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Tzav 5784

THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

RABBI PINCHAS AVRUCH (Torah.org)

This week's parsha continues the instructions for the service in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) that Moshe is to relate to his brother Aaron, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest). But in contrast to prior directives where G-d has Moshe "tell" the procedures, with these orders he is to "Command Aaron" (6:2).

Rashi explains that "command" implies stimulation to respond enthusiastically, a needed action given the financial loss associated with the elevation offering being discussed, since the elevation offering is completely consumed by fire, with no remaining meat to be enjoyed by the priests or the owner.

Ramban challenges this understanding: the priest, who is the one commanded, did not lose anything, as it was never his own animal being consumed! Numerous commentators on Rashi remove this question, pointing out that the priest counted on the remaining meat of the sacrifices for his and his family's sustenance. The lack of remaining meat, which he would have had with a different sacrifice, constitutes a loss. Additionally, his participation in the service in the Mishkan precluded the opportunity to earn a living. Thus, the priest suffered a financial hardship with this sacrifice and needed the additional stimulation that came with a command to ensure sincere and complete fulfillment of the charge.

However in Bamidbar 8:1, Rashi notes the juxtaposition of the preceding narrative of the Dedication of the Mishkan with that verse's discussion of Aaron's responsibility to kindle the eternally burning lights of the Menorah. Aaron and his tribe of Levi were not included in the Dedication Rites, causing Aaron to be despondent. G-d advised him that his mandate of the Menorah, which would belong to his offspring forever, was the greater mitzvah. It is readily apparent that Aaron's treasure in life was the opportunity to serve G-d and that he saw the true, superior value of these opportunities over the temporal value of gold and silver. So why did Aaron, who did not ascribe any true value to material wealth, need additional stimulation to properly fulfill the elevation offering, the financial cost of which was trivial?

Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz deduces from this the innate, natural draw that humans feel toward wealth, such that even an Aaron could slack off in some minute way in his Divine service because of a trivial loss. For all of Aaron's knowledge of the inherent emptiness in material possessions, so great is the human urge that the stirrings in his heart of heart would cause a laxity in his alacrity in his most treasured service of G-d. This deficiency was remedied by the additional stimulation of the "command", G-d's safeguard instituted for Aaron and his children. How much more vigilant we must be with our precautions in the course of our everyday business.

EVERYONE NEEDS A PUSH

RABBI YEHOASHUA BERMAN (Aish.com)

"Command Aharon and his sons [by] saying, this is the teaching of the olah, it is the olah on its fire on the altar the whole night, and the fire of the altar will burn in it (Vayikra 6:2)."

Rashi explains that the Hebrew word "tzav," command, implies ziruz - encouragement and urging - for that time and for all generations.

Particularly when it comes to situations involving loss of money (because the Kohanim do not receive anything from a burnt offering other than the hide), is there a need to encourage and urge.

Rav Yaakov Weinberg pointed out that the above verse is discussing Aharon Ha'Kohein, one of the greatest Jewish figures of all time; so we see that even he had a need for ziruz, encouragement.

This, explains Rav Weinberg, does not mean that without the ziruz Aharon would not have put forth his full effort. It goes without saying that Aharon would have certainly put forth his utmost effort despite any lack of external ziruz. Rather, what it means is that every person has untapped strengths that are often only manifest as a result of the prodding pressure of ziruz.

"One time", recounted Rav Weinberg, "I was arranging chevrusos (study partners) at the beginning of the zman (semester), and there was one bachur for whom I just could not manage to work out an appropriate chevrusah. I tried numerous different ideas, but nothing worked. Unfortunately, he began the zman having to learn on his own without a chevrusah.

About two weeks into the zman, I received a desperate phone call from his father. He said, 'Please! Please find a chevrusah for my son! He is suffering so much from not having a chevrusah!'

So, I tried again and, lo and behold, this time I managed to find a suitable chevrusah for him!

Don't think that I didn't try my hardest the first go-around. I can assure you that I truly did. But the desperate urging of the boy's father extracted a latent energy without which just would not surface." We all need and can benefit from ziruz, concluded Rav Weinberg, no matter how great we are or how hard we are trying.

What is very interesting to note, is that we see from Rashi's explanation that in situations where the individual stands to gain some monetary benefit there is not nearly as much of a need to have other people providing the ziruz. The monetary gain in of itself provides the lion's share of the external push that is needed.

Now, obviously, Aharon Ha'Kohein (or any of his sons, or other tzaddikim for that matter) were certainly not carrying out the avodah (service) for the sake of personal monetary gain. To even suggest such a thing would be absolutely preposterous; it is safe to assert that the thought of monetary gain did not enter his conscious thoughts at all, even for one moment. Certainly, his sole motivation for carrying out the avodah was his drive to fulfill the Will of God. Nevertheless, we see that the monetary aspect would play at least a subconscious role of ziruz even for an Aharon Ha'Kohein. And, for people of a much lesser stature, it could very well occupy a place in the conscious thought process. However, it is still just a ziruz, not the main motivating factor.

As an illustration of this idea, imagine an athlete competing for the gold medal. In the midst of the race, he begins to feel tired and weak and his pace begins to slow down a bit. Upon seeing this, his fans start cheering him on to give him a boost. And it works! He surges forward with newfound strength and achieves his goal of winning the medal.

Now, would you say that his primary motivating factor was the momentary cheering that occurred in the middle of the race? Of course not! What was motivating him from beginning to end was the accomplishment itself of winning the gold. So, what function did the cheering fulfill?

Ziruz.

Ziruz is that external push that helps propel us towards our goals without supplanting the actual motivation of our actions.

That is why it is not inappropriate that monetary gain act as a ziruz in the realm of Torah and mitzvos. One may wonder why there are many monetary incentives involved with various learning programs and endeavors, whether in the Kollel system or otherwise. Based on the above, though, it should become perfectly clear that there is in fact nothing negative about this whatsoever. On the contrary, we see that using monetary incentives as a ziruz is actually a positive thing to do. Those that are engaged in serious learning are clearly not doing so for the sake of money, God forbid.⁽¹⁾ They are motivated to learn for the sake of carrying out the loftiest endeavor that Hashem charges us with. The paltry bits and pieces of monetary incentives that they receive here and there are merely a ziruz. And ziruz, as we have learned, is a very positive thing!

So, for others and for oneself, find that positive, encouraging, and urging force of ziruz. As we have seen, ziruz can take the form of cheering someone on, a desperate plea, or a monetary incentive. The truth is that it doesn't really matter what particular form the ziruz takes, as long as it will have a beneficial, positive effect given the situation. So, for others and for oneself, find the one that works.

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

RABBI AHARON LOSCHAK (Chabad.org)

“Sure, you can go.”

That’s what my father told me in the car that night. I was stunned. Totally taken aback.

You see, for as long as I could remember, my father (of blessed memory) had this thing about his children celebrating the holidays at home. Especially when it came to the Passover Seder. It was unthinkable for any of us to spend the holiday elsewhere. It was simply blasphemous.

One of the experiences many of my friends would talk about enthusiastically was the Chabad program of sending yeshivah students to remote cities across the world to arrange Passover Seders for the local Jews, who often lacked full-time organized Jewish infrastructure. Many of my friends had done this for a few years already, and the stories and experiences they shared were tantalizing. I so badly wanted to experience it myself.

But I knew my father would never agree. I’d even asked him the year before, and he would have none of it.

That year, however, I decided: “That’s it. I’m doing it, and I don’t care.” And so there I was in the car, picking up my father at the airport in New York where I was studying. He had come to attend a wedding, and for weeks I had mentally prepared for the showdown that would certainly ensue. I steeled myself with all the resolve of an impudent, determined twenty-year-old. In my mind, I was going to wage this war to the bitter end. So, after exchanging pleasantries, I started to hem and haw. After he told me to spit it out, I came out with guns blazing, firmly stating not my desire, but my foregone conclusion, “I’m going this year!”

“Ok, sure. If that’s what you want, go ahead.”

That was it? All the mental battle-ready soldiers had just been casually neutralized without a peep—just like that. I was speechless.

(Spoiler: I didn’t end up going for technical reasons, but that’s not the point.)

My father pulled a fast one on me that evening, and now that I’m older, and somehow he seems to keep getting smarter, I think I understand what he knew then.

His little secret can be found buried in the Temple trash of millennia ago.

Taking Out the Temple Trash

One of the first rites carried out in the Temple each morning was something called, “Clearing the ashes,” a mitzvah described in this week’s parshah. Each day, ashes piled up on the altar from the many sacrifices offered there, and so, to keep things tidy, the priests were tasked with clearing the residue.

Breaking it down, the verse tells us that there were two distinct jobs:

And the kohen shall don his linen tunic, and he shall don his linen trousers on his flesh. And he shall lift out the ashes into which the fire has consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, and put them down next to the altar. He shall then take off his garments and put on other garments, and he shall take out the ashes to a clean place outside the camp.^(6:3-4)

In other words, the priest would first don his priestly vestments and move a token amount of ash off to the side in what was largely a ceremonial gesture. Thereafter, he would change into plain clothes, roll up his sleeves,

and clear the whole lot of ashes, carrying them out of the entire Temple complex.

Why did he change his clothes in between? Rashi explains:

So as not to soil the garments in which he constantly officiates. [By analogy:] The clothes worn [by a servant] while cooking a pot [of food] for his master, he should not wear when he mixes a glass [of wine] for his master.

The removing a small portion of ash an honorable, religious rite that warranted special attire. The clean-up job was pretty much janitorial work, and it wouldn’t make sense to wear the same clothes.

But here’s the question: Was there a shortage of manpower in the Temple? What was the point of this quick costume change mid-act, when there were plenty of other priests clamoring for jobs? Couldn’t they have assigned these two jobs to two different actors?

This Is Spiritual?

The fact that the same priest did both jobs tells us everything we need to know about serving G-d, cutting straight to the heart of Judaism. The Temple was the quintessential place of Divine service, so this was a teaching moment—right at the beginning of each day—showing how we ought to approach every day of our religious devotion.

To explain:

Have you ever asked yourself, “Is Judaism spiritual? Is it supposed to make me feel spiritual?”

Think about it: You don’t like the taste of matzah, but you eat it anyway. You’re not particularly awake or interested, yet you wear tefillin, or distractedly light Shabbat candles.

You’ve done a mitzvah, no doubt, but was it spiritual? Did it feel inspiring?

Can you compare that with gazing at a magnificent sunset over the Grand Canyon or staring into the face of a newborn baby? The euphoria felt while singing a Chassidic melody with thousands of other people, or the awe-inspiring majesty of the stones at the Western Wall?

Now that’s spiritual!

So what is it about the dry, technical, highly detailed, and hyper action-oriented choreography of Judaism? Can’t we trade the matzah for something tastier and the tefillin for meditation?

IT’S ABOUT G-D

Well, if Judaism was about you, then you would be right. If it was here to service you, to make you feel good, inspired, or “spiritual,” well, then, go right ahead and sing to your heart’s content.

But it’s not. It’s about G-d, creating a relationship with a Being who has reached over the impossible chasm between infinite and finite and gifted us with the opportunity to connect with Him. An extended hand to climb out of our puny humanity and connect with something larger than life itself.

And he instructed us that the bridge past that unscalable divide is a 6 oz. matzah, a perfectly rectangular tefillin, and challah made from 5 lbs. of flour. If you or me were dictating the rules of this game, perhaps we could have come up with something that feels more inspiring. But then it would be our game. If we want to connect with G-d, to experience true transcendence and meaning, you guessed it, it’s in 5 lbs., not 4.9.

And that’s why the same priest who performed the exalted ritual of taking a token amount of ash in sacred attire got the dirty job of removing trash in plain clothes. If the priest was concerned about the “spirituality” of the job, it would, indeed, make sense to split the two jobs: ceremonial rites are great, but who wants to take out the trash? Let someone else do that!

But each day, as he began serving G-d in the holiest place on earth on behalf of the entire Jewish people, the same priest did both, broadcasting this message: The same G-d Who prescribed the sacred act wishes for the janitorial act. If I’m in it for Him, it doesn’t matter what it is. Trash duty? I’m in! Let me just change my clothes.

REAL LOVE

My dad understood the same with me. He may have wanted me to be home with the family for Passover. In fact, I’m sure he did. But he was a loving parent. He understood that if he truly loved me, then he should let me go. As much as parents love their children, they must take pause at times and ask themselves, “Am I doing/demanding this for my child, or for myself?”

If you’re invested in a loving relationship, it will require doing things for the relationship—for the other, not for you. You may want your child home for the holidays, it may even be the “right thing,” but sometimes, true love dictates that you let your child go.

My father taught that to me that night. I hope to do the same with my children.

MINDFUL EATING

RABBI MENACHEM FELDMAN (Chabad.org)

In recent years it has become increasingly clear that eating mindfully has many health benefits. The Harvard Health Blog, for example, reported:

Paying more attention to what you eat, not less, could help keep you from overeating. Multitasking—like eating while watching television or working—and distracted or hurried eating can prompt you to eat more. Slowing down and savoring your food can help you control your intake.¹

Jews have always understood the power of mindful eating.

Judaism teaches that eating is not only a necessity of survival, nor merely a pleasurable experience; it is also a spiritual exercise.

Much of the discussion in this week’s parshah is about eating the Temple offerings. Some were eaten by the priests, while others were eaten by the person who brought the offering. In either case, the eating of the offering was part of what achieved the offering’s spiritual effect.

The Talmud tells us:

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar both said: while the Temple still stood, the altar atoned for man; now that the Temple no longer stands, a man’s table atones for him.”²

This teaching is extraordinary: how can it possibly be that when we sit down to eat a meal we are experiencing the same spiritual effect, the same atonement, as with the offerings that were brought upon the altar?

Kabbalah and Chassidic philosophy teach that every creation has a soul, a spark of G-dliness. This is true for each of the forms of life on earth: the inanimate, the plant, and the animal. Each possesses a soul that yearns for the opportunity to transcend and reconnect with its source.

All of creation can be elevated through the human being—the only creation made in the image of G-d and the only creation to possess free choice.

When man consumes the inanimate, plant, or animal, one of two things can happen. If he eats for his own personal pleasure, he is lowered to their spiritual level, which, from the soul’s perspective, is a missed opportunity for both man and food. If, however, he eats the food with a spiritual purpose—so that he will be healthy and have energy to serve his Creator and achieve his mission on earth, then he elevates the spark of holiness within the food and allows it to be reunited with its Divine source.³

The daily offerings, which were brought in the Temple on behalf of all the Jewish people, comprised every category of creation: each animal was brought together with an offering of grain—representing the plant kingdom, and salt—representing the inanimate. The intense holiness of the Temple meant that not only were the offerings sanctified, but all animals, plants, and minerals in the rest of the world were sanctified too.⁴

Today, however, we don’t enjoy the spiritual benefits of the Temple. As such, the responsibility of elevating the sparks within creation falls to each of us. “While the Temple still stood,” says the Talmud, “the altar atoned for man; now ... man’s table atones for him”. Today, the atonement of the world and its spiritual elevation is in our hands and upon our tables.

So next time you eat, do so mindfully. Notice the colors, smells, flavors, and textures of your food.

But don’t stop there.

Dig deeper. Be mindful of the spark of holiness within the food. Recite the appropriate blessings, and consider how you will elevate the soul of the food by using its energy to fuel good deeds.

FOOTNOTES

1. health.harvard.edu/blog/distracted-eating-may-add-to-weight-gain-201303296037.
2. Menachot 97a.
3. See Tanya chapter 7.
4. See Tanya ibid.

BE CONVICTED

AVROHOM YAAKOV

We find many community leaders, politician, and heads of organisation who are happy to impose policies, laws and procedures on everyone else while flouting the same rules. “One rule for me and one rule for thee!”

Can we forget during COVID, the sight of many political and community leaders indulging in the very activities that the rest of the community were precluded from?

The Torah is quite specific about such hypocrisy.

Regarding the sin offering, the Torah tells us that “The kohen who offers it up as a sin offering shall eat it (the sin offering).” (6:19)

Rashi comments, “who performs the components of its service, that is, the one through whom it becomes a sin-offering.”

Contrast this to the Mincha (meal) offering, where any kohen could consume it (see 6:9).

Why the difference between the two?

R’ Meis Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk notes that the sin offering always involves animal sacrifice unlike the meal offering that uses flour exclusively. There are those that believe that animal sacrifice is cruel and inhumane – if a person sinned, why does the animal have to be sacrificed? In order to underline that this cannot be the paradigm of the kohen, the koehn who himself performs the sacrifice and the rites must consume from the meat of the animal that was involved in the sin offering. The kohen must demonstrate that he is fully committed to the task.

Indeed, Halacha (see Ramo YD 246) indicates that a Rabbi that has been asked a halachic question with respect to food and permits it, must partake of the food himself to show the conviction of his opinions.

It is not good enough for leaders to impose things on others while they feel that the law does not apply to them.

FITTING WORK

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

It is not a glamorous job, but somebody has to do it. And so the Torah begins this week’s portion by telling us the mitzvah of terumas hadeshen, removing the ashes that accumulate from the burnt-offerings upon the altar. The Torah teaches us: “The Kohen shall don his fitted linen tunic, and he shall don linen breeches on his flesh; he shall separate the ash of what the fire consumed of the elevation-offering on the Altar, and place it next to the Altar” (7:3).

What is simply derived from the verse is that the service of ash-removal is done with the priestly tunic. What is noticeable to the Talmudic mind is the seemingly innocuous adjective “fitted.” Rashi quotes the derivation that applies to all the priestly garments: they must be fitted. They can not be too long, nor can they be too short. They must be tailored to fit each individual Kohen according to his physical measurements.

The question is simple. The sartorial details of the bigdei kehuna (priestly vestments) were discussed way back in the portion of Tezaveh, which we read five weeks ago. Shouldn’t the directive of precise-fitting garments have been mentioned in conjunction with the laws of tailoring? Further, if the Torah waits to teach us those requisites in conjunction with any service, why not choose a more distinguished act, such as an anointment or sacrifice? Why choose sweeping ashes?

MY DEAR FRIEND, AND THE editor of the Parsha Parables series, Dr. Abby Mendelson, was, in a former life, a beat writer for the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball club. In the years that we learned Torah together, he would recount amusing anecdotes and baseball minutia. Some of his stories have retained an impact on me years after I heard them. This is one of them.

Roberto Clemente was an amazing athlete who played the game of baseball with utmost dedication. One day, late in the 1968 season, he was playing outfield against the Houston team. The Pirates were no longer contenders, and the game had no statistical meaning.

A ball was hit deep toward the outfield wall. As Clemente raced back, it seemed that the ball was going to hit the wall way over his head. With superhuman strength he propelled himself like a projectile toward the wall. Speeding at a forty-five degree angle he collided with the wall at the same time that the ball hit it, two feet above his head.

Strictly adhering to the laws of nature, both Clemente and the baseball rebounded from the wall, the former’s return to earth much less graceful than the latter’s. While the white sphere gently bounced to the playing surface and rolled toward the infield, the much larger uniformed and spiked entity came crashing after it with a resounding thud.

Bruised and embarrassed, Clemente clamored after the elusive orb and finally threw it to a less traumatized member of his team who completed the hapless mission.

In the post-game interview an innocent reporter asked Clemente, “Roberto, your team is out of contention. There are three games left. Why in the world did you try so hard to make that play? Was it worth bruising yourself?”

Clemente was puzzled. In a few short sentences he explained his actions. “I am not paid to win pennants. My job is to catch the ball. I tried to catch the ball. I was trying to do my job.”

WHEN THE TORAH TELLS US that the clothes have to fit perfectly for a particular service it is telling us that the job is exactly right for the man who is doing it. The ash-cleaner is not doing another Kohen’s job, wearing an

ill-fitted garment as if it were thrown upon him as he entered for the early morning shift.

What seems to be the most trivial of jobs is the job that must be done! That is the job of the hour, and that is exactly what the Kohen is designated to do. And for the job or service that is tailor-made for the individual the clothes must also be tailor-made for the job as well!

I once asked a high-level administrator of a major institution what was his job. He answered in all seriousness, "I do what ever has to be done to get the job done and that becomes my job."

Whatever we do, and however we do it, we must realize that the end can only come through the menials. Whatever it takes to get to the goal is as integral as the goal itself. It requires devotion and commitment, and it requires self-sacrifice. If you dress with dignity to collect the ash, if you approach every task with both with sartorial and personal pride and grace, then you are certainly up to any task.

News, Views & Opinion

US ABSTAINS AS UN SECURITY COUNCIL PASSES CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION

MIKE WAGENHEIM (JNS.org 25-3-24)

The U.N. Security Council unanimously passed a resolution that demands a ceasefire for the rest of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan and the release of all hostages being held captive by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Washington abstained in the 14-0 vote on Monday. As one of the council's permanent members, the United States could have vetoed the resolution, which the 10 elected, non-permanent members (E10) of the council drafted and circulated.

The resolution "demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting ceasefire and also demands the immediate and conditional release of all hostages."

It also demands compliance with international law in the treatment of detainees and emphasizes the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza and demands that barriers preventing that be lifted.

Ramadan lasts for about another two weeks.

The resolution appears to leave it open to interpretation whether the ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages are connected.

Prior to the vote, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to cancel a high-level Israeli delegation to Washington if the United States did not veto the resolution. After the vote, Netanyahu confirmed that he canceled the delegation.

The delegation was to discuss the Jewish state's plans for a military operation in the southernmost city of Rafah, according to Israel, while Washington had said the discussion would be about alternatives to a military operation there.

The Israeli mission to the United Nations declined to comment to JNS ahead of the vote.

The resolution is only the third of 10 upon which the council has voted about the Israel-Hamas war to pass and only the first focused on hostilities, rather than humanitarian aid. The United States demanded a last-minute change, with a text change from calling for a "permanent" ceasefire to a "lasting" one.

"Our vote does not represent a shift in our policy," John Kirby, White House national security communications advisor, told reporters on Monday morning. "There is no reason for this to be seen as some sort of escalation. There's no reason for it to be an escalation."

Asked about how the resolution didn't represent a departure from prior U.S. policy, given it didn't appear to link the ceasefire and hostage release, Kirby rejected the characterization of the question.

"I've looked at it. It does talk about the need for an immediate ceasefire and an immediate release of the hostages. That's what we want," he said. "Those are the same principles that we've been arguing for now for many months."

Kirby said he has no information about Washington being notified about an Israeli delegation being canceled. He noted that Yoav Gallant, the Israeli defense minister, is in Washington today and tomorrow.

"He's meeting with Secretary [of State Antony] Blinken and he's going to

meet with Jake [Sullivan, the national security advisor] and he's also going to get a chance to meet with Secretary [of Defense Lloyd] Austin," Kirby said. "I have no doubt that in those discussions we will have ample opportunities to talk with him about what's going on with their planning in Rafah."

"We were looking forward to having an opportunity to speak to an Israeli delegation later this week," Kirby added. "I'll let the Israelis speak to whether they're coming or not."

'WE DID NOT AGREE WITH EVERYTHING'

Asked if the vote would impact the already-scheduled meetings in Washington with Gallant that hadn't yet occurred, Kirby said, "Why don't we have the meetings and see how they go?"

"Those are pretty weighty meetings," he said.

Washington has vetoed prior resolutions and amendments calling for a ceasefire, stating that their passage would upset or upend delicate Israel-Hamas negotiations.

While "acknowledging" ongoing brokered negotiations, the resolution passed on Monday was worded to de-emphasize those talks in favor of the urgency of a ceasefire.

The E10-drafted resolution was initially slated to be voted upon on Friday morning but was pulled in favor of negotiations over the weekend, leading to Monday's vote.

Those negotiations led to coupling the ceasefire and hostage release demands in the same paragraph, as opposed to the original separation of the two, indicating Washington's signaling that the two should be of equal urgency and, possibly, tied together in effect.

"Colleagues, we appreciated the willingness of members of this council to take some of our edits and improve upon this resolution. Still, certain key edits were ignored, including our request to add a condemnation of Hamas," stated Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, explaining Washington's abstention.

"We did not agree with everything in this resolution. For that reason, we were unfortunately not able to vote yes," Thomas-Greenfield said. "We fully support some of the critical objectives in this nonbinding resolution. And we believe it was important for the council to speak out and make clear that any ceasefire must come with the release of all hostages. "

BIDEN'S VETO IS A THREAT TO WESTERN SECURITY AND THE ARAB STATES

HILLEL FRISCH (JNS.org 27-3-24)

President Joe Biden's Middle East strategy has been problematic since the Oct. 7 attack. The Hamas onslaught proved that Israel cannot contain its enemies Hamas, Hezbollah and above all, Iran, and can only fight to reduce their capabilities, while Biden has reiterated his policy of containment regarding Iran and its proxies.

Iran was to be rewarded with the release of bank deposits the United States has frozen since the fall of the shah. Biden also sent his special negotiator to try to broker a deal in which Hezbollah would withdraw beyond the Litani River, a 50-minute drive from the Israel-Lebanon border, with all its military capabilities intact.

Despite this policy of containment, which has done nothing to deal with the lethal capabilities of Iran and its proxies, not to mention its possible repercussions on nuclear proliferation, Biden demands of the United States' only effective ally in the region, Israel, that it make concessions on the Palestinian front. Even under the optimal scenario, doing so would put Israel at a grave security risk.

In recent weeks it has become increasingly clear that Biden is now poised to prevent Israel from operating in Rafah, Hamas's final stronghold, and thus defeat it.

This would be a disastrous mistake, not only for Israel, but for the security of democratic states, especially the United States and its Western allies, as well as the Arab states in the region.

Hamas's war against Israel has proved beyond doubt that it (and all the more so Hezbollah) are far more militarily powerful than any Arab state, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Neither state, in the event of war with Israel, would have held out for five months against an Israeli onslaught. Egypt has been unable to suppress the small Islamic State presence in the Sinai even with Israeli help. Saudi Arabia in the last four decades has been defeated in Lebanon, where Hezbollah holds sway, compelled to cease its military offensive against the Houthis in Yemen, who threaten its existence, and the Sunni forces it backed in Iraq have been severely maimed by Iran's Iraqi proxies. Iran is easily the winner in these contests, and the

“pragmatic” Arab states have clearly been the losers.

Biden promises as a reward for Israel’s concessions on the Palestinian front normalization with Saudi Arabia. However, if Biden does not allow Israel to defeat Hamas, such normalization might prove meaningless given the threat Hamas and its Muslim Brotherhood allies, in conjunction with Iran and its proxies, would pose to Saudi Arabia.

Already, Saudi Arabia is showing signs of “bandwagoning” (leaning) toward Iran based on the logic of “if you can’t beat them, join them,” much as Jordan did at the beginning of the Six-Day War, when it felt compelled to join forces with an Egyptian regime that was bent on destroying it, in the hope (that indeed came to pass) that losing half the kingdom would be better than losing it all if Egypt’s dictate was not followed.

Saudi Arabia’s weakness in the face of Iran and its Houthi proxy can be clearly seen in the growing Houthi threat to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, which is more of a vital security interest to Saudi Arabia than to anyone else. Despite the threat, Saudi Arabia has not joined forces with the United States and Great Britain to meet the threat. Its official press reports on these countries’ efforts to defend free navigation are worded as if this were a security problem facing these states rather than a direct threat to Saudi national security.

The response of the only other Arab state with credible military capabilities, Egypt, to the Houthi threat has likewise been weak to nonexistent, despite the threat it poses to the navigation route that leads to the Suez Canal, a major source of income for this cash-strapped, demographically-burdened country.

Regarding the other Gulf states, they never posed a counterbalance to Iran and its proxies even before Hamas’s Oct. 7 onslaught on Israel, let alone in a scenario in which Hamas is victorious. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, which took less than 48 hours, is a painful reminder of the extent to which these states would be a walkover for Iran and its proxies. For Israel to be prevented from achieving victory against Hamas would clearly be understood as a Hamas victory—a decisive moment in Iran’s pursuit of regional hegemony and marking the loss of U.S. credibility in the region.

Vetoing an Israeli victory and enabling a Hamas victory in its stead, then, undermines if not destroys the whole logic of the Biden doctrine, which is based on creating a coalition of Israel and Arab states against Iran.

Instead of a coalition of Arab states and Israel led by the United States, the pragmatic Arab states, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, will be rushing to join the Iranian axis in the (vain) hope that Iran will rein in Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood and prevent them from destroying these states from within.

And as for the humanitarian argument against Israeli victory in Rafah, consider how many Palestinians, Israelis, Saudis, Lebanese, Egyptians and Yemenis will lose their lives in the subsequent bouts in the event of a Hamas victory. After all, Israelis will not go like sheep to the slaughter, nor will the resolve of Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas to slaughter them subside.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE BLOOD LIBEL

CAROLINE B. GLICK (JNS.org 22-3-24)

According to Canada’s La Presse, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a vampire, and he is poised to suck the life out of the Palestinians in Rafah, Hamas’s final outpost in southern Gaza. The publication that was once a paper of record in Canada ran a political cartoon on March 20 portraying Netanyahu as a vampire, with a huge hooked nose, pointy ears and claws for fingers, dressed in Dracula’s overcoat while standing on the deck of a pirate ship.

The caption, written in blood-dripping red letters, read: “Nosfenyahou: En Route Vers Rafah.” Nosferatu, the Romanian word for vampire, was the title of a proto-Nazi German silent horror film from 1922 chock-full of anti-Semitic poison. The film, which became something of a cult flick, featured a vampire with a long Jewish nose. He arrived at an idyllic German town with a box full of plague-carrying rats that he released on the innocent villagers as he plotted to suck his realtor’s blood.

La Presse’s cartoon didn’t leave any room for imagination. It wasn’t making a political or military argument against Israel’s planned ground operation in Rafah. Its goal wasn’t to persuade anyone of anything.

The Netanyahu-the-vampire cartoon asserted simply that Netanyahu is a Jewish bloodsucker and, more broadly, the Jewish state—and Jews worldwide—must be vigorously opposed by all right-thinking people who don’t want Jewish vampires to kill them.

Nosferatu Netanyahu Honest ReportingA political cartoon in the Canadian “La Presse” depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the character in the 1922 film “Nosferatu,” directed by German film producer

and screenwriter Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. Source: Screenshot/Honest Reporting.

As the paper no doubt anticipated, the cartoon provoked an outcry from Canadian Jews and some politicians. And after a few hours, the newspaper took it off its website and apologized. Anyone who thinks that means that the good guys won misses the point of the move. The Jewish outcry and pile-on by politicians and media coverage proved the point. Jews are evil and control everything, even what a private paper can publish. Like Nosferatu in its day, the cartoon will become a piece of folklore, additional proof that the Jews are the enemy of humanity.

In other words, the cartoon was a blood libel.

We’re seeing lots and lots of it these days. And so, it is worth recalling what a blood libel is.

In its original form, of course, the libel was specifically about blood. About 1,000 years ago, Christians in England began accusing Jews of performing ritual murders of Christian children to use their blood to bake Passover matzahs.

The accusation was inherently insane. Jewish law prohibits murder. It prohibits cannibalism. It prohibits child sacrifice. It prohibits eating food with blood. But none of that mattered. Like the cartoon in La Presse, the blood libel didn’t seek to persuade anyone. It presumed that its target audiences already hated Jews or had a latent tendency to hate Jews, which the blood libel aimed to unleash. The purpose of the blood libel was to scapegoat the Jews and to incite target audiences from London to Damascus to act on that hatred. Over the millennium, hundreds of thousands of Jews were massacred in Europe and the Islamic world in response to blood libels.

Since the original blood libel, other ones have appeared. Whether Jews are accused of spreading plague, poisoning wells, controlling the banking system, the media, corrupting young people or spearheading a world Communist revolution, the common denominators in all of the accusations are the same.

Blood libels appeal to emotion, not reason. They do not seek to persuade anyone; rather, they are geared towards unleashing the latest anti-Semitism.

They legitimize and incite violence against Jews, who—once slandered as the enemies of the good—have no moral right to live.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE of blood libels make them impossible to combat. Jews cannot disprove blood libels because they aren’t based on fact but on feelings or intentions attributed to Jews by people who hate them. Can Netanyahu prove that he isn’t a vampire? Of course not. If he bothered to try, it would be seen as proof that he’s covering something up. Can Jews prove that they aren’t evil? No, again. Because people predisposed to believe that Jews are evil see everything good that Israel does as an effort to cover up its foundational, immutable malevolence. “Pink-washing” is a case in point.

The discourse on Israel’s war in Gaza is suffused in blood libels.

Consider the accusation that Gazans are starving. USAID administrator Samantha Power issued a statement on Tuesday claiming that “famine is imminent in northern Gaza.”

Power pointed a finger directly at Israel, blaming it for the “imminent” famine. “The U.S. will continue to do everything we can to get food to people in Gaza, but Israel must do more to put an end to this mass—and preventable—suffering.”

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Almost simultaneously, E.U. Foreign Minister Josep Borrell accused Israel of deliberately starving the people of Gaza. As he put it, “In Gaza, we are no longer on the brink of famine, we are in a state of famine, affecting thousands of people. This is unacceptable. Starvation is used as a weapon of war. Israel is provoking famine.”

These allegations were regurgitated in every language at multiple forums throughout the week. The fact that they are untrue is of no interest.

According to data from COGAT—the Israel Defense Forces’ unit responsible for aid deliveries to Gaza before Oct. 7—an average of 70 food trucks entered Gaza daily. In March, an average of 126 food trucks entered Gaza daily. That’s an 80% increase.

But facts are for losers. And anyway, if no one dies of starvation in Gaza, that means that the good-hearted people of the world foiled Israel’s evil plans. Whatever happens, Israel’s ascribed criminality retroactively justifies Hamas’s invasion and slaughter of Israelis on Oct. 7, and supports the now-open U.S. position that Israel must lose the war. It also justifies

assaults against Jews throughout the Western world.

Then there is the claim that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, or at a minimum, has deliberately murdered upwards of 30,000 Gazans—70% of whom are women and children. U.S. President Joe Biden credited this allegation when he said in an interview with MSNBC, “You can’t have another 30,000 Palestinians dead as a consequence of going after Hamas. There are other ways to deal with Hamas.”

There are three problems with the number 30,000. First, its source is Hamas, and so there is no way to check it. Second, assuming it’s true—since Israel’s assertion that it has killed more than 13,000 terrorists can be verified and is true—the ratio of terrorists to civilians among the dead in Gaza is 1:1.3, the lowest militant-to-civilian ratio in the history of modern warfare. And third, as was demonstrated earlier this month in a study by Abraham Wyner, a statistics professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Hamas’s data is “not real.”

Wyner wrote that the Hamas data “is highly suggestive that a process unconnected or loosely connected to reality was used to report the numbers. Most likely, the Hamas ministry settled on a daily total arbitrarily. We know this because the daily totals increase too consistently to be real. Then they assigned about 70% of the total to be women and children, splitting that amount randomly from day to day. Then they in-filled the number of men as set by the predetermined total. This explains all the data observed.”

DESPITE ALL OF THESE provable, easily demonstrated facts, Israel stands in judgment for genocide at The Hague, and Jews are chased, harassed and beaten; and Jewish institutions are vandalized and burned in cities across the United States and Europe for their support for “genocide” of Palestinians.

Another allegation that is gaining prominence after being propagated by the U.N. Human Rights Commission claims that Israeli prison officials sexually abuse Palestinian female prisoners. There is literally no evidence, let alone any proof, of such claims. Indeed, there are no allegations that can be checked in any way. All the same, they are making the rounds.

IDF Brig. Gen. (ret.) Amir Avivi reported on a meeting that he held Thursday at the U.S. State Department, where he was confronted with the accusation head-on.

On his X account, Avivi wrote: “It’s hard to leave me speechless and shocked, but that is precisely what happened in my meeting at the State Department when the representative responsible for the Israeli-Palestinian dossier accused Israel of systematic sexual abuse of Palestinian women entirely on the basis of a concocted U.N. report that was written to try to find something to balance the atrocities of Oct. 7.”

Israelis and Jews around the world were stunned by the swiftness and ferocity of the propaganda campaign Hamas’s supporters in the West launched in the immediate wake of Hamas’s orgy of murder and sadism in southern Israel. Less than 24 hours after the news broke, Hamas supporters at Harvard University kicked off the hate campaign by getting 31 student groups to sign a statement blaming Israel for Hamas’s atrocities.

As details of the crimes began to flow, Hamas’s supporters in the West responded with violent denials of all of them. No rape. No immolation of children. No torture. No nothing. It was all Israel’s fault, they said. Israel killed and raped its own people. And now the Jews are raping Palestinian women. How do we know? Because they are Jews.

On the face of things, the rapidity and shamelessness of the projection of blame and culpability onto Israel was shocking. Normal people could be forgiven for assuming that in the face of crimes of this enormity, Hamas’s supporters would lay low. But that assumption misses the point.

Oct. 7 was one battle in a larger jihad to annihilate Israel. Propaganda in the form of blood libels is a central component of the war. The libels against Jews and the Jewish state today play the same role as they played in the Middle Ages, just on a national scale. If Jews deserved to be killed because Jews are evil, then the Jewish state deserves to be annihilated because it is the evil Jewish state. Everything that happens to Israel is proof of its evil. Every crime committed against Israel is a crime Israel committed. And if Israel doesn’t commit crimes attributed to it, then that’s because good people like Power and Borrell stood in its way.

The depressing thing, of course, is that Hamas’s strategy is working. The latent Jew-hatred in the West was widespread enough to support their crimes. The propagation of the blood libels by the United Nations, the European Union and the State Department is a disturbing indicator of just how bad things really are.

The question is what can Israel—and Jews more broadly—do in the midst of this avalanche of blood libel? The answer is twofold.

First, Israel must stop trying to prove a negative. No one cares if we are really blood-thirsty vampires. Persuasion doesn’t work with people moved by emotion, particularly hatred. Instead, Israel and Jews worldwide need to concentrate on rallying the people who viscerally understand what is going on and aren’t taken in by anti-Semitic cartoons and Hamas propaganda, even if it is spoken by Samantha Power.

As for the haters, countering them means going on the offensive. On the battlefield in Gaza, it means destroying Hamas completely so that everyone understands that attacking the Jews is a bad idea. And on the battlefields of the United Nations, the European Union, the State Department, Harvard, Berkeley, New York City and London, the answer is to expose the haters with as much vigor and ferocity as they demonize the Jews.

DON’T BLAME ISRAEL FOR THE SURGE IN ANTISEMITISM

JONATHAN S. TOBIN (JNS.org 20-3-24)

For liberal Jewish critics of Israel, the post-Oct. 7 world has been difficult to navigate. The international campaign to smear the defensive war being waged against terrorists bent on both the destruction of the Jewish state and the mass slaughter of its people has put them in a corner. The wave of Jew-hatred that has spread across the globe, and specifically in the United States in the streets and on college campuses, has targeted them and their children as much as any other sector of Jewish society.

Worst of all, it’s not their traditional political foes on the right or even Donald Trump who is doing this. It is, instead, their longtime allies on the left who are responsible. They have embraced a virulent form of antisemitism but believe that their hatred is justified by woke ideologies like critical race theory and intersectionality that brand Israel and the Jews as “white” oppressors.

Rather than acknowledge this, some liberals find it easier to point to Israel for their troubles.

INTERNALIZING HATRED

That’s the conceit of a recent column in The Forward by Rob Eshman that is noteworthy not so much because of its spurious arguments, but because it is just the latest example of how a considerable number of Jews have always responded to antisemitism. Instead of acknowledging the truth about those who seek to single out the Jews and their state for discrimination and violence, there are always going to be some who internalize this hatred and seek to blame the victims for being targeted.

Eshman is far from the first to claim that Israel’s allegedly bad behavior is endangering Jews. But in the wake of the Oct. 7 mass murders, rapes and other atrocities by Hamas terrorists who openly call for Jewish genocide, it takes a particularly delusional mindset to think that the open contempt for Jewish rights and safety that has become mainstream discourse in America in recent months can be rolled back by Israelis treating those trying to kill them more gently. To imagine, as he does, that the mobs on the streets of America’s cities and college campuses chanting for the Jewish state’s destruction (“from the river to the sea”) or for terrorism against Jews wherever they live (“globalize the intifada”) can be made less dangerous if only Israel could act in a manner that would generate more sympathy from its liberal critics is not only wrongheaded. It reflects a fundamental misunderstanding about why Israel is being bashed for its post-Oct. 7 conduct.

Eshman says he doesn’t want to rationalize or excuse antisemitism and wants open acts of anti-Jewish hate to be condemned. He also accepts that there are some people out there who wish Jews ill no matter what they do. Still, he insists that Jewish actions—and in particular, Israeli military tactics—can impact the amount of antisemitism that nice American Jews who want to be loved by the left, and seen as their fallies, are experiencing. And, as foolish as his argument may be, it probably reflects the way many American Jews are feeling right now.

Accepting the lies about Israel

The first flaw in his reasoning is the way he accepts without much argument the smears of the Israel Defense Forces’ counter-offensive in Gaza. Once the big lie that Israel is conducting genocide against the Palestinians has been accepted, then all is lost. If, instead of mimicking corporate media pundits like The New York Times’s Nicholas Kristof, he did some actual reporting about how Israel fights, he would know that far from conducting a “brutal approach to civilian casualties” that deserves the world’s condemnation, the IDF takes more care to avoid harm to non-combatants than any other modern army in recent history. Honest journalists are pushing back against

the fake statistics produced by Hamas, not blindly accepting them.

To even go down this road when attempting to cope with antisemitism is a mistake. Those who demonize Israel and treat its every measure of self-defense as illegitimate are not really interested in the details of the fighting in Gaza any more than they care about those of any other war that has been fought in recent history. For all of the attempts to hype the carnage in the Gaza Strip as some sort of historic barbarity, what is happening there is nothing when compared to the toll of deaths and displacement caused elsewhere in places like Syria, let alone the Chinese government's genocidal campaign against Muslim Uyghurs.

The only reason anyone cares about the deaths of Palestinians in Gaza is because the Jews can be blamed for them, even if they are happening in the course of a defensive war started with murder, rape, torture and kidnapping by the people who now claim to be its chief victims.

JEW'S DON'T CAUSE ANTISEMITISM

The problem with the attempt to blame Israel for the targeting of American Jews is more fundamental. As in every past outbreak of antisemitism, the cause is never anything the Jews do or don't do. Jews have been hated for being rich and for being poor; for assimilating and for standing apart. But the attempt to look within for the reason why Jews are hated is always a fool's errand. Antisemitism is always about the antisemites.

The notion that Eshman and liberals like him grasp at—that a kinder, gentler Israeli would be less hated—is as tragically blind as those who thought previous foes who sought the end of Jewry could be appeased.

After all, the so-called progressives didn't even wait until Israel began its push into Gaza to begin flipping the narrative from one about a Hamas war launched against Israel to one about Palestinian victimhood. Nor do those who spread falsehoods about Israelis conducting a “genocide” bother much with the actual facts about what the IDF is doing on the ground.

Going soft on Hamas won't silence the antisemites. It will just encourage them to believe that their fantasies about erasing Israel are that much closer to coming true.

Some on the Jewish left want to carve out a position where they can retain their liberal bona fides while not crossing over to the camp of Jewish antisemites and anti-Zionists, such as those who are part of the Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow groups that have trafficked in blood libels against Jews for the last decade. Like Eshman, they say that support for a ceasefire now and an end to the war followed by pressure on Israel to accept a Palestinian state is the proper response to Oct. 7, as well as a way to tamp down the storm of antisemitism. Eshman thinks that a push for a “just compromise” with the Palestinians that would empower the very forces that are responsible for the Oct. 7 pogroms is the answer. That is something that the overwhelming majority of Israelis think is not just unwise but sheer madness.

The problem with this line of thought isn't just its lack of realism or a desire to wish away an intractable conflict that is rooted in pure hatred of Jews. He quotes the left-wing Israel author Yuval Harari with approval when he says that the real struggle is not the obvious existential one against those who seek the death and displacement of Jews. Instead, he seeks to revive the divisive arguments about judicial reform that tore Israel apart last year as the Jewish left tried to spin its own desire to hold onto unaccountable power as one of enlightened Jews resisting the benighted right-wing and religious Israelis, who win elections but should still be ruled by their left-wing betters.

Eshman and Harari both seem to think the problem is not Hamas but right-wing Jews who see a “contradiction” between Jewish and Palestinian rights. Like previous generations of Jews who tried to bargain their way out of being targeted, they see the issue as one in which “bad Jews” are doing things for which the “good Jews” are being unfairly blamed.

Nevertheless, the problem is that the Palestinians—both the “moderates” and Hamas—all define their rights in a way that denies those of the Jews. For them, it is a zero-sum game and always has been. It is only liberal Jews who have tried—and failed—to wish this reality away. That was the conceit behind the colossal failure of the Oslo Accords and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's withdrawal from Gaza in the summer of 2005 that ultimately made the slaughter of Oct. 7 possible.

Yet rather than confront that reality, Eshman prefers to pretend that more trading of land for terror, as Israel did in the past, would somehow do the trick this time, even if doing so now is not just immoral but an invitation to more mass slaughter. He sees Israel's determination to eliminate Hamas and those American Jews who support that rational goal as the reason why

antisemitism has become such a problem.

This is as shameful as it is illogical.

Israel and its supporters are in no way responsible for the antisemitism we are witnessing in the United States. The Jew-haters who support the Islamist war against Jewish life are the only ones to blame.

Liberal Zionists cannot have it both ways. They can't claim to be for peace while calling for a ceasefire that will leave the greatest enemies of peace—Hamas—still standing and ready to make good on their pledges to repeat the devastation of Oct. 7. They can either stand with Israel against leftists who are ideologically opposed to Jewish rights or they can join the anti-Zionists who seek to legitimize left-wing antisemitism.

What's more, they need to understand that their efforts to undermine Jewish self-defense by blaming Israel are only encouraging Hamas and its apologists. It is liberal Jews who, even after the calamity that took place in southern Israel seek to judge the Jewish state, that are in the wrong. It is they who, whether intentionally or not, are aiding the efforts of the terrorists to win this war and making it even less likely that Palestinians will ever undergo the sea change in their political culture, which might eventually make a compromise solution possible.

Kosher & Halacha Korner

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IT'S A SIMAN THAT IT'S KOSHER: AVOIDING BOSOR SHENISALAIM MIN HOAYIN STAR-K (Star-k.org)

The world of kashrus has played, and continues to play, a dominant role in the life of a Jew and the life blood of Judaism. This centrality is evidenced by the significant halachic treatment of kashrus in the Shulchan Aruch, by our Poskim, and in contemporary Torah journals, as well as the particular attention paid to the kosher consumer stretching from the aisles of the supermarket to the media portfolios of the marketplace.

Throughout the development of practical kashrus, the Torah's halachic tenets have been interwoven with rabbinical safeguards, protective fences, known in the words of the Mishna as siyagim. Every halachic arena has been bolstered with the pickets of these fences. Some classic examples that are well known are: the prohibition of cooking poultry and milk, waiting six hours between meat and milk, stam yainum, and bishul akum.

Our Rabbis realized, that without protective measures built into the Torah's system, there would be genuine concern that Torah statutes would be abused, adulterated, watered down or forgotten, chas v'shalom. Just as a dedicated farmer would exercise herculean efforts to save the life of a beautiful tree whose life has been placed in jeopardy by predators, weeds, or disease, how much more care must be expended when we deal with the preservation of the Eitz Chaim – The Tree of Life.

One of the most detailed and involved areas of kashrus is the production and processing of kosher meat. Because of its great scope, it would be impossible to do justice to the complete gamut of the kashrus directives for shechita, bedika, nikkur, and melicha in a few brief paragraphs, but we can get a clear appreciation of the careful detail that needs to be given to every step along the production trail.

The shochet, the ritual slaughterer, who has to be armed with both technical skill and great moral integrity, has to give painstaking attention to all aspects of shechita. The concerns start from the source. From where is the packing house getting their stock? Before the actual shechita, the shochet's knife, the chalef, must be carefully checked to make sure it is smooth and razor sharp.

In order to avoid the inadvertent slaughtering of a b'chor, a first born animal born in a Jewish herd, the sources of the cattle must be known. After the animal is slaughtered every surface of the lung has to be double checked, internally and externally, making sure that the lung is free of lesions or disease. Then, when the animal is pronounced kosher, its various parts are separated and sent to different areas of the packing house. In order to avoid intermingling and confusion with non-kosher look alikes, the different parts of the forequarter of beef, veal or lamb have to be properly tagged. This system of labeling, branding, and tagging is critical to the kosher control maintenance in the packing house and beyond.

At the post-shechita stage, slaughtered meat is further processed at the plant site or at an independent processing facility, possibly under a separate hashgacha, or at local kosher butcher shops, where further processing will take place under the supervision of the local Va'ad or Rav. Whatever the option, identification plays an integral part of the process. How else would

the mashgiach know when the shechita took place, if the meat is kosher, if the meat is glatt or not, or if the meat was kashered – were it not for tags, plumbas, and letters?

In the neighborhood butcher shop where the meat and poultry is prepared for retail sale, more often than not, the cut-up chicken pieces or cutlets are not showcased with plumbas, nor is the brisket, rib steak or flanken. Furthermore, today with both husband and wife working, kosher households depend on the kosher butcher to make home deliveries. Many households employ domestic help whose duties include meal preparation. In addition, hotels and catering halls claim both kosher and non-kosher cuisine. In all of the above scenarios, beyond the Torah based kashrus requirements, an additional safeguard to protect us from the potential risk of advertent or inadvertent mixing, switching, or replacing kosher meat for a non-kosher look-alike was instituted. This siyag, protective measure, requires one to continuously identify or trace the trail of the kosher meat or kosher poultry. Failing to do so jeopardizes the kashrus acceptability of the meat, and this meat is designated as bosor shenisalaim min hoayin, literally, meat that is out of constant view of an observant Jew. Although the strict halachic context of the term bosor shenisalaim min hoayin refers to the suspicious possibility of kosher meat being switched with a non-kosher likeness, the contemporary usage of this term has far broader halachic applications. What are the parameters of this halacha? Is there any recourse once you lose visual contact with the meat?

These questions were posed to RAV MOSHE HEINEMANN, SHLITA, our Rabbinic Administrator, to clarify and elucidate this very important halacha for Kashrus Kurrents readers:

Q: How do we, in the broader halachic context, define bosor shenisalaim min hoayin?

RH: If a Jew left a piece of kosher meat or poultry, that has no distinct identification, unattended, in an area where a non-Jew has free access, and there is reason to suspect that the aino Yehudi may have exchanged the kosher meat with a non-kosher meat or poultry likeness, this piece of meat is deemed bosor shenisalaim min hoayin and may not be used.

Q: Could you list some of the circumstances that would arouse suspicion?

RH: 1) The kosher meat is of superior quality and the non-Jew would enjoy it more. 2) It is more convenient for the non-Jew to use the exposed kosher meat on the table at that moment and replace it later with non-kosher. 3) There is an outside benefit for the non-Jew to substitute the kosher meat.

Q: When a kosher meat or poultry order is being sent from the kosher butcher shop to a Jewish household for home delivery and the order is wrapped in plain wrapping paper and tape, can bosor shenisalaim min hoayin be avoided?

RH: 1) If the delivery man is, himself, a Shomer Shabbos and the order is delivered directly to the housewife or family member, the order can be sent out as is without additional identification. 2) If the delivery man is not a Shomer Shabbos, the meat order has to be marked with distinct and distinguishing simanim to avoid bosor shenisalaim min hoayin problems.

Q: When is meat considered adequately identified?

RH: Preferably lechatchila, the piece of meat or poultry should be sealed twice with kosher identification on the seal (two simanim), or be sealed with a foolproof seal that would qualify for two simanim. Any seal which makes it difficult to open the closed package without tearing or breaking the closure, tape, or packaging qualifies as a siman. An example of a foolproof siman would be the new frozen chicken products which are encased in a totally fused specially printed Chill Pack Bag that has to be ripped open to take out the products.

Q: Must a mashgiach be present at all times in a hotel kitchen during kosher meal preparation or throughout the function?

RH: The “glatt” kosher method of hotel hashgacha is for the mashgiach to be present at all times. If the mashgiach has to leave the kitchen, he can only leave if (a) none of the kitchen help knows that he stepped out, (b) he leaves for a brief interval with the intention of immediately returning, and (c) he does not leave the hotel premises.

Q: Assuming there are no bishul akum problems, can a maid prepare meals for a Jewish household without being supervised by a member of the household?

RH: There are different scenarios that have to be considered. (a) If the meat, chicken or fish have simanim on them (e.g. a plumba, a sealed casserole, fish with skin on) and these simanim will remain throughout their total preparation and cooking process the maid would be permitted to cook it. (b) If the maid knows that members of the household constantly come in

and out of the kitchen at no set time or schedule, this would serve as a deterrent for any foul play, and the maid would be permitted to cook. (c) If there is no distinct identification on the meat and the maid is alone in the household, you would be forbidden to eat any food item that requires identification prepared by the maid, unless the food can be identified through a member of the family’s t’vias ayin.

Q: What is t’vias ayin?

RH: If a Yehudi can recognize that this is the original piece of meat or poultry which was previously known to be kosher, and can be clearly identified without any question.

Q: Can a recent Baal or Baalas Teshuva eat at their parents’ home if the parents are still non-observant?

RH: If the parents agree to keep kosher for their child, the Rov or Rabbi should be consulted to work out the details of each specific circumstance.1

Q: What foods halachically require identification?

RH: All foods that require kosher certification. That includes, among others, meat, poultry, fish, wine, cheese, bread, cake, and milk. Those products that have a more severe halachic prohibition (m’doraisa), require two simanim (e.g. meat, fish, poultry, wine, etc.). Those that have a less stringent prohibition (m’drabonon), require only one siman (e.g. cheese, bread, cake, milk, etc.).

Q: Can you buy cryovaced, boxed, or bagged kosher chicken or meat provisions from a non-kosher supermarket or buyers warehouse?

RH: Yes, if they come appropriately sealed as outlined above.

Q: Do meat flavored sauces, or food items mixed with cheese or fish require simanim (sent from caterers or take-out)?

RH: If the meat, fish, or poultry is not batel (nullified) in the sauce or food item, two simanim would be required. Even if it is batel, it requires a siman identifying the sauce as kosher.

Q: How would a deli meat or tuna fish sandwich sent by a caterer or take-out be wrapped if they require two simanim?

RH: Wrapping the sandwich in a plastic wrap, sealing it on the bottom with a heat seal or label and labeling the top of the plastic only qualifies for one seal. An example of a second seal would be an additional band wrapped around the sandwich plus the sealed and labeled plastic. Another method would be to place the bill into the paper bag holding the sandwich and staple the bag and bill shut.

Q: Would plain unmarked sealing tape qualify for an acceptable seal?

RH: No, because there is no distinctive marking on the tape. In order for plain sealing tape to suffice, the mashgiach would have to sign his name across the tape and onto the box. If the box would be opened the signature would tear.

Q: Would a specially made box used to box fish sticks that has the name of the company and the hechsher clearly printed on the box qualify for a siman?

RH: No, the flaps of the box would have to be sealed to qualify for a siman. Sealed plastic over-wrap would qualify for a second seal.

Q: If a mashgiach forgot to seal a cholov Yisroel milk silo, but the weight of the poundage that was recorded elsewhere corresponds to the weight in the silo, would that qualify for an adequate siman?

RH: Yes, b’dieved.

Q: What is the halacha if only one of the two simanim remains intact?

RH: If the remaining siman is foolproof, it would be fine lechatchila. If the remaining siman is not foolproof a competent halachic authority should be consulted.

Q: Is there any halachic recourse to permit the use of questionable chicken or meat if there are no obvious simanim? (e.g. The plumbas fell off or the simanim are no longer recognized.)

RH: This meat can be used if the meat can be identified through t’vias ayin. If it was sent through an aino Yehudi, if the weight is the same as on the bill and it has a saltier taste indicating that it was kashered, one may rely on this b’dieved.

Q: Who can make this identification?

RH: The person who is the identifier must be a Shomer Torah U’Mitzvos; otherwise he has no halachic credibility and would not be believed in this instance.

Candle lighting (Melbourne) Tzav 29/3/24 20 Adar 2 5784 6.59pm/7.56pm