בס"ד

מכון יעקב

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Pinchas 5785

HOW TO TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

My upstairs neighbor was having a rooftop garden put in. Fine and dandy, except for the fact that his special drainage system was not yet installed, and the unremitting drip-drip descending from above was driving us bananas. Worse yet, a cloud of mosquitoes hovered above the muddy patch under our bedroom windows, so that each morning my three beautiful daughters woke up covered with ugly insect bites.

I asked the guy in charge of the renovations up there to please stop the water torture. He patiently explained that the potted trees and shrubs (which included some very delicate ferns especially imported from some exotic sub-tropical country) had to be fed a small but steady stream of nutrient-enriched water, which must not be interrupted, ever. But they're working on a solution to divert the water by some less vexatious route. He referred me to the gardener/landscape artist in charge of the project for further elucidation.

"I don't care what you're doing up there and how you do it," said I, not ungraciously. "Just stop the dribble of water, ok?"

But the dribble didn't stop. I spoke with the guy's plumber, his foreman, his gardener, his secretary (who said that he's in San Francisco). I begged, I pleaded, I cajoled. Tears sprang to my eyes as I described the suffering of my family. I yelled, I threatened. Weeks went by, and the drip-drip of nutrient-enriched water and the buzz of nutrient-enriched mosquitoes continued.

So one Friday afternoon, after all the workers had left for the weekend, I clambered into a small dark closet under the stairs and shut off the water to the upstairs apartment.

Come Monday morning there was a pounding on my door. A shouting match ensued. He called me a criminal and I rejoined that there are situations in which an ordinary citizen is justified in taking the law into his own hands. He threatened to sue me, and I welcomed the suggestion. By the end of the week, a hose had been rigged up to send the water elsewhere.

But before I had a chance to properly savor my satisfaction over how I had handled the situation, I discovered The Three Fundamental Rules on How To Take The Law Into Your Own Hands. To my dismay, I found that I failed to meet all three requirements.

The three fundamental rules on how to take the law into your own hands are:

1) There has to be a truly extraordinary compelling need—e.g., tens of thousands of people are dying in a plague, and hundreds of thousands more will die unless drastic action is taken to stop it.

2) You must be prepared to pay the price. The law will not protect you from the consequences of your deed. You must be willing to sacrifice all—including your righteousness.

3) It must be completely against your nature to act this way, and it must pain you no end that you are forced to do so. In other words, if you enjoy doing this, then you shouldn't be doing this.

(In case you're wondering where I found these Fundamental Rules, it's all in the precedent of Pinchas' slaying of Zimri, as described in the Bible and discussed in the Talmud and the commentaries.)

Well, that nipped my career as an outlaw in the bud. Though it was fun while it lasted.

PEACE WITHOUT CONJUNCTIONS

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

Peace is the ultimate blessing of the Jewish people. When we are at peace, we have everything. When we are not at peace, we have nothing. Indeed, the concluding statement of the Talmud is that Hashem found peace to be the only vessel capable of preserving the blessings of the Jewish people.

But how is all this peace meant to come about?

In this week's Torah portion, we read that Hashem sealed a covenant of peace with Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron, as a reward for his zealous defense of the Torah. For all future generations, the priestly descendants of Pinchas would be the guardians of the peace. By serving as role models and arbiters, they would spread peace among the Jewish people.

The commentators draw our attention to an unusual aspect of the lettering in these verses. A close look into the Torah scroll at the word for peace, shalom, reveals that the third letter, the vav, is broken across the middle. Why is this so?

The commentators explain that there are two distinctly different levels of peace. On a more prosaic level, peace exists when people reach an accommodation for reasons of expediency. It may be that they are working together in order to reach a common goal by putting aside their differences and concentrating fully on their objective. Or else, they may simply find themselves living together in close proximity and therefore find it necessary to tolerate each other. This is a no more than a superficial peace imposed from without, a marriage of convenience.

There is, however, a higher form of peace which comes when distinct and separate individuals develop a profound sensitivity to each other's thoughts and feelings, when they learn to become perfect complements to each other. Far more than an expedient accommodation, this peace results from the bonding of two individuals into one organic whole. It is a marriage of love.

Ideally, the first from of peace leads to the second. What starts as a marriage of convenience blossoms into a marriage of love.

The different forms of peace are reflected in the Hebrew word shalom, peace, which is formed by adding the letter vav to the word shalem, complete. In the Hebrew language, the vav serves as a conjunction, a point of connection between two disconnected entities. There is a peace which is based on the vav, a conjunction of the disconnected. In its pure form, however, peace derives from a sense of completion or wholeness, a sense of perfect harmony and fusion. In its pure form, it jettisons the vav and becomes shalem, complete.

One of the missions of the priestly caste is to promote peace among the Jewish people, but a simple peace of accommodation is not enough. The ultimate goal must be to create a harmonious fusion among the Jewish people so that they become one organic whole. Therefore, the letter vav in the word shalom is broken, to indicate that peace founded on a conjunction is inadequate. Pure peace is shalem, complete.

An elderly sage brought his wife to the doctor.

"What seems to be the problem?" asked the doctor.

"Well," said the sage, "whenever we walk more than a short distance we feel

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

very fatigued and often experience shortness of breath."
"Indeed?" said the doctor. "Are you telling me that both of you have the same symptoms?"
"Oh no," said the sage. "I feel perfectly fine. It is my wife who is ill. But when she becomes fatigued and out of breath, I feel as if I am suffering as well."
In our own lives, we all yearn for the gift of peace which will allow us to savor life's blessings. But what sort of peace do we seek? A peace of accommodation and expediency may give us some respite from the hurly-burly of existence, but in the end, it is superficial. Deep down, we are still at odds with the world around us. All we will have accomplished in doing is putting a lid on it. Our true goal should be to achieve a deeper peace, a peace that connects us with our people, our world, our Creator, a peace that enriches us with the transcendent serenity that comes from the sense of being complete.

WHO MAKES YOUR CHOICES?

RABBI NAFTALI SILBERBERG (Chabad.org)
A husband was once asked for the secret behind his happy marriage.
"It's simple," he replied. "We divide responsibilities. We decided long ago that my wife makes all the small, routine decisions, and I make the major decisions.
"She decides what house we buy, where we go on vacation, whether the kids go to private schools, if I should change my job, and so on."
"And what are the big decisions?"
"Oh, I make the big, fundamental decisions. I decide if the United States should declare war on China, if Congress should appropriate money for a manned expedition to Mars, and so on."
LIFE IS A SERIES OF CHOICES and decisions. The decisions, however, are relatively simple in comparison to their implementation. The majority of us "choose" to live healthy lifestyles; improve our parenting, spousal and interpersonal skills; increase our knowledge; advance our careers; etc. Carrying through with these choices is the challenge. The trick is to concentrate on one, two or three of these choices. But that just leads to another choice. Which of these choices should we focus on?
Let us look to the Torah, and specifically the description of the methods by which the Land of Israel was to be divided amongst the tribes, for insight on this matter.
"To a large [tribe] you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance" (Numbers 26:54). The division of the land was logical: each tribe was allotted land according to its size. Furthermore, the land wasn't divided merely based on acreage. Rather, the land was evaluated for quality and potential crop yield, ensuring that each tribe received a fair portion.
Nevertheless, the final say belonged to the lottery. After the land was divided into twelve portions, each portion earmarked for a particular tribe with the population which corresponded to its size, a lottery was made to determine which tribe would receive which portion. Miraculously, the lottery confirmed the division which was previously agreed upon.
Why the need for this two-track process? If the division was meant to be logical, then why the need for a lottery? And if it was to be left in G-d's hands—the lottery—why the need for the investment of time and energy in gathering numbers, logistics and evaluations?
Perhaps the lesson G-d was teaching the Israelites before they entered the land, before they became involved in the art of making a living and the many decisions which this entails, was that even those decisions which seem to be in our hands are also ultimately determined by lottery, orchestrated by G-d's hand.
The Talmud tells us that forty days before a child is conceived, an angel approaches G-d and inquires whether the child will be wise or dim, muscular or frail, wealthy or poor, and whom he or she will marry. He does not, however, inquire whether the child will be righteous or wicked—because "all is in the hands of Heaven besides for [an individual's] fear of Heaven."
We may think that we determine our spouse, our field of work, our city of residence, etc. In fact, though, these questions have all been answered before we were even conceived. Yes, G-d expects us to make wise decisions, but ultimately these wise decisions are manipulated and guided by G-d, who orchestrates the circumstances to ensure that we follow the path which He planned for us.
Yet we rightfully pride ourselves in being creatures that possess freedom of choice. But this choice is relegated to the arena of right and wrong, ethics and morals. We do have the ability to choose whether to pray with concentration, give charity, be kind to our fellows and keep kosher. And ultimately, our choices in these areas will be our lasting legacy—because in reality they are our only real and un-influenced choices.
So, on which choices will we focus? The "big" ones, over which we have no control, or the "small" ones, which are entirely in our hands?
As is it turns out, it is the small choices which impact the world.

NO ARGUMENTS ALLOWED

AVROHOM YAAKOV
As the Jews approach the land of Israel, Hashem instructs Moshe how to fairly divide the land.
"According to the lot shall their inheritance be divided between many and few." (26:56)
Rashi comments "The lot itself spoke … this tells us that the division took place by the Holy Spirit."
The words "according to the lot" indicate that the lot itself spoke.
The Midrash Tanchumah (Pinchas 6) relates how the drawing of the lots took place.
"Elazar … wears the Urim and Tumim. And the slips of the lottery were in front of Yehoshua … But before the lot went up, Elazar said with the holy spirit, "The lot of tribe x is coming up, to take place y." And Yehoshua would extend his hand and [it] would come up [into his hand.
"And this was [even] more; that the lot would yell out at the time that it went up, "I am the lot of tribe x; I have gone up to it in place y."
Rabbenu Bahya notes, "If we assume that the other person has gained his property through the casting of lots no one can begrudge it claiming unfairness by human authority."
But why did the lots need to speak when this exercise was conducted by the two undisputed leaders of the Jewish people – Yehoshua and Elazar?
The answer is found in the words of the Midrash - so that there would be absolutely no dispute or accusation that one tribe was favoured over another.
Pninei Torah explains why the method of land division was implemented by Moshe before entering Canaan. Inevitably, there are arguments about both the method and results of any land distribution. An objective and unassailable methodology was therefore required. This enabled the Jews to start the conquest with a clear view of what happens next.
IN THIS AGE of partisan reporting and fake news, it is often hard to determine what is real and what is bias. Everyone sees the facts from their own subjective perspective.
We can see the importance of pure objectivity so that nobody could dispute how the Land of Israel was divided by Divine determination. If there had been any hint of disagreement, the ability for the Jews to conquer and live in the Land would have been jeopardised.

A VIEW FROM ABOVE

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)
Imagine you have been the Chief Operating Officer of a major corporation. The owner and Chairman of the board spotted you some forty years back. Observing your commitment and concern during a totally different mission, he picked you to steer his fledgling group of workers into a major force in the corporate world. During your forty year tenure with the firm, you fulfilled every one of your boss's wishes with honesty and skill. You cared for the corporation and every one of its employees as if they were your offspring. The Chairman, who supplied every one of the company's needs, financial, moral, physical, and spiritual, commended you as the greatest individual that the would ever lead the corporation. But before you get to lead the company into a new phase of operation, the boss says it is time to retire.
So far so good. But then in a parting request you come into your boss's office and begin to lecture him on the qualifications of a successor. You tell him to make sure that the next corporate officer has the qualities of leadership that will be able to bring the corporation into the next millenium. Then you add the kicker. After all, you tell the boss, "you don't want to leave the company like sheep without a leader." In simple terms, it sounds like there is a word that defines the move — chutzpah.
Though it may not be a perfect parable, it seems like Moshe did just that. After he realizes that he will not lead the Jewish people into the Land of Canaan he approaches Hashem with a request. "May Hashem the Lord of all spirits appoint a man over the assembly, who shall take them out and bring them in and let them not be like sheep that have no shepherd" (27:15-18). The question is simple. How does Moshe have the gall to tell the Master Of The Universe, He who breathes life into the centipede while splitting the sea and delivering manna, the qualifications of the next leader? Out of the multitudes of earthlings that are on the planet, does the Lord need guidance in appointing a new leader of the Jewish people?
During the last months of the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezhritz life, the decrees against the Jews living in Russia increased many fold. Young men

were forced into the Czar's army and ripped from their families, heritage, and faith. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk went to beseech Rabbi Dov Ber, the Holy Magid of Mezhritz to intercede on their behalf by praying to the Almighty to force an annulment of the Czar's dastardly decrees.

"Perhaps," suggested the Rebbe Elimelech, "we should declare a communal fast led by the Magid — surely our united prayers will evoke Heavenly compassion!"

But the Rebbe Dov Ber quietly assured his disciple of an amazing secret. "Soon I will be departing this world. There is no need to gather the community and have them deprive their weak bodies of food. I will personally approach the heavenly throne and plead for mercy from the Almighty."

Sure enough, two weeks later the Mezhritzer Maggid passed from this world. The week of shiva passed, but the decrees were not annulled. The thirty period of morning passed as well, and still no change. The conscriptions were as ferocious as ever. Rabbi Elimelech became frustrated. Didn't the Magid promise salvation?

Desperate for an answer, he went to the Magid's grave and asked him why the decrees were not abolished.

That night the Magid appeared to his disciple and revealed to him the reason that nothing had occurred.

"On earth there is one view — one that I shared with you. Like you, I also saw the decree as a most terrible event befalling our nation. But here in Heaven I see a different picture. Now I understand everything from an entirely different perspective. And frankly, the view from above is not as bleak as the view from below. In fact, I don't even see the decree as a curse. I cannot pray to annul the decree. At this point, your only salvation is to ask an earthly rabbi to help you. Only a human leader can feel the mortal pain as you and the community feel it. Only someone who sees life from your perspective can pray on your behalf."

Moshe knew that Hashem can choose whomever He wants. But he felt it was his obligation to beseech the Almighty to continue his particular legacy and direction in leading the people. Moshe wanted the appointment based on his opinion of what the Jewish nation needs, not based on a Divine choice. A ruler with the attribute of pure justice may have been harsher on the people. He would not respond to each complaint by beseeching the Almighty for a miraculous solution. The sweetened waters of marah, the deliverance of quail, the splitting of the sea, the victories over Amalek, and the healing of Miriam were all preceded by a common denominator Moshe's intervention. A different leader with a different personality may have chosen a different direction. And an immortal leader may have not felt the despair of the people. Moshe created a destiny for his people based on his humility and understanding of the plight of his fellow Jews. And he wanted a shepherd like himself to care for his sheep. Even if it meant attempting to cajole his Creator with a very human philosophy.

lore

DAY IN, DAY OUT

RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS (Aish.com)

Parshat Pinchas tells of the heroic deed of Pinchas, who jumped up with spear in his hand to save the Jewish people from a plague of immorality. When the moment called for bold action, Pinchas was ready and willing to step forward.

Later in the parsha, G-d announces who will become the successor to Moses as leader of the Jewish people. Surprisingly, it is not the heroic Pinchas. Nor is it another great hero, Calev, who bravely stood up to protest, when the spies recommended not to enter the Land of Israel.

Instead, Yehoshua was chosen to succeed Moshe. Why?

The Talmud explains that the greatness of Yehoshua was that he stayed by Moses' side - day-in, day-out. No, Yehoshua didn't perform any incredible heroics that earned him front-page headlines. But in his own quiet and consistent way, Yehoshua made it his priority to draw close to G-d, absorb Jewish wisdom, and do whatever he could to help others do the same. In fact, the Talmud says that Yehoshua came to the synagogue early each morning - to help set up the chairs!

Think about it: These humble acts of dedication are what G-d values most, even more than dramatic demonstrations of bravery and heroics. Teachers, public servants, dedicated parents - these are the true Jewish heroes of yesterday and today.

THE DAILY GRIND AND THE DAILY LAMB

RABBI AHARON LOSCHAK (Chabad.org)

Imagine if someone stopped you on the street and asked you, "What's the single most important verse in the entire Torah?"

You'd probably answer something to the effect of "Shema Yisrael" or perhaps one of the Ten Commandments. Maybe "Love your fellow as yourself" would qualify. You know, Golden Rule and all that.

These are reasonable choices.

Well, do I have news for you!

THE MOST INCLUSIVE VERSE IN THE TORAH

A major chunk of the parshah of Pinchas speaks of sacrificial law for various events throughout the year. The Torah details sacrifices to be offered on Shabbat, festivals, and assorted other situations. At the very beginning of these laws, we read of the Tamid offering, the twice daily sacrifice offered in the Temple:

The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening. (28:4)

These two offerings served as the backbone of the daily Temple service; no other sacrifice was allowed to be offered prior to the morning Tamid or after the afternoon Tamid.

That seems to be the end of it. A simple enough law about sacrifices in the Temple.

But it's not. Take a look at this Midrash, in which several rabbis offer the verses they believed could encapsulate the entirety of Torah:

Ben Zoma says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, "Shema Yisrael."

Ben Nanas says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, "Love your fellow as yourself."

Shimon Ben Pazi says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, "The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the afternoon."

Rabbi Ploni stood up and said: The halachah follows Ben Pazi.2

Wait, what? What did Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi just say? Why would a passage about offering daily sacrifices be the "most inclusive" verse in the Torah? How can this detail of Temple law play ball with heavyweights like "Shema Yisrael" and the Golden Rule itself?

CONSTANCY IS KEY

The Maharal (Netiv Olam, Netiv Ahavat Rei'a 1:4) offers a fascinating, yet profoundly simple, explanation: constancy is key.

Yes, to love your neighbor as yourself is very important. The proclamation of faith that is "Shema!" is both moving and critical. Yet they are arguably not as important as the simple, banal truth of "offer the same two sacrifices every day."

You see, religious life is thankfully full of high-voltage, electric moments. Be it prayer, taking in the majestic glow of the Shabbat candles, or the thrill of doing a favor for another person, these are the moments we live for. Those pockets of time when we're energized and joyous about our religious life, and really, life at large.

Such moments are indeed important, and it's safe to say that no person, no matter how pious or devout, could survive without them.

The problem is that such moments are not constant. In fact, for many, they are few and far between. So what then? What do you do when there's no majestic glow of Shabbat candles or the prayers no longer talk to you? What do you do when the electricity of religion is gone, or if not entirely gone, seems to be fast asleep?

It is at such moments, when the going gets tough, that the proverbial tough get going. You wake up listless and apathetic, yet you carry forward.

Why?

Because you're committed. You view your relationship with G-d as a constant, something beyond question, a rock-solid formation that is not subject to the passing whims of your interest or drive.

A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP

It's really like that with any relationship. Do good relationships offer electric moments of passion, energy, and joy? Of course they do!

But those who enjoy true, everlasting, and committed relationships know this simple truth: The secret sauce lies in the commitment itself—regardless of what happens. The constancy, the willingness and readiness to just keep on plugging and doing the same thing today, tomorrow, and the next ten years no matter how boring it may seem—that is the magic ingredient of a successful relationship.

Our relationship with G-d is no different. There are moments of incredible passion and boundless joy. There will be times when your feet lift off the ground in exuberant dance. Those moments are represented by the holiday sacrifices detailed in the later verses. And then, there are moments when it might seem, dare I say, downright boring. Moments that appear to be a repeat of yesterday and a thousand years stretching back—like the daily Temple sacrifice that was offered every day; twice, in fact.

And you know what?

It's in the latter instances when the strength of your commitment will be tested, and should you pass, when its full beauty will flower.

So yes, "The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second

lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening" is truly one of the most important verses in the entire Torah. It gets little attention—and that's the point.
Consider yourself lucky that you're now in on the secret.

IMAGINE EVERY DAY A HOLIDAY

RABBI LEVI AVTZON (Chabad.org)

Our day is comprised of a mesh of constants and variables. Getting out of bed every day: a constant. What time we get up: a variable.
We eat constantly (if only we didn't!), but what we eat varies. Most of us surf the net daily, but how long our eyes are glued to the screen depends on our level of boredom.
In Judaism, as well, we have the constants: daily prayer and study, ethical behavior, kosher, and boring speeches. And we have the variables: holidays, ceremonies, Yom Kippur, a guest speaker.
Isn't change preferable over the predictable? Can we all agree with the teenage motto, "Normal is boring"?
So who needs constants? Why don't we have a holiday every day? (My younger brother would love that.)
Many years ago, G-d had a home in Jerusalem: the Holy Temple. Throughout the day, animals, flour, oil and fowl would be offered on the altar. No two days were the same; one day someone brought an atonement offering, the next day a wealthy tycoon came with a thousand animal donation, followed by a beggar who came with a meagre handful of flour. Unpredictable.
Amid all the change was a pillar of stability: the Tamid sacrifice. Tamid actually means constant, and every morning the Tamid (part one) would inaugurate the Temple service, and the Tamid (part two) would wrap up the hectic day. Nothing was offered before the morning Tamid or after its evening counterpart.
We each have a Holy Temple inside of us. We each need our Tamids, our constants.
Change is great, but only within the framework of stability. Too many variables in life, like the "celebrity life," put one on the front cover of tabloids. There have to be certain aspects of life that are etched in stone. Your commitment to your marriage, children, ethics, G-d, your health, the world.
Once you have stability as your bedrock, then, by all means, shake the applecart, take a vacation, do something abnormal (like calling up a friend from high school), buy an unusually beautiful pair of tefillin. Live it up.
After all, having no variables in life can lead you to count the pieces of cereal in your bowl, living as an automaton in a human laboratory.

News & Views

STOP THE CRIMINALIZATION OF JEWISH CIRCUMCISION IN BELGIUM

ISRAEL NATIONAL NEWS (Israelnn.com 16-7-25)

The European Jewish Association (EJA) has launched an urgent and coordinated campaign to defend Brit Milah, the Jewish religious circumcision of infant boys, in response to deeply concerning police raids and pending prosecutions of registered Jewish Mohalim in Antwerp, Belgium.
In a formal letter sent today to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, over 50 prominent Jewish leaders and rabbis from across Europe condemn the May 14 police actions, which involved raids on Mohalim homes, the confiscation of religious instruments, and the demand for a registry of circumcised infants. The letter warns that such actions constitute a direct violation of religious freedom and evoke "some of the darkest chapters in European history."
Accompanying the letter is a compelling Open Letter from more than 20 leading medical professionals from Europe, North America, and Israel—including endorsements from the Global Jewish Health Alliance (GJHA) and the American Jewish Medical Association (AJMA). These experts attest to the safety, training, and health benefits of circumcision when performed by certified Jewish Mohalim, rejecting any attempt to stigmatize or criminalize the practice. The signatory Doctors cite extensive evidence confirming that circumcision significantly reduces risks of urinary tract infections, penile cancer, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. It emphasizes that Jewish Mohalim are rigorously trained and medically proficient, and perform the procedure safely and with the utmost care.
Rabbi Menachem Margolin, Chairman of the EJA, stated: "We cannot and will not stand idly by as our faith is put on trial. circumcision is a sacred commandment, practiced safely for thousands of years by the Jewish people. Attempts to criminalize this rite not only threaten Jewish life—they defy Europe's founding values of religious freedom and human dignity. We call on the European Commission to act swiftly and decisively."
The EJA stresses that continued legal action against Brit Milah would amount to a de facto ban on Jewish life in Belgium and any country adopting similar policies—contradicting the European Commission's stated goal of protecting and fostering Jewish life within the European Union. The Association calls on President von der Leyen to publicly reaffirm the EU's commitment to religious freedom, condemn the actions in Belgium, and engage directly with the Belgian authorities to prevent further persecution of Jewish religious practice.

ANTI-ISRAEL UN COMMISSIONERS RESIGN EN MASSE AFTER TRUMP SANCTIONS

ALANA GOODMAN (FreeBeacon.com 14-7-25)

All three commissioners leading the United Nations' anti-Israel inquisition panel resigned this week, just days after the State Department sanctioned a pro-Hamas U.N. investigator.
The U.N. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory's chairwoman Navi Pillay, commissioner Miloon Kothari, and commissioner Chris Sidoti all announced they are stepping down, according to the watchdog group U.N. Watch.
The exodus comes less than a week after Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced U.S. sanctions against U.N. special rapporteur for the Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese for her "illegitimate and shameful efforts to prompt [International Criminal Court] action against U.S. and Israeli officials, companies, and executives."
Albanese, as the Washington Free Beacon reported earlier this month, wrote "threatening letters" to a variety of companies across the globe in which she warned them to cut business ties with Israel or face "potential criminal liability."
The mass departure could mark the end of the U.N. Commission of Inquiry, founded after a request from the Palestinian delegation and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2021 to probe the "root causes" of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Supporters of Israel have accused the commission of extreme bias, noting that the appointed leaders have called Israel an "apartheid" state and accused Jews of controlling the media.
While Pillay attributed her resignation to "age, medical issues, and the weight of several other commitments," U.N. Watch welcomed the departures and said the "architects of the U.N.'s anti-Israel inquisition are fleeing the ship."
"The resignation of all three commissioners is long overdue," U.N. Watch executive director Hillel Neuer said in a statement. "This was a commission born in prejudice—designed to target Israel, while ignoring Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Authority. Its members were selected precisely for their hostility to the Jewish state."
The hostility Neuer referenced includes Pillay's accusation of "apartheid" against Israel and Kothari's claim that social media is "controlled largely by the Jewish lobby."
Albanese, the sanctioned U.N. official, has also minimized Hamas terrorism, accused the CIA and Mossad of orchestrating the 2015 terrorist attack by ISIS in Paris, and said the United States is "subjugated by the Jewish lobby."

HAREDI SOLDIERS ARE DYING FOR ISRAEL

DUVI HONIG (Israelnn.com 13-7-25)

As Israel mourns the tragic loss of five soldiers from the Netsach Yehuda haredi battalion this past Tuesday and prays for the recovery of 14 others wounded, it is time to pause and confront a painful truth: there is a relentless effort by some to create an image of all haredi Jews as outsiders in the fight for Israel's survival. This needs clarification as it is an innaccurate generalization.
The haredim as a community are not sitting on the sidelines. Some of their sons are in uniform. Families are grieving. There are haredi soldiers risking—and losing—their lives in Gaza, standing shoulder to shoulder with their brothers-in-arms. Their blood stains the same sand. Their sacrifice deserves the same honor. To ignore or diminish their contributions is an affront not only to them but to the values of truth, unity, and justice.
Yet we are witnessing an aggressive campaign, largely driven by leftist political motives, to paint the entire haredi community as draft dodgers and societal burdens. Politicians on the left, aided by the current attorney general (who will soon be replaced) are calling for the mass arrest of yeshiva students who do not enlist. Some go as far as to compare them to threats to national security, echoing rhetoric typically reserved for enemies of the state. This demonization must stop.
It is eerily reminiscent of other smear campaigns in history, including the

politically motivated Russia hoax used to undermine President Trump during his previous administration with one goal in mind to topple Netanyahu and his government. Once again, we see political actors using smear by creating division to gain power, this time targeting a sector of devout Jews as scapegoats during wartime.

Let's put things in perspective. The 50,000 Torah students at the heart of this debate are needed because Israel must enlarge its army. Although more soldiers are needed, it's not the time to topple the government for this and start arresting our own in the streets, but should be addressed with dialogue. Seeking to bring down the government by painting them as the biggest enemy to the state of Israel's security, toppling the government in a time of war, is much more of a security risk to the state of Israel.

This need was realized during the current war, while before that, the army brass said Israel needed a small, smart army. The haredi young men are not draft dodgers in the traditional sense because they were granted exemptions at the birth of the state, but since their number has grown and the IDF's needs have grown as well, there has to be a change. However, they are only now being given conditions for army service that will preserve their level of observance.

They are members of a religious community that predates the essence of Judaism and the State of Israel, survivors of a tradition nearly wiped out in the Holocaust. We can not let the very same faces and clothing styles displayed in Yad Vashem—beards, black coats, and sidelocks who were arrested in the streets and lined up for deportation by the Nazis — to be dragged into public contempt as the enemy of the state with threats of arresting them in the streets and at checkpoints. Is this something of which to be proud? Are these pictures the Israeli government wants to see on headlines in Germany and around the world?.

Here in the Jewish state, some demand the forced conscription or imprisonment even of those young men who sincerely dedicate their lives to Torah study—a pillar of Jewish continuity that Ben Gurion himself vowed to preserve when Israel was founded. The state should be concentrating on those who are not attending yeshiva seriously, yet the left in Israel want to generalize because they are willing to do anything to push Netanyahu out of office.

Yes, many haredim do not serve in the military. But the numbers are growing. And while it is not the same as serving in combat roles, many contribute—whether through national service, charitable institutions, or keeping alive the heartbeat of Jewish heritage. The light of Torah has guided our people for thousands of years. Today, that light still shines—through the study halls of Bnei Brak, the synagogues of Jerusalem, and even the combat gear of Hashmonaim and Netsach Yehuda soldiers.

Recent reports in the UK show how over 250,000 social media posts promoting Scottish independence—suddenly went silent following a major Israeli airstrike on Iran, pointing to its being an outside smear campaign of political warfare aimed to instigate division and weaken the UK. This underscores a deeper reality: Israel, too, is facing coordinated disinformation campaigns by the left designed to destabilize its society from within.

The same foreign or politically motivated forces are attempting to topple Prime Minister Netanyahu's government by targeting Israel's haredi population—falsely scapegoating them as a national threat. These efforts are not organic. They are deliberate, divisive, and dangerous—and they must be exposed and rejected for what they are: foreign-fueled political warfare aimed at tearing apart Israel's social fabric and leadership in a time of war.

We must stop vilifying a community that represents the soul of our people for political purposes. We must reject political smear campaigns masquerading as national interest. And we must honor those haredi soldiers who died in Gaza not just with our prayers, but with our public recognition and national gratitude.

In this time of war and heartbreak, unity is our only path forward. Increasing the number of haredi recruits is a gradual, but necessary, process. Let us stand together—not just in memory of our fallen, but in defense of the values they died to protect: faith, family, freedom, and the eternal connection of the Jewish people people and the holy Torah.

WHEN THE REAL ENEMY IS A BOX OF FOOD: THE WAR ON GHF

LESLIE (GlobalDisconnect.substack.com 11-7-25)

CNN just published what it clearly intended to be a "damning exposé against Gaza Humanitarian fund." It revealed that internal USAID officials during the Biden administration had strongly advised against funding a little-known group called the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), citing concerns over oversight, operational capacity, and even reputational risk. A 14-page document obtained by CNN, dismissed GHF's aid proposal as "abysmal." From the outside, it looked like a classic case of bureaucratic accountability—except for one glaring omission.

While the Biden administration was throwing billions into Gaza's black hole, and turned the U.S. into one of the largest sponsors of Islamism around the world, a Trump administration sought to do something different. In June 2024, Secretary of State Marco Rubio fast-tracked a $30 million grant to GHF. It was one of the only grants designed to bypass Hamas entirely. As of last week, the $30M had not yet been disbursed. State Department says GHF must fulfill new conditions to receive funds. The U.S. may increase funding if GHF operates "safely," officials reportedly told CNN.

GHF has done what no other international body has managed to do in Gaza: deliver nearly 70 million meals, for free, directly to Palestinian civilians. No UN giving the food to Hamas. No Hamas taxation. No glorified terror-front "civil society" partners. Just food. Delivered. Efficiently. Without political games.

And that is exactly why GHF has become a target—not of Israel, not of ordinary Palestinians—but of Hamas, the United Nations, and before the Trump administration, USAID itself.

Since becoming operational, GHF has disrupted the Gaza aid cartel—a tightly controlled system in which Hamas taxes every truckload, the UN manages every headline, and international NGOs compete to stay ideologically compliant. GHF threatens that cartel. It offers a working alternative. It breaks the illusion that the only way to help Palestinians is to fund their jailers. That's why it had to be discredited, first through internal memos, and then through a media campaign.

The real scandal isn't GHF. It's USAID—and the corruption, ideology, and cowardice that define it under the Biden administration. Between October 7, 2023 and November 2024, USAID sent a staggering $2.4 billion into Gaza. Not to apolitical humanitarian channels. Not to civilian-focused partners. But through the same compromised networks—UNRWA and Hamas-affiliated NGOs—that have enabled a terror state to masquerade as a victim society.

That success is precisely why USAID tried to stop it. Meanwhile, on the ground in Gaza, the cost of that sabotage is being paid in blood.

In the past two weeks, Hamas has openly threatened GHF workers. It hasn't stopped there. At least a dozen local aid workers affiliated with GHF have been murdered by Hamas operatives. In a separate incident, two American aid workers were injured in an attack by Hamas fighters while attempting to distribute food.

And yet, there has been no condemnation from the United Nations. No urgent press release from Amnesty International. No tweets from Human Rights Watch. No tearful op-eds from Samantha Power. In the world of humanitarian politics, it seems terrorism only counts when it can be blamed on Israel.

To the contrary, the efforts from GHF are condemned, Francesca Albanese called it "Essential to Israel's Genocide," yes feeding people is a crime, according to the UN.

As if coordinated, a new phase of the campaign to destroy GHF began just days ago—this time led by Reuters. The wire service published an inflammatory story claiming that GHF was involved in building "concentration camps" in Gaza, based on an ambiguous PowerPoint presentation they claim came from the organization. What Reuters failed to mention is that GHF had already denied the claim before the story was published. No matter. The headline ran anyway, the entire world repeated the claims. The narrative was too valuable to fact-check.

The accusation is not only false—it's grotesque. It cynically invokes Holocaust imagery to smear the only group actually feeding Palestinian civilians at scale. It's not journalism. It's disinformation, deliberately deployed to discredit a group that threatens the status quo.

Let's be clear: the only people trying to dismantle GHF are Hamas, the UN and the media class that props them up. They are not doing this because GHF is ineffective—they are doing it because GHF is too effective. It has exposed them all. Including an entire UberEats operation, delivering food straight to Hamas leaders' homes.

Meanwhile, GHF just successfully completed a pilot of its new community distribution program that is getting food directly to people in need - safely, without interference, and where they live. This is an efficient kind of of Uber Eats, not the one the UN was operating, delivering food to Hamas terrorists. Hamas wants GHF gone because it threatens their control. The UN wants it gone because it threatens their monopoly. USAID din"t want it because it would have exposed the failure of their billion-dollar programs. And Western journalists and "human rights" groups want it gone because feeding people goes against their narrative.

GHF has proven something dangerous to this entire ecosystem: that it is possible to feed Palestinians without empowering Hamas. That success is revolutionary. And that's why it has to be destroyed—by any means necessary.

Ask yourself: Why does no one care when Hamas murders aid workers? Why do UN officials fall silent when Americans are attacked by the very regime they help fund? Why are reporters willing to run unverified slander against a group that's saving lives—just because it doesn't fit the narrative?

The answer is brutal: they don't care if Palestinians eat. They care if Hamas survives.

If humanitarian aid can function without Hamas, without UN branding, and without ideological loyalty to a failing system—then the justification for that system collapses. And with it, the careers, funding streams, and political narratives of hundreds of powerful people and institutions.

That's what this is really about.

GHF is not the problem. It is the proof that everything we've been told about Gaza aid is a lie. That billions were never needed. That the UN was never a necessary partner. That "humanitarian coordination" was always a scam.

HOW DEI UNLEASHED THE MONSTER OF ANTI-SEMITISM

BRENDAN O'NEILL (Spiked-online.com 15-7-25)

'Anti-Semitism is a very light sleeper', said Conor Cruise O'Brien. Indeed it is, and it has been stirred from its thin slumber these past two years. Since Hamas's pogrom of 7 October 2023 we have witnessed the violent rebirth of English anti-Semitism. And this is one breed of fanatical prejudice that cannot be libellously pinned on the 'gammon', on those lower orders who are so often written off as bigots. No, it is in polite society, among the hoarders of virtue, that the revived Jew hate is most prominent and most vicious.

A new report has found that anti-Semitism has been 'normalised in middle-class Britain'. Wariness of the Jew is rife in the very institutions of bourgeois society that pride themselves on their anti-racist credentials. At universities, in the arts and in the NHS, the report found, anti-Semitism has become 'pervasive'. The same lanyard classes that organise training sessions on 'white privilege' or 'heteronormativity' to enlighten the oiks on their inner bigot have created a climate in which Jews feel 'marginalised' and 'tolerated rather than respected'.

The report was commissioned by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. It was written by Lord John Mann of the Labour Party, who advises the government on anti-Semitism, and Dame Penny Mordaunt of the Conservative Party, who was defence secretary under Theresa May. They describe themselves as 'two non-Jews from opposite sides of the political spectrum' who were 'stunned into silence' by what they heard from Britain's Jews. We're 'hard-nosed politicians', they write, but still they were shaken by reports of surging anti-Jewish violence, censorship of Jewish artists and even the belittling of Jewish patients in the NHS.

Their report is a difficult read. It reminds us that Britain suffered a historic spike in Jew-hating crimes in the aftermath of 7 October. No sooner had that neo-fascist militia visited its violence on the Jews of southern Israel than its sick mimickers in the UK were visiting abuse on the Jews of Britain. There was a 'vertiginous growth in anti-Semitism', the report says. There were a record 4,103 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK in 2023, most of them occurring after 7 October. The fascistic menace persisted into 2024, when there were 3,528 incidents of Jew hate – the second-highest annual total.

Synagogues were desecrated, Jewish kids were roughed up, posters featuring Hamas's kidnap victims were rabidly ripped down or daubed with Jewphobic graffiti. One especially grim symptom of the post-7 October mania was when pupils at the Jewish Free School in north London were given permission to remove their blazers on their way to and from school. Literal children encouraged to hide outward signs of their Jewishness lest some Hamasnik should target them for violence – we forget at our peril the darkness that befell Britain in the weeks after the slaughter of the Jews in Israel.

The most valuable thing about the report is that it shows how institutionalised anti-Semitism has become. Every recent conflict involving Israel has been accompanied by a rise in Jew hatred, the report says. The minute Israel takes action against the armies of anti-Semites that surround it, a digital 'sewer of hate and disinformation' will wash over our societies. But it's been 'different this time around'. Post-7 October, anti-Semitism has 'crept into civil society', including 'the workplace, cultural spaces and even the NHS'. The chilling result is that Jews have 'almost nowhere they can turn… where anti-Semitism does not seem present'.

The report paints a grim picture of how suffocating the cult of Israelophobia has become. It tells of Jewish musicians elbowed out by venues that once hosted them. And Jewish students seeing their disabilities liaison officers, the people they trust with their health records, screaming for an 'intifada'. And Jews waiting years for the professional bodies they work for to investigate incidents of anti-Semitism. And Jewish academics watching as studies into anti-Semitism were 'heavily edited' to avoid offending other minority groups. Sidelined, censored and gaslit – that's been the experience of our Jewish compatriots since the October pogrom.

And much of the animus has come from that section of society that fancies itself as being on 'the right side of history'. The preening grad classes who say 'Black Lives Matter' and 'transwomen are women' are the ones marginalising Jews. Israelophobia and its less guarded cousin – anti-Semitism – have become the dinner-party prejudices of our age. That was clear in the sick spectacle of middle-class youths at Glastonbury chanting for the death of the Jewish nation's soldiers. Educated elites who for years posed as anti-racist now gleefully partake in mob orgies of Israelophobia that often cross a line into something even darker.

It seems to me that the latent anti-Semitism of England's middle classes has found a fresh outlet in Israelophobia. Under the faux-political cover of hating the Jewish nation, some are giving vent to that old, regressive loathing of Jews. And this is where the report falls down – with its solutions. It calls for the boosting of DEI – Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. Educational institutions and public bodies must ensure, it says, that DEI includes 'education on anti-Semitism'. This strikes me as a staggering moral contradiction – because it is precisely DEI that helped to birth the new Jew hate.

It is not a coincidence that it is in the very institutions that are rife with DEI that anti-Semitism is now 'pervasive'. And not just in the UK – on campuses across the US, where DEI is a neo-religion, Jew hatred has surged. We've seen students at Columbia call the Jewish nation 'the pigs of the Earth' and openly dream of death for their Jewish colleagues. At Penn University, Jewish students have been told to go back to 'fucking Berlin where you came from'. There's even been the daubing of 'swastikas and hateful graffiti' on campus. In America as well as Britain, the creep of the fascist imagination seems most pronounced in those zones where wokeness rules and diversity is sacralised.

DEI is Dr Frankenstein to the monster of the new Jew hatred. It is the very racial conspiracism of this bourgeois cult that has made life hard for Jews. For this hyper-racialist ideology ruthlessly sorts all ethnic groups into boxes marked 'oppressed' (meaning good) or 'privileged' (meaning bad). And it views Jews as the most privileged, the people with the most to atone for. It hangs a target sign round their necks, marking them out for the righteous opprobrium of self-styled defenders of 'the oppressed'. An ideology that damns Jews as unjustly advantaged, and the Jewish State as uniquely barbarous, is an ideology that sooner or later will let the world's oldest racism off its weak leash. And that has happened.

Anti-Semitism is not only a light sleeper – it's a shape-shifter, too. There's been religious anti-Semitism, racial anti-Semitism, and now woke anti-Semitism: a swirling bigotry fuelled by the blind righteousness of a half-mad activist class that genuinely thinks history is on the side of its hatreds. We don't need more DEI. We need Jews and their allies to prep for the fight ahead. Because while history doesn't 'take sides', it does contain lessons, and none as important as this one: Jew hatred must always be strangled at birth.

MAKE FAITH GREAT AGAIN

MEIRA KOLATCH (JNS.org 15-7-25)

It has long been fashionable in the Western world to treat faith with a kind of embarrassed condescension. A relic of a more primitive time.

Useful, perhaps, for inspiring great art or comforting the bereaved, but not to be mentioned in serious company and certainly not in the company of generals or heads of state. At some point, the modern mind decided that invoking G-d was unsophisticated. That prayer belonged to children and televangelists. That miracles were metaphors.

But then something extraordinary happened. Over the past few days, even the most hardened secularist would struggle to deny it: We are witnessing events that defy politics. That refuse to be explained away by diplomacy or realpolitik. That feels (and I say this with care) biblical.

U.S. President Donald Trump, in a bold military operation, neutralized what has been called the "nuclear heart" of Iran. In a matter of hours, one of the greatest threats to the Jewish people since 1945 was disabled. Not only without American casualties, but with surgical, almost divine, precision. It was, by every metric, a miracle.

And then the images: Trump at the Western Wall. Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu is speaking openly about divine guidance. U.S Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee invoking G-d without apology. These are not accidental optics. These are men—flawed, yes, like all leaders—who seem acutely aware that they are part of something far larger than themselves. That history is being moved by a hand not their own.

For decades, Western liberalism has tried to sanitize G-d out of the public square. Faith was reduced to a personal hobby. "Keep it to yourself," we were told, as if belief in G-d was no different than a fondness for birdwatching. But the Jewish people, and indeed the State of Israel, do not exist because of realism or probability. They exist because of a covenant. Because of a promise. Because of miracles.

What we are seeing now is not merely a geopolitical shift. It is something more profound: a return to the language of faith. A restoration of the moral imagination. A world in which we can again say, without embarrassment, that Pharaoh hardens his heart. That evil exists.

Trump, for all his many eccentricities, is beginning to look like one of them. As is Netanyahu. Not because they are perfect. But because, at this moment in history, they are standing in the gap and holding the line. Saving a nation that was once again on the brink.

The Jewish instinct, shaped by exile and pogrom, has been to retreat from overt expressions of faith in public. To play by the rules of a secular world that tolerates menorahs as decoration but not as declarations. But this is no longer tenable. Faith is no longer optional. It is the lens through which reality must now be understood.

Iran is not just a threat because of uranium. It is a threat because of ideology, one rooted in a theocratic belief that the Jewish people must be destroyed. To fight such hatred without the language of G-d is to enter battle half-armed. The enemy is spiritual—and so must be the response.

Christians in America have long understood this. They walk boldly with their Bibles. They vote with their values. They build movements with prayer at the center. And they are not ashamed. It is time for the Jewish people, especially those in positions of influence, to do the same. To stop whispering the name of G-d like it's a liability. To say it as they once did, with trembling and pride.

There is a reason the Western Wall in Jerusalem still stands. A reason it has become the backdrop of this war, a war not just for land or security, but for truth, light and faith itself.

So yes, let us say it plainly: G-d is back. The sooner we welcome Him into our headlines, our policies and our souls, the sooner we'll understand what's really happening. Not just in Israel. Not just in Iran. But in the very heart of history. Let's make faith great again.

NETANYAHU GIFTS TRUMP WITH DOLLAR BILL FROM THE REBBE

CHABAD.ORG STAFF (Chabad.org 9-7-25)

During their meeting on Tuesday at the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented President Donald Trump with two gifts: a dollar bill from the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, and a mezuzah. The mezuzah case was made out of Iranian missile shrapnel and formed in the shape of a B-2 bomber plane.

The two leaders met in the aftermath of Operation Rising Lion, when Israel boldly attacked and degraded Iran's nuclear capabilities. The U.S. stepped in to help a week into the military operation, when Trump dispatched seven B-2 stealth bombers drop what are known as "bunker busters" on three heavily fortified Iranian nuclear sites. The mezuzah case was a nod to American assistance.

Accompanying the mezuzah case was a dollar bill from the Rebbe. Beginning in 1986, the Rebbe would distribute dollar bills every Sunday to thousands of men, women and children—Jews and non-Jews—seeking his blessing. The dollar bill was intended for charity, embodying the Chassidic teaching that when two people meet something positive must emerge for a third, and each individual was empowered to make their contribution to whatever cause they wished. Recipients would often donate another dollar and keep the one from the Rebbe as a treasured keepsake. The dollar gifted to the President was presented in a custom leather case engraved with gratitude to "a true friend and partner of Israel and the Jewish people."

The Rebbe's dollar reached Netanyahu through Meir Bar Lev, deputy mayor of Beitar Illit, Israel, who initially gifted the Prime Minister with a bill in the merit of his diplomatic success. The mayor had received it from Rabbi Chaim Greenberg, director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Beitar Illit. When Netanyahu requested a second dollar for Trump, Bar Lev returned to Greenberg, who provided a second dollar from his private collection—originally received from the Rebbe on 9 Shevat 5747 (Feb 8, 1987).

Netanyahu has often spoken about the inspiration he draws from his numerous encounters with the Rebbe, both publicly and privately, and maintains a photo of himself with the Rebbe in his office. On the eve of Operation Rising Lion President Javier Milei of Argentina gifted a visibly moved Netanyahu a drawing of one of the Prime Minister's visits with the Rebbe.

Trump himself is likewise familiar with the Rebbe's legacy. The President visited the Ohel, the Rebbe's resting place in Queens, on Oct. 7, 2024, and more recently wrote a letter highlighting the Rebbe's continuing impact on the world to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the Rebbe's passing.

The timing of Netanyahu's state visit held special significance, taking place on July 8, which this year coincided with the 12th of the Jewish month of Tammuz. The day marks the liberation in 1927 of the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory, from Soviet imprisonment. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak had been arrested by the Communist regime for upholding Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain, and his release a miraculous event that unfolded in what appeared to have been the natural order of things.

WHY JEWS STILL CRY OVER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

RABBI MENACHEM LEHRFIELD (Aish.com)

For nearly two thousand years, the Jewish People have mourned the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. At every Jewish wedding, at the moment of intense joy when the ceremony concludes, we break a glass to remember this loss. Jews pray daily for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its crowning jewel, the Temple. Each year during the summer, Jews observe a three-week period of mourning, culminating in the saddest day of the Jewish year, Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av, when we fast and mourn the destruction of both Temples.

This begs a simple question: Why can't we just get over it? Why don't we just move on? Why continue mourning over the destruction of a building that happened so long ago?

The root of this question lies in a misunderstanding of the Temple's significance to Jewish life and the profound power of mourning.

Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, obm, the great Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisrael in Baltimore, gave a profound analogy to grasp the depth of this loss. Imagine a blind person who, never having the ability to see, believes he's not missing anything. He has never seen a sunset, looked into the eyes of his wife, or seen the smile on his child's face, yet he is convinced he lacks nothing. If offered a procedure that would grant him the gift of sight, he would decline it since he doesn't think he is missing anything.

The true tragedy is not his blindness; it's his complete lack of awareness of what he is actually missing.

Similarly, we have become so accustomed to a world without the Temple that we do not fully realize what we are missing. This lack of awareness is a tragedy in itself. If we would appreciate the enormity of the loss, we would long for its rebuilding and the subsequent redemption.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I SHOULD CRY

A poignant story from the recapturing of the Western Wall in 1967 illustrates this concept. As the Kotel came into Jewish hands for the first time since 1948, the moment was filled with significance and emotion. David, a non-religious soldier, began to cry uncontrollably. His friend who grew up on the same kibbutz asked, "Why are you crying? You and I grew up secular; this Wall means nothing to us."

David responded, "I'm crying because I don't know why I should cry."

Perhaps his tears also reflected a deep, albeit unconscious, sense of loss for something he couldn't fully comprehend.

The grief we feel is not just about a lost building; it reflects a profound longing for the spiritual completeness and unity that the Temple once embodied.

The Temple served as a connection between the spiritual and the physical, the nexus point where heaven and earth kissed. It was where the Jewish people gathered to feel closer to G-d and each other, reinforcing their collective identity and faith. The daily services, the lighting of the menorah, and the offerings were not just rituals but acts that unified the nation in their shared devotion and values.

The destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE were catastrophic events that shattered this spiritual and national unity. The loss was not only physical but also deeply spiritual, symbolizing the severing of a direct line to the divine and a disintegration of communal cohesion.

A CHAOTIC WORLD

Our mourning today is a yearning for the ideal state of being that the Temple represented. We are not crying over something from thousands of years ago, but rather we are grieving for the catastrophic consequences of

its destruction that continues to impact the world today.
We are not crying over something from thousands of years ago, but rather we are grieving for the catastrophic consequences of its destruction that continues to impact the world today.
No matter what benchmark you use, our world today is deeply troubled. One looks around and wonders, how did we get here? The beginning of the unraveling that brings us to our current reality is the loss of the Temple.
In our daily prayers, we express a longing for the restoration of the Temple, envisioning a time when peace, justice, and divine presence will be fully realized in our world. This mourning is a recognition of the current imperfections in our lives and the world around us, and a hope for a future where these gaps will be filled, when meaning and moral clarity will be apparent to all.
When one suffers loss, there is a tendency to try and stifle the pain and move on. Well-meaning friends try and help distract us and tell us to 'get over it' and remind us that 'time heals all wounds.' But time does not heal all wounds.
Judaism encourages us to develop a growth mindset, not just in our happiest times but also in our sorrow and grief. A fixed mindset sees loss and failure as permanent conditions. In contrast, a growth mindset sees failures as opportunities to learn and grow, to realize the enormity of our loss, and use that realization to change the ending of our story.
There are no bad emotions, sadness is difficult but it isn't bad. We need sadness to help us change the status quo and appreciate joy.
When a loved one passes away, we don't just move on or pretend the person didn't leave us. We don't stifle the pain; we embrace it through the practice of sitting shiva, spending a week confronting the loss and remembering our loved one. This way, we can process the pain and embrace our new reality. By concentrating on our loss, as difficult as it may be, we recognize and remember who this person was and realize the profound loss that we may have taken for granted.
Similarly, we don't just move on from the loss of the Temple. We actively mourn our loss so that we can appreciate what we lost and what we need to do to get back there.
We actively mourn our loss so that we can appreciate what we lost and what we need to do to get back there.
This reflection of our collective loss led to the Jewish people's response to our exile and the Temple's destruction. Despite the loss, Judaism did not collapse but instead adapted, finding new ways to maintain spiritual and communal life through synagogues, study, and prayer.
A BETTER TODAY
Tisha B'Av is a day for deep reflection on the causes of the Temples' destruction. Our sages teach that the primary cause was baseless hatred and communal discord. This reflection encourages a mindset that seeks to learn from past mistakes.
By commemorating the Temple's destruction, we remind ourselves of the importance of striving for a better future while finding meaning and connection in the present. The Temple's memory encourages us to build bridges within our communities, foster spiritual growth, and maintain hope, even in times of adversity.
Our mourning for the Temple is not merely a remembrance of the past but a call to strive for a better today and a brighter tomorrow. By reflecting on the themes of unity, resilience, and hope that the Temple embodies, we can find inspiration to address the challenges of modern life and work towards a more connected and harmonious world.

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

SQUEEZING LEMONS ON SHABBAT

RABBI CHAIM JACHTER (KolTorah.org)
The permissibility of squeezing lemons into a liquid (such as tea) on Shabbat has been debated among Halachic beginning with the Rishonim all the way up to contemporary authorities.
TALMUDIC BACKGROUND
The issue of squeezing lemons on Shabbat does not appear in the Gemara. However, we must first see the Talmudic background to this issue. Almost all Rishonim accept as normative the assertion of Rav (Shabbos 145) that "the only fruits that are forbidden from the Torah to squeeze on Shabbat are olives and grapes." They are prohibited because of the subcategory (toldah) of Sechita (squeezing) which is part of the general category of work of Dash (threshing), (see Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 21:12 and 8:10).
Rashba and Ran (Shabbos 145a) explain that the juices of olives and grapes are considered a significant drink. Therefore, it is Biblically forbidden to produce their juice on Shabbat. The juices of other fruits are not considered significant by the Torah and therefore are not biblically forbidden to squeeze on Shabbat. We find a similar idea articulated in the Gemara (Brachos 38a) that juices of other fruit are considered Zeya B'Alma, "mere sweat," and therefore the bracha made on these juices is only shehakol.
Rabbinically however, it is forbidden to squeeze berries and pomegranates on Shabbat because the Gemara (Shabbos 144b) explains that since these fruits are squeezed for juice, the juice are considered significant and they are Rabbinically considered to be a drink and are forbidden to produce on Shabbat.
The Ramo (OC 302:1) adds that in a place where the practice of some people is to squeeze a particular fruit for its juice as a refreshment or pleasure, it is forbidden on Shabbos to squeeze such a fruit in that locale. The Gemara (Shabbos 144b) states that other fruits, i.e. fruits that are hardly ever squeezed for their juice are not forbidden to be squeezed on Shabbos. Even if there is one individual who does squeeze a particular fruit, his actions are considered eccentric and therefore halachically insignificant. Hence, it would be permissible to squeeze that fruit on Shabbat. It appears that in our times, almost all fruits are squeezed by some elements in the food industry and one would be hand-pressed to find a fruit that would be permitted to squeeze on Shabbat.
RISHONIM
Lemons, however, are different than almost all other fruits, in that hardly anyone drinks lemon juice alone without mixing it with water and (in most cases) sugar. Therefore, the Halachic status regarding lemons as far as the prohibition of squeezing is concerned, is unclear. On one hand, it is frequently squeezed and should therefore be in the Talmudic category of berries and pomegranates. On the other hand, since lemon juice is not consumed by itself without additions, perhaps its juice is not considered Halachically significant.
The first Rishon to deal with this issue was the Shibolei Haleket. He cites two opinions regarding this issue. He cites the opinion of Rabeinu Yishai who believes that it is forbidden to squeeze lemons. He reasons that since people squeeze lemons, lemons are Halachically identical to berries and pomegranates. However, he cites the opposing view of Rav Yehudah Ben Rav Binyamin who rules that "it is permitted to squeeze lemons for lemon juice onto a plate, even if there is no food presently on the plate, since he will later mix the juice with food and it is understood that by all, that lemons are squeezed only to add flavor to the food and not to be consumed as a drink." The Rosh (Responsa 22:2) likewise adopts a lenient ruling based on basically the same logic - "that lemons are squeezed for the purpose of flavoring food and not to be consumed as a drink."
It should be apparent to the reader that even according to the two lenient opinions we cited, it would seem to be forbidden to squeeze lemons if in that culture, lemon juice was used as a drink, even if it was not drunk alone without additions. The lenient opinions were based on the fact that lemon juice was not consumed as a drink.
Accordingly, the Beis Yosef (OC 320) is puzzled by the common practice in Egypt "for Jews to squeeze lemons into water which has sugar added to it, and everyone does so on Shabbat as well, and no Rabbi questions this practice."
The Beis Yosef offers two ways to defend this practice of Egyptian Jewry. First he suggests that it is not forbidden to squeeze a fruit such as a lemon, whose juice is not consumed independently. The second suggestion is that it is forbidden to squeeze a fruit whose juice is first squeezed directly into containers. Lemons are permitted to be squeezed since their juice is almost always squeezed into containers that already have water in them. Hence, lemon juice is not elevated to the status of a significant drink.
SHULCHAN ARUCH AND COMMENTARIES
Rav Yosef Karo (the author of both the Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch) does not indicate in the Beis Yosef which answer he considers to be normative. However, in Shulchan Aruch (OC 320:6), Rav Karo unequivocally states, "it is permissible to squeeze lemons". This follows the first approach he adopted in the Beis Yosef that squeezing lemons is not included in the prohibition of Sechita since lemon juice is not consumed independently. Accordingly, to the Shulchan Aruch it would be permissible to squeeze lemon juice directly into tea.
The commentaries to the Shulchan Aruch disagree as to how to rule on this

issue. The Magen Avraham appears to accept as normative the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch that squeezing lemons is permissible, since it is not consumed independently.

On the other hand, the Taz seems to adopt as normative the opinion that it is permissible to squeeze lemon only if the juice is intended to be used to add flavor to food and not to be consumed as a drink. The Taz apparently rejects both of the Beit Yoseph's justifications for the practice of Egyptian Jewry to squeeze lemon on Shabbat.

LATE CODIFIERS

This dispute continues even among the later codifiers such as the Shuchan Aruch HaRav, Chayei Adam, Aruch HaShulchan, and Mishneh Berurah. The Shuchan Aruch HaRav (320:10) appears to adopt the lenient view of the Shulchan Aruch and Magen Avraham. However, he notes that there is reason to be strict according to the minority view that prohibits squeezing all fruit even if it is never squeezed.

However, the Mishneh Berurah (Bi'ur Halacha 320:Mutar) rules that one need not be concerned with this minority view that other fruits may not be squeezed for their juice.

The Aruch HaShulchan (320:17) appears to wholeheartedly accept the most lenient opinion of the Shulchan Aruch and Magen Avraham. He writes "there is no concern [of squeezing] regarding lemons because they are not squeezed to drink its juice independently." Rather, its juice is squeezed to be used as a dip or into water or other beverages, but not to be consumed independently. Therefore, lemons are entirely excluded from the prohibition of squeezing."

The Mishneh Berurah (320:22), Chayei Adam (14:4) and Eglei Tal (Dash 16:30) adopt a middle position regarding this issue. They regard as normative the aforementioned second answer of the Beis Yosef. This approach was that the lemon juice is not regarded as a "significance drink" only if the normal procedure for making lemonade is squeezing the juice into a container that already has a liquid present. In that situation, lemon juice has not been elevated to the status of a "significant drink." However, in a culture in which the normal procedure for making lemonade is to first squeeze lemon juice into a container and subsequently to add water, then the status of lemon juice would be elevated to a "significant drink." In that culture squeezing lemons for its juice would be Rabbinically forbidden, even if the lemon is squeezed into a liquid.

The three aforementioned major authorities, Mishneh Berurah, Chayei Adam and Eglei Tal all point out that the procedure for making lemonade in "their time" (and many people today) was to first squeeze lemon juice into empty containers and subsequently to add water. Therefore, the status of lemon juice was elevated to a significant drink and it would be forbidden to squeeze lemons for its juice on Shabbos.

The Chayei Adam and Mishneh Berurah offer a simple way to squeeze lemons into tea without violating the Sechita prohibition. They cite the recommendation of the RaDbaZ (Responsa 1:10) that one first squeeze the juice onto sugar (juice may be squeezed into food but not liquid). Then, after the sugar absorbs the juice the sugar is placed into the tea. Indeed, this has become common practice in many observant homes. The reasoning of this leniency is that the juice is being squeezed into a solid and not into a liquid.

Nevertheless, some authorities question this procedure. Even the Chayei Adam already expressed some reservations regarding this procedure, although the Mishneh Berurah wholeheartedly accepts it.

The Chazon Ish firmly objects to this procedure. He argues that since one's intention and objective is to squeeze lemon juice into tea, it is considered as if one is squeezing the lemon directly into the tea.

CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITIES

Contemporary authorities continue to disagree as to which opinion to follow. The opinions range from the most lenient to the strictest.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ruled in accordance with the lenient ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, Magen Avraham and Aruch HaShulchan that it is permitted to squeeze lemons directly into a liquid (even when lemon juice is commonly squeezed into empty containers).

Rav Hershel Schachter told this author that he believes that it is preferable to follow the approach of the Mishneh Berura to first squeeze the lemon onto sugar. Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, however, told this author that one should follow the approach of the Chazon Ish. According to this ruling, if one wants lemon juice in his tea, the juice should be either squeezed before Shabbat or the lemon should be placed directly in the tea. One should consult his Rav for guidance as to which opinion one should adopt in practice.

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