



Compliments of the Institute of Jewish Studies (founded by [Yankel Rosenbaum](#) HY"D) First Published Adar 5761 Vol 24.26
 Printing in part sponsored by **NLZ Imports, D&A Werdiger, Weis Printing** – email: zichron-yaakov@hotmail.com
 (In memory of Moshe Yehuda ben Avrohom Yaakov, Mala Mindel bas Meir, Moshe Tzvi ben Yitzchok Aharon, Gittel bas Sinai,
 Nechemia ben Menachem Mendel, Yaakov ben Menachem Mendel)

Pekudei 5785

LEARNING TO LOVE IT

RABBI LAZER GURKOW (Chabad.org)

This week's Parshah continues the theme from the previous Parsha in describing our ancestors' enthusiasm for building the Mishkan (tabernacle) and their exacting commitment to its great detail. After transmitting G-d's detailed instructions for building the Mishkan the Torah could have simply concluded with the words Vayasu ken, "and so they did." Instead, it describes how the Mishkan was actually made, repeating all the details. Why does the Torah do this when it is usually so economical with its words? Every teacher strives not only to transmit his lesson but also to spark the student's curiosity, to engender within him a desire to follow the instruction. The Torah is no different. Torah is a book of instruction. Thus it endeavors to inculcate within us, its students, affection for its tradition.

It is not enough for us to learn the letter of its law — it is imperative that we also develop an appetite for its spirit. Torah wants to nurture within us a thirst for its information, a hunger for its heritage, a yearning for its compelling atmosphere and an appreciation for its sanctity.

Thus, the Torah dedicates two full portions to describe the atmosphere of yesteryear. To give us a feel for the ambiance that prevailed in the home of our ancestors, to convey their enthusiasm for the Torah and their adherence to its laws. To teach us not only that they obeyed G-d's commandments but also why. Why they found it so compelling.

I have talked to many Jewish adults who remember their Talmud Torah years. Those youthful memories are often unpleasant. Teachers frequently used the stick more than the carrot. They were taught to study the Torah but not to love it. It was assumed that with time they would develop this love on their own but for many that expectation fell short; their parents and teachers failed them.

When we set out to teach our children let us remember that commitment is not enough; we must also aspire for conviction.

DIRE PRECAUTIONS

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

Most building dedications are joyous events filled with upbeat speeches and predictions of growth and unyielding expansion. This week, Moshe recaps and reckons all the labor and material that went into the building of the Mishkan. He proudly announces that the contributions of gold, silver, copper and other materials, brought by the children of Israel exceeded the demands. Yet there is one aspect of his inaugural address that is strikingly somber. Instead of declaring that the Mishkan is here to stay and will be the forerunner of the Temple, he begins with a foreboding sense of doom.

The portion of Pekudei (Reckoning) begins in Exodus 38:21 "These are the reckoning of the Mishkan — the Mishkan of testimony." The Medrash is bothered by Moshe's repetitive expression. Why does he repeat the words Mishkan — Mishkan? He should have said, "These are the reckoning of the Mishkan of testimony." The Medrash answers, homiletically, that the word Mishkan has a close relative in the word Mashkon — collateral. Moshe was alluding, "to the two Temples that were taken back by G-d as collateral for the sins of Israel."

Why on opening day, does Moshe allude to impending doom? Wouldn't such talk be totally demoralizing? What lesson is there for the Jewish People?

In Poland there was a group of smugglers that employed many devious schemes to get goods across the Russian border without paying taxes. Yet, they were not successful until they realized that the border guards never bothered funeral processions.

The smugglers decided to load their wares into coffins, and with all the grief and anguish that accompanies a funeral they carried the contraband across the border. As this ritual became the norm, the fabricated anguish of a funeral procession was abandoned. One dark night, the group, laughing and kibitzing, came to the border. The guards, noticing an unusually buoyant atmosphere, demanded to open the casket. Upon seeing the illegal goods, the guards immediately arrested the group and brought them to police headquarters for interrogation.

The leader of the smugglers stood before the commanding officer and broke down in tears. "Have mercy upon us. We all have families!" he wailed. With rage in his eyes the officer responded. "You fool! You are crying now! Had you cried as you reached the border, you surely would be laughing now. It is because you laughed then that you are crying now!"

Moshe injected a sense of seriousness into the joy of dedication. He warns the Jewish people at this celebration that even the greatest gifts are not permanent. Even the Mishkan will not last forever. We must have that sense of seriousness and appreciation relating to everything we cherish. The prophet (Yoel 2:13) tells us, "rend your heart and not your clothing." The sages explain those words as saying "if you rend your hearts, you will not have to rend your clothing." Moshe, in a very subtle way, sends the same message. Even at a wedding, as the groom smashes the glass under the canopy, he reminds himself, his bride, and all those gathered of Moshe's inaugural message. Cherish what you have and guard it dearly. Because nothing left unguarded lasts forever.

IN THE EYES OF G-D AND MAN

RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS (Aish.com)

Previous parshas described building the Tabernacle in the desert, including the donation of materials and the actual construction. This week, Moshe presents a precise accounting of how each donation was utilized. For example, since one silver half-shekel had been collected from each of the 603,550 men (totaling 301,775 shekels), Moshe reports constructing 100 pillar sockets (at 3,000 shekels apiece), with the remaining 1,775 shekels going toward silver bands, hooks and caps. In much the same manner, Moshe lists his allocation of gold, copper, wood, fabrics, animal skins and precious gems — confirming that every penny went to the Tabernacle — not into his own Swiss bank account.

Yet since Moshe was known for his utmost integrity and had a reputation beyond reproach, why did he deem it necessary to make a detailed public accounting? Nowhere do we see G-d requesting this information. Yet Moshe does so voluntarily. Why?

The answer offers insight into the two-way street of integrity: Not only do others have the responsibility to judge me favorably, but at the same time it is my responsibility to avoid creating a situation where others may draw the wrong conclusion.

All too often we hear someone say, "I don't care what anybody thinks — I know I'm doing the right thing." The Torah approach, however, is that while we certainly strive to do what's right in the eyes of G-d, neither may we give the wrong impression to our fellow man.

The Talmud (Shekalim 3:2) states that when the treasurer would withdraw funds from the Temple coffers, he was not permitted to wear any garment that might possibly conceal money — e.g. pockets, cuffs or even shoes.

These precautions were taken not because of apprehension that money would actually be stolen, but rather lest people come to think it was! As King Solomon says:

"You shall find favor and understanding in the eyes of G-d and mankind." (Mishlei 3:4)

SAPPHIRE QUARRY

In the case of Moshe, there was a particular need for full disclosure. After Moshe smashed the tablets at the Golden Calf, G-d forgave the Jewish people and commanded Moshe to chisel out a second set of tablets. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 32:2) says that G-d placed a sapphire quarry right in Moshe's tent, thereby making him a very wealthy man.

Immediately thereafter, construction began on the Tabernacle, and Moshe was entrusted with approximately one ton of gold and silver. The potential for abuse was so great, that even though there was never any accusation of misdeed, Moshe still wanted to remove the slightest suspicion that he'd become wealthy from misappropriated Tabernacle funds.

Moshe's concern was further compounded by his position of public prominence. He knew that all eyes were upon him. So while this sensitivity is incumbent upon each of us, it is all the more so upon our leaders.

AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

This has particular implications for observant Jews. Imagine an observant Jew going into McDonalds to make a phone call. A passer-by might mistakenly draw one of the following conclusions:

1. That McDonalds is really kosher and it's OK to eat there, or
2. That this Jew (who purports to keep kosher) is sneaking around doing something he shouldn't, or
3. Even though McDonalds is not kosher, but if others are lax in observance, then somehow it's okay for me, too.

We don't live in an isolated, compartmentalized world. Rather, we are a community and a nation – and that puts each of us in the position to inspire others and lift the baseline of acceptable behavior. Like it or not, we are all role models for each other. And one person's actions – even those misconstrued – can generate either good or bad PR for G-d and the Jewish people.

The joke is told of a rabbi who is bothered by the fact that he's never been able to eat pork. So he flies to a remote tropical island and checks into a hotel. He immediately gets himself a table at the finest restaurant and orders the most expensive pork dish on the menu. As he's eagerly waiting for it to be served, he is shocked to hear his name called from across the restaurant. He looks up to see 10 of his loyal congregants approaching. Just his luck, they'd chosen the same time to visit the same remote location!

At that moment, the waiter comes out with a huge silver tray carrying a whole roasted pig with an apple in its mouth. The rabbi looks up sheepishly at his congregants and says, "Wow – you order an apple in this place and look how it's served!"

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

This concept has endless applications in everyday life.

Imagine you've just purchased a magazine at the newsstand, and now you're going into the supermarket. If you walk out of the supermarket with a magazine in your hand, you're setting yourself up for unpleasant accusations. So based on what we've said, take one of the following precautions:

1. Get a bag from the newsstand and keep the magazine in the bag with the receipt.
2. As you pass through the checkout line, announce loudly that you've purchased the magazine elsewhere.
3. Stick the magazine in your car before even entering the supermarket.

In this way, no one might misconstrue.

This Shabbat, let's take inspiration from Moshe and think about steps to enhance our integrity.

WHEN LEADERS ARE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (Chabad.org)

Long ago, King Shlomo, the wisest of all men, said (Koheles !:9)“There’s nothing new under the sun.”

Anyone involved in communal work knows all too well that being in the public eye is a double-edged sword. While it’s nice to be well-known and respected, high-profile figures are also prone to being talked about at the dinner table. “Did you see the rabbi’s new car? And what about the Rebbetzin’s new earrings?”

So I found it comforting to read that even Moshe had tongues wagging in his day.

When it came to the building of the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary in the wilderness, the people had plenty to say about Moshe. Looking closely at the verse, “They gazed after Moshe,” (33:8) the Midrash Tanchuma quotes

some rather snide remarks about the great man.

What exactly were the people gazing at?

“Look at that neck ... those legs ... Moshe is eating and drinking what belongs to us. All that he has belongs to us!”

And another fellow added, “What do you expect? A man in charge of the work of the Sanctuary shouldn’t get rich?”

As soon as he heard this, Moshe said, “By your life, as soon as the Sanctuary is completed, I will make a full reckoning with you.”

Moshe, the greatest prophet of all time, was suspected of making a profit on the communal collection? Of raiding the Tabernacle treasury? The man who took us out of Egypt, split the sea, brought us the Ten Commandments and so much more was accused of fraud and embezzlement? It seems incredulous!

You mean to tell me that if Moshe bought a new animal they would say, “What, he bought the latest model, that souped-up, super-charged donkey? And if his wife, Tzipporah, got a new dress, they would chirp, “And did you see what she wore to the wedding last night? That outfit must have cost her a fortune at Saks Fifth Avenue!”

Well, it seems like it wasn’t very far from that.

“If Moshe went forth early from his tent, they said, “Why does the son of Amram leave so early? Perhaps all is not well at home?” If he left late, they said, “What do you think? He is sitting and devising evil schemes against you and is plotting against you.” (Sifri Devarim 12:2)

Now, of course Moshe knew that he was absolutely and completely innocent of any wrongdoing. But the Torah itself states “And you shall be clean and innocent before G-d and before Israel.” (Bamidbar 32:22) And the Talmud (Yoma 38a) derives from this that “Not only must one’s behavior be innocent and beyond reproach in the eyes of G-d, but he must also ensure that he is beyond suspicion in the eyes of man.”

And so, in what was most likely the very first official audit in history, Parshat Pekudei (38:21-31) records how Moshe ordered a meticulous accounting of the gold and precious materials collected from the Israelites for the construction of the Tabernacle.

Some 33 centuries before terms like accountability, transparency, and good governance became common parlance, the first national leader of the Jewish people had instituted just such a system.

I am reminded of another scandalous story where people spoke critically, not of Moshe, but a leader of the Chassidic movement. Some wise guy announced in the presence of the Gaon of Vilna that he had seen, with his own eyes, the Chassidic leader “eating meat and drinking wine on Tisha B’Av and even dancing with female companions!” And guess what? It was absolutely true! Really? Yes. It was Tisha B’Av which fell on Shabbat, so the fast was actually postponed until Sunday, and the feasting was obligatory. And the female? She was but a few days old and held on a tray. (Beit Rebbi, chapter 4; Igrot Kodesh vol 13, letter 291.)

When rabbis like me read about the greatest of the great being maligned and slandered it makes it easier to handle it when we hear those “innocuous” comments that can often bury someone; those not-so-silent whispers about us or our families. Well, if it could happen to Moshe and the greatest leaders of Chassidim, why should I be spared?

Of course, there is a glaring inconsistency here. The same people who complained about Moshe getting rich from their donations had nothing whatsoever to say about their contributions to the building of the Golden Calf. While they suspected Moshe may have had his hand in the till, no one enquired why their piles of gold jewelry had only resulted in the creation of a little calf. All that gold for a tiny calf? No problem. Nobody demanded any audits there. But the Tabernacle? Suddenly they wanted to know where all the gold had gone. “You’d better be able to account for every penny of expenses!”9

Come to think of it, this pretty much reflects our own human inconsistencies, doesn’t it? I know a guy who can blow a hundred thousand dollars in two hours at the casino, but ask him for a donation to the shul and he wants to see the budget and the balance sheet and how every last cent is being spent, “and, by the way, do we really need so many peanuts and raisins at the Kiddush?”

This week, we learn about leadership, transparency and accountability. And that is how it should be. But there’s another lesson too, and that’s about consistency. Yes, transparency in the corporate governance of our shuls, religious, and communal institutions is very important, and we should make no excuses whatsoever. But let’s be consistent and wise in our own spending too..

HIRING PRACTICES

AVROHOM YAAKOV

The main construction of the Mishkan was supervised by Betzalel (the great grandson of Miriam).

“And Betsalel ... did all that Hashem commanded Moshe.”(38:22)
 Rashi comments, “... but “[Bezalel made] all that the Lord commanded Moshe” — even regarding such things which his teacher (Moshe) did not tell him, his own opinion was in agreement with what had been told to Moshe on Sinai ... Moshe further said to him: Betzalel, you must have been sitting in the shadow (Betzel) of G-d (El), for certainly did thus G-d command me!” And consequently, Bezalel made the Tabernacle first and afterwards he made the vessels.”

The Tiferes Shlomo, R' Shlomo of Radomsk notes that Betzalel wasn't just a skilled craftsman but a perfect tsaddik who did everything that Hashem commanded Moshe. People who work in the Holy service need also to be holy.

When appointing people, we should not merely look for people skilled at their job e.g. accounting, but also ehrlichkeit – of ethical standing.

If the best doctor in the world acts unethically, then he is not doing his job.

But on the flip side, the person still needs to be skilled at doing their job.

Both aspects are important.

PLAIN-CLOTHES JEW

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

“... and they made the holy vestments for Aharon” (39:1)

There's much talk about the rise of antisemitism at the moment. Actually, I don't think there is a rise in antisemitism. Jew haters are always out there and their numbers don't change. What changes is their confidence in showing their hatred openly, whether verbally or physically.

I just got back from visiting my mother, who will be 100, G-d willing, in two weeks. My mother lives in St Johns Wood, an upscale suburb just north of London's Regent's Park. It's not exactly Oxford Street on a Saturday, where you could expect ten thousand pro-Palestine protesters, chic-ly clad with their keffiyehs around their necks, screaming “From the river to the sea,” but I still weighed up whether I should wear my standard outfit of dark suit and fedora, or put on a baseball cap and become a plain-clothes, undercover Jew.

In the event, I decided to stand up and be counted, and I discovered something very interesting: There are Jew-lovers out there! Now, I'm not going to say they are as many or as vocal as Jew-haters, but they are out there. In St. John's Wood High Street, there was this big black traffic cop giving out tickets, who looked up at me, gave me a big smile and said, “Me and my mates, we're behind the Jews one hundred and ten percent!” and then he went back to giving out parking tickets. On Friday night as I made my way back from St. John's Wood Synagogue, I turned into a rather dark side street, and saw a taxi driver getting into his cab. He looked at me. I couldn't tell exactly what his attitude was, so I said, “Good Evening!” “Good Shabbos!” he shot back at me. I still wasn't sure whether he was being sarcastic or not, but as he drove past me, he wound down his window, gave me a big thumbs-up and shouted: “Israel Forever! Long Live Israel.”

The Koran explicitly warns Muslims not to make the same mistakes as the Jews did, by not keeping G-d's commandments. They understand this led G-d to reject the Jewish People. There's a similar theme in the Christian scriptures that depicts the “Wandering Jew” outcast from the Promised Land because of the failure to keep G-d's ‘testament’. This is remarkably similar to our reason for sitting on the ground and fasting every Ninth of Av. We too understand that through our many sins, we were exiled from the land of Israel. However, our belief is that G-d will never revoke His Covenant with the Jewish People, nor will He take to Himself another nation.

The Midrash tells us that when Hashem gave the Jewish People the Torah on Mount Sinai, the kings of the East and the West were aware that something cataclysmic had happened that could destabilize their power. They felt the shaking of the earth beneath their feet. They feared another global flood and so asked the Gentile prophet Bilaam what caused this disturbance of the natural order. Bilaam said that there would be no flood, nor would a deluge of fire envelop the world. Rather, the world was responding to the momentous event of the giving of the Torah on Sinai – “Hashem Oz L'Amo Yiten.” To which they responded, “May Hashem bless His people with peace.”

That's the default reaction of the nations of the world: “May Hashem bless His people with peace.” But, when we lose our connection to Torah, then they see in us no spirituality, no “chosen people.” They see us as a choker around their necks, stifling their enjoyment of this world. They see us as a gang of killjoys, for we have lost the ability to be the light to the nations, which is G-d's role for His people. However, when we exemplify our true heritage, the nations will finally say, “May Hashem bless His people with peace!”

REJOICE ON THE FINAL DAY

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Aish.com)

According to the Midrash, the boards of the Mishkan were so heavy that

the people could not hold them up erect next to each other long enough for them to assemble the Mishkan. They kept toppling over. In frustration, the people brought all the boards and poles to Moshe, and he assembled it with miraculous strength that Hashem granted him especially for this purpose.

The Torah, however, states that the Jewish people "brought the Mishkan to Moshe." This would seem to imply that they brought him a completely assembled Mishkan. How can the Midrash be reconciled with these words?

Regarding this same verse, the Midrash quotes from Mishlei (31:25), "Might and splendor are her garments, and she will rejoice on the final day." The Midrash goes on to illustrate this idea with a story concerning Rabbi Abahu's departure from this world. On the threshold, he was shown all the reward that awaited him in the World to Come, and he remarked with astonishment, "All of this is for Abahu? I thought I had been toiling in vain, and now I see I have a great portion in the World to Come!"

What point is the Midrash making by bringing this story in connection to the erection of the Mishkan? And how do we understand Rabbi Abahu's surprise? Did he really expect that having spent his life learning Torah and doing mitzvos he would not be rewarded in the World to Come? Did he really think he was laboring in vain?

Rav Shlomo Breuer explains that Judaism is a deed-oriented religion. It is not enough to say, "I am a Jew at heart." Deeds are what count, learning Torah, performing mitzvos, doing chessed. Being a Jew is about doing, from the moment we arise until the moment we go to bed. Our religion is not one of sentiment, it is one of deed.

At the same time, however, intent also plays a great role in Judaism. If someone is prevented by circumstances beyond his control from doing a mitzvah, the Torah considers it as if he had done the mitzvah (maaleh alav hakasuv k'ilu asahu). Judaism demands deeds but not necessarily results. As long as a Jew puts in the honest and sincere effort, he is rewarded even if he is not successful. Hashem considers his intentions as deeds.

This is what Rabbi Abahu was saying, "There were so many times in my life when I tried, I made the effort, but I was not successful. I had assumed that on these occasions my efforts had been in vain. Now I see that I have been rewarded even for my intentions, for my efforts, even when they were unsuccessful." Therefore, Rabbi Abahu "rejoiced on the final day."

When the time came to assemble the Mishkan, the Jewish people made every effort to do it by themselves. Sweat pouring from their brows, veins bulging on their foreheads, they strained and they pushed those heavy boards with all their might, but they could not erect the Mishkan. It was simply beyond them, and they had no choice but to turn to Moshe for help. Nonetheless, the Torah reports that they "brought the Mishkan to Moshe," because that is what they intended to do and what they tried to do with all their hearts. Hashem considered it as if they had erected the Mishkan themselves, and He rewarded them. Therefore, they "rejoiced on the final day."

JUST PASSING THROUGH

RABBI YAAKOV MENKEN (Torah.org)

This week's reading, Pekudei, closes out the second book of the Torah. As Rashi says, it provides an accounting of the donations or the Tabernacle, of silver and gold and copper, and accounts for all of the holy vessels used in the Divine Service.

Then the Torah tells us that the Tabernacle was actually built and set up, just under a year after leaving Egypt. Once that process was complete, the Divine Presence came down and rested upon the Tabernacle. And then the Torah tells us, at the very end of the reading, “And when the cloud rose up from on the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel traveled, in all their journeys. And if the cloud did not lift, they did not travel, until the day it rose” [40:36-37].

The name of the closing reading of the Book of Numbers is Masei, using the same word for travels, and refers to the actual journeys of the Children of Israel during the 40 years in the desert.

And although we like to speak of the “wanderings” of Israel in the desert, we see that there actually were not so many wanderings: less than three dozen over a 40 year period. A dozen of those were accomplished in the first 50 days, traveling from Egypt to Mount Sinai; if a family traveled by car from New York to California, we would not account for each day's drive from hotel to hotel as a separate trip, we would call it one long journey.

So the journeys of Israel in the desert seem like more than they actually were: Israel dwelled in the same location for years at a time. So how were they wanderings, and what do we learn from these travels?

In addition, it seems odd that the explanation of what triggered a new journey is found here, in our reading, at the time when the Tabernacle was built. The Torah explains to us that from this point forward, the signal that it was time to travel was when the Divine Presence rose from the Tabernacle, but none of those travels are discussed before or after. So why is it

important, when discussing all of the materials of the Tabernacle and how it was set up, even before the Torah's extensive discussion of how the Divine Service was done within it, that the Torah tell us that oh, by the way, the Divine Presence rising from the Tabernacle was the sign to get underway?

A story is told of a wealthy traveler who came to visit the holy Rabbi Yisrael Meyer Kagan, the Chofetz Chaim. When the traveler entered the rabbi's home, he was surprised to find the house was barely furnished. There were benches alongside a simple wooden table, rather than comfortable chairs. And he asked the rabbi why he didn't have more substantial furniture.

Answering a question with a question, the Chofetz Chaim asked the traveler, "where is your furniture?" To which his wealthy guest responded in confusion, "I don't live here, I am just passing through. My furniture is at home!"

"Well," the rabbi said, "I am also just passing through. I know this life is only temporary, and what is important is eternity. So I don't want to invest in furniture I will soon leave behind. I am also just passing through!"

Although it is true that there were relatively few travels over the 40 year period, the Children of Israel spent that time "just passing through." They knew that at any moment, the cloud of the Divine Presence would rise from Tabernacle, and they would have to hurriedly take down their tents, pack their bags, and be ready to move.

The lesson to us is the same that the holy Chofetz Chaim told his wealthy visitor: all the comforts of this world will be left behind, and what truly counts is the eternity that lies ahead. We are better off when we realize that, in the end, we are just passing through.

News, Views & Opinion

ANTI-ISRAEL CAMPUS GROUPS KNEW OF OCT 7 ATTACK BEFOREHAND

MICHAEL STARR (Jpost.com 25-3-25)

Leading US-based anti-Israel activist groups, including Columbia University's Apartheid Divest (CUAD) and Within Our Lifetime and heads like Mahmoud Khalil, had prior knowledge of the October 7 massacre, a Monday lawsuit by families of the Hamas-led attack's victims alleged.

The lawsuit is seeking damages from activists aiding and abetting Gaza's terrorist organizations.

According to it, some groups, whom Hamas members reportedly saw as operatives, reactivated just before the massacre, and others issued protest and propaganda materials as the event unfolded in southern Israel. The suit was filed by the National Jewish Advocacy Center, the Schoen Law Firm, Greenberg Traurig LLP, and the Holtzman Vogel Law Firm at the Southern District Court of New York.

It was filed against Within Our Lifetime (WOL) and its leader, Nerdeen Kiswani, Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and its representative, Maryam Alwan, Columbia-Barnard Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and its representative, Cameron Jones, CUAD, and Khalil.

The lawsuit is requesting compensation and punitive damages over the alleged coordination with Hamas and its affiliates in its "terror-by-propaganda strategy" and the purported provision of material to support the terrorist organization's public relations operations.

Per the victims of the massacre involved in the litigation, the organizations had "prior knowledge of the October 7 attack" based on the timing of their public relations activity.

Also, according to one ex-hostage, Hamas captors described these groups as their operatives.

After months of dormancy, Columbia SJP allegedly reactivated its Instagram account "three minutes before Hamas began its attack on October 7," announcing a meeting and stating that supporters should "stay tuned."

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Eighty-three SJP chapters, including Columbia's, signed and disseminated a statement in support of Hamas at midnight at the end of the day of the attack, leading the suit to insinuate that the content must have been drafted, reviewed, and signed by dozens of organizations "before and/or during the events of October 7 themselves."

The Bears for Palestine issued a solidarity statement honoring terrorists "working on the ground on several axes of the so-called 'Gaza envelope' alongside [its] comrades in blood and arms" and offered support for "the resistance in Gaza." It added that the Hamas operation was a "revolutionary moment" in Palestinian "resistance."

This statement was shared by the National SJP as an October 8, 2023, toolkit, which the suit asserted was disseminated to Columbia SJP, Columbia JVP, and WOL.

Then, nationwide October 12 rallies "included materials that appear to have been created before October 7," according to the suit.

DAY OF RESISTANCE

The Day of Resistance Toolkit included October 7-themed graphics, one of which Kiswani allegedly published on Instagram on October 7 – a day before the toolkit was released.

"We must continue to resist directly through dismantling Zionism and wielding the political power that our organizations hold on our campuses and in our communities," the toolkit read.

"We are asking chapters to host demonstrations on campus/in their community in support of our resistance in Palestine and the national liberation struggle – one which they play a critical role in actualizing [sic]."

The toolkit's creators said that the Israeli victims of October 7 were not civilians because they were "settlers," and that all forms of resistance, including "armed struggle," were legitimate.

NSJP described its chapters as being part of a "unity intifada" movement for all Palestinian people and Gazan terrorist "factions" that appeared to be "participating under unified command."

"We as Palestinian students are part of this movement, not in solidarity with this movement," said NSJP. "This is a moment of mobilization for all Palestinians. We must act as part of this movement. All of our efforts continue the work and resistance of Palestinians on the ground."

The suit alleged that Columbia SJP, Columbia JVP, CUAD, and WOL utilized the toolkit as part of their "direct response" to repeated Hamas calls for "mass mobilization" in the wake of October 7, including now-deceased Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh's October 7 call to Muslims and Palestinians worldwide to "join this battle in any way they can."

Last March, CUAD and WOL hosted a leading member of the NSJP, Samidoun International Coordinator Charlotte Kates, and her husband, Khaled Barakat, who is an alleged Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) senior official, in a Resistance 101 event.

During the event, Barakat said that Hamas, PFLP, and Islamic Jihad operatives told him they cared more about what American student supporters did than about the US president.

SHLOMI ZIV'S TESTIMONY

Plaintiff Shlomi Ziv, who was held hostage for 246 days before being rescued in an IDF operation, alleged that "Hamas captors bragged about having Hamas operatives on American university campuses" and showed him photographs of protests at Columbia University organized by the defendants.

The suit alleged that the defendants operated as Hamas's public relations wing, supported by the terrorist group through shell organizations that were founded by Hamas leaders.

It detailed, echoing past suits by October 7 victims against NSJP, that Hamas had founded a group of support organizations in the US, including the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development and the Islamic Association for Palestine. After the US government exposed the groups, it was alleged that the key members founded American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), which in turn created the National SJP, which serves as an umbrella organization for different chapters.

According to the lawsuit, the AMP controls and funds NSJP. Columbia SJP is a branch of SJP, and WOL is a rebranded New York City Students for Justice in Palestine. JVP works nationally as a partner of SJP, and the Columbia branch works closely with its local counterpart – so much so that the suit alleged that Khalil is the de facto president of both Columbia SJP and JVP.

The groups together allegedly used CUAD, a coalition of over a hundred groups, as a puppet to allow them to continue to operate on campus after they had been suspended in November 2023. The suit said that the CUAD social media accounts roused from dormancy after the groups had been banned. Immediately after Khalil's March 8 arrest, CUAD's social media accounts temporarily entered a lull of activity.

"Upon information and belief, and based upon statements made to plaintiff Shlomi Ziv by his Hamas captor, Hamas and AMP/NSJP provided financial, organizational, and other support to CUAD and the Columbia AMP/NSJP affiliates for the encampment," read the suit.

The suit maintained that through organizational ties, answering the terrorists' call to arms, and providing material support through the production and dissemination of pro-terrorist propaganda and advocacy, the defendants served as the public relations wing of Hamas.

The groups allegedly implemented the three-part Hamas grand strategy that works as follows: Terrorists conduct indiscriminate terrorist attacks against civilians to provoke a response that endangers Palestinian civilians who are used by Hamas as human shields. Either Israel cannot launch military actions due to concern about harming civilians, or the human shields are killed, which caters to Hamas's propaganda goals. Hamas then manipulates the situation by using propaganda to demonize Israel, legitimize its efforts, and cast itself as the victim.

NSJP appeared to respond directly to a Hamas call for a global December 11 strike for Gaza, posting the same day on Instagram that they were striking

“in solidarity with the Palestinian people as they demand a permanent ceasefire and a liberated Palestine free from colonial apartheid.”

Columbia SJP and JVP joined with a Barnard College protest, according to the Columbia Daily Spectator. In April, CUAD established the encampment on Columbia grounds that received backing from WOL in an attempt to pressure the academic institution into cutting all academic and financial connections with Israel.

Activists repeatedly declared support for the October 7 massacre during the several-week occupation of the campus.

This eventually expanded into the seizure of Hamilton Hall, where, according to the university, activists were breaking doors, “mistreating our public safety officers and maintenance staff, and damaging property.”

In January, CUAD activists disrupted a Columbia Israeli history class. When Barnard students were expelled for the incident, CUAD called for further disruptions and led two occupations of Barnard buildings. During the occupation of the Milstein Library, CUAD allegedly disseminated official Hamas pamphlets.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt referenced these pamphlets in a March 10 press briefing in which she said Khalil was arrested and had his green card revoked on March 8 for supporting Hamas.

Two IDF reservists studying at Columbia, who now count among the suit’s plaintiffs, argued that they had come back from fighting Hamas to find that their “affiliates” on their campus were causing mental anguish and suffering. Another Columbia student plaintiff said that she experienced emotional distress from pro-Hamas protests occurring outside her window, with demonstrators glorifying the people who wounded her IDF soldier brother.

These plaintiffs, along with US citizen Iris Weinstein Haggai, whose parents were taken by Hamas, brought their claim against the defendants under the Antiterrorism Act.

Plaintiff Talik Gvili, the mother of slain patrol officer and captive Ran Gvili, Roe Baruch, the brother of slain hostage Uriel Baruch, and James Poe, the father of murdered hostage Leo Poe, brought their claims against the defendants under the Alien Tort Statute for the aid provided in violation of the Law of Nations.

“This case gives voice to heretofore seldom spoken facts. JVP, WOL, CUAD, the Students for Justice in Palestine collective, and student leaders on campuses throughout the country are serving as instruments of Hamas, a foreign terrorist organization that hates the United States and the very values these anti-Israel college protesters claim to represent.

“The leadership of these campus protesters knowingly affiliates with those who applaud any form of physical, emotional, or economic harm that can be inflicted upon citizens of Western democracy,” the NJAC associate director, Ben Schlager, said in a statement.

TERRORIST TALKING POINTS AND THE ISRAELI PROTEST MOVEMENT

RUTHIE BLUM (JNS.org 26-3-25)

There’s nothing new about the terrorist ghouls in Gaza plagiarizing the Israeli protest movement’s mantras. Slogans from the “Kaplan crowd” are the source of hostage-video scripts, practically verbatim.

That this doesn’t put a dent in the messages conveyed at anti-government demonstrations—a biggie being the threat posed to the country by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—is not only shameful. It’s counter-productive where securing the freedom of the captives is concerned.

As recently released hostage Omer Shem Tov recounted on Tuesday to Israeli President Isaac Herzog, “The times we were shown television in captivity, [our captors pointed to] the division among the [Israeli] people. ... They speak about how Israel will be destroyed from within, and that’s what gives them strength.”.

By now it’s widely acknowledged that though the Oct. 7 massacre had been planned well in advance, Hamas took advantage of the apparent “civil war” in Israel—over the government’s intention to reform the judicial system—to strike when it did. Terrorists who participated in the atrocities said as much to their Israeli interrogators.

Not that this awareness has caused the protest movement to lower the temperature. On the contrary, it has expanded the focus of its hysteria and operations.

It’s even gone so far as to shift attention from the plight of the hostages to Netanyahu’s firing of Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) director Ronen Bar and moves to oust Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara. The sole reason that both are being hailed, rather than disgraced, is that each has been openly at odds with Netanyahu.

The sudden explosion of sympathy for Bar would be comical if it weren’t so tragic. After all, he was the figure most responsible for failing to interpret and prevent Hamas’s movements in the hours leading up to the invasion. He

didn’t even wake up Netanyahu or then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to inform them that something major was afoot.

Arrogance dictated that he knew better than they how to stave off an “escalation of tensions” with the jihadis along the border. You know, the terrorists whom he believed were “deterred.” And the Gazans he was certain were assuaged by Israeli work permits.

Hamas couldn’t believe its good fortune on that fateful day, owed in large measure to Bar. Nor is the genocidal organization done with exploiting the soon-to-be-ex-Shin Bet honcho.

As if to pay homage to the disgruntled security chief and his newfound champions in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Hamas cited the letter Bar sent on Thursday to the ministers in Netanyahu’s Cabinet.

In the lengthy missive, Bar argued that the grounds for his dismissal are insufficient and lack concrete “examples.” Never mind that Netanyahu has no legal obligation to provide evidence to support his decision to sack a subordinate such as Bar. The former is the boss; the latter an appointed underling, no matter how big his britches.

Hamas might not give a hoot about Israeli hierarchy. But it was extremely interested in Bar’s written complaints, especially those in the following passage:

“The decision proposal [to end my tenure] ... suggests, incorrectly, that the alleged lack of trust between the prime minister and me stems from our handling of the hostage crisis. Without delving too deeply into this matter, I will note that the recent hostage-release deal was the result of a unique operation personally led by me, with the prime minister’s full knowledge. The deal was reached according to the objectives set by the prime minister, was brought by him for government approval and was endorsed with his support. In light of this, the claim of an alleged lack of trust has no basis—unless the real intent, which I apparently failed to grasp, was to conduct negotiations without actually reaching a deal.”

Hamas quickly came to Bar’s aid, presenting its own version of his words.

“Bar’s statements expose the deliberate game played by the criminal Netanyahu regarding the negotiations, his efforts to sabotage any agreement and his attempts to undermine it after it was reached—all for his personal political goals,” the terrorist organization declared. “These statements, coming from within the leadership of the occupation, emphasize that Netanyahu has been and remains the real obstacle to any prisoner-exchange deal.”

In addition, Hamas claimed, “Netanyahu’s attempts to remove influential security officials from the negotiations reflect his internal crisis and the growing distrust between him and the security establishment, revealing his lack of seriousness in reaching a genuine agreement.”

Finally, it called on Washington to “stop blaming Hamas for the failure of the agreements and instead hold Netanyahu directly responsible for the continued suffering of the prisoners [hostages] and their families.”

To be fair, the anti-Netanyahu choir isn’t at fault for Hamas brutality. But it is to blame for weakening the war effort and encouraging enemy intransigence.

Mass tantrums will not topple the government, especially with the passage of the state budget. All they accomplish is societal malaise—precisely what Hamas is counting on to bolster its bargaining position.

FROM MUNICH 1972 TO OCTOBER 2023 –MEDIA MYTHS FUELLING ANTISEMITISM

JAN SHURE (Jewishnews.co.uk 25-3-25)

A few weeks ago, I saw the film September 5 about the deadly attack on Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists at the Munich Olympics.

It resonated because it highlighted the gulf between the public reactions to that atrocity and to 7 October when Palestinian terrorists slaughtered, mutilated, raped and burned-alive some 1,200 Israeli citizens – mostly non-combatants, including babies, infants, pensioners and women – and abducted some 230 more.

In 1972 – ignoring the street mobs in Damascus, Tripoli, etc – so few people supported Palestinian terrorists, that they would have probably fitted inside a London phone box. The overriding public reaction was abhorrence for the terrorists and sympathy for Israel.

Flash forward to 7 October 2023 and we saw a very different public reaction. Despite, in the intervening 51 years, Israel signing (and honouring) peace deals, handing back territory (including Gaza) and giving autonomy to the Palestinian Authority, an alarmingly high number of people (including UN Secretary-General Antonio Gutierrez) seemed to feel that Palestinian terrorists were somehow “justified” in slaughtering, butchering, raping and kidnapping citizens of a sovereign nation. Israel was condemned for defending itself and accused of “genocide” for attempting to eradicate the terrorist threat – despite terrorist leaders openly declaring their intention to repeat the savagery.

So what changed between 5 September 1972 and 7 October 2023 to cause this abhorrent, inhumane reaction and a terrifying resurgence in antisemitism?

A large number of people – including some quite intelligent ones, and some Jews – have been persuaded to believe a flimsy, Soviet-fabricated narrative that would be obviously fake to anyone who did even the slightest historical research, and also persuaded to believe that Palestinians are victims of Jews even though Palestinians have been slaughtering Israeli non-combatants – and diaspora Jews – since long before they had the “justification” of “Occupation,” “Settlers” or Bibi Netanyahu.

Of course Palestinians are victims – of regional geo-politics, theo-politics, Muslim imperialism. Just not of Jews.

What changed between 5 September 1972 and 7 October 2023 to cause this abhorrent, inhumane reaction and a terrifying resurgence in antisemitism?

And then, of course, there’s media – notably, the BBC and the Guardian – which has promoted the Palestinian narrative, inflamed Israel hate and driven an upsurge in Jew-hate – and not just in the UK, but around the globe – by consistently reporting the conflict in ways that minimise (or ignore entirely) threat and harm to Israel, while amplifying threat and harm to Palestinians.

This may happen because the myths and fairytales have made them “sympathetic” to the “poor Palestinians” or because they are actively hostile, but whatever the motivation, the bias – in particular at those twin bastions of middle class morality – has been instrumental in rekindling the always-smouldering embers of Jew-hate.

In the belly of the beast: Israeli captive Arbel Yehoud, 29, who had been held hostage by Hamas in Gaza since October 7, 2023, is escorted by Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters as she is handed over to the Red Cross in Khan Younis

So what can we do to counter this tsunami of disinformation that is having tangible consequences – for young British Jews in universities and for British Jews of all ages everywhere else.

An alphabet soup of worthy and wonderful communal organisations – CAA, CST, BoD – have all been doing a wonderful job but individually. Our community now needs to unite to refute the lies and libels and most importantly, to counter the ever-expanding media bias.

Most urgently, we need to forget differences – left, right, orthodox, progressive. We need to put aside ideological differences or differences of degree; our views of Bibi, or of “settlers” and concentrate on the immutable truths which are that Israel is a legitimate nation; that Jews did not steal anybody’s land and that virtually every hostile act Israel has committed since its establishment has been in response to terrorism or existential threat. In short, in defence of its right to exist.

And the way to do it is with an advertising campaign. Because if we buy space, airtime or billboards we can bypass the filter of a biased media. We can state empirical truths without fear of them being cut, edited, truncated or turned into a negative sound-bite.

This campaign would neither praise nor denigrate the government; it would not make controversial claims, infer, imply, suggest or offer opinions. It would rely on hard facts which prove that Israel did not “steal” a Muslim land; that Jews have had a continuous presence in their own land for thousands of years; that more Jews were forced to leave Arab lands in 1948, than Palestinian Arabs left Palestine; that “Yahudi” – Jews – have been the real victims for 77 years (of Arab imperialism, Muslim expansionism, terrorism and Islamic/Islamist racism).

The campaign must put those facts (and others) on TV screens, in newspapers and magazines, on websites, on station platforms, in tube carriages, alongside escalators, on hoardings and billboards and on the sides of buses across the UK – and perhaps across American and European cities, too. It has to reproduce text from censuses and population statistics in six-foot high letters.

It must reproduce maps showing that Israel is not some vast empire but a nation so tiny you can drive it north to south, coast to eastern border in under seven hours without breaking the speed limit. It has to try to show that though it has had to defend itself – often forcefully – Israel is not the aggressor. Ideally it should try to find a way to show the truth of Golda Meir’s words on ending the Middle East “conflict”: that if the Arabs laid down their arms, there would be no more wars, but if Israel laid down its arms, there would be no more Israel.

We’ve faced a tsunami of disinformation, and now it’s time for the deluded “believers” – the paid and unpaid Iranian stooges – to face a tsunami of facts that refute their lies and libels.

Our community has the financial resources and an insane amount of creative genius. We need to harness both and unite to push back this tsunami of disinformation before it sweeps us all away.

We just need the will to do it.

ISRAEL SHOULD ANNEX AT LEAST PART OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA

ISRAEL KASNETT (JNS.org 225)

Israel’s strength stems from its people, but its continued presence on the Jewish nation’s historic homeland is vastly important as well—both from a security as well as a nationalistic perspective.

With a deeply pro-Israel U.S. administration currently in the White House under President Donald Trump’s second term, the question many Israelis have today is whether Israel will annex any part of Judea or Samaria.

Enia Krivine, senior director of the Israel Program and the National Security Network at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told JNS, “It’s very hard to predict what Trump will do.”

She said this administration’s staffing, different from the last administration, “will impact decision-making.”

Krivine pointed out that Mike Huckabee, a minister, former governor of Arkansas and Trump’s pick for ambassador to Israel, is “someone who has a long record of being vocally supportive of annexation.”

She noted that Huckabee “is also an emissary to Trump’s powerful Evangelical base, a large percentage of whom are supportive of Israel and believe that the Land of Israel – including Judea and Samaria – was promised to Jews in the Bible.”

“A lot will depend on who Trump empowers to manage this file,” she said. Huckabee is not the only major U.S. figure to express pro-Israel views. U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Trump’s appointee as UN ambassador, was asked in her confirmation hearing in January if she agreed with the view that Israel has a “biblical right to the entire West Bank,” to which she replied she did.

The need for Israel to annex and control strategic areas in Judea and Samaria and to counter the Palestinian ideological rejection of any Jewish state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea has only been further bolstered by the hostility and misguided opinion expressed recently by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk.

He recently seemed to suggest that Israel has no legal or historic rights to any part of Judea or Samaria and accused it of committing “a war crime” by occupying land he believes belongs to the Palestinians.

“The transfer by Israel of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies amounts to a war crime,” Türk said.

He also said: “Israel’s settlement policy, its acts of annexation, and related discriminatory legislation and measures are in breach of international law, as the International Court of Justice has confirmed, and violate Palestinians’ right to self-determination.”

According to a report by his office, Israel’s government last year “ratcheted up settlement of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, transferring its own population into the territory and unlawfully demolishing Palestinian homes, while settler violence increased in a climate of continuing impunity.”

Türk demanded that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities and evacuate all settlers, stop the forcible transfer of the Palestinian population, and prevent and punish attacks by its security forces and settlers.”

The report goes on to accuse Israel of the “ongoing transfer of Government powers over the Occupied Palestinian Territory from the Israeli military to the Israeli Government” and is “facilitating the advancement of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the steady integration of the occupied West Bank into the State of Israel.”

Notwithstanding the report and Türk’s accusations, Israel’s Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Avi Dichter convened a meeting on Sunday with senior officials from the Yesha Council to address both the challenges and opportunities involved in advancing agricultural development and prosperity in the region.

In his remarks on strengthening Israeli agriculture, Dichter stated, “We are at a historic moment that must not be missed; the time has come to apply Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria.”

Israel Ganz, head of the Binyamin Regional Council and chairman of the Yesha Council, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the potential of the region.

“Judea and Samaria can be at the forefront of Israeli agriculture,” Ganz said. “But to achieve this, bureaucratic obstacles must be removed, and the communities must be allowed to manage the land and agricultural reserves like anywhere else in the country. One of our central challenges stems from the fact that Israeli law does not apply in Judea and Samaria. The time has come to apply sovereignty.”

Words are one thing; actions are another. What would need to fall into place for this to happen?

According to Krivine, if Huckabee is placed in charge of the Judea and Samaria portfolio, “there’s a good chance that the White House will give Israel some flexibility on the issue of annexation.”

Hillel Frisch, a professor of political science and Middle Eastern history at

Bar Ilan University, told JNS he isn't sure he understands what Türk was referring to when he talked about Israel transferring its civilian population. However, if it means expanding Jewish communities, then he said he believes "it has increased, most of it through private initiative," meaning, not through a government project.

Frisch said if the political conditions allow it, it is possible that Israel could annex the Jordan valley and surrounding areas, as well as Ma'ale Adumim and Ariel.

There is no question that vehement opposition to the idea of annexation exists within Israel and while the majority of those against identify with the left-leaning political spectrum, there are also some on the Center and Right who, with certain incentives, would be willing to forgo the idea.

For instance, many Israelis favor normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia alongside the establishment of a Palestinian state over annexing Judea and Samaria, according to new polling data, though it is unclear what percentage of respondents identified with the Right, Center, or Left.

The survey, conducted recently by the aChord Research Institute at Hebrew University, found that when presented with two options—"promote a regional political-security arrangement that includes normalization with Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, and agreeing to establish a Palestinian state" or "promote full annexation of the West Bank"—60 percent of respondents chose the former, while 31 percent favored the latter.

Krivine raised this point as well. She said that unilateral annexation would "likely slow or stall normalization with Saudi Arabia, which Bibi sees as critical for Israel's future."

She added that even if unilateral annexation would be "blessed by the White House" it will cause "a huge international headache for Israel," and it is up to Israel's leadership "to decide if the trade-off is worth it for them."

With this in mind, it is important to understand the possible advantages and disadvantages of annexing any part of Judea or Samaria.

In Krivine's view, "there are big risks and big opportunities here and different ways that annexation could happen."

During his first administration, Trump proposed the "Deal of the Century," which involved annexation in the context of a larger peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians.

According to Krivine, "If Trump can work with regional partners to craft another peace proposal that includes some Israeli annexation in Judea and Samaria in exchange for other, generous offers to Palestinians, including potential land swaps, then there's a chance that Israel could annex territories in Judea and Samaria in the context of a deal."

"As usual, the Palestinians will be the deciders, and they have never agreed to any deal, so it's hard to imagine them ever saying 'yes' and ending the conflict," she said. "Unfortunately, it's highly unlikely that they will change their rejectionist ways."

The major advantage of annexing Judea and Samaria, according to Frisch, "is the prevention of the emergence of a Palestinian state."

JUDAISM & AI: THE DYBBUK IN THE MACHINE

RABBI DR. STU HALPERN, MBA (Aish.com 23-3-25)

Might ancient, mighty mythical Jewish creatures be helpful guides in navigating our world of ever-emerging technology? A new book makes a convincing case that they should.

Michael M. Rosen's Like Silicon from Clay: What Ancient Jewish Wisdom Can Teach Us About AI suggests that traditional teachings about the golem, dybbuk, and maggid can inform how we survive and thrive as companies like OpenAI churn out further iterations of the instantly-ubiquitous ChatGPT and whatever computer-creatures come next.

Rosen, a nonresident senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute where he specializes in intellectual property issues in the field of technology, is deeply knowledgeable about the state of the current ethical dilemmas regarding AI. He is also a committed Jew with command of canonical sources.

As Rosen explains, there have been four basic reactions to the late-2022 launch of ChatGPT, the "large language model (LLM) that has revolutionized many aspects of everyday life... helping write wedding toasts, obituaries, news summaries, and even term papers."

Positive Autonomists, like OpenAI head Sam Altman, "regard AI's recent advances as truly revolutionary—a difference in kind, not just degree, from previous computing technology." They also "believe that machines have already achieved—or will soon achieve—a measure of autonomy... sentience, awareness, or consciousness." Most importantly, "they wholeheartedly applaud these breakthroughs."

Negative Autonomists, on the other hand, including Elon Musk and Eliezer Yudkowsky, agree that AI will deeply alter human existence and could potentially become autonomous, but interpret this possibility "overwhelmingly as dangerous, harmful, and even existentially risky" with

some like Yudkowsky urging AI's immediate and permanent deactivation.

Others disagree with this dichotomy. Positive Automatoners deem AI "no more than an extension of human capabilities—a force multiplier that reflects and implements its programmers' own abilities, assumptions, and biases." Constructs like ChatGPT, in this view, lack the capabilities of human creativity and independent thinking.

Negative Automatoners agree that the technology is a "mere mechanical prosthetic" but nonetheless worry that machines will harm humanity - not, like the Negative Autonomists, because of AI's powerful potential, but rather from its ample shortcomings. Forget lacking a human soul - it often can't even provide accurate information!

As policymakers, engineers and CEOs navigate these diverse perspectives, Rosen offers three rabbinically-gleaned guideposts.

1. The Golem

The golem, a human-like creature mentioned in the Talmud and in legends surrounding the 17th century sage known as the Maharal of Prague, are understood to protect their creator and the Jewish community. But they could also act in an overly destructive manner. The stories about them, therefore, remind us that creatures created by humans but with the ability to operate on their own should be closely monitored.

As Rosen puts it, "the golem is the Positive Autonomist perspective personified, or at least as personified as a humanoid can be—the product of human hands, but independent, benevolent, and transformative." But, he reminds his readers, the golem's "operation remained dependent on its human creator, who was able and willing to terminate its existence when absolutely necessary, such as when the initially good golem turned bad."

Thus the 20th century Israeli scholar Gershom Scholem, in a 1965 speech celebrating The Hebrew University of Jerusalem's first computer, which he referred to as a "golem," remarked to it, and the audience, "Develop peacefully and don't destroy the world. Shalom."

2. The Dybbuk

A supernatural spirit thought to possess a human form, the dybbuk expresses mischievous and often downright evil inclinations. In tales of it possessing individuals, communal sages are compelled to exorcise and banish it. Such a demonic entity, Rosen proposes, "should be especially attractive to Negative Automatoners, whose default view of robots emphasizes their dark and stultifying aspects."

The cautionary tales of dybbuks parallel the feelings of those who consider AI a parallel phenomenon, "a dark, dangerous, and heavy reflection of humanity; a malign force that humanity must exorcise; and a burden to be cast off" if we are to remain psychologically healthy.

3. The Maggid

Much less well-known, but perhaps more valuable to the current moment, is the maggid. The seminal 16th century Jewish scholar Rabbi Joseph Karo, the author of the classic Jewish work the Shulchan Arukh, The Code of Jewish Law, believed that a subconscious voice - a positive mirror of the dybbuk - visited him and inspired his scholarship and spiritual growth. He called it a maggid, a storyteller, and similar to Sam Altman's view of AI, it "inspired him and brought out his best."

Our inner dybbuks—our darkest instincts—will dominate our thinking about technology and the solutions we devise if we don't empower our inner maggids—our better angels—to overpower them.

Rabbi Karo, seemingly the first to mention such a spiritual entity, describes it in a way, that, as Rosen puts it, "resembles the dybbuk in that, like its darker cousin, it represents human urges and creativity without necessarily transcending them. Unlike the dybbuk, however, the maggid reflects our inner angels, positive urges, and desire to apply the best versions of ourselves to bettering the world."

Ultimately, Rosen concludes, "our inner dybbuks—our darkest instincts—will dominate our thinking about technology and the solutions we devise if we don't empower our inner maggids—our better angels—to overpower them."

He proposes "warmly embracing the best that our contemporary golems have to offer by encouraging the continued development of technology that will extend and enhance human existence." At the same time, he argues for a strategy of rigorous voluntary industry standards, informed by corporate, government and public ethical voices, "that will ensure AI development is carried out responsibly and for proper purposes."

Part of this regulatory process should be identifying and rooting out our worst psychological biases and impulses—the dybbuks—from our machines "and imbuing them with our better angels—our maggids." And, of course, like the creators of golems of old, having safeguards in place should what we forged threatened to escape human control.

Rosen's final prayer, echoing Scholem, is that whatever AI develops next comes in shalom, ushering in a more peaceful existence for us all.

Kosher & Halacha Kerner

The following article may be at variance to local Kashrus Agencies. When in doubt, contact your local reputable Agency. In Australia, direct any questions to info@kosher.org.au or visit www.kosher.org.au

SELLING EGG MATZA TO ASHKENAZIC JEWS

RABBI CHAIM JACHTER (KolTorah.org)

This week we shall discuss the propriety of selling egg Matza to Ashkenazic Jews who avoid egg Matza on Pesach (except in case of great need). We will discuss the debate between the Rishonim concerning the permissibility of eating egg Matza during Pesach. We will also deal with an aspect of the prohibition to cause someone to sin (Lifnei Iver Lo Titein Michshol, or Lifnei Iver, see Vayikra 19:14). Our discussion is based on Rav Ovadia Yosef's responsum on this question (Teshuvot Yechaveh Daat 1:10).

THE EGG MATZA DEBATE – RASHI AND RAAVAD VS. TOSAFOT AND RAMBAM

The core of the egg Matza debate is the question of how to resolve an apparent contradiction between two passages in the Gemara. On one hand, the Gemara (Pesachim 35b) states that flour that is kneaded with fruit juice cannot become Chametz. On the other hand, the Gemara (Pesachim 36a) states, “On Pesach one should not knead dough with wine, oil, or honey.” Rashi (ad.loc. s.v. Ein Lashin) explains, “Because it becomes Chametz quickly” and is difficult to insure that it has not become Chametz. The problem is that the Gemara on Pesachim 36a express concern that dough mixed with fruit juice will become Chametz, yet the Gemara on Pesachim 35b state that dough kneaded with fruit juice cannot become Chametz.

The Rishonim resolve this apparent contradiction in two ways. Rashi (ibid.) explains the Gemara on Pesachim 35b to mean that dough kneaded with fruit juice cannot become “Chametz Gamur” (full-fledged Chametz). However, dough kneaded with fruit juice does, in Rashi's opinion, become “Chametz Nukshah” (partial Chametz). Rashi explains that one is not punished with Karet for eating Chametz Nukshah, but one is nevertheless forbidden to eat Chametz Nukshah on Pesach.

Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosafot Pesachim 35b s.v. Umei Peirot) disagrees with Rashi. Rabbeinu Tam interprets Pesachim 35b as teaching that fruit juice cannot become Chametz at any level when mixed with dough. He explains that Pesachim 36a speaks of fruit juice mixed with water that one kneads with dough. The mixture of water with fruit juice greatly accelerates the process of “Chimutz,” leavening. It is therefore difficult to insure that it will not become Chametz and must be avoided on Pesach.

The Rambam (Hilchot Chametz Umatza 5:2) adopts the same approach as Rabbeinu Tam. He rules that pure fruit juice mixed with dough cannot become Chametz, “even if one lets the mixture rise the entire day until the dough becomes swollen it is permissible to eat, because fruit juice does not ferment; rather it merely decays” (Masrichin). The Rambam adds that this applies only if no water has been added to the fruit juice. For an explanation of the chemical difference between Chimutz and Sirachon see Dr. B.P. Munk's essay printed in Techumin 1:97-99.

The Raavad (ad. loc.), though, cautions that there are some who disagree with the Rambam and assert that fruit juice mixed with dough becomes Chametz Nukshah. The Magid Mishna (ad. loc.) responds that the majority of the Geonim and Rishonim agree with the approach of the Rambam and reject Rashi's view. The Magid Mishna asserts that the Rambam and Rabbeinu Tam are correct and records that common practice accords with their lenient ruling. Rav Ovadia lists the Rishonim who side with Rabbeinu Tam and the Rambam, including the Rosh, Ramban, Rashba, Ran, Meiri, Raavya, Ri, Rabbeinu Simcha, Ohr Zarua, and Rokeach.

SHULCHAN ARUCH – RAV YOSEF KARO VS. RAMA

Rav Yosef Karo (Shulchan Aruch 462:1-4) rules in accordance with the lenient ruling of the Rambam and Rabbeinu Tam. The Rama presents a compromise approach to this issue. On one hand, he writes that Ashkenazim refrain from eating Matza that was kneaded with fruit juice unless they are elderly or sick. The Vilna Gaon (Biur Hagra 462:4 s.v. Ubemidnot) explains that Lechatchila (ab initio) Ashkenazim seek to accommodate Rashi's stringent view. They are also concerned that water might have unknowingly been added to the fruit juice. The Aruch Hashulchan (O.C.462:5) condemns those Ashkenazim who fail to abide by the stringent custom. Sephardim (as noted by two great Sephardic authorities - the Pri Chadash O.C.462 and the Chida, Birkei Yosef 462:7), however, follow Rav Yosef Karo's codification of the majority view of the Rishonim.

Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechaveh Daat 1:10) notes that Ashkenazim are permitted to give Matza that was kneaded with fruit juice to children. The Rama does not specifically mention children but elsewhere (O.C. 276:1 and 328:17) he writes that children are considered to have the status of a sick

individual. Twentieth century authorities dispute until what age a child has this status (see Nishmat Avraham 1:197). Opinions range from age three to age nine. Dr. Abraham S. Abraham (ibid.) is probably correct in suggesting that it is more appropriate to assess the health and maturity of the individual child, rather than assign a specific age for all children. A proof to this is the fact that the Rama does not mention a specific age.

EGG MATZA

Rashi (cited in Tosafot Pesachim 35b s.v. Umei Peirot) is uncertain whether flour kneaded in eggs has the same status as flour kneaded in fruit juice. On one hand, egg liquid appears similar to water and thus the appropriate comparison should be to flour kneaded in water. On the other hand, Rashi notes that flour that is kneaded in eggs rises in a manner that is thicker than flour that is kneaded in water. Thus, Rashi is concerned that the Gemara's prohibition to knead flour with fruit juice because the resulting dough will rise too quickly to properly supervise that it not become Chametz applies also to eggs.

Tosafot, however, record that Rabbeinu Tam disagrees with Rashi and permits eating egg Matza on Pesach. Moreover, Rabbeinu Tam practiced in accordance with his lenient ruling and ate egg Matza on Pesach. The Rambam (Hilchot Chametz Umatza 5:2) indicates his agreement with Rabbeinu Tam by excluding eggs from the list of items such as grape juice that ferment when mixed with water and flour. Nevertheless, the Ashkenazic practice to follow the stringent opinion applies to egg Matza as well as fruit juice Matza (see Shulchan Aruch O.C. 462:4).

LIFNEI IVER CONSIDERATIONS

Accordingly, the question arises whether one may sell egg or grape juice Matza to Ashkenazic Jews. Rav Ovadia rules that it is forbidden for Sephardim to sell egg Matza to Ashkenazim even though Sephardim regard egg Matza as permissible. A precedent for this approach is the Mishna (Yevamot 13b) that states that men and women from the families of Bait Hillel and Bait Shammai used to marry each other. The Gemara explains that this occurred despite the fact that Bait Hillel and Bait Shammai had different standards regarding Mamzeirut. They were not concerned that a prospective mate was a Mamzer because they informed each other if a prospective mate would considered a Mamzer according to the others' standards.

Accordingly, the Rama (Yoreh Deah 119:7) teaches that a host must inform his guest that a food item is forbidden to the guest by his standards, even though the host abides by the lenient standard. Thus, Rav Ovadia (Teshuvot Yechaveh Daat 4:53) rules that one may not serve products whose Kashrut depends upon the Heteir Mechira if his guests do not subscribe to the Heteir Mechira. Similarly, one should not serve milk that was not rabbinically supervised to someone who subscribes to the strict opinion regarding Chalav Yisrael.

Rav Ovadia notes that one who does not obey these rulings violates the prohibition of Lifnei Iver Lo Titein Michshol (Vayikra 19:14). Rashi (commentary to Vayikra 19:14) explains that the Pasuk prohibits offering someone bad advice. Presenting someone with an item that is forbidden to him by his standards falls into the category of giving bad advice. This is similar to the Minchat Chinuch's (Mitzva 232) assertion that one violates a Torah prohibition of Lifnei Iver if he facilitates the violation of a rabbinical prohibition, by his bad advice.

Hence, Kashrut organizations print on the boxes of egg Matza that Ashkenazim are forbidden to eat this product unless they are old or infirm. Bakery owners must prominently display signs that indicate which products are forbidden to Ashkenazim. However, what should one do if he sees an Ashkenazic Jew purchase egg Matza on Pesach?

Rav Ovadia rules that one may attribute (Toleh) the purchase of egg Matza to a permitted purpose such as feeding it to a sick or older individual. The precedents to this ruling are as follows. The Mishna (Shviit 5:8) teaches that one may sell an ox in the Shmittah year to a farmer who is lax in his observance of Shmittah. The Mishna permits us to be Toleh that the farmer is purchasing the ox for a permitted purpose such as for slaughtering. The Chatam Sofer (Teshuvot Y.D.19) takes a similar approach regarding his ruling that a non-Jew is forbidden to eat eggs because it is defined as eating a limb from a live animal according to the Halachic standards for Bnei Noach. He defends the accepted practice of Jews selling eggs to non-Jews, because the Jews are Toleh that the non-Jews are purchasing the eggs for a purpose that is permitted to them.

I am aware that one Rav instructed his congregants to avoid serving eggs to their non-Jewish workers because of the Chatam Sofer's ruling. However, it appears that Poskim have not accepted the ruling of the Chatam Sofer regarding eggs (see Encyclopedia Talmudit 3:131-132 where this ruling of the Chatam Sofer is merely referenced in a footnote). In fact, even the Chatam Sofer introduces this assertion by stating that it is a novel idea. One should consult his rabbi for a decision whether he must abide by this ruling of the

Chatam Sofer.

CONCLUSION

The strength and vitality of Klal Yisrael rests upon respecting and revering the diverse Halachic practices of the various segments of the Jewish community. Each legitimate group has a rock-solid basis for its practices and we should respect and protect them. A synergy of the diverse sections of Klal Yisrael can be created only when we value our differences. Hence, we are forbidden to cause someone to sin according to his standards even though we regard the matter as permissible. Nevertheless, we may give someone the benefit of the doubt when there is a plausible Halachic justification for what he is doing.

Candles Pekudei (Melb) 28/3/25 29 Adar 5785 7.02p/7.57p