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(In memory of Moshe Yehuda ben Avrohom Yaakov, Mala Mindel bas Meir, Moshe Tzvi ben Yitzchok Aharon, Gittel bas Sinai, Nechemia ben Menachem Mendel, Yaakov ben Menachem Mendel)

Shlach 5786

How the Mighty Fall

RABBI NOAH WEINBERG (Aish.com)

This week's Torah portion tells the fateful story of the 12 spies who were sent to spy out the land of Israel.

"Shelach lecha anashim... Send forth, for yourself, men..." (Bamidbar 13:2). Hashem is telling Moshe to send them out "for yourself" – not for Me. I've already told you that it is a good land; there is no need for spies. But if this is what you want, I will not stop you. I will not take away your independence. But be sure to choose "anashim" (which Rashi tells us means men of distinction, righteous leaders). It is a dangerous mission; be sure to send the best.

The Torah says, "Moshe sent them forth... by the mouth of Hashem; they were all distinguished men; heads of the Children of Israel" (ibid 13:3). What does "by the mouth of Hashem" mean? The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:5) explains that Moshe did not rely on his own judgment in selecting them. He conferred with the Almighty on each one: "Is he up for the task? Is he the strongest leader of this tribe?" And God gave His stamp of approval for each man chosen, testifying that indeed, "kulam anashim – they are all distinguished men."

Moshe then sends twelve of the greatest men of the Jewish people to spy out the land. It's a dream team! Yet for some reason Moshe is very concerned that something horrendous is going to happen.

Moshe's fear compels him to change the name of his devoted student: "And Moshe called Hoshea the son of Nun, Yehoshua" (ibid 13:16), adding a yud to signify the prayer, "May God save you from the evil counsel of the spies." He is actually worried that Yehoshua, the future leader of the Jewish people, the one who will lead them into the land of Canaan and wage fierce battles against the thirty-one kings, is going to be convinced to become a traitor. Why was Moshe so concerned?

Moshe was not alone in recognizing the insidious dangers of this mission. The Talmud (Sotah 34b) tells us that the only reason Calev ben Yefuneh was able to resist the temptation to join the other spies was that he went to the graves of the patriarchs in Chevron to pray that he be protected from their evil counsel. Why did a great tzaddik like Calev feel that he was in such great danger that he needed the Almighty to save him?

But perhaps the most mystifying aspect of this saga is how quickly this illustrious, handpicked group went from being righteous leaders to being disloyal, faithless liars who brought back an evil report that demoralized the entire nation. The verse says, "They went and they came" (ibid 13:26). But the previous verse already says they returned, so how can the Torah say, "They went"? Rashi explains: "What is meant by 'They went'? To compare their going with their coming. Just as their return was with evil intent, so was their departure with evil intent." The ten spies were infected with evil intent the moment they left, long before they entered the land of Israel and began their mission.

What is happening here? God Himself gives testimony that each of the spies is a righteous, distinguished leader. Yet as soon as they start on the road they already have the appalling intention of undermining Hashem's plan, preventing their generation from entering the land of Israel and planting the seeds of all future calamities, culminating with the destruction of our two Temples on Tisha b'Av (Taanis 29a). One moment, the spies are tzaddikim, and the next moment, they are evil – with no time in between for anything to have caused them to fall so precipitously. What changed?

THE ONLY THING THAT changed was that now they are going to the Land of Israel with the responsibility of reporting back to the Jewish people. They are going to have to face a fearful nation that is eagerly awaiting their report. A moment before, they were tzaddikim, but now they have to stand up to their society and tell the people something they do not want to hear: "Friends, we have to fulfill our mission and invade the land of Canaan! The

Almighty is with us, and there's nothing to fear!" Suddenly these courageous, righteous men are thrust into the difficult situation of confronting the people and giving them a report the majority are not interested in hearing. The people do not want reassurance – they want confirmation of their fears.

Right from the start, the pressure to bring back a negative report subtly affected the objectivity of ten out of the twelve spies and caused them to decide not to risk their popularity and stature by pushing an agenda that went against what the Jewish people desired.

We are all creatures of society. We crave approval and validation. We prefer not to take a stand that goes against the grain and makes us vulnerable to criticism or attack. When Yehoshua and Calev got up in front of the nation and told them, "You have nothing to fear. We can go up!" the people called them murderers and wanted to stone them. Who wants to be called a murderer? It is far easier to put on blinders and view the situation through subjective eyes that will appease the people.

Society is an incredibly powerful force. If the masses expect you to come back with a report that says they do not have to enter the Land of Israel, you come back with that report. That type of societal pressure creates a formidable undertow that constantly erodes our understanding of what is true and good. And it is very easy to get caught in this pull.

For example, we know that the crown of Torah is available to each and every Jew, regardless of his level of intelligence (See "Terumah: The Crown of Torah"). As the Rambam authoritatively states, "Whoever wants it may come and take it" (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:1). Chazal say, "One who says I searched and did not find, do not believe him... and one who says I searched and did find, believe him. This is referring to the area of understanding Torah" (Megillah 6b). We have a guarantee that anyone who sincerely puts in the effort to understand Torah will attain it. That is a halachah, an indisputable fact.

No matter who you are, if you make the genuine effort to learn and know Torah, you can attain the crown of Torah. Hashem will help you; He makes that promise.

But deep down, do we believe it? Our society tells us that only the gifted individuals can become towering talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars. For the rest of us, it's just not realistic.

We think this way because our society conveys that message, drowning out the reality that is defined only by the Torah. We all get caught in the undertow and lose our bearings, which causes us to give up on the goal.

Realizing how dangerous societal pressure can be, Moshe prayed for Yehoshua. Calev recognized this danger as well, and so he prayed to Hashem to give him the strength to resist the pressure and be able to stand before the people and tell them they are all wrong.

THE RAMBAM SAYS, "It is natural for a man's character and actions to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behavior." (Hilchos Dei'os 6:1) This is a reality that every one of us must contend with. It is hard to hold onto your sanity and stand up to society. But the first step in winning this battle is to recognize how powerful the pull of society is. If you do not appreciate the need to struggle, there is no chance you can resist the undertow.

Then you have to work on attaining clarity, to know what is true and what is false as clearly as you know that you have five fingers. It would be exceedingly difficult for someone to convince you that you have six fingers. Reach that level of clarity with regard to your fundamental convictions, too. And lastly, tap into the power of social pressure and channel it toward good. As the Rambam continues, "Therefore, one should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds. Conversely, one should keep away from the wicked who walk in darkness, so as not to learn from their deeds." It's a crazy world out there. Surround yourself with role models and a community that embodies Torah values.

On marathons and mitzvahs

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (JNS.org)

There is a fascinating idea about the human psychology involved in observing the commandments of the Torah. The Talmud states that “one who is commanded to do something, and does it, is greater than one who is not commanded to do it and still does so.”

It’s very intriguing because it’s counterintuitive. One would have imagined that someone who does a good deed without being instructed to do so should be greater than someone who is simply following instructions. Surely, those who go beyond the call of duty and volunteer are superior to those who are only performing what they were ordered to do.

The explanation given is that human nature is such that what we must do, we resist. What we don’t have to do, we embrace—and want to do it.

Think of your own family situation. Mom is handing out chores to the children after dinner.

“Ellen, won’t you clear off the table, please?”

Well, Ellen doesn’t exactly spring into action. But her brother Mark, who wasn’t asked, jumps up and offers, “I’ll do it, Mom.”

Now, the last time Mom asked Mark to do something, he was an immovable object. A statue. No response. And if there was a response, it was a sigh, “Why me, Mom?!”

But as soon as Mom asks Ellen to do it, suddenly, Mark is a man on fire.

And that precisely is the mystery of human psychology. As soon as something becomes a command, we resist it, we even bristle; we play deaf, dumb and blind. But when it’s someone else’s command and an optional extra for us, then often very quickly we are happy to offer our help.

So the Talmud teaches that before we become a bar or bat mitzvah, we can’t wait to do the commandments that we are not yet obligated to do. Little kids in religious communities dream of the day when they will be able to wear their very own pair of tefillin. They play with it as kids, wrapping their father’s or grandfather’s tefillin whenever they can.

But as soon as they are over bar or bat mitzvah age, and Judaism’s commandments become obligations, then they are rather slow to respond. The tefillin are exciting at first, but all too quickly can become a burden.

The yetzer hara (“evil inclination”)—that little voice of temptation inside our heart that always gets us into trouble—works much harder when we are commanded to do a mitzvah. But if it’s only an optional extra, then it’s not as serious, so we are left to our own devices. Nisht geferlich, as they say in Yiddish.

And that’s why the reward for doing something we are commanded to do is greater than the reward when we are not commanded. Because it’s emotionally more challenging and harder to do when it’s a mitzvah, a commandment.

To explain, let me use something current and topical.

On June 14, more than 20,000 people of otherwise sane mind will be running the Comrades Marathon. This is a very famous race in South Africa that draws athletes from all over the world to run nearly 90 kilometres (55 miles) from Durban to Pietermaritzburg. Some are even from my own synagogue. I wish them well.

These people train for and dream about it; they plan and prepare for months before the actual race.

Now, if I told you that, according to Jewish law, it’s a halachah that every Jew must run 87 kilometers straight and that you had to do it because it’s a mitzvah, would you? Would anyone?

If I pronounced from my pulpit that it was a religious requirement to engage in an activity that would result in three heart attacks, 543 cases of dehydration, the winner on a drip in hospital, seven broken legs, 1,389 torn ligaments, 47 cases of sunstroke and thousands of ruined running shoes, would this be acceptable? Or would the Minister of Health step in and actually ban such a religion?

But since it’s not a commandment, law, obligation or requirement of any kind and only optional, we see 20,000 people doing it happily—spending fortunes of money and undergoing months of training. All completely voluntarily.

Now, if I told you that in my shul, we have two morning minyans every day and that you must be there for one of them every morning, will you get up for the 6 a.m. early minyan or the later 7 a.m. one?

I can talk from my pulpit until I need a drip, until I’m green in the face, about commandments and obligations: “You must, you should, please!” But, ladies and gentlemen, at the end of the day, if you don’t want to do it, nothing and no one can make you do it.

It’s my job to teach you what we should and should not do. But if you don’t want to, then my words will remain just that—words, and empty ones at that.

So, let’s forget about doing it for God, for Torah, for Judaism, for the shul, the rabbi or the cantor. Let’s do it not out of obligation, but out of joy. Because we want to do it. Because we are Jewish and proud, and we want to do the right thing, and then we will indeed enjoy it.

My friends, I promise you, compared to the Comrades Marathon, Judaism is easy. Simple even.

In this week’s Torah portion, Shelach, we read the story of the spies who were commanded by Moses to do a reconnaissance mission to the Promised Land ahead of the Israelites entering the land. Unfortunately, the spies messed up badly and returned with a deliberately negative report, designed to discourage the people from ascending to Israel.

It was a tragic mistake, and it cost the Jewish people an extra 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Later, we also read of a man who deliberately violated the Sabbath by collecting wood on the holy day.

I was wondering how these individuals may have responded if they weren’t “commanded” about these things. Would they have behaved in the same way? We’ll never know, but it’s an intriguing thought.

Still, I have to believe that we all want to do the right thing, whether commanded to or not.

Meraglim, Mossad, and Military Might

RABBI ELCHONON MOROZOW (Chabad.org)

The world looked on in awe as Israel began its miraculous campaign against the Iranian threat. Within hours, Iran’s military leadership and nuclear scientists were eliminated, and many of its missiles and launchers decimated.

The Mossad spied for years. IDF and IAF trained for months. The advance preparation is unimaginable.

And so is the alternative.

Where would we be if this operation hadn’t taken place? If Iran was still marching full speed ahead toward nuclear weaponry? If they were smashing out ballistic missiles by the thousand? As harsh as the situation is now—and thank the Almighty for His constant miracles—without this operation, we would be in deep, deep trouble.

I can’t help drawing a parallel to another operation, one we read about in this week’s Torah portion: Spies, victory, conquest.

Who: the 12 Spies Moses sent. Their task: Scout out the Holy Land. Assess the weaknesses of the Canaanites and determine the best way to victory.

Only in that operation, the result wasn’t as dazzling. The spies came back with negative reports: “We can’t do it. Mission impossible.”

The consequences? A tragedy. Forty years in the desert. The passing of an entire generation.

If not for this blunder, we’re told, the Jewish people would have marched into the Land of Israel with the Final Redemption. Thousands of years of darkness, exile, trials and tribulations throughout our history would have never come to pass.

But the Spies made a fatal error. In their mission to scout out the land, they were tasked with a basic question: How? How should we conquer? What is the best way?

But instead, they asked if. Is it possible? Can we really succeed? And that was their failure.

But the story of the Spies is more than just history. The Torah tells us the story to teach each of us a lesson that remains applicable today in 2025.

Every person is given a mission, assigned by the One Above. How do we figure out our mission? We look for clues in our background and history, our talents and interests, and—of course—the needs we discover in the world.

It is up to us to work out the how, never the if.

G-d Almighty doesn’t expect without providing the tools we need to succeed.

The mission is timely and critical. The world relies on you to complete your part: We’re marching toward the Final Redemption, a time when peace will finally reign, and you’re at the front.

Piece of Cake

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

It was not a good scenario. The twelve spies returned from their forty-day sojourn to the Land of Canaan and ten of them were not happy campers.

They left as an enthusiastic and united crew, selected by Moshe for what should have been an easy mission of assurance — confirming what they were already told by their forebears, as well as the Almighty — Eretz Yisrael is a beautiful land that flows with milk and honey. Instead, the only two who had anything positive to say about the land of Israel, were Calev and Yehoshua. The rest of the spies claimed that the land was not good and that there were dangerous giants living there who would crush them. And now, in the face of the derogatory, inflammatory and frightening remarks that disparaged the Promised Land, Calev and Yehoshua were left to defend it.

It was too late. The ten evil spies had stirred up the negative passions of a disheartened nation. The people wanted to return to Egypt. But the two righteous men, Yehoshua and Calev, tried to persuade them otherwise.

The first and most difficult task facing them was to get the Children of Israel to listen to them. The Torah tells us: “They spoke to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, saying, “The Land that we passed through, to spy it out — the Land is very, very good.

If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!” (14:7-9).

What did they mean by saying that the giants were “our bread”? Did they mean that the children of Israel will eat them like bread? Why bread of all things?

A story that circulated during the 1930s told of Yankel, a Jewish immigrant from the Ukraine who made his livelihood selling rolls on a corner in lower Manhattan. He was not an educated man. With poor eyesight and a hearing problem, he never read a newspaper or listened to the radio. He would daven, say Tehillim, learn a bit of Chumash, and bake his rolls. Then he would stand on

the side of the road and sell his fresh-baked delicious smelling rolls.

“Buy a roll, mister?” he would ask passersby, the majority of them would gladly oblige with a generous purchase. Despite his simple approach, Yankel did well. He ordered a larger oven and increased his flour and yeast orders. He brought his son home from college to help him out. Then something happened. His son asked him, “Pa, haven’t you heard about the situation with the world markets? There are going to be great problems soon. We are in the midst of a depression!” The father figured that his son’s economic forecast was surely right. After all, his son went to college whereas he himself did not even read the papers. He canceled the order for the new oven and held s for more flour, took down his signs and waited. Sure enough with no advertisement and no inventory, his sales fell overnight. And soon enough Yankel said to his son. “You are right. We are in the middle of a great depression.”

Bread is the staple of life, but it also is the parable of faith. Our attitude toward our bread represent our attitude toward every challenge of faith. If one lives life with emunah p’shutah, simple faith, then his bread will be sufficient to sustain him. The customers will come and he will enjoy success. It is when we aggrandize the bleakness of the situation through the eyes of the economic forecasters, the political pundits, or the nay sayers who believe in the power of their predictions and give up hope based on their mortal weaknesses, then one might as well close shop.

Yehosua and Calev told the people that these giants are no more of a challenge than the demands of our daily fare. They are our bread. And as with our daily fare, our situation is dependent totally on our faith.

If we listen to the predictions of the forecasters and spies, we lose faith in the Almighty and place our faith in the powerless. However, by realizing that the seemingly greatest challenges are the same challenges of our daily fare — our bread — the defeat of even the largest giants will be a piece of cake.

HOW AM I AFFECTED?

AVROHOM YAAKOV

“At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land” (Bamidbar 13:25).

The Malbim offers a subtle but transformative insight into this moment. For forty days, the spies faithfully carried out Moshe’s instructions—they were observers, gathering facts about the land. But something shifted on the fortieth day. Instead of returning as neutral reporters, they became participants with an agenda—no longer describing reality, but shaping it. They crossed the line from observation to provocation.

What caused this transformation?

Oznayim LaTorah suggests a deeply human answer: they heard that Moshe would soon pass away and that Yehoshua would succeed him. Yehoshua, at only forty-two, was younger than many of the spies, who were leaders of their tribes. The thought that someone younger, perhaps less “senior,” would become the next leader was too difficult to accept. Their mission was no longer just about the Land of Israel—it became entangled with their own honour, status, and future.

This reframes the entire episode. The spies did not suddenly lose faith in Hashem. Rather, their perception became distorted by personal bias. What they saw was filtered through what they felt. The same land that Kalev and Yehoshua saw as an opportunity for growth and Divine promise, the others saw as a threat. Not because the facts were different—but because their inner world had changed.

This also explains a puzzling detail: why didn’t Yehoshua effectively counter their claims? Surely he could have argued logically against their conclusions. But the people suspected him of bias. “Of course you want to enter the land,” they could say, “you stand to gain the most—you’ll be the next leader.” Once a person is perceived as having a personal stake, even the strongest arguments can be dismissed. Truth itself becomes suspect when trust is eroded.

WE LIVE IN A WORLD saturated with opinions, data, and perspectives. Often, the disagreement is not about the facts themselves—but about the lenses through which those facts are interpreted and those interpretations are treated as fact, when in reality it is Fake News.

Like the spies, people can begin as observers, but quickly become advocates, influenced by ego, insecurity, or personal interest. And once that happens, objectivity becomes almost impossible.

The Torah is teaching us the critical importance of intellectual honesty and self-awareness. We must ask ourselves: am I truly observing reality, or am I interpreting it to fit my own narrative? Am I open to truth, or am I protecting my position?

It also calls on us to be humble in leadership and in community. Sometimes, the greatest resistance to change is not ideological, but personal. The challenge is to recognize when our own kavod—our sense of honor—is shaping our decisions.

Finally, there is a powerful takeaway about credibility. Yehoshua was right—but because he was perceived as personally invested, his voice was weakened. This reminds us that in order to influence others, we must strive not only for truth, but for trust. People must feel that we are not speaking for ourselves, but for something greater.

The tragedy of the spies was not simply a failure of faith—it was a failure of perspective. They allowed who they were to interfere with what they saw.

The challenge for us is to remain true observers—to approach life, Torah,

and decisions with clarity, humility, and the courage to separate our personal interests from the truth we are meant to see.

Are You Working Hard — or Too Hard?

RABBI ELIEZER SHEMTOV (Chabad.org)

One cause of anxiety is uncertainty about the outcome when embarking on a new and important undertaking. The more important the venture, the more stress it can generate — sometimes enough to paralyze us, or to make us abandon the effort altogether.

How does one overcome this natural fear?

In this week's Torah portion, Shelach, the Jewish people face exactly this challenge, and we have front-row seats to the consequences of their response—and the tools the Torah offers to help us respond differently.

After the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai, the next step was the conquest of the Promised Land. At the people's request (and with G-d's reluctant authorization), Moses sent twelve men — one from each tribe — to scout the land: its agricultural potential, its fortifications, its strengths and weaknesses. He also asked them to bring back samples of the fruit of the land, so the people could see the blessing awaiting them.

The scouts spent forty days in the land and returned. Ten of them gave this report: "The land is extraordinarily fertile" — and they displayed the enormous, lush fruit they had brought back. "But," they continued, "the people who inhabit the land are very powerful, the cities are large and heavily fortified, and we even saw giants there."

Seeing where things were headed, Caleb, one of the twelve, tried to turn the narrative around, concluding that they could conquer the land. His colleagues (except Joshua) disagreed, insisting that it was impossible. The people believed the negative report and broke out weeping. They complained to Moses, "Let us return to Egypt! We should never have left!"

It was a major crisis.

The ten scouts who brought the negative report died of a plague. The rest of the people would wander the desert for forty years, until the adult generation that had left Egypt died out; only their children — along with Joshua and Caleb — would enter the land.

But wasn't it entirely reasonable to be frightened by such a daunting challenge? Why were they punished for their fear? And as for the scouts who gave the negative report, hadn't Moses sent them precisely to evaluate the situation and report back? Why punish them for conveying what they saw?

Among many other explanations, the ten scouts made several errors: 1) They were sent to assess how best to conquer the land, not to render a verdict on whether conquest was possible. 2) Moses had not sent them because he himself needed information. He sent them so that they would see for themselves, and thereby enter the land convinced by their own experience and not merely on Moses's word.

Let's apply these two lessons to the anxiety we face in our own lives.

One of the foundations of Judaism is Divine Providence: everything that happens is by Divine design. When you find yourself in a situation, it is not by chance but by intention. You did not choose to be there; G-d placed you there. And if G-d brought you to a specific place at a specific moment, it is because there is something you can and must do there—not only for your own growth and fulfillment, but also for the people, moment, and place in which you find yourself.

The question is not, "Can I do this?" That is G-d's department. The question is: "How do I best fulfill this mission?" Knowing that the mission is G-d's, and that success ultimately depends on Him, eliminates much of the anxiety that uncertainty creates. If G-d trusts you with this, trust that you can meet His expectations!

Second, anxiety often arises when we take on too much responsibility. A great deal of responsibility empowers and motivates; too much crushes and paralyzes.

How do we tell the difference? "Too much" can be defined as anything we think, say, or do that is not actually productive. And the way to assess what falls within our genuine capacity and what exceeds it is difficult to do alone. Self-love distorts objectivity. Which brings us to our Sages' advice: Make yourself a teacher. Choose a trusted guide with whom to consult when making important decisions.¹ Finding such a teacher is not easy, but navigating life without one is harder still.

The Grasshopper Syndrome

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

So near and yet so far. The Jewish people were massed in the Desert, waiting for the signal to enter into the Promised Land. In a matter of days or weeks, they could have been in possession of the land that Hashem had promised to Abraham's descendants centuries before. But fate intervened. They decided to send spies to scout the land and its defenses, and these spies returned with slanderous reports, causing an insurrection among the people and their exclusion from the land for forty years.

Who were these spies who took it upon themselves to slander the Promised Land, to inflame the minds of the people with their distortions and exaggerations, to instill fear in the hearts of the innocent? Our Sages tell us that they were among the greatest and finest leaders of the respective tribes.

How then is it possible that these righteous men would do such a terrible thing? Hadn't they themselves witnessed the wondrous miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people in Egypt, during the Exodus and at Mount

Sinai? Did they think He was incapable of leading the Jewish people to victory against the Canaanites entrenched in the Promised Land?

Let us look into this week's Torah reading for the answer. When the spies returned from their mission, they made a very revealing comment, "We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that is how we appeared in their eyes." The commentators explain that this comment illuminates the underlying reason for the downfall of the spies. These people did not believe in themselves. They lacked confidence and a sense of their own worth. They felt like grasshoppers in the presence of the Canaanites, and therefore, the Canaanites viewed them as grasshoppers as well. This selfsame lack of confidence also led them to slander the land. They saw the major obstacles that had to be overcome, and they felt intimidated and overwhelmed. They shriveled within, unable to believe that they were worthy of yet another display of spectacular miracles. And so they chose to slander the land in order to deflect the Jewish people from their plans of conquest and to persuade them to remain in the relative safety of the Desert.

A great sage told his disciples for a walk, "Today, we will do something different."

Without another word, he led them to a deep ravine at the end of the town. A taut rope was stretched across the top of the ravine, and a huge crowd was gathered a short distance away.

Presently, a tightrope walker holding a long balancing rod stepped off the rim of the ravine onto the rope and began to walk across the chasm. The crowd gasped in amazement as the tightrope walker made his way steadily along the quivering rope. When he finally reached the opposite rim of the ravine safely, the crowd responded with an audible sigh of relief and an enthusiastic round of applause.

The sage nodded gravely, turned around and started to walk away. "Why did you bring us here today?" one of his disciples asked him. "What are we supposed to learn from the tightrope walker?"

"A very important lesson," said the sage. "Walking a tightrope is a metaphor of life, because all of us are indeed walking a tightrope. Did you watch that tightrope walker? He was totally focused on what he was doing, and he was confident in his ability to do it. If he had lost focus or confidence he would never have made it across."

In our own lives, we are always faced with challenges and ordeals that may lead us to question our own capabilities and worth. Whenever we are inspired to do something good and worthwhile, the evil inclination immediately tries to make us second guess ourselves. Can we really do it? Is it too difficult? Are our motivations pure? And as our confidence erodes, the chances of success slowly fade away. But if recognize that the source of our inspiration is the divine spark within us, if we find within ourselves the courage and the confidence to persevere, Hashem will surely bless our efforts with success.

The Land of Our Dreams

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

And HASHEM spoke to Moshe and Aaron, saying, "How much longer will this evil congregation ... " (14:26-27)

Here's a curious and somewhat embarrassing fact. Everybody knows what a MINYAN is. It has even found its way into the Miriam Webster Dictionary. It's a quorum, a group of 10 men that is required to begin a Jewish prayer service, to say Kaddish, Kedusha, and read from a Sefer Torah. It's a magic number! Where is it learned from? From these words describing the 10 spies that deviated from their mission, "this evil congregation". That's pretty awkward! Couldn't the Torah have found a more positive source to teach us an EIDA is a group of 10?!

Reb Tzadok HaKohen writes that when a person does Teshuva, then whatever experience he has had in life can be utilized to serve HASHEM. Please excuse me if I dip into my deep past and draw on a memory from a less than holy source, but it has helped me enormously and I am still learning from it many years later.

It was 1974, Thanksgiving, and my brother bought a couple of tickets for himself, me, and another friend to attend a concert at Madison Square Garden to watch Elton John play. It was exciting and beyond for us American kids. We were really enjoying it when something totally unusual and unexpected happened. The star of the night, Mr. John, announced in the middle of the event that he was inviting on stage a good friend and he proceeded to welcome John Lennon. Now John Lennon was a Beatle and the Beatles had an almost deity-like status among young people all over the world for decades.

The place went wild. My brother was hitting me in my ribs with his elbow and shouting, "It's a Beatle Bobby, it's a Beatle!" They played an old song, "She was Just Seventeen..." ". Madison Square Garden was pulsing "like one man with one heart" as John Lennon with ease plucked the guitar strings. It was one of the most magical and unifying events I had ever witnessed.

Years later I found my way to Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Monsey and I remember one Rebbe explaining why we lift our heels when reciting in Kiddusha, "KADOSH-KADOSH-KADOSH" – He told us that at the time that we are reciting Kedusha and raising up our heels, the entire angelic world is jumping and dancing with ecstasy in response.

My mind immediately flashed back to that experience from years earlier. When I have the presence of mind to remember, it has helped me to focus and visualize the grand import of what I am doing. Yes, I am like that lone Beatle on the center stage of the universe gently touching those strings and

generating an indescribable pulse of sublime unity. This is lesson number one.

Years later I felt comfortable sharing this experience. Someone told me that I could easily revisit the concert online. I became curious and it was as I had remembered. The camera is scanning the crowd and there is John Lennon's wife with her lips pursed nervously and rubbing her hands like the mother of the Bar Mitzvah boy in the women's section. It seemed odd to me that she was not enjoying it like everyone else. So, I scrolled to read an article. I learned there that he had not played music in public for many years prior to this appearance and it was his last public performance. He was afraid of his own shadow, afraid of failing. It hit me with such force. Someone who with a few movements could electrify a room of 20,000 people, plus was scared to try. I realized that we may not realize the importance of the moves we make and how powerful we are.

The Chiddushei HaRim often employs this method of thinking, "Mida Tova Meruba" – The goodness that HASHEM delivers is, at least 500 times more than any seeming negativity. If 10 complainers can frustrate the dreams of a generation and forestall their entry into the Holy Land, then how much more so, in the positive direction, can 10 men who gather to sanctify HASHEM's name, bring us much closer to the land of our dreams.

THE LITTLE THINGS

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.com)

Sefer Bamidbar describes not only the physical locale of the Jewish people, but their spiritual state. Wandering in the desert, they could not be self sufficient, neither physically nor spiritually. The book reads like one depressing story after another. While Bamidbar makes for fascinating reading and its lessons are crucial for community building, for those in the desert, little came of their aimless wandering.

While it is the story of the meraglim that takes center stage in the parsha, there is a second story—much shorter and perhaps less impactful—that the Torah felt worthwhile to relate. It begins, "and the Jewish people were in the desert" (Bamidbar 15:32), something that seems rather obvious. Clearly, the Torah has more than geography in mind. This is another of the litany of sad stories that take place in the spiritual and physical desert.

"And they found a man mekoshesh eitzim, gathering wood on the Shabbat day", the story continues. The tragic end of this story, just as it was for the meraglim and their entire generation, was death. Our rabbis note that this story actually occurred soon after the Exodus, taking place before Matan Torah. According to rabbinic tradition, the Jewish people were given the command of Shabbat on the way to Sinai, at Mara, and observed only the first Shabbat properly—with this story taking place on the second Shabbat. The story thus belongs in Sefer Shemot, and its placement after the meraglim story and just before the mitzvah of tzitzit begs further explanation.

Perhaps the key message of the story of the meraglim is when to speak and when to remain silent. As our Sages note, it follows on the heels of the story of Miriam, who made a similar mistake in talking about her brother. Although the story of the gatherer of wood seems unrelated to speech, a midrashic debate illustrates otherwise.

While the Torah does not reveal the identity of this person, Rabbi Akiva identifies him as none other than Zelofchad who, as his daughters will tell Moshe, "died of his own sin" (Bamidbar 27:3). This claim drew an angry retort. If you are correct, our Sages responded, why reveal what the Torah has hidden? And if you are wrong, then you have libeled an innocent man. The fact that he sinned once does not give us license to slander him. The debate between Rabbi Akiva and the Sages has continued throughout the ages, with many seeing the importance of revealing that which is hidden.

The story of the mekoshesh in many ways parallels an earlier story, one that has much to do with speech: that of the one who cursed the name of G-d (Vayikra 24:10-15). Here, too, the story seems oddly out of place, with little to do with what precedes or follows it (the laws of the festivals, the mishkan, and shmitta). In both stories, the sinner is placed bamishmar, in custody, as they awaited word—the Torah uses the word porush, an explanation—regarding punishment. In both cases, the person was to be taken out of the camp and stoned. Our Sages even claim that both stories occurred at the same time. Both stories are immediately followed with Moshe being instructed to speak to the nation. In the case of the blasphemer, it is (quite understandably!) the prohibition to curse, whereas with the mekoshesh, it is the mitzvah of tzitzit.

Perhaps the link between the story of the gatherer of wood and the mitzvah of tzitzit is that both teach the importance of seemingly little things. Gathering some wood on Shabbat does not seem like such a big deal. Yet from the perspective of the Torah, this violates the sanctity of the Shabbat and serves to deny G-d as the Master of the Universe. When G-d issues a command, the details are almost irrelevant. If one accepts G-d, then we accept all He says. Similarly, putting some fringes on our garments seems rather insignificant. Yet the Torah teaches that such "reminds us of all the mitzvot", and can serve as a protection against sin. Wearing a "uniform" in the service of G-d, even if it's tucked in, can have a huge impact. Our Sages have even equated tzitzit to all other mitzvot combined. From the Torah's perspective, speech and action go hand in hand. How we speak greatly impacts on how we ultimately act—and how others speak to us or about us can have an even greater impact.

News & Views

Report Alleges Systemic Failures in UN Gaza Reporting

JEFF GORMAN (TJVNews.Com 7-6-26)

The United Nations' role as a primary source of information during the Gaza war has come under intense scrutiny following the publication of a lengthy and highly critical report that accuses key UN agencies and officials of abandoning standards of neutrality, impartiality, and factual rigor in their reporting on the conflict.

The report, titled "Laundering Propaganda: How UN Actors Manipulated Information in the Gaza War (2023–2025)," presents a sweeping indictment of what its authors describe as a systemic breakdown in professional standards within parts of the United Nations humanitarian information apparatus. According to the report, the consequences of these alleged failures extended far beyond public discourse, influencing international diplomacy, legal proceedings, media narratives, and public opinion around the globe.

The document argues that since the Hamas-led attack against Israel on October 7, 2023, the United Nations has served as one of the most influential sources of information concerning both military operations and humanitarian conditions in Gaza. Through thousands of reports, briefings, social media posts, and public statements, UN agencies generated what the report characterizes as a continuous flow of statistics and claims that shaped international perceptions of the conflict.

According to the report's authors, this vast body of information frequently suffered from significant factual distortions and displayed a recurring pattern of bias against Israel while minimizing or ignoring the actions of Hamas. The report contends that these shortcomings were not isolated incidents or unavoidable mistakes resulting from the fog of war but rather reflected a broader institutional failure within portions of the UN humanitarian reporting system.

Central to the report's thesis is the allegation that some UN agencies engaged in what it calls "data-laundering," a process through which information originating from Hamas-controlled institutions was gradually transformed into what appeared to be verified UN data. According to the report, this process typically began when a UN agency cited figures from Hamas-run entities such as the Gaza Ministry of Health. Subsequent UN publications then cited the earlier UN report rather than the original Hamas source, eventually allowing media organizations, governments, and advocacy groups to cite the information simply as originating from "the United Nations."

The report argues that this transformation often occurred without adequate disclosure regarding the origin of the information or the limitations associated with wartime data collection. It further alleges that casualty figures supplied by Hamas-affiliated authorities were repeatedly circulated by UN bodies without independent verification and without distinctions between civilians and combatants.

One of the report's most prominent case studies involves the October 17, 2023 explosion at the Al-Ahli Hospital compound in Gaza. The report notes that initial claims from Gaza authorities asserted that an Israeli airstrike had killed approximately 500 people at the site. According to the report, these claims were rapidly disseminated through UN channels and became dominant headlines across international media.

However, the report points to subsequent assessments by American and European intelligence agencies, as well as investigations conducted by other organizations, which concluded that the explosion was most likely caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket rather than an Israeli strike. The report further notes that later analyses cast substantial doubt on the original casualty estimates, suggesting that fatalities were likely far lower than initially reported. Nevertheless, the authors contend that the original figures continued to appear in certain UN databases and reports long after competing evidence had emerged.

The report also devotes significant attention to claims regarding housing destruction in Gaza. According to its analysis, statements suggesting that approximately half of Gaza's housing stock had been destroyed within the first month of the conflict were based on figures originating from Hamas-controlled agencies and were subsequently amplified through UN reporting. The report argues that distinctions between structures that were destroyed and those merely damaged were often blurred as the figures spread through international media and diplomatic discussions.

Another major area of criticism concerns humanitarian aid statistics. The report alleges that UN agencies consistently underreported the volume of aid entering Gaza by excluding various categories of shipments from publicly cited totals. As a result, the report argues, international audiences were left with the impression that aid deliveries had collapsed far more dramatically than comprehensive logistical records suggested.

Beyond statistical disputes, the report argues that UN humanitarian reporting frequently omitted crucial contextual information regarding Hamas' conduct during the war. According to the document, reports often failed to adequately address allegations that Hamas embedded military infrastructure within civilian areas, diverted humanitarian assistance, obstructed civilian evacuations, infiltrated humanitarian organizations, and exploited civilian facilities for military purposes. The report contends that

these omissions contributed to an incomplete understanding of the conflict's complexities.

One of the report's most controversial sections examines what it characterizes as sensationalized statements issued by senior UN officials. The document specifically discusses a widely publicized warning that "14,000 babies" in Gaza could die within 48 hours without aid. According to the report, the statement stemmed from a projection regarding severe malnutrition cases over a much longer period and was subsequently criticized for dramatically overstating the immediate threat. The report notes that a later clarification was issued, though it argues that the correction received only a fraction of the attention generated by the original claim.

Similarly, the report challenges widely circulated assertions that Gaza had become home to the largest population of child amputees in modern history. According to the authors, a chain of statements by various organizations and officials transformed preliminary estimates into what eventually became accepted as established fact despite limited supporting evidence. The report argues that repeated amplification by prominent institutions gave these claims an aura of credibility that far exceeded the available data.

Perhaps most strikingly, the report argues that attempts to scrutinize humanitarian reporting methodologies were sometimes dismissed by officials as inappropriate or insensitive. It highlights comments by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, who questioned the focus on methodological debates amid human suffering. The report contends that such responses discouraged legitimate examination of data quality and accountability.

Despite its extensive criticism, the report stops short of condemning the United Nations as a whole. The authors explicitly acknowledge that many humanitarian workers operating under the UN umbrella are dedicated professionals committed to delivering aid and alleviating suffering. They argue, however, that the actions of a relatively small number of agencies and senior officials have undermined the credibility of the broader humanitarian effort.

In its concluding recommendations, the report calls for the United Nations to undertake a comprehensive review of its reporting practices, issue corrections where necessary, and establish stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure future reporting is accurate, objective, impartial, and transparent. The authors argue that without such reforms, disputed narratives generated during the Gaza war could continue to shape legal, political, and academic discussions for years to come.

Whether the report's conclusions gain broad acceptance remains to be seen. However, its publication is likely to intensify ongoing debates surrounding information warfare, humanitarian reporting, media responsibility, and the role of international institutions during one of the most fiercely contested conflicts of the modern era. As governments, scholars, journalists, and policymakers continue to evaluate the legacy of the Gaza war, the questions raised by this document are certain to remain at the center of an increasingly consequential global conversation.

Is Saving Europe Still Possible?

GUY MILLIÈRE (GateStoneInstitute.org 7-6-26)

London. Sunday, May 10. A protest against rising anti-Semitism is organized in front of the prime minister's residence. About 20,000 people are present, mostly Jews. Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Pat McFadden, who addressed them, was jeered and booed. "I feel your pain," he told the crowd. The reply was, "Action, no more words."

When British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, a few days before the protest, visited Golders Green, a heavily Jewish area of London where two Jews had been stabbed on April 29, he was greeted with chants of "Keir Starmer, Jew Harmer."

Jews in the United Kingdom are no longer safe. The year 2025 saw 3,700 anti-Semitic incidents recorded — approximately ten a day. By the end of 2026, it looks as if the figures will be at least as high. In 2023, the figures were even higher. The massacre of thousands of Israelis by the terrorist group Hamas on October 7, 2023 triggered an explosion of attacks on Jews in the United Kingdom.

Violent attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions in London are on the rise. On March 23, an arson attack destroyed four ambulances belonging to a Jewish volunteer emergency medical service, Hatzola Northwest. On April 18, the Kenton United Synagogue in northwest London was firebombed. On April 29, there were the stabbings in Golders Green.

Jewish children are harassed on their way to school. It is dangerous to display any Jewishness. Men hide their skullcaps and women conceal the Star of David pendants they wear.

"London has become a no-go zone for Jews," UK Commissioner for Countering Extremism Robin Simcox said on March 8.

What is happening in London is happening throughout the UK, wherever Jewish communities exist. On October 2, 2025 — during the Yom Kippur holiday — a 35-year-old Syrian, Jihad Al-Shamie, plowed his car into a gathering of Jews who had come to pray at a synagogue in Manchester, then began slashing and stabbing them, and finally tried to force his way into the synagogue. He left two dead and three wounded.

Almost all antisemitic acts in Britain are carried out by radicalized Muslims,

yet it has become a problem to state that openly. Britons who question Muslim antisemitism are accused of "stirring up racial or religious hatred." After every attack, the British government, along with other political leaders, take great care to condemn antisemitism. They also take great care each time to avoid saying who the perpetrators are. Their condemnations therefore amount to empty words. If you do not identify the source of the Jew-hate, how can you combat it?

Hatred of Jews, of course, goes hand in hand with hatred of Israel. It is a sentiment shared by a large segment of the UK population.

Starmer, who, a few years ago, claimed to have purged antisemites and anti-Israel elements from the Labour Party – and for five minutes appeared to be a friend of Israel – now sharply criticizes country as well as its democratically elected government.

In July 2025, on behalf of the United Kingdom, Starmer agreed to the publication of a communiqué – also signed by 28 other countries – falsely accusing Israel of depriving Palestinians of "human dignity" and perpetrating the "inhumane killing of civilians." The communiqué was – no surprise – exploited by all of Israel's enemies, particularly those also falsely accusing Israel of genocide.

Starmer was just warming up. As if that were not odious enough, Starmer went on, in the name of the UK, officially to recognize a non-existent "State of Palestine."

In the words of Zoheir Mohsen, who was a senior Palestine Liberation Organization official from 1971-1979:

"The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality, today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct Palestinian people to oppose Zionism.

"For tactical reasons, Jordan, which is a sovereign state with defined borders, cannot raise claims to Haifa and Jaffa, while as a Palestinian, I can undoubtedly demand Haifa, Jaffa, Beer-Sheva and Jerusalem. However, the moment we reclaim our right to all of Palestine, we will not wait even a minute to unite Palestine and Jordan."

Starmer recognized this fictitious "State of Palestine" even as Hamas still held power and hostages in Gaza. His weakness cannot be overstated.

He was – along with the current leaders of France, Belgium, Ireland, Spain, Norway and Sweden – just among the too many countries also recognizing an imaginary Palestinian State.

Starmer was also quick to declare on April 1, "This is not our war" – as if Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the threats through terrorism that the Iranian regime poses to the West are not matters of concern to the UK. Starmer must surely be aware that at least one Iranian group – Harkat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia (HAYI) – is directly responsible for numerous antisemitic attacks in the country. Starmer has never publicly condemned HAYI or any similar group.

Starmer further sought to deny the U.S. Air Force access to the joint US-UK airbase on Diego Garcia and RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire. His consent included the pitiful stipulation that the bases should be used for "defensive" missions only.

Several countries in Europe – Spain, Italy, France, and Austria – also barred U.S. Air Force aircraft from using their bases and airspace.

Many in the UK now see that unless a course correction is undertaken – and fast –, the country is facing an extremely bleak future. British civilization itself appears positioned to perish.

On March 10, 2025, a protest march was organized by political activist Tommy Robinson – one of the very few people in England consistently to speak out on behalf of the tens of thousands of British children who have been raped and trafficked by gangs of "Asian" migrants (a euphemism for Pakistani as well as others).

On May 16, 2026, Robinson organized a "Unite the Kingdom" march, which drew another massive crowd – tens of thousands. Starmer claimed that Robinson and those who work with him peddle "hatred and division."

The day before the march, Starmer announced that "We've already blocked visas for far-right agitators who want to come here to spew their extremist views," – but not, of course, for potential rapists.

The local elections on May 7 – described in several British newspapers as an unofficial referendum on Starmer – were a disaster for Starmer's Labour Party – and a huge victory for Reform UK, the anti-immigration party created in 2018 as the "Brexit Party" by Nigel Farage. Labour lost more than 1,100 of the 2,300 council seats it had held. It also lost control of 35 councils it had held for decades. Reform UK won more than 1,400 council seats and gained control of 14 councils.

After such a rout, it was expected that Starmer would resign. So far, he has chosen to remain in his post. Four members of the British government, however, did resign; more than 80 Labour MPs urged him to quit.

The next elections for parliament are scheduled for 2029. If the government falls before then, elections would be held sooner. If they were held today, Reform UK would likely win, accompanied by a recovery of the endlessly mismanaged country (such as here, here and here).

Meanwhile, Muslims continue to enter the UK, both legally and illegally. As their population continues to grow, they have been integrating less and less. Many appear to have come not only for employment opportunities and

welfare benefits, but also to transform Great Britain into a country indistinguishable from the ones they left.

Some people might call that imperialism. The Portuguese and Spanish displaced the cultures of South America; England tried to bring its customs to its colonies, and so on. At the time, the countries overtaken did not have the means to stop these invasions. Today's Britons are not Aztecs.

There are now officially almost four million Muslims in the UK (6% of the population). In 2001, there were only 1.59 million Muslims in the country (2.7% of the total population).

A Pew Research Center study estimated that under just a "medium" migration scenario, the Muslim population in the UK by 2050 could be around 16.7%–17.2%, approximately 13–13.5 million people.

Jews continue to leave Britain. According to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, there are 313,000 Jews left in the UK (0.4% of the population), and the number falls every year.

The problem, in addition to the sharp shift in demographics, is also one of determination. In 404 BCE, it took only 30 men working on behalf of Sparta to bring down Athens, one of the great foundational civilizations of Western culture.

Even among non-radicalized Muslims, there is widespread acceptance of Sharia practices, such as the continual cover-up of sexual abuse crimes. There has been a consistently permissive attitude toward rape gangs by the police, the government and the judiciary – all of whom are apparently terrified of being labeled racist. There has also been an increasing suppression of free speech – the cousin of blasphemy laws – as well as the rejection of Judeo-Christian traditions, such as Christmas, and a subversion of common law (such as finding that terrorists just have "mental health" problems. All this has been accompanied by a rise in hatred of Jews, of Israel, and of the culture of the West.

Meanwhile, the British economy continues to fall. The official unemployment rate is low, 4.9%. Mostly people seem to be exiting the labor market and becoming economically inactive, apparently content to live off welfare benefits and "free stuff." Almost 14 million British citizens (21% of the population) live in poverty, have an income below 60% of the national median, and struggle to afford food, housing and essential services.

As in the UK, the economies of most Western European countries are in decline. In 2000, the member states of the European Union collectively accounted for 20% of global GDP. By 2024, they represented only 15.2 %.

The birthrate among Muslim women everywhere in Western Europe is far higher than the birth rate among non-Muslim women.

In France, the birthrate is 1.56. In Germany, 1.35. In Italy, 1.14, and in Spain, 1.10.

The birthrate in the United Kingdom has also been falling. It is now 1.41 children per woman, well below the replacement level of 2.1. The birthrate among Muslim women is far higher. In the UK, even if polygamy is not allowed, a Muslim man's extra wives receive extra welfare benefits. If the polygamous marriage took place overseas, you see, that makes it all right. There are reports that sometimes each of the four wives has her own house – presumably at the British taxpayers' expense.

What is happening in the United Kingdom is also happening throughout Western Europe – and has established a foothold in the United States.

In France, antisemitic acts may not be as frequent as in the United Kingdom, yet they remain common: 1,320 incidents recorded in 2025—more than 3.5 each day. Jews in France make up slightly less than 1% of the population, yet, year after year, they are the victims of more than 50% of all anti-religious hate crimes.

In Belgium, the Jewish population is even smaller – fewer than 30,000 – but the number of antisemitic incidents nevertheless jumped from 57 in 2022 to 277 in 2024, a more than fourfold increase. A survey conducted in 2024 for the European Jewish Congress showed that many Belgians apparently do not even consider it antisemitic to scrawl graffiti on a synagogue, or to insult or threaten a Jew or person thought to be a "Zionist": 22% of respondents said they regarded such acts to be understandable, acceptable and legitimate.

In Germany, the Jews account for less than 0.2 percent of the total population, yet suffer a disproportionate number of anti-religious attacks – also on an upward trend: from 1,824 antisemitic attacks recorded in 2024 to 2,267 in 2025.

The same pattern can be seen across all of Western Europe. For years, virtually all antisemitic acts – as in the United Kingdom – have been perpetrated by radicalized Muslims. Again, most Western European politicians condemn "antisemitism" but without mentioning who the perpetrators are.

Hatred of Israel and Jews, doctrinally imposed by the Qur'an and the hadith, is deeply entrenched within Muslim communities in Western Europe, and accommodated by much of non-Muslim society there.

Every current Western European leader, just like Starmer, has stated – in varying terms – that the war in Iran is "not their war."

Lately in Western Europe, political parties with platforms like that of the right-of-center Reform UK are gaining ground. Several appear poised to win elections. They see – and say aloud – that in Europe, Western civilization could die. They are calling for national renewal.

The governments of some Central European countries – Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia – have adopted a firm stance against immigration – for which the European Union thoroughly excoriated them.

Hungary experienced being occupied by the Ottoman Empire for nearly 200 years. Former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán – who just lost an election – did not want to see another Islamic occupation.

Central Europe still has one of the world's lowest Muslim populations (roughly between 0.1% and 1% of the total population). Jews living there face virtually no violent antisemitic attacks. Central Europe, however, is also seeing declining birthrates. In the Czech Republic, it fell to 1.28 children per woman. In Hungary, it now stands at 1.31; in Poland, the figure is 1.1.

Is saving Europe still possible? If the political parties that are seeking to preserve Western civilization prevail, probably yes – but time is just about up.

Claim: UN Forces Collected Intelligence on IDF for Hezbollah

HEZKI BARUCH (Israelnn.com 3-6-26)

The IDF officially admitted that UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) forces operating in southern Lebanon have been collecting intelligence on IDF soldiers.

Military representatives revealed the disturbing information during a confidential session of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. According to the representatives at the committee session, the intelligence collected by the UN forces flows directly to the Hezbollah terrorist organization.

The flow of sensitive information to terrorist entities in Lebanon severely threatens the lives of IDF troops operating in the region.

In recent months, IDF officials have been warning that the forces have been working against the IDF and exceeding their authority on the ground.

In an interview with Ynet several months ago, a senior military official in the Northern Command voiced fierce criticism of UNIFIL's conduct and did not hold back from using strong language against the "peacekeeping" force.

"We find them documenting IDF forces, and not documenting the border and things that are under their authority," the official stated. "We sent blunt and clear messages in protest of their spy and unusual activities. We understand that they are not a helpful force, but a foreign force that does suspicious and unusual things beyond their authority."

It should be noted that UNIFIL numbers approximately 13,000 troops and was first deployed in southern Lebanon in 1978. In August of last year, the United Nations Security Council extended UNIFIL's mandate in the area through the end of 2026. Under that decision, the UN force is scheduled to withdraw from Lebanon in 2027.

Israel was accused of genocide before

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 6-6-26)

Palestinian terrorists attack families going about their lives. They blow up young people heading out to dance. They detonate a roadside bomb at 7:30 in the morning beside a bus carrying schoolchildren, killing a teacher and a maintenance worker and maiming children badly enough to cost them their legs.

The killings shock the world. Before Israel has launched a single major operation in response, the world's leading human rights organizations endorse a declaration branding guilty of "apartheid" and of "acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing," and demanding the restoration of the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism.

2023? No, 2001.

The final declaration at the NGO Forum of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, released on September 3, 2001, accused Israel of "acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing" as well as "apartheid and other racist crimes against humanity."

The Second Intifada had begun only a year earlier. In the months before Durban, the attacks increased in pace and deadliness. A suicide bomber killed twenty-one people and wounded one hundred and twenty outside Tel Aviv's Dolphinarium discotheque in June 2001, most of them teenagers waiting to get in.

The Sbarro massacre occurred a mere three weeks before Durban: a Hamas bomber walked into a pizzeria packed with families on a school-holiday afternoon at the corner of King George Street and Jaffa Road and detonated a charge studded with nails and bolts, killing sixteen people, seven of them children, and wounding about a hundred and thirty.

Sbarro was the visible peak of a sustained campaign rather than an isolated horror. It came at the end of a two-week effort to concentrate terror in Jerusalem, and within days a suicide bombing at the Wall Street Café in Kiryat Motzkin wounded twenty-one while a car bomb near the Russian Compound in downtown Jerusalem carried a second, larger device that had to be dismantled before it could kill. The bombs were built to maximize the slaughter of civilians, packed with hardware whose only function is to tear through human bodies.

It wasn't as if the world's media ignored the terror spree. Full page stories described the horror of the attacks. The NGO Forum decided that the very moment when Jews were being targeted for death for being Jews was a good time to accuse Israel of genocide.

Even though blatant antisemitism was prevalent in Durban, including the poster shown here, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had both signed the Durban document and both had distanced themselves from its worst language at the time, with Amnesty noting it did not condone the wording while accepting the declaration as "a largely positive document."

By any definition, Hamas and the other terror groups were guilty of genocide— but this didn't bother the two leading human rights organizations, who claimed they didn't agree with every sentence in the final declaration but decided its blatant antisemitism was not enough to decline signing it.

Israel had not even begun a campaign to go after the terror groups at this time. The idea that Israel was guilty of these crimes in September 2001 while its citizens were being ripped apart by bombs aimed at children is a bizarre joke.

But Durban wasn't a joke. It was a blueprint.

The drafting and the trial were separated by twenty years of patient construction. Israeli Apartheid Week began on a single Canadian campus in 2005, reached forty cities by 2009, and passed two hundred by 2013, carrying the apartheid charge into progressive spaces as settled vocabulary rather than contested claim. The activist fringe supplied the repetition, and "apartheid," "genocide," and "settler colonialism" migrated from the mock walls on university quads into the working language of the institutions that had once kept their distance. What began as a slogan students chanted became a premise educated people no longer thought to question.

Amnesty and HRW read the genocide charge in 2001, flagged it, and signed anyway. Then they spent two decades methodically arriving at it. Human Rights Watch in 2021 and Amnesty in 2022 issued reports declaring Israel guilty of apartheid, the very term the 2001 declaration had assigned. After October 2023, Amnesty completed the sequence: its December 2024 report named the verdict in its title — "Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza" — and reached it, by the account of Amnesty's own Israel branch, as a "predetermined" conclusion, written by the international office without the Israeli branch's involvement and resting on a looser definition of genocidal intent than the International Court of Justice has ever accepted. The conclusion came first, and the evidence was gathered to fit it.

The cynicism of accusing Israel of genocide while it was a victim of weekly genocidal acts was only surpassed in October 2023, when it took a mere hours after the horrors of October 7 for the same Israel haters and antisemites to accuse Israel of what it had just been a victim of. It is herd to escape the conclusion that the charges are deliberately intended to remove any possibility that the world would be sympathetic to Jews for being brutally murdered. The bodies were not yet counted before the massacre was reframed as resistance and the retaliation pre-labeled genocide.

Durban built the frame in 2001, and October 2023 supplied the hook it had been waiting for. The function of the genocide charge was never to describe what Israel does. It was to establish, in advance, that whatever is done to Israelis, they had it coming.

The pro-Gaza brigade whose suffering you never heard of

POST EDITORIAL BOARD (NYPost.com 6-6-26)

When the Israeli navy detained Greta Thunberg and other pro-Hamas radicals who were trying to “break the siege on Gaza,” the global sob-sister class went crazy on cue, crying about international piracy and Israeli mistreatment of the fake aid workers, including such torture as sending them home in coach.

When the Israeli navy detained Greta Thunberg and other pro-Hamas radicals who were trying to “break the siege on Gaza,” the global sob-sister class went crazy on cue.

Which makes the fate of other members of the same group so telling: The Global Sumud Flotilla, traveling overland from Tunisia, found themselves seized by Libyan forces and held incommunicado for weeks, and the world's moral police said . . . nothing.

Crickets.

No marches or protests.

No front-page coverage alleging torture and beatings.

No lawyers rushing to demand access to the detained “humanitarians.”

It's the clearest example of “No Jews, no news” we've seen since Hamas terrorists invaded Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, massacring 1,200 innocents and taking 250 hostage.

According to Sumud, 10 members of its “Land Convoy,” including several Europeans, Argentinians and one American, were detained at a checkpoint in eastern Libya on May 24, “forced into unmarked white vans and disappeared to an unknown location.”

After a week in isolation, the group was hauled before a prosecutor in Benghazi, denied counsel and ordered held another 10 days.

The American in the group, Jenelle Jones, filmed an “SOS” video soon released on Instagram: “If you are watching this video,” she says, holding her US passport in front of her, “it means I have been detained or abducted.”

Sumud says its people are “being held in an isolated, non-civilian prison complex operated by the Ministry of Interior, known locally as a ‘black site.’” They have no access to the outside world or to medical treatment; some are reportedly refusing food and water.

Aside from local coverage in Jones' hometown of Knoxville, Tenn., and a scattering of news on leftist websites, it's been a press blackout.

Meanwhile, Reuters reports that French prosecutors are looking into Israel's “suspected torture and war crimes” of French nationals during the two or three days they were detained while being processed for deportation.

What a naked demonstration of the double standard the “international community” employs when it comes to Israel and its neighbors.

If Libya commits horrible human rights abuses, or half a million Sudanese civilians are killed . . . eh, that’s par for the course, isn’t it?

No need for protests, boycotts or hatred directed against Libyan or Sudanese citizens living abroad.

The moral fervour’s not really about anything Israel does, but purely about what Israel is: the Jewish state.

Before You Erase the Jews, Read This

JOSEPH COX (Aish.com 31-5-26)

The year was 1921. A catastrophic drought has hit one of the world’s richest grain producing regions, the Volga River basin. In a dramatic attempt to save lives, the American Relief Administration shipped millions of tons of grain to Russian ports. But that grain never made it to the starving interior. Broken down railroads couldn’t move it to those who needed it. As a result, five million people starved to death.

In 1966, a similar famine struck India. 80% of crops in Bihar were destroyed and 60 million people faced imminent starvation. 11 million tons of grain were shipped to ports. Unlike the Russian famine, that grain was successfully moved and millions saved.

The critical difference between these two stories was railroad technology. The thermite process, a chemical reaction that generates intense heat to fuse metals, enabled railroad ties to be joined together on an atomic level. They thus formed a single continuous rail that was far easier to maintain. With the old bolt-together methods, trains not only produced the classic “clack clack”, they broke down constantly. A single broken connection could cripple a transportation network. A series of them could starve a population.

In India the railroads had been upgraded, and famine was averted.

Hans Goldschmidt

I’m telling you this story not because I’m fascinated by railroads, but because the thermite process was developed by **Hans Goldschmidt**, a German Jew. This single invention highlights something we often miss. When people talk about the Jewish and Israeli impact on modern life, we often focus on the iPhone, Waze, the microprocessor and various apps. But the Jewish impact on modern life is far more fundamental than that.

Karl Landsteiner discovered blood types, enabling transfusions. **Benno Straus** developed 18/8 stainless steel, enabling the safe storage of perishable foods (including milk, which used to be a major source of tuberculosis).

While Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, it was **Ernst Chain** who enabled that unstable laboratory curiosity to become a lifesaving antibiotic. Not only that, Ernst foresaw antibiotic resistance and laid the groundwork for follow-on antibiotics like Amoxicillin.

Herman Pines, another Jew, opened up entirely new ways to process raw petroleum. His work yielded practical plastics, far higher yields from petroleum resources (and thus massive reductions in pollution for the same energy output) and even synthetic rubbers and seals. Today’s petroleum industry, which enables almost every industry on earth, is based on Pines’ work. Not only that, Pines enabled the shift from leaded to unleaded fuel. Since lead poisoning measurably reduces cognitive function, removing it from fuel raised global IQs by as much as 6 points while seriously boosting public health.

In 1900, over 80% of children had rickets, deforming their ribcages and softening their skeletons. Many died from opportunistic diseases; surviving girls often died in childbirth because their bodies couldn’t bear the strain of labor. Meanwhile, half of all Chinese laborers in Malaya were dying from beriberi. A Jew named **Casimir Funk** solved these problems. He coined the term “vitamin” and identified specific deficiencies as the cause of these devastating conditions.

TODAY, MORE AND MORE people openly talk about the wonders of a world without Jews. They speak about exploitation and oppression being erased, as if Israel and the Jews are the core of all evil. What they often don’t realize is that they owe their very lives to Jewish innovation.

This innovation didn’t stop in the 1940s. From communications to healthcare to water security, some of the most advanced technologies in the world are being developed by Jews and Israelis.

My cousin Amitai used to get drunk with hard-core antisemites. Back in those days they required a little help before they’d blurt out their underlying Jew-hatred. But eventually they’d tell him that they knew the Jews ruled the world.

Rather than argue, Amitai would say, “Well, yeah. But there are only 15 million of us, not enough to control the entire world. Care to guess what countries we actually control?”

Invariably, his interlocutors would say the US, maybe Europe and Australia and Canada. As they listed the victims of Jewish control, my cousin would nod his head, agreeing with every word.

When they were done, he’d ask, “And would you rather live in any other country?”

Jews don’t rule the world but their impact is enormously positive.

Amitai was speaking to a fundamental truth: Jews don’t rule the world but their impact is enormously positive. The Jewish People should be proud of their achievements that have saved countless lives, enriched cultures, and increased the quality of life for people across the globe.

When others suggest the world would be better off without the Jews, perhaps they can be reminded of Hans Goldschmidt – and so many others – who have positively impacted them and the world they live in.

Let his memory be a call to action

RABBI YEHUDA KAPLON (JNS.org 9-6-26)

This coming week, Jewish communities around the world will mark the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Escaping Europe and arriving in America during World War II, the Rebbe knew well where silence leads. His father died in exile for daring to defend religious liberty under communism.

The Rebbe taught the world to lead with light—to fight hatred by speaking out against injustice wherever and whenever it rears its ugly head.

Today, that ancient poison of global antisemitism strikes with new intensity. Just last week alone, we saw horrific incidents targeting Jewish communities around the world: a synagogue attacked in Montreal and another vandalized in Toronto. Jewish communities across Europe and around the world require heightened security to practice their faith and go about their daily lives.

Have we already forgotten the Rebbe’s message?

“In whatever place and in whatever time an individual finds themselves,” the Rebbe once said, “each person is chosen and appointed to fulfill a particular purpose.”

When U.S. President Donald Trump asked me to serve my country, those words became my marching orders. Our purpose here today is clear. Not only does antisemitism surge across the world: anti-American, anti-Western threats now lurk around every corner, fueling violence and terror.

Still, too many leaders, governments and so-called activists around the globe have turned a blind eye. They are quick to stand up for others yet content to ignore—or worse, justify—the plight of their Jewish citizens or neighbors.

I was living in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., when Australian scholar Yankel Rosenbaum, 29, was stabbed to death on Aug. 19, 1991, during riots when cries of “Kill the Jews!” filled the streets. I stood there. I heard them. I still remember the cowardly excuses, the moral equivocating and the paralyzing silence.

That story is a familiar one today. Voices on all sides of the political spectrum betray Jewish communities through inaction and cowardice.

Fulfilling our purpose in the world means standing up for what is right, as the Rebbe did, without apology and without delay.

That is why real leadership demands moral courage. Together, we must not only call out antisemitism when it is politically expedient or rhetorically useful, but we must stand with Jewish communities, no matter the cost. We cannot compromise in the fight against antisemitism because this evil is an acid that will corrode the very fabric of our societies.

Under the president and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the United States is answering that call. We are shattering the old silence, leading by example and making clear that there can be no compromise with antisemitism as it rears its ugly head around the world.

Within the realm of foreign policy, the Trump administration is taking decisive action to protect Jewish communities and defeat this scourge at its source. We are holding international organizations accountable for fanning the flames of antisemitism; urging governments to fulfill their most basic commitments to protect Jewish communities; and finding and bringing to justice terrorists like Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood Al-Saadi, who has been indicted in the United States for directing and carrying out attacks globally.

Others are taking a stand as well.

When president of Argentina Javier Milei stands before the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in Buenos Aires to decry an “implicit alliance between the radical left and Islamist terrorism ... [that] functions as a contemporary vector of antisemitism,” when Chancellor of Germany Friedrich Merz affirms Germany’s historic obligation to counter antisemitism while reopening a synagogue with tears in his eyes, or when the leaders of governments across the Middle East and North Africa take groundbreaking steps to normalize ties with the only Jewish nation-state, we see what real leadership looks like.

Our chorus is growing. The only question is who will join us.

Still, the fight against antisemitism does not rest with governments alone. As I told a group of rabbis and ambassadors from around the world this week, it rests with each of us. Rather than wait for the next attack, we must speak out proudly, without fear or hesitation. We must be clear-eyed in our morals and unashamed in our convictions. As the Rebbe reminded us, “a little light dispels much darkness.”

No one since Moses has had a greater reach among the Jewish people. As we honor 32 years since his passing, let us commit to being that light.

Let us add good things around the world. Let us stand up for what is right. And let us remember that silence is never an option. Respecting one another: that is the reason why God created us.

Together, we must build a better world for us all. The Rebbe’s memory demands nothing less.

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

How Pas Yisroel is Created

OU KOSHER STAFF (OUkosher.org)

The Mishna in Avoda Zarah (35b) tells us that Chazal forbade pas akum. The Gemara (36b) explains that this was done as a geder to avoid intermarriage. However Tosfos 1 bring a Yerushalmi that says that a later Bes Din removed this issur. The exact extent of this retraction is a disagreement between the Mechaber and the Rama. While all agree that bread baked by an akum for personal use is still forbidden, there are differing opinions as to how careful one must be to avoid eating pas palter, bread baked by an akum for the purpose of selling.

The Rama (Toras Chatas 75:1) says that the general custom is to permit pas palter even if pas Yisroel is readily available, except during Aseres Yemei Teshuva when one should try to be as strict as possible.² In Darchei Moshe (O.C. 242) the Rama extends this to Shabbos and Yom Tov as well. The minhag of Ashkenazim is to follow the opinion of Rama.

However, the Mechaber (Y.D. 112:2) says that one may only be lenient to purchase pas palter if pas Yisroel is unavailable or of inferior quality. The minhag of Sefardim is to follow the opinion of the Mechaber.

HOW DOES ONE CREATE PAS YISROEL?

If a Jew has some involvement in the baking of the bread then this bread can be considered pas Yisroel. Therefore it is considered pas Yisroel:

If a Jew places the bread into the oven (אפיה)

If a Jew turns on the oven (שגירת התנור)

If a Jew raises the temperature of the oven causing more gas to flow,⁽³⁾ even if he subsequently lowers it. (השלכת קיסם)

Rav Belsky has said that if a Jew turned on the fire or raised the temperature, even if the oven is subsequently turned off and turned back on by a non-Jew, the bread baked in the oven can still be considered pas Yisroel, so long as the oven did not cool down to below 176 F (80 C). This is the approximate lowest temperature at which foods will still cook. Since the dough will eventually cook in this oven even without the akum turning back on the fire, it is considered pas Yisroel. The OU does not accept the use of a light bulb or glow plug in maintaining pas Yisroel, since this will not cause the oven to maintain 176 F. If a heating rod can be installed that will permanently heat the entire oven to 176 F then this is acceptable.

When installing a heating rod in a tunnel oven, how much of the oven must be continuously heated to 176 F? Recently a bakery was interested in producing pas Yisroel in a tunnel oven. Rabbi Belsky ruled that only the section of the oven in which krias hapas takes place must always be heated to 176 F. Krias hapas is the point when the dough no longer remains stringy but begins to harden like bread. Although this particular oven was 60 feet long, only the few feet of oven in which krias hapas took place needed to have a heating rod installed.

The pas palter leniency only applies to breads or pas haba b'kisin (cakes, cookies, etc...). Pastries that are cooked or fried, even though they are Mezonos, may be subject to the halachos of bishul akum. Therefore, one must make sure that there is no issue of bishul akum before certifying blintzes and cannolis.

Although the Taz (Y.D. 112:7) says that the leniency of pas palter does not apply to Jewish owned bakeries in which an akum bakes the breads without involvement of a Jew, Igros Moshe (Y.D. 1:45) explains that this is only applicable to small bakeries in which the bread could have been baked by the Jew without the need for hiring employees. In an industrial bakery that has many employees this rule does not apply.

SUMMARY OF HALACHOS:

- There is a machlokes Mechaber and Rama as to whether one may eat pas palter when pas Yisroel is available.
- It is proper to only eat pas Yisroel on Shabbos Yom Tov and Aseres Yemei Teshuva
- It is pas Yisroel if the Jew puts the dough in the oven
- If the Jew turns on or adds fuel to the fire, bread baked in the oven will be considered pas Yisroel so long as the temperature doesn't drop below 176 F
- Light bulbs and glow plugs do not maintain an oven temperature of 176 F, so they cannot be used to create pas Yisroel
- Only the section of a tunnel oven where krias hapas takes place needs to maintain 176 F
- Fried or cooked dough is not considered pas and is therefore subject to the laws of bishul akum
- A Jewish owned bakery is eligible for the leniency of pas palter provided it requires many workers to operate.

1. Tosafos A.Z. 35b s.v. Michlal

2. Many cereals may be eaten during Aseres Yemei Teshuva because they lack tzuras hapas (for example shredded wheat and flakes). Rav Belsky and Rav Schachter also maintain that Cheerios is not considered pas, because of its small size and the way it is dried.

3. Although one may argue that turning up the thermostat and allowing more gas to flow is simply a gramma and should not be considered a full involvement of a Yisroel, still Rav Belsky explained that since this is the ordinary way in which people bake, for the purpose of pas Yisroel it is adequate.

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