layer of silver that obstructs the transparency, the result is more profound. Looking at a mirror, while one cannot see forward, one is able to see behind. One will see the unexpected.

The mirror does not completely obstruct the light, as do other objects. Instead, it reflects the light that shines upon it. It symbolizes how the creation itself can reflect and express the Divine light.

Moshe preferred clarity of vision. He was drawn to transparency, to a place where holiness is obvious. G-d explained that the purpose of the Tabernacle, which reflects the purpose of the creation of the world, was to be mirror-like, to see the holiness where it is least expected, to understand that desire can be an expression of transcendence and spirituality. The mirror reminds us that in order to experience the true profundity of the infinite G-d, one should look not directly upward to the transparent

heavens, but rather one should look down here on earth, where the concealment of the material creates a deeper reflection of the oneness of G-d.

Likkutei Sichot, Ki Tisa, vol. 6, sichah 1.

News, Views & Opinion

ARMY DIDN'T STRIKE AID CONVOY, IDF SAYS AFTER REVIEW

JEWISH NEWS SYNDICATE (JNS.org 3-3-24)

"Our initial review has confirmed that no strike was carried out by the IDF towards the aid convoy," IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said on Sunday of the Feb. 29 incident.

Last Thursday, Gazan civilians mobbed trucks carrying humanitarian aid supplies, as seen by aerial footage released by the IDF.

"The majority of Palestinians were killed or injured as a result of the stampede," Hagari said.

According to the Israel Defense Forces, residents surrounded the trucks on Al-Rashid Street, southwest of Gaza City, and looted the supplies, with many Palestinians being struck by the trucks or crushed by the crowd.

The incident began at around 4 a.m. when some 30 trucks passed an IDF checkpoint to deliver food in Gaza City's Rimal neighborhood. Thousands of Gazans rushed the trucks after they passed the checkpoint, resulting in a deadly stampede.

Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry reported that 104 people died and 280 were injured during the riot, with some reports giving a greater number of injured. The terrorist group is reportedly threatening to halt hostage negotiations over the incident, which it is calling a "massacre."

However, the IDF said only a handful were shot by Israeli soldiers as some in the crowd who rushed the last truck in the convoy then began moving towards Israeli forces tasked with coordinating the entry of aid into the Strip, in a way that endangered the troops.

This prompted an officer stationed at the checkpoint to fire warning shots in the air, after which troops fired at the legs of those who continued to move towards Israeli forces.

"From the information we gathered from the commanders and forces on the ground, our initial review has indicated that following the warning shots fired to disperse the stampede and after our forces had started retreating, several looters approached our forces and posed an immediate threat to them," Hagari said.

"According to the initial review, the soldiers responded towards several individuals," he said.

Hagari emphasized that Israel is a professional military body committed to international law and examines its operations. As the inquiry develops, the army will draw conclusions to reduce the likelihood of such a tragedy reoccurring.

Israel's war is not against the people of Gaza, but against Hamas, he said.

"This is why we are facilitating aid, creating humanitarian corridors, establishing unilateral humanitarian pauses and exercising caution in our use of force."

He added that Israel helped coordinate Saturday's airdrop by the U.S. and the Royal Jordanian Air Force of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

"We have coordinated a total of 21 air drops in northern Gaza, in collaboration with France, the UAE, Jordan, Egypt and the United States," Hagari said.

On Feb. 24, Israel decided it would start transferring humanitarian supplies directly to the northern Gaza Strip, to bypass the Hamas terrorist group.

Hamas has been stealing up to 60% of the aid entering the Gaza Strip.

In early February, it was reported that despite Israeli efforts, Hamas was making significant efforts to renew its control of the northern Gaza Strip, and it was using its control of aid supplies to reassert that control.

HAMAS STAGED A FOOD RIOT TO BLAME ISRAEL AND RETAIN CONTROL OF AID

DANIEL GREENFIELD (JNS.org 3-3-24)

Here's the roadmap for what just happened in Gaza with the aid deliveries.

Israel wanted to take out Hamas terrorists who claimed to be escorting aid. Biden barred Israel from doing that unless Israel handled the aid distribution itself.

"Biden administration officials raised their concerns with their Israeli counterparts and asked that Israel stop targeting the Hamas civilian police as long as there is no alternative that could provide security to the aid

trucks, Israeli and U.S. officials said,” Axios reported.

The Israel Defense Forces tried to distribute the aid, and Hamas staged an attack on one food delivery and a riot at another in order to be able to maintain control over aid. The two incidents are unlikely to be a coincidence. Which means they were the work of Hamas.

Now Israel is once again under fire, accused of a massacre, and Hamas is in a position to retain control over aid.

The media is carefully not providing any of the relevant context such as why Israel was there distributing aid.

And the question that no one is asking is why Hamas is so bent on maintaining control over aid deliveries?

The answer is that Hamas, like most Islamic terror groups, wants two things from humanitarian aid.

1. It uses the aid as currency, to reward supporters and then to resell for profit.

2. It uses the denial of aid to create a humanitarian crisis that it blames on Israel.

It’s hard to say which of these is more valuable, but in the latest incident, we see both prongs at the same time.

Hamas needs to retain control over aid because it can use the supplies to buy loyalty and reward its terrorists, and because denying aid to civilians puts political pressure on Israel to stop attacking Hamas.

REPORT: OVER 450 UNRWA TEACHERS PARTICIPATED IN OCT. 7 MASSACRE

HANA LEVI JULIAN (JewishPress.com 4-3-24)

I’m inside, I’m inside with the Jews,” and “We have female hostages, I captured one” — just a few words, but with the impact of thousands of tons of explosives.

Israeli intelligence revealed Monday night (March 4) that more than 450 terrorists belonging to terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, mainly Hamas, were — and in some cases still are — also employed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) tasked with providing humanitarian aid and educational services to the Palestinian Authority and Gaza populations.

The IDF has revealed two recordings incriminating two UNRWA teachers who took part in the October 7 massacre.

The first recording is of a terrorist working as an Arabic teacher at an UNRWA school in ‘Deir al-Balah’ describing his entry into Israeli territory and stating that he is holding female Israeli hostages.

“We have female captives (sabaya). I caught one,” an UNRWA “teacher” says. “We entered. I saw... They shot them in the eyes. I saw two, me and another guy from our group... Wow, what they did. Listen, they did actions for liberation Inshallah (Allah willing).”

The second recording features an additional terrorist who is also an elementary school teacher at an UNRWA school in Khan Yunis, telling his family he is inside Israeli territory.

“I’m inside, I’m inside with the Jews. Wait for me on the street... on Tamran Street.”

The speakers in both recorded conversations sound exhilarated, joyous, proud of their actions.

Terror organizations in the Gaza Strip routinely exploit international aid organizations for terror purposes and in the case of UNRWA, the organization has been enmeshed with Hamas for decades, adopting its genocidal aspirations of annihilating its Israeli neighbors into its school curricula.

THE TERROR OF THE RIGHT

MELANIE PHILLIPS (JNS.org 29-2-24)

There’s a fixed belief in progressive circles that if only Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, were to be removed from office, there would be at least a sporting chance of peace in the Middle East.

On Monday night, in an appearance on an NBC show, U.S. President Joe Biden said that Israel must make peace with the Palestinians to survive. He warned that Israel’s “incredibly conservative government,” which includes the ultra-nationalist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and others, was “going to lose support from around the world. And that is not in Israel’s interest.”

American officials repeat, like a steady drumbeat, that the reason the Israelis are so resistant to the imposition of a Palestinian state and insistent on mounting an attack against the last bastion of Hamas in Rafah, contrary to American instructions, is that Netanyahu is in hock to “right-wing

extremists.”

Some believe that the Biden administration is working to replace Netanyahu with a more pliable alternative, such as war cabinet member Benny Gantz. Isn’t such interference in another sovereign state by seeking to lever out its democratically elected prime minister the kind of thing that the left routinely denounces as U.S. “imperialism”?

It’s apparently fine, however, for the Biden administration to do this to Israel because Netanyahu is, after all, leading a “right-wing extremist” government, which seems to mean he has no basis to be in power at all.

Of course, Biden is trying to appease the virulently anti-Israel wing of the Democratic Party, which is causing him a major election-year headache.

More fundamentally still, his administration won’t permit Israel to derail U.S. strategy for the region. Astonishingly, this involves empowering Iran, and ludicrously asserts that the solution to the Iranian war being waged against Israel and the West by using Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis as proxy terrorist armies is to impose a Palestinian state.

Biden wants Netanyahu gone because the Israeli prime minister is refusing to bend to American pressure and is standing in the way of the administration’s treacherous policy goals.

The “right-wing” meme is a potent weapon because it damns everything at which it is directed. To be “right-wing” in the circles that control Western culture is to be utterly beyond the pale. Everything bad is “right-wing,” and everything “right-wing” is bad.

In Britain, even newspapers that are relatively well disposed towards Israel frame the conduct of the war as disproportionately belligerent because, well, Netanyahu runs an “extremist ultra-right” government.

In Israel, the left-wing press pounds out daily the message that absolutely everything Netanyahu is doing in this war is bad because it’s designed to save his skin and keep himself in power.

Since both the “settlers” and the “right-wing” are demonized as evil by so-called progressives, any opposition to a Palestinian state is also demonized as evil.

All this ignores a number of facts. Since the genocidal pogrom of Oct. 7—and with Hamas threatening to mount such atrocities over and over again until Israel is destroyed—Israelis are united as never before in opposition to a Palestinian state. They are also overwhelmingly committed to continuing with the war until Hamas no longer has the capacity to mount such attacks ever again.

This has absolutely nothing to do with the “settlers,” Ben-Gvir or Netanyahu’s desire to save his own skin. It is due to the fact that the vast majority of Israelis understand that they are fighting for their lives.

People may detest Netanyahu, but they don’t detest his conduct of the war. They may hold him ultimately to blame for the systemic mistakes behind the catastrophic failure to anticipate the Oct. 7 attack. They may think that he should no longer be in office. They may believe that he is unprincipled, devious, hypocritical, narcissistic, power-crazed, corrupt and with a dangerous messiah complex, as he is painted by his enemies.

Yet none of that means that they think the war should be waged in any other way. None of their dismay at Netanyahu as prime minister means they believe that anyone else would or should prosecute this war any differently. They understand that making peace depends not on Israel, as Biden insists, but on its Palestinian Arab aggressors. They understand that if Biden gets his way and Hamas survives as a military force, there will be more Oct. 7-style atrocities. They understand that the Palestinian state Biden is threatening to impose upon Israel will deliver Oct. 7-style atrocities on steroids.

And so the more Biden applies the thumbscrews to Israel, the more he will actually increase Israeli support for Netanyahu, who will be applauded for standing up to such an unconscionable betrayal and defending Israeli lives. Some people dismiss the realities of Israeli opinion about the war and the “two-state solution” because all they can see is the apparently demonic figure of Netanyahu. Such people are obsessed with him. Many Israeli journalists see nothing but this hate-figure looming in front of them. He fills the entire visual space between the hater and the political horizon.

But it’s perfectly possible to dislike Netanyahu and want to see him gone from office, and yet support his determination to destroy Hamas or oppose the imposition of a Palestinian state, on the grounds that there is no alternative strategy that would protect Israelis against further genocidal attack.

So why are so many unable to distinguish between the man and the measures?

For a start, it's so much easier to blame a man who can be removed from office rather than face up to a terrifying reality that's far harder to address, such as the Palestinian Arabs' implacable and brainwashed hatred of the Jews.

For exactly the same reason, it's so much easier to believe that a Palestinian state would end that enmity, rather than face up to the actual evidence of a century of murderous Palestinian rejectionism that continues without end. There's also another reason, a clue to which was provided by certain reactions to the Oct. 7 pogrom both in Israel and abroad.

Among many "progressives," the atrocities produced a profound sense of disorientation. This was because the Palestinians—people whose cause they had promoted as the acme of conscience and enlightenment—turned out to be barbaric savages.

Even worse, people the progressives had opposed and stigmatized as the "far-right" because they had regarded the Palestinians as murderous foes turned out to have been correct all along.

Worse yet again, some people on their own side actually turned on them for supporting Israel against Hamas. This was a terrible and destabilizing shock. That's because the left is governed by a herd mentality. Their views have to conform to the opinion of similarly "enlightened" people. Anyone who isn't part of the progressive herd is "right-wing" and wrong about everything.

Moreover, since progressives believe that they embody virtue itself, right-wingers aren't just wrong but evil. Yet the Oct. 7 massacre revealed that the people supported by the progressives were evil.

This put progressives in a terrible bind. They couldn't accept anything that revealed their own narrative to be so morally bankrupt.

So they exaggerated the plight of Gaza civilians in the war, for which they blamed Israel not Hamas. In response to the tsunami of antisemitism consuming the West as a result of the Palestinian cause they themselves promoted, they focused instead on the evils of "Islamophobia." And they redoubled the attack on Netanyahu as their scapegoat.

As a result, both the Biden administration and others who demonize "the right" are supporting the insupportable. If they have their way, more Israelis will be murdered, raped, beheaded and taken hostage; there will be more Islamist intimidation, subversion and violence in Britain and America; and the West will find itself in a terrible war for its survival not against "right-wing" bogeymen, but against truly sinister enemies whom Western folly has so catastrophically empowered.

GAZA - WHERE DOUBLE STANDARDS INTERSECT

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 28-2-24)

It has been 144 days.

Not one human rights organization, not one major media outlet, not one world government, not one UN agency has publicly called on Arab countries to open their borders for Gazans in a war zone to flee.

This is unlike every other war in modern history. Millions of Ukrainians, Syrians, Somalians, Sudanese and other refugees flee war zones all the time and the world's human rights organizations and editorialists relentlessly call for borders to be opened and for refugees to be treated humanely.

Except for Gaza.

And as far as I can tell, not one reporter - not one! - has bothered asking HRW and Amnesty and Gisha and UNRWA - or even the State Department or white House - what their official position is on Egypt's and Jordan's refusal to allow any Gazans to seek safety within their borders.

It is astonishing. Not a single major group, organization, pundit or nation who claim to care about the welfare of the civilians of Gaza is willing to even express a passing public criticism of Egypt's and Jordan's quite public proclamations that they will not allow a single Palestinian to flee to safety.

There are two overlapping sets of double standards for Gaza.

One is discussed quite a bit: antisemitism. The very charge of "genocide" that is only hurled at Israel and no other nation at war can only be explained by hatred of Jews. The demands that Israel behave in ways that no one else is expected to are antisemitic. The suspicion that Israel's statements are suspect, that their claims and evidence must be corroborated before they can be believed no matter how much evidence is produced, is classic antisemitism where Jews are considered shifty and always scheming.

The other double standard is Islam-phobia, the very real fear of Islam that has been exhibited in the West since the 19th century, not to be confused with "Islamophobia."

No one wants to admit it aloud, but there is a great fear in the West of upsetting Muslims, who are regarded as irrational creatures who might just decide to attack you if you make them angry. And many Muslims take full

advantage of this fear, threatening violence or terrorism that could somehow result if they don't get their way.

If anyone would publicly call on Egypt to open its borders to Gazans, the Egyptian government would react with great anger - it would suspend relations with any country, it would expel or imprison any human rights workers, it would embark on a smear campaign against any pundits, it would self-righteously say that its policy is the most humane policy possible for Palestinians and no one would dare contradict them.

And Islam-phobia ensures that no one wants to shame Egypt or prompt such reactions. "Speaking truth to power" only applies to power that doesn't act irrationally or violently. It directly leads to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

The violence we are now seeing in Western cities and campuses, ostensibly in defense of Palestinians, is partly a result of Western reluctance to appear "Islamophobic" in acting against the lesser offenses of "only" blocking major transportation routes.

No one wants to criticize Palestinians for overwhelmingly supporting the mass murder of Jewish civilians. Calls for a "ceasefire" begin and end with Israel. Calls for Hamas to release hostages are pro forma and forced, while calls for Israel to stop fighting and allow Hamas to win are strident and angry.

This overlapping of Islam-phobia and antisemitism has some surprising commonalities. In both cases, context is anathema.

No one wants to compare how Egypt is expected to act with Gazans with how they are expected to act with other people seeking refuge from war.

No one wants to compare Israeli actions with the behavior of the US and Britain and Germany in various Muslim theatres of war.

Almost no one wants to seriously publish the IDF's extensive controls in place to minimize civilian harm and how difficult that is in an urban war with Hamas hiding beneath civilians. Very few seriously compare Israel's actions with real international law, instead creating new rules for Israel that have never been applied anywhere else.

Gaza is where the double standards for Jews and the double standards for Muslims intersect.

THE DEMAND FOR A CEASE-FIRE IS A DEMAND FOR THE ANNIHILATION OF ISRAEL

BEN-DROR YEMINI (Ynetnews.com 4-3-24)

When the Luftwaffe carried out the blitz on London, it was a war crime. When the Americans and British bombed Tokyo, Dresden, Hamburg, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hundreds of thousands of innocent people were killed. But it was not a crime. This was a necessity in order to defeat the Nazi axis of evil.

When Hamas leaders repeatedly declare their intent to exterminate the Jews and take over the world, and embark on a campaign to murder innocents, Israel is forced to defeat Hamas. Innocents are being killed. It's as sad in Gaza as it was in Dresden or Mosul.

The axis of evil has announced in advance that as soon as Israel holds her fire, it will renew its effort to destroy the Jewish state. This is exactly what Razi Hamad, a senior Hamas official, declared: "October 7 was only the first time. There will be a second and third and fourth time."

So it is not only Israel's right to defeat Hamas. It is her duty. Just as it was a supreme moral obligation to defeat the Nazis, a demand for a cease-fire is tantamount to supporting the resumption of Hamas' extermination efforts. Anyone who would have proposed a cease-fire with Germany without the complete surrender of the Nazis would have been considered insane. Today he is considered a human rights fighter.

A reminder: Israel demands a cease-fire in return for the release of the hostages and the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip. Hamas prefers bloodshed. Not Israel.

But anyway, this is not the demand of the pro-Hamas demonstrators. They are on the side of the axis of evil and annihilation. And it's a shame.

WHERE IS THE 'HUMANITARIAN AID' FOR THE HOSTAGES?

RUTHIE BLUM (March 3, 2024 / JNS)

The day after President Joe Biden announced that the United States would begin airdrops of humanitarian aid to Gaza, U.S. military planes parachuted pallets of food and water over the beach in the southwest of the Strip.

Biden made this declaration during a joint press briefing on Friday with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who claimed that the "humanitarian crisis [in Gaza] is our No. 1 priority."

Never mind that Biden twice confused Gaza with Ukraine. Forget that

Meloni followed up with an emphasis on the need to “guarantee the two-state perspective.”

The implication of both mental lapses—one literal and the other figurative—was clear: The onus for the current and future resolution of Hamas’s war against the Jewish state is on Israel.

The timing of the statements was convenient. Dozens of Gazans were left dead on Thursday after descending, mob-like, on an aid-delivery convoy.

The scene provided yet another opportunity for Israel’s enemies and fellow traveler detractors to believe the Hamas-reported lie that Israel Defense Forces troops opened fire on the hungry crowd.

As it happens, fewer than 10 Gazans—those approaching soldiers in an aggressive and menacing manner—were killed by IDF bullets. The rest lost their lives in the stampede or were run over by the Gazan drivers of the aid trucks under threat from the throng.

Neither Biden nor Meloni went as far as to accuse Israel of murdering the rioters. The United States even blocked an attempt on Thursday by Arab states to push through a U.N. Security Council statement blaming Israel for the incident.

But Biden did give Israel an indirect slap on the wrist over it.

“In addition to expanding deliveries by land,” he said, “we’re going to insist that Israel facilitate more trucks and more routes to get more and more people the help they need.”

He went on: “No excuses. Because the truth is, aid flowing to Gaza is nowhere nearly enough. Innocent lives are on the line and children’s lives are on the line and we won’t stand by until we get more aid in there.”

Finally, Biden added, “We should be getting hundreds of trucks in, not just several. I won’t stand by. We won’t let up, and we’re gonna pull out every stop we can to get more assistance in.”

He failed to mention that nearly 15,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since the start of the war. According to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), only 1.5% were refused entry, on the grounds that they contained forbidden “dual-use” items—those that could be employed for terrorist purposes.

Biden also forgot to point out that Hamas steals most of the goods that make their way into the Strip, hoarding some of the food for its terrorists while selling the rest to noncombatants at exorbitant prices. And it commandeers all the fuel to keep its tunnels operational.

This is in addition to the travesty of international agencies—chief among them UNRWA—being in complete cahoots with Hamas. Obviously, then, getting the supplies to the people for whom they are intended has been challenging, if not downright impossible.

Meanwhile, those of the 134 remaining hostages in Hamas captivity who are still alive have been receiving no assistance of any kind, not even from the International Red Cross. Some require medication for chronic conditions. Others aren’t being treated for serious wounds sustained during the Oct. 7 massacre. But all are subsisting on half a pita per day—malnourished to the point of starving.

The actual number of “innocent civilians” in Gaza is debatable, since even 10-year-olds there have been aiming RPGs at IDF soldiers. There is no question, however, that the hostages being held in physically and sexually abusive conditions in the dungeons of Gaza are guiltless victims of a genocidal onslaught.

Theirs is the plight that the world should be highlighting. Instead, the “humanitarians” are calling on Israel to cease its battle against Hamas.

Biden, Meloni and anyone else whose heart is bleeding over the crisis in Gaza ought to be reminded that this war would end instantly if Hamas were to surrender and free the hostages.

Since that’s not happening, Israel has no choice but to force the release of the hostages through increased military pressure, and ultimately to demolish Hamas. This is the sole acceptable scenario for anyone in his—or her—right mind.

THE NEW HAMAS TIMES

PHYLLIS CHESLER (NewEnglishReview.org 6-3-24)

The New York Times simply cannot help themselves. Every time they write about Israel/Hamas/Gaza/Palestine they get it all wrong.

Their anti-Israel bias and their pro-Hamas bias is malicious. It also constitutes incitement to genocide since so many Westerners swear by what they read here.

I—and many others—have documented this pernicious bias hundreds of times and it has made no difference. The Times just digs its heels even harder. Why do I even bother? I just can’t help myself.

Someone has to speak truth to power. One must stand up to say that the Emperor is oh-so-very naked. As Edmund Burke said: “All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men (and women) to do nothing.”

Let’s look at the language the Times uses. The piece, by Farnaz Fassihi and Isabel Kershner, is titled, “Signs of Sexual Abuse in Several Locations in Hamas Attack.” “Signs?” Only “signs?” In “several locations?” Not in the south of Israel? Not at a music festival? Not as strategized and funded by Iran and launched by Hamas?

Online, the Times changed the title to “U.N. Team Finds Grounds to Support Reports of Sexual Violence in Hamas Attack.” Of course, they also discuss “reports of abuse of Palestinians in Israeli detention.” Of course.

Here’s their language in a previous piece based on Gazan Health Ministry statistics.

On February 29th, 2024, the Times titled their article: “As Hungry Gazans Crowd in an Aid Convoy, a Crush of Bodies, Israeli Gunshots and a Deadly Toll.” The authors, Hiba Yazbek and Aaron Boxerman write:

“The Gazan Health Ministry said in a statement that Israeli forces had killed more than 100 people and injured 700 others in a ‘massacre’, as they waited for food from the convoy. The latest bloodshed came as Gaza’s health officials reported that the death toll from the war had risen above 30,000, a grim milestone that intensified pressure on Israel to end its military offensive.”

They do not write that Hamas “claims” that this number is accurate or that there are “signs” or “grounds” for believing these figures.

Why do they refuse to understand who Hamas officials really are—yes, including the Health Ministry? They are terrorists, not resistance fighters. Even President Biden “told reporters that he had ‘no confidence’ in how Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip has calculated the mounting death toll.”

On the same date, (February 29th), another articles in the Times, by Victoria Kim, titled “Death Toll in Gaza Passes 30,000,” begins this way: “The death toll in Gaza passed a somber milestone on Thursday as the local health ministry reported that more than 30,000 people had been killed in the war since October 7... The figures provided by the Gazan health ministry do not distinguish between civilians and combatants.”

Why not be fair and at least mention the far more accurate numbers which are kept by the Israeli Defense Forces concerning the number of Israelis murdered since 10/7 (approximately 2,692). This includes civilians, hostages, soldiers, and police officials. Then add to that the number of Israelis who have been displaced from both the north and the south (200,000? A bit more? Less?)

Why is the New York Times still falling for Hamas’s every trick? And inciting the entire world into genocidal Jew hatred? Inflaming the mobs who have been stabbing and shooting Jews, calling for “death to Israel,” blocking traffic, harassing politicians?

But first, contrast the tentative language employed in the March 4 article about Hamas’s sexual barbarism on 10/7, with the language that the NYT used about the so-called Israeli bombing of the Ahli hospital in Gaza City. They headlined it: “The Gaza Hospital where hundreds were reported killed is a mainstay for Palestinians.” Their reporter begins:

“The Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, where Palestinian authorities say hundreds of people were killed by an explosion on Tuesday, has a long history in the region.... (according to the hospital): ‘Hospitals and patients in Gaza are in grave danger,’ (according to the most Rev. Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury) ‘Hospitals and patients in Gaza are facing catastrophe.’”

According to the Times, “the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem condemned the strike on the hospital. Gaza remains bereft of safe havens.”

I must ask—why does the NYT still believe what Hamas officials, especially Hamas health officials, tell them? For that matter, why believe everything that so-called “experts” sent by the UN more than five months after 10/7 believe?

A multitude of articles have documented what Professor Richard Landes long ago termed “Pallywood,” something in which Hamas and the PLO specialize, namely, civilian actors playing the part of wounded teenagers, corpses that are seen jumping out of ambulances once they’ve cleared camera range, suffering Arabs who really did their suffering in other Middle East countries and even in other wars. Only Hamas-vetted journalists were allowed into the Gaza strip and if they reported anything true, they would immediately lose their precious “access.”

How do Blood Libels start? Easy. Just rely on Hamas officials as your news source. The Western media does just that. Take their coverage of the alleged Israeli bombing of a hospital. According to Landes:

“At 6:59 p.m. on Oct. 17, a blast occurred in the parking lot of the Al-Ahli hospital. The crater it left was small and shallow, and the explosion that followed was a sudden fireball that left two fires burning in the parking lot. The hospital was undamaged, except for some broken windows on the blast side, and half a dozen cars were strewn around, badly burned... Anyone who saw the crater knew right away that it was what observers call a ‘fell-short’: a Palestinian rocket that never made it to its target in Israel.

Hamas had a massive advantage in circulating the accusation that Israel struck a hospital killing hundreds, since there were few or no Western reporters in Gaza at that time. Hamas still had one problem: As soon as the evidence came out, its story would collapse. Therefore, within a limited window, it had to supply Western media with the semblance of evidence to get them to bite and run with the story, long enough for the Hamas version to take hold around the world... The ruse succeeded. Like stenographers, the Western media reported the Hamas version as the headline news item. However, the NYT remains perfectly content to cite as its source a ‘spokeswoman for the Gazan health ministry, which is overseen by Hamas,’ asserting ‘that the death toll was expected to rise as bodies were pulled from the rubble.’ After quickly noting the highly dubious source, almost as a formality, journalists ran with the Hamas narrative.”

As a psychologist, I can confirm that the first picture or story out, even if it has been photoshopped, has the most forceful and permanent effect. Corrections—even major corrections—matter much less.

Filmmaker Pierre Rehov has also documented the industry of fake news perfected by Arabs in Gaza and in Yehuda and Shomron.

Please read how Israeli officials sound, how sober, and how painstaking their attempts are to estimate the number of our dead. And how long they take to revise their statistics.

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) reports that “Israel revised its estimated death toll from the October 7 massacre by Hamas to approximately 1,200 people after five weeks of forensic struggle to identify the victims. Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat released the figure on November 9. ‘This is the updated number,’ Haiat told AFP. ‘It is due to the fact that there were a lot of corpses that were not identified and now we think those belong to terrorists... not Israeli casualties.’” The previous estimate was 1,400 people, shared by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to visiting U.S. President Joe Biden on October 18.

Haiat cautioned, “‘This is not a final number. It is an updated estimate,’ which may be updated again. The new figure includes 845 civilians and more than 350 troops, police, and security personnel. Some of the 239 people taken hostage by Hamas may also have been killed outright or shortly after being taken into captivity. Another 13 people remain unaccounted for. Numerous bodies have yet to be identified, but Israeli officials said most belong to terrorists killed while perpetrating the massacre.”

I would strongly suggest that the NYT check with the Israeli Foreign Ministry every time Hamas officials allege anything.

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

LIGHTING THE SHABBOS CANDLES

RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT (Torah.org)

The obligation to light Shabbos candles rests equally on all members of a household. Nevertheless, our Sages placed the responsibility for the actual lighting upon the wife. One of the reasons given[1] is that candle-lighting atones for Chavah’s part in the sin of the eitz ha-da’as (Tree of Knowledge): Chavah caused Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit for which Man was punished by losing his immortality. Since Chavah extinguished “the candle of the world[2], ” it is the woman who sets aright Chavah’s misdeed by assuming the obligation of lighting candles for her household[3]. Consequently:

Even if a husband demands that he light the candles, the wife has the right to protest and prevent him from doing so[4]. It is recommended, though, that the husband take part in the mitzvah by lighting and quickly extinguishing the candle wicks, thereby making them easier to light[5]. If candles are lit in other rooms in addition to the eating area[6], it is the

husband who lights them[7].

If one has no wife, or if he sees that his wife is running late and will be unable to light on time, then he should light the candles with the blessing[8].

If one’s wife is not home for Shabbos, it is preferable that the husband himself light candles and not one of the daughters[9]. If, however, a daughter who is over twelve years old lights for him, he fulfills the mitzvah through her lighting. One cannot, however, fulfill his obligation by having a daughter under twelve light candles for him[10].

In the event that a brother and sister are at home without their parents, it is preferable that the sister light the candles[11].

Years ago, it was customary for a woman who gave birth not to light candles on the first Friday night after giving birth. For that one Shabbos, candles were lit by the husband[12]. Several reasons are offered in explanation of this custom, but apparently the main concern was that women were too weak after childbirth to get out of bed and light candles[13]. In view of the improved health conditions prevalent nowadays, many poskim agree that the custom is no longer valid and the wife should light candles as she does every Friday night[14].

Question: How has electrical lighting affected the traditional way of lighting Shabbos candles?

Discussion: When electricity became commonplace, the poskim debated whether the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles could be fulfilled by turning on electric lights. While the vast majority of poskim were of the opinion that one could indeed fulfill this obligation with electrical lighting, and some even held that it was preferable to use electricity, most women opted to continue lighting the traditional candle or oil-based lights. This remains the prevalent custom today. Still, there is a prominent role for electric lights to play in the performance of this mitzvah and indeed, almost every Jewish household relies on electricity in order to properly and completely fulfill the mitzvah of hadlaks neiros Shabbos. Let us explain:

The halachah states that one is obligated to have light in any room that will be used on Friday night[15]. Our Sages instituted this ordinance so that household members would be able to safely move about the house without fear of injury that would disrupt the harmony of Shabbos. Today, most homes rely on some electrical source (night-light, bathroom-light, etc.) to illuminate the areas in which they will find themselves on Friday night. Thus, they fulfill this part of the mitzvah with electric lights[16].

The appropriate procedure, then, is as follows. When the wife is ready to light candles in the dining room, all the electrical lights in the rooms which will be used on Friday night should be shut off. Those lights should then be turned on by the husband (or wife or another family member), with the intention that they are being turned on for the sake of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The wife then lights the candles, and the blessing she recites covers all of the lights in the house, both electrical and otherwise.

There are a number of other scenarios in which electric lights may be used in conjunction with candles in order to properly fulfill the mitzvah:

Students residing in a dormitory or guests staying at a hotel are obligated to light Shabbos candles. Even if they light candles in the dining hall, they are still required to light in the area where they sleep. Since it is usually unsafe to leave candles burning in a dormitory or in a hotel room, we must rely on electric lights to fulfill that part of the mitzvah. A small light should, therefore, be turned off and on in honor of Shabbos before Shabbos starts. A blessing, however, should not be made, since the blessing is recited over the candles which are lit in the main dining room.

Shabbos guests can technically fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles through the lighting of their hosts. Even though they are not required to light a special candle of their own, it has nevertheless become customary that all married women light their own candles. But since the guests are required to have some light in their sleeping area (to fulfill the halachic obligation mentioned above), the proper procedure for them is as follows: Turn on an electric light in or near one’s sleeping quarters, proceed quickly to the dining room and light candles, and have the blessing apply to both acts of lighting[17].

Sometimes a situation arises where the mitzvah of hadlakas neiros can be performed by using electric lights only. For instance:

Moments before Shabbos is about to begin, one realizes that there are no candles in the house and none can be gotten on such short notice. Instead of panicking, the dining room lights should be turned off and then turned on again lichvod Shabbos.

In a situation where using candles would be difficult or dangerous, such as

in a hospital, the poskim agree that one should rely on the electric lights for Shabbos candles. They should be turned off and then turned on again for the sake of the mitzvah[18].

Many poskim hold that the blessing of lehadlik ner shel Shabbos is recited even when the mitzvah is performed by lighting electric lights only[19]. Others hold that in such a case the blessing should be omitted[20]. No clear-cut custom exists and one should follow his or her rav's directives.

Question; Does it matter whether or not the electric lights in the dining room are off or on at the time the Shabbos candles are lit?

Discussion: Contemporary poskim debate this issue[21]. Some question the custom of lighting candles when the electric lights are on, since the candles are not adding any more light to the room. In their opinion, reciting the blessing over candles which are lit in a brightly illuminated room may be a berachah l'vatalah. Other poskim dismiss that argument and maintain that since the candles are lit lichvod Shabbos and add a measure of festivity and ambiance to the Shabbos table, the candle-lighting is significant enough to warrant the recitation of a berachah.

In order to avoid a possible berachah l'vatalah, it is recommended that either the husband or the wife turn off the lights in the dining room before the candles are lit, and then turn them on again lichvod Shabbos right before (or immediately after the lighting, but before the recital of the blessing) the candles are lit. This way, the blessing which the wife recites over the candles will cover the electric lights as well[22].

1. Tur, O.C. 263.

2. This is how the Midrash (Tanchumah, Metzora 9) refers to Adam.

3. Contemporary poskim debate whether or not the custom that all of the girls in a household over the age of chinuch light candles with a blessing — is valid; see Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7; Az Nidberu 6:67-68 and Yechaveh Da'as 2:32.

4. Mishnah Berurah 263:11.

5. Mishnah Berurah 263:12; 264:28. See Tosfos Rav Akiva Eiger, Shabbos 2:6. [The Chazon Ish, however, is quoted as ruling that nowadays, when the candles are of superior quality, there is no reason to light and extinguish them first; see Dinim v'Hanhagos 9:6 and Eहेle be-Tamar, pg. 17.]

6. See follow-up discussion for explanation of why candles [or electric lights] need to be lit in other rooms.

7. Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 263:5; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 74 (Badei ha-Shulchan 11). See also Beir Halachah 263:6 s.v. bachurim.

8. Mishnah Berurah 262:11.

9. Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 46.

10. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:7.

11. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 45, note 34).

12. Mishnah Berurah 263:11.

13. See Toras Shabbos 263:4; Tehilah l'David 88:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7; Hagahos Imrei Baruch 263:6.

14. Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling, quoted in Halichos Bas Yisrael 15:18); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:9.

15. Mishnah Berurah 263:2, 29, 31. See Shevet ha-Levi 3:24.

16. Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 17 and pg. 36).

17. Rav Y. Kamenetsky recommended this procedure for hotel guests as well; see Emes L'yaakov, O.C. 263, note 274.

18. Based on Rama, O.C. 263:4 (concerning candles). See Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:157 quoting Rav M. Feinstein.

19. Teshuvos Beis Yitzchak, Y.D. 120; Machazeh Avraham 41; Melamed Leho'il 47; Rav A. Kotler (quoted in Kochvei Yitzchak 1:2); Rav Y.E. Henkin (Eidus l'Yisrael, pg. 122); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ashrei ha-Ish, vol. 2, 6:33); Yechaveh Da'as 5:24. See also Tzitz Eliezer 1:20-11.

20. Har Tzvi 2:114, quoting the Gaon of Rogatchov; Mishpatei Uziel, O.C. 1:7; Tchebener Rav (quoted in Shraga ha-Meir 5:11); Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, 2, note 26). Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, 43, note 22) maintains that a blessing could be made over a flashlight but not over other lights.

21. See the various views in Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:20-30; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 166 and 171, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 20; Divrei Yatziv, O.C. 120; Az Nidberu 3:2; Chut Shani, Shabbos, vol. 4, pg. 65-66, quoting Rav N. Karelitz.

22. This was the custom in the homes of a number of prominent poskim: Rav M. Feinstein (The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 20); Rav Y. Kamenetsky (Ko Somar l'Beis Yaakov, pg. 50), who turned on the electricity after his wife lit the candles but before she recited the blessing; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (after his wife's passing) turned off the lights, lit the candles and then turned on the lights (reported by his grandson in Kol ha-Torah, vol. 40, pg. 16). See also Be'er Moshe 5:32 and Az Nidberu 1:79-9, 3:2, for a concurring opinion.

Candle lighting (Melbourne) Vayakhel 8/3/24 29 Adar 1 5784 7.31pm/8.27pm