

זכרון יצחק

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Terumah 5784

GIVE & TAKE

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

After an entire portion filled with commandments regarding man's obligation toward his fellow man, the Torah focuses on a very spiritual aspect of our existence. Hashem commands His nation to build a Tabernacle in which He would figuratively dwell. Thus the Torah begins this week's portion with a mainstay of Jewish life — the appeal.

The Torah instructs the Jewish nation to contribute gold, silver, and an array of other materials to the great cause of erecting and furnishing a Mishkan (Tabernacle). However the appeal is worded very strangely. Hashem does not ask the people to give; he asks them to take. Shmot 25:2: "Speak to the children of Israel and let them take a portion for me." The question is obvious. Why does the Torah tell the people to take a portion when in essence they are giving a portion? What is the message behind the semantic anomaly?

Max and Irving went fishing on an overcast afternoon. About two hours into their expedition a fierce storm developed. Their small rowboat tossed and tossed and finally flipped over into the middle of the lake. Max, a strong swimmer, called to save Irving, but to no avail. Irving did not respond to any plea and unfortunately drowned. Max swam to shore to break the terrible news to Irving's poor wife.

"What happened?" she screamed. "Tell me the whole story!"

Max recounted the entire episode in full detail.

"But what did you do to try to save my Irving?" she shrieked. Max explained once again. "I kept screaming to your husband, 'Irving, give me your hand — give me your hand — Give me your hand! But Irving just gave me a blank stare and drifted away."

"You fool!" shouted the widow. "You said the wrong thing. You should have said, 'take my hand.' Irving never gave anything to anybody!"

We often make the same mistake that Irving made. When we hear the word "give" we recoil. In its first solicitation, the Torah is teaching us a lesson. When you give with true heart, you are not giving anything away. You are taking a share for yourself. Materialistic pleasures in which many people indulge are eventually digested and forgotten. The new cars become old ones, the glorious homes fall to disrepair, and the newest gizmos become outdated. The only items that remain are those that we give. They remain in a storehouse of merits and eventually will repay us and our descendants. The Montefiores and the Rothschilds are not forever cherished for opulence and indulgence. They are remembered for their great benevolence and charity. They not only gave for eternity. They received for eternity as well

THE BIG DONORS

RABBI ELISHA GREENBAUM (Chabad.org)

Anyone involved in a non-profit will recognize the temptation to hold out for the big bequests and ignore the cumulative effect that comes from lots of smaller donations.

Every organization dreams of receiving a massive inheritance or endowment that will instantly catapult them into an entirely new league. It's when people contribute financially, they feel invested in the project tempting to spend time shadowing the major donors and cultivating

relationships with world famous philanthropists, but allowing this to become your exclusive fundraising strategy would be the equivalent of planning for retirement by buying a weekly lottery ticket.

An organization which has a broad base of supporters is an institution that has a future. By diversifying our income stream we allow many more people to join in our success, while simultaneously protecting ourselves from the potential impact of losing any one donor. When people contribute financially they feel invested in the project and their expectations become the true catalyst of sustainable growth.

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, of righteous memory, once pointed out that when the Jews were building the Tabernacle, they could have easily allowed a few of the mega-wealthy contributors to sponsor the entire project. But Moshe was specifically commanded to "collect donations from every single person whose heart is devoted." (25:2)

Every single man, woman, and child was invited to contribute, and it was their shared commitment that built a fitting home for G-d.

GIVE WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

At the same time, the onus remains on those who can afford give more to do so. In 1992, the Rebbe reflected on the fact that although every Jew was invited to contribute to building the Tabernacle, most of the actual work was undertaken by a few dedicated and talented individuals, headed by Betzalel and Ahaliav. (31:2)

If you have more, you should give more. The verse we quoted before wasn't saying that the burden should be shared equally, rather each person gives as much as his heart can hold.

When each of us contributes according to his or her ability, together we ensure that Judaism will flourish and that every worthy institution will have everything they need to build G-d's home.

REMEMBER WHY YOU ARE HERE

AVROHOM YAAKOV

"Speak to the Bnei Yisrael and have them take for Me a Terumah-offering." (25:2)

In preparation for the construction of the Mishkan, G-d instructed the Jews to donate materials. This first command reflects the concept of charity.

Rashi notes that the Torah uses the words 'take for Me' and explains 'for the sake of My (G-d's) name'.

R' Sholom of Komarna observes that those charged with collecting funds should be careful not to forget the purpose of their role is to collect funds. They should not use their position to lord over others.

Each of us have roles that we fulfill. In private we are parents, children and siblings. In synagogue we are shule members, lay leaders or Rabbis. At our work, we are employees and employers. And each role needs to fit in with the overall 'organisational' goals of the family, the community and where we work.

Communal workers are in place for the betterment of the community not to boost their own egos or to enrich themselves at the expense of the community. Yet too often, community workers forget why they are employed and make it all about themselves and how good they look or how smart they are.

Is the leader who views the function of the community as supporting them, doing the right thing?

The Torah reminds us, “take for Me” – remember why the donations are being collected. Not to make Moshe look good, but for the sake of Hashem.

YAAKOV'S TREES, MIRIAM'S TAMBOURINES AND SUPER BOWL DREAMS

RABBI JARED VIDERS (Aish.com)

You can glean a lot about a person from what they bring along with them. One person always has a pen. Another inevitably has a handkerchief. A third is perpetually in possession of stamps. My parents once hosted Shabbos guests who insisted on bringing their own noise machine(s) and their own coffee.

There's always that traveler who insists on packing for all possible weather patterns – from arctic to tropic to everything in-between. Another voyager won't leave home until his luggage resembles a pharmacy – packed to the gills with remedies, sprays, lotions and paraphernalia of all sorts. I recall one trip to North Carolina where each daughter insisted on bringing along their own doll (and carrying case) as a carry-on (guess who had the privilege of schlepping those dolls through the airport).

With that in mind, you can appreciate how I attended the home games of my (then) beloved New York Jets way back in 1982. That I donned their green-and-white jersey was obvious – just about everyone in the ballpark did so as well. I, however, opted to be extra-stringent and even chose to wear my own Jets helmet to the game. What was I thinking?

The answer lies in a dream. I used to dream that one-by-one the Jets were left without wide receivers. Wesley Walker went down. Johnny “Lam” Jones pulled a hamstring. Even the second and third-stringers got banged-up, thereby setting the stage for my dream come true. A squawky voice came over the stadium's loudspeakers announcing: “If anyone is interested or available to substitute in as a wide receiver for the Jets in tonight's game, please report to the 50-yard line. And you must have your own helmet. I repeat: you must have your own helmet.” I sauntered down to the 50-yard line, was picked for the squad, scored the winning touchdown, became a sports legend ... and then woke-up in time to catch the bus to Mrs. Gelberg's third grade home room.

“This is the portion you shall take from them: gold, and silver, and copper ... and shittim wood” (25:5)

Rashi: “From where did they have wood in the desert? R. Tanchuma explained: Our forefather Yaakov foresaw through Divine inspiration that Israel was destined to build a Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the wilderness. He brought shittim trees to Egypt and planted them there, and he commanded his sons to take them with them when they would depart from Egypt.”

Rashi: “What is meant by the beams? From those which have been standing as designated for this purpose. Our father Yaakov planted shittim trees in Egypt, and when he was dying, he commanded his sons to take them up with them when they would depart from Egypt. He told them that Hashem would command them in the future to make a Mishkan of shittim wood in the desert. So he said, “See to it that you should have them ready at hand.” (26:15).

“Miriam the prophetess ... took the tambourine in her hand and all the women went forth after her with tambourines ...” (15:20)

Rashi: “The righteous women of the generation were certain that Hashem would perform miracles for them so they took tambourines out of Egypt.”

For 200-plus years, the Jewish People suffered personal and national persecution, prosecution, inhumane servitude and genocide under the regime of Pharaoh. For a Jew entrenched in such a protracted nightmare, what emotional response would be associated with viewing those trees? How about resentment? The bitter recollection of unfulfilled dreams? The painful reminder of their ancestors' overly-optimistic wishful-thinking? A cruel joke?

In a similar vein, of what use were the tambourines when the Jews were (apparently) dying from thirst (before Hashem miraculously quenched that thirst at Marah)? What kind of cruel, ill-fitting prop were those instruments when Pharaoh's infantry was barreling down on the helpless, defense-less Jews (before Hashem miraculously split the sea)?

In different contexts, Yaakov's shittim trees and Miriam's tambourines echoed similar notes – notes of hopefulness and optimism in an abyss completely devoid of hope and optimism. Reminders that a future existed regardless of how bleak the present seemed to be. Visual aids that would enable us “ordinary” Jews (as if there is such a thing) to tap into the wellspring of faith ever-present in our great leaders.

All too often dreams are abandoned in the “Get Real” labyrinth or forsaken somewhere along the path of “practicality.” Rabbi Noah Weinberg, zt'l use

to teach: “When people say, ‘You'll grow up,’ what they really mean is, ‘You'll give up, like I did.’” Fitting that upon his death, one of Rav Weinberg's students eulogized how: “[Rav Noach] dared to dream a dream that no one believed possible. A man of vision is not afraid to stand alone. For such a long time he was alone. Few encouraged him.”

In our life's voyage we choose what to pack and what to discard (albeit some emotional baggage is harder to leave go than others). Hold tight to your dreams. For things often can shift during the flight of life – but an unquenchable hopefulness and optimism can always remain close at hand. Such is the legacy of Yaakov and Miriam. Such is the song of the trees and the tambourines.

THE KITCHEN OR THE LIBRARY?

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

A huge fireplace dominated the room, in which a fire blazed round the clock. To its right were the food preparation areas. A massive oaken table, seating fourteen, indicated that the food in this home would be eaten right here, within sight of where the staff of butchers and chefs had prepared it for consumption. It was also obvious that this was the epicenter of the building, while the other rooms (sleeping alcoves, storage rooms and guest reception areas) filled secondary roles to the structure's central space.

“My design for A New Home for the New Millennium may seem revolutionary,” explained the architect, “but only because we have drifted away in recent centuries from the home's initial, primal function. The kitchen moved from the core of the house to its periphery. It shrunk in size, sometimes to miniscule proportions, or it became little more than a showcase for expensive gadgetry. The dining table devolved into an undersized 'kitchen table' and thence to a small countertop at which one perches to 'grab a bite.' My design represents the endeavor to recapture the original purpose of the home: to shelter and nourish its inhabitants...”

A smattering of applause. Then the second architect unveiled his design.

At first glance, the second architect's model was similar in form and dimensions to the first. But closer examination revealed it to be a fundamentally different structure. The kitchen and other service areas were out in the courtyard. The building's core was an intimate room, furnished with bookshelves bearing a collection of ancient and modern volumes. It was a space for people to pursue intellectual study, listen to heart-stirring music, and engage in soul-enriching dialogue.

As you can see,” the second architect began, “I have taken the very opposite approach of my esteemed colleague. Yes, the home should cater to our visceral needs; but is that all it is? Is that all we are—bodies that eat? To me, the primary function of a home is to house and facilitate our spiritual self—the self that thinks and feels, the self that gains and imparts knowledge and wisdom, the self that thrives on receiving and sharing joy...”

“G-d desired a home in this world.” (Midrash Tanchuma, Naso 16)

Indeed, say the Chassidic masters, this is the purpose for which G-d created all the worlds supernal and lowly, and the purpose of everything we do in and with our lives.

Following the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, G-d instructed that a “model home” be built — a structure that will embody, on a highly condensed and intensified scale, His vision of a dwelling for Himself in the physical world. Thus the portable Mishkan (“Tabernacle”) was built in the desert to accompany the Children of Israel in their journeys, later achieving a more permanent form in the Beit Hamikdash (“Holy Temple”) in Jerusalem.

The design and construction of the Tabernacle are described, in great detail, beginning in Shmot 25. The Sanctuary itself consisted of two chambers. An outer chamber, the “Holy,” housed the menorah (seven branched candelabra), the “table” on which the 12 showbread were displayed, and a small altar for burning incense. The inner “Holy of Holies” contained the ark which held the Torah. The “courtyard” enclosing the Sanctuary contained the large Outer Altar on which the korbanot (animal and meal offerings) were offered.

Which of these “vessels” most represented the significance of the divine dwelling? In which of these various functions did the primary objective and raison d'être of the edifice lie? Two of the great commentators and interpreters of Torah offer two contrasting perspectives on this question.

According to Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Holy Temple 1:1), the Holy Temple is most basically defined as “a house for G-d that is prepared for the offering of korbanot.”

According to Ramban (25:1), “The main object... is realized in the ark, as G-d says to Moshe, ‘I will commune with you there, speaking to you from above

the ark's cover..."

According to the Talmud (Eruvin 13b), when we are confronted with differing opinions amongst Torah sages we should appreciate that "these and these are both the words of the living G-d."

What is our purpose in this world—to serve G-d with our bodies, or to serve G-d with our souls? Which is the greater mitzvah—to eat kosher or to study Torah? Who is closer to G-d—the honest businessman or the ascetic sage? Which is the holiest part of ourselves—our physical being or our transcendent strivings?

In the home we make for G-d out of our lives, where does G-d live—in the kitchen or in the library?

These and these are both the words of the living G-d.

WHEN WE DID NOT HAVE THE KOSEL, WE STILL HAD #12 IBN SHAPRUT

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Torah.org)

In the beginning of Parshas Teruma, the pasuk says, "And you shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst." (Shemos 25:8). Rashi comments: "And you shall make for My Name a House of Holiness." That is the essence of the Beis HaMikdash—a House of Holiness!

Two years ago, Reb Yossi Goldstein sent me an e-mail relating the following incident:

Rav Yosef Buxbaum, who was the founder of Machon Yerushalayim (an institution in Yerushalayim which puts out wonderful seforim), was once walking in Yerushalayim, when he passed the house of the Tchebiner Rav. The Tchebiner Rav was Hagaon HaRav Dov Berish Weidenfeld (1881-1965). The terminology 'world class scholar' and 'great personality' are not sufficient to describe who he was.

Going back to my youth (circa 1960), before my Bar Mitzvah, my shul Rabbi, Rav Sholom Rivkin, z"l, told me that "the Tchebiner Rav is the Gadol HaDor!" (literally 'greatest person in the generation'). That was a time when Rav Aharon Kotler was alive, Rav Moshe Feinstein was alive, Rav Eliezer Silver was alive, Rav Henkin was alive. Nevertheless, Rabbi Rivkin told me that the Tchebiner Rav was the Gadol HaDor! Now, at that time I did not know what the term "Gadol HaDor" meant! But it always remained in my mind that the Tchebiner Rav was the Gadol HaDor. He was a Rosh Yeshiva. He was a Posek. He was a Tzadik. I can go on and on describing who the Tchebiner Rav was.

Rav Buxbaum was once walking past the Tchebiner Rav's house, which was at Rechov Ibn Shaprut #12 in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood of Yerushalayim. He saw that Rav Aryeh Levin (1885-1969), the Tzadik of Yerushalayim, was standing and crying in front of the Tchebiner Rav's house. Rav Yosef Buxbaum walked over to Rav Aryeh Levin and asked why he was crying. "Are you in pain? Why are you are standing in front of the Tchebiner Rav's house, crying?"

Rav Aryeh told him that one of his children was sick. "If I could go to the Kosel Ma'aravi (Western Wall), I would go. (This was pre-1967, when the Jews did not have access to the Old City of Yerushalayim or the Kosel Ma'aravi) Since I cannot get to the Kosel, I need to pray in another makom kadosh (holy place). The Tchebiner Rav's house is that makom kadosh."

This is what Rashi means here "You shall make for me a Sanctuary" – a House of Holiness! If someone thinks of all the Torah that was learned in the house of the Tchebiner Rav and the chessed that was done there and the tzidkus that was practiced there – the Tchebiner Rav's house was a makom kadosh. If the Kosel Ma'aravi was not available, a person could at least go to this makom kadosh to pray.

Rav Buxbaum was so impressed with what Rav Aryeh Levin told him that he went and related the conversation to the great sage Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, who also lived in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood. Rav Shlomo Zalman reacted without astonishment "Certainly that is appropriate. I, too, whenever I pass by that holy dwelling place, lift my eyes heavenward in prayer." Rav Shlomo Zalman also used the opportunity of being in the proximity of such a makom kadosh to petition the Almighty in prayer. Which person does not say a Tefilla when he goes to the Kosel. Religiously sensitive individuals considered the holy home of the Tchebiner Rav a similarly holy place.

This gives us practical insight into Rashi's comment "And you shall make Me a Sanctuary" – a House of Holiness.

HOLY INSIDE AND OUT

RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS (Aish.com)

This week's Parsha is the dream of every Jewish architect and interior designer. It describes the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Temple

that traveled with the Jewish People during their 40 years in the desert (and for 500 years after), until finding its permanent home in Jerusalem.

At the center of the Mishkan was the Holy Ark which contained the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. This Ark was a square box made of wood. The Torah explains (25:11): "You shall cover the wood with pure gold from the inside and from the outside."

The need to cover the outside of the Ark with gold is understandable: The centerpiece of the Mishkan should certainly be majestic and regal. But what need is there to cover the wood on the inside of the box as well?

The Talmud (Yoma 72b) explains: A person's outward appearance must be an accurate reflection of their insides as well. In other words, don't be a hypocrite.

We all know someone who is a fake - quick with a smile, yet ready to stab you in the back just the same. Sadly, part of getting by in life is the ability to discern the genuine from the fake. (Children happen to be particularly adept at this.) Maybe that's what King Solomon meant when he said, "Better the anger of a friend than the kiss of an enemy." At least you know what you're getting.

One of the wonders of Judaism is how the Hebrew language reveals truths about everyday life. The Hebrew word for face - "paneem," is nearly identical to the Hebrew word for interior - "pineem." This teaches that the face we present must reflect our insides. (Contrast this with the English word "face," which shares its origins with "facade," meaning a deceptive appearance.)

This aversion to hypocrisy is reflected in the laws of kashrut as well. The one Jewish law that everyone in the world seems to know is that a Jew is not allowed to eat ham, pork or anything else derived from a pig. Interestingly, there is nothing in the Torah that seems to make this prohibition more stringent than eating, for example, catfish or a chocolate-covered ant. Why then have we singled out this prohibition against the pig?

The Torah tells us (and zoologists concur) that the pig is the only animal in the world possessing the outward symbol of kosher (split hooves), but not the inward symbol (chewing cud). The pig therefore represents that which is kosher in outward appearance, but is in fact unclean on the inside. This type of hypocrisy is described the Talmud as one of the categories of behavior that G-d detests. For that moral reason, the pig is universally viewed as reprehensible to the Jew.

Back to our Parsha... We're left with one glaring question: If the Ark is covered with gold both on the inside and the outside, then what need is there at all for the shell to be made out of wood?! Why not simply make the ark one solid piece of gold?

The answer is that attaining purity and sincerity does not necessarily happen overnight. Like any important goal, it is achieved through constant, steady growth. Wood - organic and dynamic - represents this idea.

Judaism is not all-or-nothing. Observance of Torah might begin with the lighting of Shabbos candles. Or it might mean studying the weekly Parsha, 15 minutes a day. (ArtScroll's Stone Chumash is particularly good for this.) Or it might mean reciting Shema Yisrael before going to bed.

Imagine stumbling across a gold mine. Would you turn down the gold because you know you won't find all the gold mines in the world? So too, every Mitzvah is a gold mine. Of course, we strive ultimately to fulfill them all. But even if we do just one, our lives are enriched forever.

The important thing is not where we are on the ladder, but rather in what direction we're headed, and how many rungs we've climbed. One tree does not compare its rings against another. Growth through Torah is the same way. Whatever effort you make to come close to the Almighty, whatever Torah you learn - the impact is cumulative. Perhaps that's why the Torah likens a person to a tree (see Deut. 20:19). Steady and constant, every drop counts.

The Talmud (Brachos 28a) says that in the Yeshiva of Rabban Gamliel, the prerequisite for admission was that a student's internal character had to match his outer appearance. Rabban Gamliel did not accept just anybody into the Yeshiva; he accepted only those who were honest, sincere and free of hypocrisy.

The Talmud continues: After Rabban Gamliel left his position as head of the Yeshiva, they instituted a new policy whereby any student - fitting or not - could be admitted. Hundreds of new students flocked to sign up. At which point, Rabban Gamliel became depressed and said, "Perhaps, G-d forbid, I have withheld Torah from the Jewish People!"

The Chiddushei HaRim (19th century Europe) asks: What was Rabban Gamliel saying? Of course he knew all along that his strict admission policy

prevented some people from learning! So why is he so surprised now and getting depressed?

The answer is that Rabban Gamliel saw that because all those new students spent time in the Yeshiva, they too became honest and sincere by virtue of having learned Torah. Torah has the power to transform a person from mediocre to great.

Some years ago, I was speaking privately with a great Torah scholar and I said to him: "Rabbi, I am so grateful for the opportunity I've had to learn Torah. Without it, I don't know where I'd be."

The rabbi looked at me and said, "Me, too."

At the beginning of this week's parsha, G-d commands the Jewish People to "make Me a Mishkan, so that I may dwell within them" (Shmot 25:8). The Talmud points out that the verse should have read, "Make Me a Mishkan, so that I may dwell within it." Why then the language of "dwell within them"?

Because, answer our Sages, the Torah is telling us that the goal of building the Mishkan is not merely to create a House for G-d, but to sanctify a place for Him within the people. Each individual Jew must personally strive to become a microcosm of the Mishkan: a living, breathing bastion of holiness. Today, let us hope to find the strength and inspiration to build our very own Mishkan. And may its Ark be crafted of fine wood, laden with gold, both inside and out.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

RABBI PINCHAS AVRUCH (Torah.org)

The first fund-raising campaign in Jewish history was held in the midbar (wilderness), soon after the Torah was given to the Jewish nation, as the beginning of the effort to build the Mishkan (Tabernacle). From the donated precious metals, stones and textiles would come all of the structures, fixtures and utensils of the Mishkan, as well as the priestly garb. The first set of construction specifics were for the Holy Ark that would hold the two tablets of the Decalogue. While all of the fixtures had structures to facilitate their transportation through the midbar, the staves of the Ark were unique. "The staves shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they may not be removed from it." (Shemos 25:15). Why?

Ralbag explains that this mitzvah (Divine command) comes to teach the completeness of the Torah that was represented by the tablets within. That is, G-d commanded to leave the Ark whole, with the staves intact, to teach us that the Torah is complete. But how could the generation of that time, which had witnessed the miracles of the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea and the Revelation at Sinai, question that the Torah, which G-d Himself had just given them, was NOT perfect? Furthermore, if someone was lacking in this belief, how would seeing the staves in the Ark turn him around?

Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz elucidates that the teaching function of the staves in the Ark was not to impart that which was not yet appreciated. Rather, they were there to instill and concretize that which the Children of Israel KNEW with a complete belief, but that some might not have FELT in the depths of their hearts. Therefore, by leaving the staves in their rings on the Ark, the Jewish people would always see the Ark as a complete unit, reinforcing the same truth of its contents.

There are many matters of faith and truth that we know absolutely, certain that they are part of our essence. But in times of crisis and challenge, when the fortitude of our trust in G-d is put to the test, how will we fare? The distance between the head and the heart can be a great one. Vigilance and visual cues will assure that the truths of Jewish faith contained in the Decalogue are etched onto the tablets of our souls, firmly embedded in the depths of our hearts.

DO NOT DESPAIR

RABB YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

You shall make a table of acacia wood... " (25:23)

They say that into every life, a little rain must fall. Sometimes, however, we might feel this "little rain" as a full-blown downpour, leaving us reeling and searching Terumah: The Jewish Spark for answers. But we should know that there is a little candle at the end of the tunnel, a light that can never go out. In Yiddish it's called the pintele Yid — the Jewish spark. And a spark that can never go out, never needs to be more than a spark. For the greatest blaze can be ignited with just one spark.

After the original creation of the world, Hashem creates nothing ex nihilo; rather, every new creation has to have a pre-existing conduit from which it can flow.

In Hebrew, the word beracha (blessing) always connotes "increase." A blessing always takes some pre-existing state and infuses it with expansion.

Hashem uses a pre-existing vessel and then injects blessing to swell and amplify what is already present.

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah describes the shulchan. The shulchan, which was an ornamental table, was the conduit through which material blessing flowed to the Jewish People.

And similarly, on our tables, when we say the blessings after a meal, Judaism teaches us to leave the bread on the table so that it should be a vessel to receive Hashem's blessings.

Another example of this is when the prophet Elisha helped a penniless woman. He asked her what she had in her home, and she replied that all she had was a small jug of oil. Elisha told her to borrow as many jugs and pots from her neighbors as she could. Then, she was to start pouring from this tiny jug of oil into the first container. Miraculously, that little jug kept on pouring oil until all the borrowed vessels were full.

And in our own spiritual lives, we should never despair, because there will always be that pintele Yid, that eternal spark that will re-kindle our hearts even when we feel to be running on mere fumes.

News, Views & Opinion

'JEW LIST' PUBLISHED BY AUSTRALIAN PRO-PALESTINIAN ACTIVISTS FORCES FAMILIES INTO HIDING

DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD (Jpost.com 9-2-24)

A collection of pro-Palestinian activists collected and published the names, photos, and social media accounts of 600 people from the creative industry whom they deem "Zionist," according to multiple media reports from Friday and a statement from the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies.

The spreadsheet listed numerous Australian Jews, many of whom were vocally critical of Israel, according to the Jewish Chronicle. In addition, many of the listed parties had never publicly supported Israel but had called for journalists who published antisemitic content to be reprimanded.

Some of the listed parties have received death threats, and at least one Jewish family was forced to go into hiding, according to an online statement by the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies.

The board also claimed that the list included photos of Jewish children, and a 5-year-old child had been the recipient of threats as a result.

"I have been vocally critical of Israel, was not added to the group and specially said I didn't want to be in that group, and my name is on the spreadsheet," a Jewish Australian journalist told the Sydney Morning Herald. "I am not a Zionist, I have never been a Zionist, I am just a Jewish woman trying to go about my life. This is a group of any Jew they know the name of. I can't believe it is happening."

"This is a group of "creatives" working to silence voices calling for Palestinian liberation. Knowing that I will likely see some of these people at industry events is sickening - but not quite as sickening as knowing how many more peers I'll run into who have maintained silence on Palestine AND the people trying to harm others because of it." said Australian writer Clementine Ford as she shared the now deleted-link on her Instagram in a post that received nearly 9000 likes. "If you want an insight into how coordinated efforts are to silence Palestinian activists and their allies, you can read the leaked chat here. As always, I'm proud to stand alongside those fighting for justice and an end to Israel's brutal oppression of Palestinians. You'll see many of them sharing this post today - i thank them for inviting me to do so too."

According to the Jewish Chronicle, artist Matt Chun wrote that "The purpose of this group chat was to plan co-ordinated attacks against Palestinians and their allies, while infiltrating a wide range of institutions and industries with pro-occupation and pro genocide propaganda..."

"We already know that Zionists are parasitic upon progressive spaces. It is under the guise of progressivism that Zionists launder their genocidal colonialism, while weaponising their influence to amplify occupation propaganda and steer cultural narratives away from Palestinian liberation.

"Every single person in this leaked chat is a Zionist, even if they sat by in silent complicity while others conspired."

CONDEMNING THE 'JEW LIST'

Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-chief executive Alex Ryvchin described the document as a "Jew list" designed to target those speaking out against antisemitism, according to the Jewish Chronicle.

Speaking to the Herald, Ryvchin said, "These people have painstakingly collected the names, faces, professions, and other personal information of a group of Australians whose sole common trait is that they are Jews.

“They are telling those who chant ‘Where’s the Jews?’ exactly who and where the Jews are.

“It is a ‘Jew list’ drawn up and published in a menacing manner intended to inflict maximum emotional damage and professional loss.”

Victoria police are investigating the incident.

WHY ARE BRITAIN'S POLICE ASKING THE PUBLIC FOR ANTI-ISRAEL WAR CRIME ACCUSATIONS?

NEVILLE TELLER (Jpost.com 10-2-24)

On January 4, the lead story in the UK’s Daily Telegraph featured Scotland Yard’s investigation into alleged war crimes by Israel, and more specifically the condemnation of the police operation by former prime minister Boris Johnson.

The hundreds of thousands of people flying into the UK every day are currently being faced with posters written variously in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, addressed to “Travellers who have been in Israel/Palestinian Territories.” Produced by the Metropolitan Police’s Counter-Terrorism Command, they continue: “If you have been in Israel/Palestinian Territories and have witnessed or been a victim of terrorism, war crimes or crimes against humanity, then you can report this to the UK police.”

After suggesting various ways in which would-be informants can contact the police, including approaching a police officer at the airport, the poster concludes: “UK policing is supporting the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is investigating alleged war crimes in Israel and Palestine from June 2014 onwards. Any evidence gathered may be shared with the ICC in support of their investigation.”

In short, Britain’s Metropolitan Police force is actively soliciting accusations of Israeli war crimes. And, of course, that is precisely what they are likely to receive – reams of unproven testimony obviously emanating in the main from individuals or organizations with an anti-Israel or antisemitic agenda.

Why are Britain's police trying to find anti-Israel war crime accusations?

The Metropolitan Police, known as the Met, is Britain’s largest police force. It is responsible for policing the whole of London, excluding the ancient once-walled central financial and business center known as the City of London, which is self-policing. With its remit covering the UK’s capital, the Met has significant responsibilities, such as protecting 164 foreign embassies and high commissions; policing the Heathrow and London City airports; protecting the Palace of Westminster; and providing security for the royal family and foreign dignitaries.

Counter-terrorism policing within the Met, which is based in New Scotland Yard, is carried out by a unit led by a senior officer with the rank of commander. Its main remit is clearly to frustrate attempted terrorist activity within the UK. However, the unit told the Daily Telegraph that the British police force had a “responsibility to support” the ICC, and that with “higher volumes” of British nationals returning to the UK since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, it anticipated a greater number of potential witnesses and victims of war crimes arriving from the region. Hence its poster campaign.

That appears to be a highly disingenuous statement, implying that most of the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity would emanate from British nationals. However, the posters, in three languages, are addressed to everyone entering the UK. Antisemitism is known to be alarmingly on the increase. This campaign by the Met is an open invitation to all and sundry – and especially individuals and organizations dedicated to delegitimizing Israel – to flood the police with antisemitic and anti-Israel bile.

The Met seems to presume that those making allegations of “terrorism, war crimes, or crimes against humanity” know what those crimes entail. In fact, each is very carefully defined in a range of internationally accepted judicial documents. For example, Britain’s Terrorism Act 2000 defines terrorism, both within and outside the UK, as the use or threat of a number of actions designed to influence the government or intimidate the public, and aimed at advancing a political, religious, racial, or ideological cause.

War crimes are extensively and precisely defined in Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the ICC. Essentially, they must amount to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

Crimes against humanity – such as murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and a whole host of other crimes – are set out meticulously in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC. They must be committed knowingly as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.

Is the police’s Counter-Terrorism Command prepared to separate the wheat from the chaff in the material it receives? Will it discard material that is

obviously specious, spurious, or malign? Even more importantly, perhaps, is it prepared to recognize what it is not receiving? How widespread, for example, is the knowledge that hostage-taking is a war crime, and that those guilty of it can be prosecuted in virtually every country in the world?

The UN Human Rights Council has set up a commission to investigate “possible international crimes and violations of international human rights law in Israel and the Palestinian territories since October 7, 2023.” On October 10, the commission included the following in a media release: “The taking of hostages is a violation of international law and constitutes an international crime.”

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a unique role in the system of international humanitarian law, and its special role is now formally recognized by the states party to the Geneva Conventions – that is, practically the whole world. According to the ICRC, the prohibition on hostage-taking is now “firmly entrenched in customary international law and is considered a war crime.”

Boris Johnson, mentioning a recent report of police removing posters of Israeli hostages held by Hamas, described the Counter-Terrorism Command’s campaign as “a worrying politicization of the Met Police.” At the time, Scotland Yard had defended the two police officers seen tearing down the posters, claiming they had been acting to defuse local tensions.

Gideon Falter, the chief executive of the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, said: “At a time when protesters are marching in London every week wearing Hamas-style headbands, shouting genocidal chants, calling for jihad against the Jewish state, and inciting violent intifada with apparent impunity, the Met is concerned with acts of terrorism and allegations of war crimes halfway around the world... Britain’s cities have become no-go zones for Jews. Where are the Met’s posters addressing that unacceptable reality?”

A spokesman for the Met Police is reported as saying that the force had a duty to assist the ICC. “Under the terms of the 1998 Rome Statute, our war crimes team is obliged to support any investigations opened by the ICC that could involve British subjects” and said the posters were put up to meet that obligation. The ICC opened an investigation in 2019 into alleged war crimes in Israel and Palestine. It could be argued that supporting ICC investigations carries no obligation to indulge in a proactive campaign calculated to elicit a wave of anti-Israel and antisemitic sentiment.

As if to demonstrate its even-handedness, the Met spokesman added that the Counter-Terrorism Command “also continues to gather direct information and evidence relating to the terrorist attack in Israel on October 7, in support of the UK coronial investigations into British nationals who were killed during those attacks.”

As for identifying potential “terrorism offending” during the course of the weekly pro-Palestinian marches in London and other major cities, the Met spokesman said the force was “working round the clock” to identify such offenses and has set up a task force to investigate potential crimes committed online and during protests. The Telegraph reports that in total, about 150 cases are being investigated. About 30 are linked directly to alleged offenses committed during London protests. The problem is that it took sustained pressure from a variety of sources to waken the Met up to the need to take any action at all.

Despite its best endeavours, the Met’s attempts to justify mounting this campaign are unconvincing. There can be little justification for encouraging Israel’s enemies – individuals or organizations – to offer the police testimony alleging terrorism, war crimes, or crimes against humanity. It is legitimate to ask what sort of unbiased assessment is likely to be made of the material acquired by the British police, or will they simply send everything, lock, stock and barrel, to the ICC for them to sort? Will any attempt be made to verify the charges made? If a selection is to be made before material is dispatched to the ICC, who will undertake this? Another pertinent question is whether the Met intends to seek a response or explanation from Israeli sources for the wilder charges, or will it perhaps adjudge that its responsibility begins and ends with seeking allegations of criminality and passing them to the ICC?

This eager effort to gather testimony charging Israel with criminality sits uneasily with the police’s initial failure to arrest pro-Palestinian demonstrators clearly voicing antisemitic and genocidal slogans during the marches, held every Saturday starting on October 14. The claimed impartiality of the British police hangs in the balance.

MEDIA WORRIES ABOUT TERRORISTS WHO DIED IN ISRAELI HOSTAGE RESCUE

DANIEL GREENFIELD (JNS.org 13-2-24)

The media defies satire.

“Palestinians in Rafah Describe ‘Night Full of Horror’ During Israeli Hostage Rescue”—New York Times

“Dozens reported dead in Rafah strikes as Israel rescues two hostages”—Washington Post

“Israeli military says it’s rescued 2 hostages during Rafah raid; Palestinian officials say dozens of Palestinians killed”—CBS News

“Israel frees two hostages in Rafah under cover of air strikes, Gaza health officials say 67 killed”—Reuters

How bizarre is this coverage? Here’s what normal coverage of a hostage rescue looks like:

“How Israeli commandos blasted their way into Rafah apartment to rescue hostages”—The Telegraph

But the media has stopped pretending that its concerns are anything other than the lives of Hamas terrorists. Except that it refuses to actually say the words. Instead, in keeping with the same distorted framing we hear from the likes of AOC or Bernie Sanders, no distinction is made between Hamas and “Palestinians” or “Gazans.”

All of this has been passed along to the Biden administration. Here’s the CNN coverage of that:

“The Biden administration is deeply concerned about an Israeli operation that rescued two hostages out of Rafah but may have also resulted in some one hundred Palestinians being killed as part of that operation, according to a senior administration official.”

We’ve gone from dozens to 67 to a hundred. By next Wednesday, it’ll be a thousand.

“For now, United States officials are still gathering information on details of the rescue operation, including how exactly the operation unfolded and how many civilians may have been killed, that official said. But such a high rate of Palestinian deaths would be deeply worrisome, according to the official, and comes as U.S. President Joe Biden and US officials have been warning Israel about their preparation to make a ground incursion into Rafah.”

High rate of what? Hamas claims 97 dead. Who were those 97? How many of them were Hamas?

Don’t ask the media, which is not concerned with such questions or distinctions. All it does is repeat Hamas propaganda.

Two hostages were rescued from Hamas, but all the media cares about is protecting Hamas.

UNITED NATIONS WARNS ISRAELI ATTACK ON RAFAH COULD LEAD TO MORE HOSTAGES BEING RESCUED

THE BABYLON BEE (BabylonBee.com 13-2-24)

Officials with the United Nations are condemning the Israeli attack on Rafah to rescue two hostages, warning that such attacks could lead to even more hostages being rescued.

"These atrocious and inhumane rescue missions cannot be allowed to continue," said Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour. "With every flagrant incursion into Gaza to rescue hostages, Israel violates our human right to kidnap, rape, torture, and imprison Jews, who I might add are being treated very well by our noble Hamas freedom fighters."

Experts further warned that if Israel continues to rescue hostages, Gaza will lose all the leverage they need to release terrorists from prison.

President Biden also chimed in, expressing his concern about the attack on Rafah. "I know that sometimes when you... I... you know... well, anyway," he said. "Flurbriddle cornswallop. Not a joke. I'm serious!"

At publishing time, the Senate had also responded by voting to send another \$5 billion to Hamas. (Satire?)

BELIEVE IT OR NUTS: THE UN COUNTS JEWS VISITING THE TEMPLE MOUNT AS ‘SETTLER VIOLENCE’

DAVID ISRAEL (JewishPress.com 9-2-24)

Hakol Hayehudi reporter Elchanan Groner on Thursday presented a UN Excel sheet depicting Jewish visits to the Temple Mount as violent incidents. As can clearly be seen for this batch from 2019, the Incident Description is always, “Israeli settlers and other groups, accompanied by Israeli forces, entered and toured the yards of Al Aqsa Mosque compound.” The source is always “other” or UNRWA, and the region is described as “West Bank.”

Last week, Ynet’s Amit Segal quoted Dr. Michael Wolfowicz, a criminology

researcher at the Hebrew University’s Faculty of Law, who examined the UN reports of 5,656 incidents of settler violence against “Palestinians” between 2016 and 2022.

Dr. Wolfowicz discovered that 1,600 incidents occurred in Jerusalem, predominantly concerning Jews accessing the Temple Mount or confrontations between police and Muslims engaging in violent behavior in the vicinity.

2,500 incidents encompassing property damage or assault, including instances such as a terrorist attack where a PA Arab assailant targeted Jews and was subsequently subdued.

Meanwhile, according to the IDF, between 2019 and 2022, there were 25,257 instances of PA Arab assaults on Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria (without Jerusalem), with more than 20,000 incidents of stone-throwing, about 4,000 Molotov cocktails, about 400 shooting attacks, and more than 50 stabbing attacks. And the annual figure rose much higher in 2023. However, according to the UN reports on the same period, there were only 1,935 Arab-on-Jew assaults in Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem.

It turns out that many of these Arab-on-Jew attacks were recorded by the UN as... “settler violence.”

On April 8, 2018, Muhammad Abed el-Karim tried to stab Israeli citizens at a gas station in the Ma’ale Adumim industrial area. An Israeli citizen with a firearms permit neutralized the threat with his weapon. The attacker then died of his wounds on April 9, 2018. It turns out this incident is recorded in UN data as an act of settler violence. Moreover, two separate incidents of “settler violence” were recorded on April 8 and 9 for the same incident, one for the shooting of the stabbing assailant, and one for his subsequent death.

The IDF demolished the home of Muhammad Dar Yusuf in the village of Kauber near Ramallah on August 28, 2018. Dar Yusuf murdered Yotam Ovadia Hy’d in the settlement of Adam on July 26, 2018. The UN recorded the elimination of Dar Yusuf as ‘settler violence.’ / Flash90

A July 26, 2018 incident is described in the UN annals as “a 31-year-old settler (Yotam Ovadia Hy’d) was killed and two settlers (41 and 58 years old) were wounded when they were stabbed by a 17-year-old Palestinian man in the settlement of Adam near the village of Jaba. The murderer was identified as Muhammad Dar Yusuf from the village of Kauber; he was shot to death A settler shot a settler in the settlement with live ammunition. The body of the slain Palestinian was detained by the Israeli authorities (Jerusalem).”

On March 1, 2017, an Arab broke into the Mor farm in South Hebron Mountain and stabbed the Jewish homeowner with his family watching. The Jewish man managed to kill the assailant and – you guessed it, another recorded case of “settler violence.”

Instances of Arab rioters who attack Jews praying in Joseph’s tomb or visiting archaeological sites in Judea and Samaria were also recorded by the UN as “settler violence.” Essentially, whenever IDF forces eliminate a terrorist near a Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria, this is recorded as “settler violence.”

It can be cautiously estimated that only about 35% of the reported incidents actually describe events in which there are settlers and violence, and they too have not been examined, and include questionable descriptions such as car accidents (a settler ran over a PA Arab child), or Arabs who “ran away from settlers” and fell and hurt themselves while running.

Naturally, no one in the Biden White House wants to be confused by the facts, and no amount of well-documented proof that “settler violence” is the early 21st century’s version of medieval blood libels against Jews will move the needle.

Having appointed a special Holocaust Czar, the Biden folks are much nicer to dead Jews than to Jews who fight to stay alive.

DIRECTLY BENEATH UNRWA’S GAZA HEADQUARTERS, IDF UNCOVERS TOP SECRET HAMAS DATA CENTER

EMANUEL FABIAN (TimesofIsrael.com 10-2-24)

Beneath the Gaza Strip headquarters of the controversial United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, known commonly as UNRWA, the Hamas terror group hid one of its most significant assets, the Israeli military has revealed.

The subterranean data center — complete with an electrical room, industrial battery power banks and living quarters for Hamas terrorists operating the computer servers — was built precisely under the location where Israel would not consider looking initially, let alone target in an airstrike.

The revelation of the server farm comes amid other accusations of UNRWA

collusion with the Gaza-ruling terror group and the entanglement of the UN body that provides welfare and humanitarian services for Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars and their descendants.

Israel last month accused 12 staff with the UN Palestinian refugee agency of taking part in the October 7 massacre by Hamas-led terrorists, who killed 1,200 people and took 253 hostages in the murderous rampage.

Since the allegations became public late last month, UNRWA has seen many of its top donor countries announce funding freezes, leading to concerns that the agency could stop operating in Gaza and elsewhere in the Middle East within weeks.

But the IDF's recent discovery of the Hamas data center while UNRWA is under increased scrutiny appears to be merely a coincidence.

UNRWA's Gaza headquarters is located in Gaza City's upscale Rimal neighborhood, an area that the IDF had previously operated in, dismantled the local Hamas battalion and withdrawn its troops from.

At the time of the initial ground offensive in Gaza City, the military had not found or known much about the Hamas data center. But new intelligence, primarily emerging from the Shin Bet interrogations of captured terrorists, helped pinpoint where to dig.

"The IDF was here previously, the first time was to destroy the enemy, but when we were here the last time we collected a lot of intelligence documents and findings, a lot of prisoners, and thanks to this we reached here. Now we carried out a targeted operation to take this capability away," said the commander of the 401st Armored Brigade, Col. Benny Aharon, while giving a media tour of the tunnel and UN complex on Thursday.

"We had a basis of information, but not enough to be able to dig down 20 meters and find it, we needed a bit more. There's information we get from prisoners we capture, from computers we find, from documents, maps," he said.

The IDF in recent weeks has returned to carry out smaller operations in the northern Gaza Strip, after largely destroying Hamas's fighting capabilities during the early stages of the ground offensive.

Col. Nissim Hazan, a senior officer in the 401st Brigade, said the IDF can now carry out raids with much smaller numbers of forces, for operations "that require much more research and much more time, and a lot more patience." There is still a risk to these raids, with Aharon noting that two soldiers under his command had been killed during their operation to reach the Hamas data center — Maj. (res.) Yitzhar Hofman, a commander in the Israeli Air Force's elite Shaldag unit and Maj. David Shakuri, the deputy commander of the Combat Engineering Corps' 601st Battalion — both by sniper fire.

Hazan, who is tasked with coordinating the brigade's underground operations, said the main entrance to the tunnel was located under a UNRWA school in the area. However, it had been blocked off by Hamas by the time troops arrived. Instead, combat engineers dug down around eight meters to find the shallowest part of the underground passage.

Journalists, accompanied by troops of the elite Yahalom combat engineering unit, the Shaldag unit and Hazan, entered the tunnel passage that had been uncovered. Due to the humidity, with all of Hamas's air filtration systems disabled, we were advised to remove our bulletproof vests before embarking on the journey to the data center.

The first stretch of the 700-meter-long tunnel, a few dozen meters with Hamas's hallmark concrete arches and a floor of sand, was relatively unremarkable, similar to hundreds of kilometers of underground passages the terror group has built across the Gaza Strip.

The passage had several other branching paths, but to keep the reporters on track and not get lost, soldiers had placed neon glowsticks on the floors. The route we followed led to a small hole, which after climbing through, revealed a large hallway with flooring, wall tiles, air conditioning and lighting fixtures.

The hallway was plastered with posters bearing the logo of Hamas's military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, some with operational security instructions for the terrorists managing the data center.

In this part of the tunnel, according to Hazan, Hamas IT and intelligence staff would supervise and manage the data center.

Along the hallway, there were several rooms, including a kitchenette, a meeting room with office chairs, two bathrooms and living quarters with several mattresses.

Also in the hallway, troops found several small mobility scooters, thought to have been used by Hamas to traverse through the tunnel's facilities with ease.

"Above us is a UNRWA kids' school," Hazan said, as we explored the rooms

in the main hallway. "This is years of work, with a lot of determination and resources."

From the main hallway, a 300-meter passage led to the data center and nearby electrical room.

"We are now crossing a main road in Rimal, below several high-rise towers," Hazan said.

Parts of the tunnel, due to the combat engineers' operations, did not have the usual concrete ceiling, exposing the fragile sand.

"Keep your head down and don't touch the ceiling," a Shaldag officer told us, as we crawled through the section, making sure not to cause the tunnel to collapse on our heads.

Also as a result of the combat engineers digging to reach the tunnel, rainwater had flooded in, causing knee-deep puddles in some areas, which we waded through to reach the data center.

After the flooded sections of the tunnel, a slippery incline led to the first main facility in the tunnel, the electrical room.

The room, with several electrical closets, power inverters and dozens of off-grid industrial batteries, was now covered in a thick layer of mud.

Part of the room's dropped ceiling was falling apart, where the combat engineers had dug down 20 meters from the courtyard of the UNRWA complex, adjacent to one of the main buildings.

A few more dozen meters of tunnel from the electrical room led to the heart of the facility, Hamas's data center.

There were about half a dozen rows of server cabinets, each with racks of computers for Hamas's operations.

"We are now at the heart of the secret... under the main UNRWA building. Here is where Hamas kept its intelligence servers," Hazan said. He said that "to destroy it, totally, so that Hamas cannot use this intelligence supremacy again, you need boots on the ground."

IDF officials believe Hamas used the server farm for intelligence gathering, data processing and communications. Hard drives and some of the computers were taken to Israel to be investigated by intelligence authorities before the tunnel system was demolished in a large explosion.

Hazan said the IDF knows of several more "strategic" Hamas tunnels in Gaza, that they will reach in time.

"We have time, months ahead of us in the war, and one by one we will dismantle them and take away what the enemy is trying to hide, and it hides it in a very sophisticated and cynical way," he said.

UNRWA'S GAZA HEADQUARTERS

After leaving the tunnel back through the way we entered, we boarded an armored personnel carrier to take us to the UNRWA headquarters, as walking there aboveground was too exposed to potential Hamas snipers.

The headquarters appeared to be largely intact, unlike many of the surrounding buildings that had been pummelled by Israeli strikes.

Passing through the main gate, reading UNRWA HQ GAZA, and a nearby building with similar text in English and Arabic and bearing the UN logo, we reached the courtyard from which the combat engineers dug down into the electrical room.

At the UNRWA headquarters, Aharon said his forces found several caches of weapons belonging to Hamas when they raided and battled Hamas gunmen for the complex, although it was after the UN staff had evacuated.

"Grenades, rockets, launchers, explosives, a large amount of weapons that would put any Hamas company to shame," he said.

The IDF also said that in some of the offices of UNRWA officials, troops found equipment and documents that indicated "that the same offices were also used by Hamas terrorists."

"There is no doubt that UNRWA staff knew that [Hamas] was digging a massive tunnel beneath them," Aharon said. "There's a perimeter wall, a gate, cameras, at the gate they log who comes in and out. Whoever worked at UNRWA knew very well who was coming in, and who they were covering for."

"UNRWA provides cover for Hamas, UNRWA knows exactly what is happening underground, and UNRWA uses its budget to fund some of Hamas's military capabilities, this is for certain," he said.

At the main building in the UN complex, Aharon led the reporters to UNRWA's server room, which he said sits directly above the underground Hamas data center, where the reporters had been a short while earlier.

"Some of the cables connect down," he said, showing a line of cables running down to and into the floor, as we stood above the Hamas data center.

The IDF said the electrical cables leading from the UN building to the tunnel

were providing power to the Hamas infrastructure belowground.

The UNRWA server room, unlike the Hamas one, appeared to be mostly empty. One server cabinet was placed outside the room, but it had been stripped of all the computers.

“They cleared out all the computers, all the DVRs (digital video recorder for surveillance cameras), cut [most of] the cables, this is the behavior of someone who has something to hide,” Aharon said.

“Someone who works at UNRWA, who is supposed to care for human rights, to care for the welfare of the population in Gaza, shouldn’t rush to disconnect all the DVRs, the cameras, cut all the wires and take all the computers. These are the actions of someone who knew the army was coming and wanted to hide the evidence,” he said.

Hazan said that Hamas “didn’t randomly select this area. It knows that during peacetime and in previous wars [Israel] didn’t have the legitimacy to strike a UNRWA building and collapse it on the tunnel.”

In addition to the allegations of its collusion with Hamas, Israel has also long accused UNRWA of perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by extending refugee status to millions of descendants of Palestinians who fled or were forced out of homes in today’s Israel at the time of the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, rather than limiting such status only to the original refugees, as is the norm with most refugee populations worldwide.

“We were shocked to the depths of our souls, that an organization that is meant to be caring for human rights, is cooperating in such a clear and brutal way, without any fears, with a terror group like Hamas,” Aharon said. UNRWA did not immediately respond to requests for comment. In a tweet following the publication, the agency’s head Philippe Lazzarini denied any knowledge of the Hamas data center.

UNRWA’S ‘NOBEL PRIZE FOR GENOCIDE’

DAN DIKER (SAjr.co.za 8-2-24)

George Orwell, one of Britain’s greatest gifts to Western literature, warned his readers about the deceptive use of language, particularly in the realm of politics. Political language, Orwell wrote, “is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

So, it is with Norwegian Labour MP Asmund Aukrust’s recent nomination of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to receive a Nobel prize “for its long-term work in providing vital support to Palestine and the region as a whole”.

UNRWA’s nomination, like hundreds made annually to the Nobel committee, has no operative meaning. And the Nobel committee permanently stained its noble name in 1994, when it awarded the prize to arch terrorist, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairperson Yasser Arafat, a long time African National Congress (ANC) ally. But the message in the recent UNRWA nomination does matter. It’s another weapon in the deception-driven global disinformation war the Iranian regime and its terror proxies are waging primarily against Israel, the Jewish people, and the West. Psychological warfare is consequential in a world shaped by feelings over facts and in which iPhones and social networks sire instant alternative realities for billions of people.

The recent UNRWA nomination is yet another case of Orwellian “double speak”. It comes as the world bears witness to incontrovertible evidence of UNRWA employees’ direct role in the Hamas mass terror invasion, massacre, rape, and kidnapping of Israelis and other nationals on 7 October 2023.

UNRWA’s crimes were well documented. On 30 January 2024, UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer testified before the United States Congress, documenting UNRWA employees’ incitement of the murder of Jews and glorification of the Hamas 7/10 massacre.

Neuer said, “Just in November 2023, we sent a report to the UN on 20 teachers who celebrated the October massacre. In March, together with the organisation Impact-se, we identified 133 UNRWA teachers who promoted hate and violence on social media.” Neuer summarised his congressional testimony, observing that, “the core problem with UNRWA is that the very purpose of the agency is to perpetuate the war of 1948, and to send the message to Palestinians that the war of 1948 isn’t over”.

Neuer isn’t a lone voice. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken characterised as “highly credible” evidence provided by Israel proving UNRWA staffers participated in Hamas’s 7 October terror onslaught. Even UNRWA, albeit tacitly, admitted the culpability of its employees by terminating their employment pending a hearing.

UNRWA isn’t the only worthy nominee for the “Nobel Prize for Genocide”. The South African government is another leading candidate for its abominable and unforgivable referral of Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on charges of genocide. This “award winning” Orwellian perversion of justice reflects what Mary Kluk, the vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, characterised as “a pornographic and sycophantic romance between [South African] government ministers and Hamas”. It’s also become clear to many in Israel that the South African government and Hamas serve at the pleasure of the genocidal Iranian regime.

South Africa’s ICJ claim didn’t develop in a vacuum. Just months before the petition was submitted, the ANC teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. Almost magically, following South Africa’s minister of international relations, Dr Naledi Pandor’s, 23 October 2023 visit to Tehran, it was reported that the ANC ruling party’s finances had “stabilised”. Pandor’s visit was almost immediately followed by South Africa’s full-throated accusation of genocide against Israel. Soon after, the South African Parliament voted in favour of severing diplomatic ties. It was a perfectly timed political-warfare operation.

Deception, disinformation, and psychological warfare are tentacles of the Iranian “octopus” in its mission to sow global destruction. Though Iranian officials remain in the background and often unseen, their presence is constantly felt, pulling on the strings of state puppets and terror proxies. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Syria, the Houthis and even South Africa do Teheran’s bidding, while the mullahs rub their hands in satisfaction.

Alfred Nobel must be turning in his grave.

IS THE PATH TO A PALESTINIAN STATE "IRREVERSIBLE"?

ELLIOTT ABRAMS (Cfr.org 8-2-24)

On February 7, Secretary of State Blinken gave prepared remarks in Israel and called for “a concrete, time-bound and irreversible path” to a Palestinian state.

The danger to Israel implicit in these remarks is very great.

Even if one assumes that creating a Palestinian state is an important goal, what Blinken has done here is to destroy any preconditions. Blinken of course said that new state should live side by side with Israel in peace, but he did not make that a condition of its creation. When the United States proposed a pathway to Palestinian statehood twenty years ago in the Bush administration, it was via the “Roadmap.” Its formal name tells the story: “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

It seems “Performance-based” is now gone. If the path forward is “time-bound and irreversible,” there are by definition no conditions that would slow or preclude creating that state. Not Iranian influence, not Hamas control, not support for terrorism, not teaching hatred of Jews, not importing weapons, not building tunnels into Israel, not brutal repression of Palestinian voices that criticize those in power. Nothing.

Is this now truly the position of the United States? Have we learned nothing in the last twenty years, watching the Palestinian Authority degenerate into a corrupt and ineffective autocracy that Palestinians loathe, while Iranian support helped Hamas turn Gaza into a murderous headquarters for anti-Israel violence?

George W. Bush once spoke of the soft bigotry of low expectations, and that is part of what we see here. A “time bound and irreversible path” to Palestinian statehood demands nothing of Palestinians. They are not asked to confront hatred of Jews, not asked to end terrorism, not asked to create decent and effective governance. Instead of being asked to reform their institutions and confront the murderers in their midst, they are asked for nothing. And if that is what they are asked for, that is what they will deliver. This U.S. position would be understandable in many ways were it entirely cynical. That is, if the idea is that a commitment to a “time bound and irreversible path” is what the Saudis need to move forward toward normalization while we and they know creation of a Palestinian state will never happen or will take decades, that would be cynical but realistic. The deeper problem with the U.S. position today is that it appears to be idealistic: Blinken actually means what he says and does want a “time-bound and irreversible path” that will create a Palestinian state no matter how great a danger to Israel it presents. If so, he is promoting a policy that does Palestinians no favors and endangers Israelis. Let’s hope realists (or cynics) in the U.S. government, and Israelis of all political leanings, explain to Blinken why his demand is unacceptable.

MEMO TO THE 'EXPERTS': STOP COMPARING ISRAEL'S WAR IN GAZA TO ANYTHING. IT HAS NO PRECEDENT | OPINION

JOHN SPENCER (Newsweek.com 13-2-24)

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has inevitably drawn comparisons to other battles or wars, both modern and from the past. These comparisons are mostly used to make the case that Israel's operations in Gaza are the most destructive in history, or the deadliest in history.

Yet while the use of historical analogy may be tempting for armchair pundits, in the case of Israel's current war, the comparisons are often poorly cited, the data used inaccurate, and crucial context left out. Given the scale and context of an enemy purposely entrenched in densely populated urban areas, as well as the presence of tunnels, hostages, rockets, attackers that follow the laws of war while defenders purposely do not, and proximity between the frontlines and the home front, there is basically no historical comparison for this war.

Let's start with the context: After Hamas crossed into Israel on Oct. 7, murdering over 1,200 Israelis in brutal ways that included mutilation and sexual assaults as well as taking over 200 hostages back into Gaza, Israel formally declared a defensive war against Hamas in Gaza in accordance with international law and the United Nations charter. Since, the IDF estimates it has killed 10,000 Hamas operatives, while Hamas claims that the total number of casualties is 24,000 (Hamas does not distinguish civilian deaths from militant deaths).

The truth is that Israel has painstakingly followed the laws of armed conflict and implemented many steps to prevent civilian casualties, despite enormous challenges. Israel's military faced over 30,000 Hamas militants in over 400 miles of defensive and offensive tunnels embedded in and under civilian areas, populations and protected sites such as hospitals, mosques, schools, and United Nations facilities across multiple cities.

Hamas' strategy is to use Palestinian civilians as human shields, because their goal is not to defeat Israel's military or to hold terrain; it is far more sinister and medieval—to use the death and suffering of Palestinian civilians to rally international support to their cause and demand that Israel halt their war.

Meanwhile, Israel's war aims were more traditional: returning Israeli hostages, dismantling Hamas military capability, and securing their border to prevent another October 7 attack.

These goals required not one major urban battle but multiple. While Gaza is not the densest populated urban region on earth as many claim, it features over 20 densely-populated cities. And while the Israeli Defense Forces are engaged in fighting, Hamas has continued to launch over 12,000 rockets on nearly every day of the war from the combat area toward civilian-populated areas in Israel, literally over the heads of the attacking IDF, who it bears mentioning are fighting just a few miles from their homeland and the homes of their soldiers.

Put all of this together, this war is simply without precedent. Certainly, it cannot be compared to the host of other wars that have been used for comparison sake to paint Israel in an unflattering light.

Some have compared Israel to Russia, yet there is simply no comparison. In the 2022 Battle of Mariupol, estimates of the number of civilians killed range up to 25,000, including 600 civilians killed in a single bombing of a theater with the word "children" written in giant letters around it. This is the same Russia that killed over 50,000 civilians (5 percent) of a 1.1 million pre-war population of Chechnya in 20 months of combat in the late 1990s in multiple major urban battles such as Grozny.

Or take Syria. Over 300,000 civilians have been killed in the Syrian war; an average of 84 civilians were killed every day from 2013 to 2023.

Others have compared the battles in Gaza to World War II air campaigns like the UK bombing of the German city of Dresden in 1945 that killed an estimated 25,000 civilians. But here, too, memory is selective: These same people discount air campaign cases such as the U.S. firebombing of Tokyo the same year that killed over 300,000 civilians, to include 80,000 to 100,000 civilians in a single night, causing more death and destruction than Dresden, Hiroshima, or Nagasaki.

A battle that does bear a resemblance to Israel's war against Hamas is the 1945 Battle of Manila—the largest urban struggle of World War II, with more civilian casualties incurred than even the Battle of Stalingrad. The city had a population of 1.1 million residents as well as over 1,000 American prisoners of war being held in the city. It took the U.S. military 35,000 forces and a whole month to defeat 17,000 Japanese Navy defenders in and around the city.

Like in Gaza, the defenders used the city's sewer and tunnel systems for offensive and defensive purposes. And there were over 100,000 civilian deaths from the battle—one of the major factors of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which stipulated the laws of armed conflict to further protect civilians and prevent civilian deaths.

Most experts compare the Gaza war to the recent urban battles against ISIS involving United States forces, including the 2016-17 Battle of Mosul. In that battle, over 100,000 Iraqi Security Forces, backed by American advisors and U.S. and coalition air power, took nine months to clear a city of 3,000 to 5,000 lightly armed ISIS fighters. The battle resulted in over 10,000 civilian deaths, 138,000 houses destroyed or damaged and 58,000 damaged with 40,000 homes destroyed outright in just Western Mosul. Iraqi Security Forces suffered 10,000 casualties. There were very limited, shallow, house-to-house tunnels, but no tunnel networks, no hostages, no rockets.

In April of 2004, the U.S. military was directed to arrest the perpetrators of an attack that caused the death of four American civilians and deny insurgents sanctuary in the densely populated city of Fallujah, Iraq, a city of 300,000 residents. The battle that ensued was later dubbed the First Battle of Fallujah. Because of international condemnation and political instability fueled by international media over a perceived indiscriminate use of force and civilian casualties, the U.S. forces were ordered by the U.S. Central Command Commander to stop the battle six days into it.

Estimates of the total civilian deaths from the battle range from 220 to 600. Six months later, in November 2004, the U.S. military initiated the Second Battle of Fallujah. It took 13,000-15,000 U.S., UK, and Iraqi forces six weeks to clear the city of 3,000 insurgents. There were some 800 civilian deaths even though the city's residents had largely evacuated before the battle. Over sixty percent the city's buildings were damaged or destroyed. But there, too, the enemy defenders did not have access to tunnels.

Ultimately, comparisons with both past and modern cases highlight the fact that there is almost no way to defeat an entrenched enemy defender without destruction, even while implementing all feasible precautions and limits on the use of force required by the laws of war.

Let's put away our military history books. There is no comparison to what Israel has faced in Gaza—certainly none by which Israel comes out looking the worse.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT ICJ DEBACLE

LT. COL. (RES.) MAURICE HIRSCH (JNS.org 8-2-24)

In the theater of the absurd commonly known as the International Court of Justice, judges are again preparing to ignore history and facts. Having weaponized the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide against the Jewish state, the judges are now preparing to hear oral arguments on the next oxymoron: The “legal consequences” of the “Israeli occupation” of “Palestinian territory.”

The glaring problem with this is that there is no such entity as the “Palestinian territories.” The term is an invented one used to define areas allocated by the international community to the Jewish state, which were then illegally invaded by Egypt and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Any discussion anchored on this false terminology should immediately be ignored and scorned.

In December 2022, the United Nations General Assembly, prompted by the Palestinian Authority, adopted a resolution to request from the ICJ an advisory opinion on the following question:

“Considering the rules and principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council, and the advisory opinion of the Court of July 9, 2004:

“a) What are the legal consequences arising from the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, from its prolonged occupation, settlement, and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures?

“b) How do the policies and practices of Israel referred to in paragraph 18 (a) above affect the legal status of the occupation, and what are the legal consequences that arise for all States and the United Nations from this status?”

Following the request, the ICJ set a July 25, 2023 deadline for initial written statements to be submitted, with responses to be submitted by Oct. 25,

2023 and oral arguments to be made starting Feb. 19, 2024.

The underlying assumption of this debacle is that Israel is in some way "occupying" "Palestinian territory." But is that really the case?

In reality, never in history has an independent country called "Palestine" ever existed.

In reality, the area the UNGA claims and has asked the ICJ to consider as "Palestinian territory" was controlled for 400 years by the Ottoman Empire. In reality, after World War I, the international community repeatedly allocated the entire area from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, from Lebanon to the Red Sea, for the sole purpose of reconstituting the Jewish homeland.

In reality, the 1923 division of the geographical area called "Palestine" into two separate areas, one to be called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the other remaining Jewish Palestine, was the real "two-state solution."

In reality, in 1947, the United Nations offered the Arabs an opportunity to create another Arab country to the west of the Jordan River alongside Israel, but the Arabs refused. Instead, five Arab armies attacked the nascent Jewish state with the stated and express goal of throwing the Jews into the sea.

From 1948 to 1967, Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip and Jordan controlled Judea and Samaria, which it renamed "The West Bank." During that time, no U.N. resolution of the General Assembly or the Security Council demanded that Egypt and Jordan retreat and desist from occupying those areas. No such request was made of Jordan since Jordan saw Palestine as an integral part of Jordan.

In reality, even U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, from November 1967, does not mention, even once, the notion of occupied "Palestinian" territory.

In fact, the idea that a State of Palestine ever existed and that Israel is occupying "Palestinian territory" seems to prove the billboard advertisement that "Palestine" is the only country in the world that did not exist before it was "occupied."

Sadly, as the judges demonstrated with their shameful decision on the false claim of South Africa against Israel when it comes to the Jewish state, history, facts and the truth are just not relevant.

THE RED CROSS STILL HATES THE JEWS

ROBERT WILLIAMS (GateStoneInstitute.org 11-2-24)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate to "alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity," especially during armed conflicts. It has an annual budget of roughly \$2.7 billion to fulfill that mandate. Yet, when it comes to the Israelis kidnapped by Hamas during the terrorist organization's horrific invasion on October 7, the ICRC has literally done absolutely nothing.

Approximately 136 hostages remain in Gaza, but Israel has confirmed that at least 32 of those hostages are no longer alive.

Throughout the more than four months that have passed since thousands of Hamas terrorists invaded southern Israel on October 7 and raped, mutilated, tortured, burned and murdered their way through Israeli communities, kidnapping more than 240 hostages and dragging them into the terror tunnels of Gaza, and killing more than 1,200 mostly civilians, including babies and the elderly, the ICRC has refused to play any role in helping the hostages in any way, including basic ICRC obligations such as visiting them to check on their physical condition – many hostages were severely injured by the terrorists, when they were taken hostage – and bringing them medication.

The organization boasts:

"The ICRC's actions are aimed at protecting the lives, health and dignity of people affected by violence. In doing so, the ICRC takes a holistic, integrated approach in which three distinct areas of action – protection, assistance and prevention – are closely interlinked. Work done in any one of these areas informs, reinforces and complements actions taken in the others."

So far, the ICRC has done absolutely nothing to "protect" the lives of the hostages in Gaza, has not "assisted" them, or done anything to "prevent" the ongoing physical and psychological abuse of the hostages, including rape and torture. The ICRC has done nothing, even if such attempts at prevention had meant only the most basic task of obtaining access to the hostages and ensuring that any signs of abuse would be made public for the world to react to, or even just making public statements directed at Hamas to the effect that they must not harm the hostages. The ICRC has uttered no such thing.

The only time they have shown themselves on the scene was in operating what has been dubbed as the ICRC's "Uber" service: passing the little more than 100 freed hostages from Hamas vehicles into the ICRC's SUVs.

Shockingly, the ICRC has consistently refused to provide the hostages with life-saving medicine, and claimed that Hamas would not let them.

According to ICRC spokeswoman Elizabeth Shaw:

"Since October 7, the ICRC has continuously called for the release of all hostages and for their humane treatment. We have been meeting with Hamas at all levels and undertaking humanitarian diplomacy efforts to gain access to people being held, to be able to visit them, and bring the necessary items, like medicines."

Five families of Israeli hostages are suing the ICRC for its neglect. One of them, former Israeli hostage Raz Ben Ami, who suffers from several brain tumors, is suing the ICRC for its neglect: the organization has violated its own mandate by not visiting the hostages and guaranteeing their safety or taking action to assist in their release. Ben Ami's family pleaded with the ICRC to bring her the vital medications, but ICRC officials in Israel, Germany and the United States all rejected the family's requests. According to the lawsuit, the family's appeals were acknowledged with an email dismissing the issue with a message wishing the family luck with "reconnecting with their loved ones."

Attorney Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, who is representing the families, said:

"[The ICRC] does nothing, absolutely zero, for the Israeli hostages, and I want to remind you that young women and young men kept hostages by Hamas are probably being raped, being sexually abused or assaulted, being tortured. We know that because we hear the testimonies of the hostages that were released. And one of the jobs of [the] Red Cross is to prevent this from happening. They are supposed to make sure that their hostages are safe or not getting harmed.

"The Red Cross ignores and betrays its duties, a breach of its legal obligation, and therefore is being sued for compensation for the damages caused to the hostages, and being sued for orders that we asked the court to compel the Red Cross to fulfill its obligation to compel [it] to visit the centers to give them the medicine they need and to protect their well-being."

During a meeting with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem in December, the ICRC readily admitted that it had not even tried getting access to the hostages.

"You have every avenue, every right and every expectation to place public pressure on Hamas," Netanyahu told ICRC chief Mirjana Spoljaric Egger.

"It is not going to work because the more public pressure we seemingly would do, the more they will shut the door," Egger claimed.

"I'm not sure about that. Why don't you try?" Netanyahu asked.

Netanyahu told a special Knesset session attended by families of the hostages that the ICRC had refused his request to bring the medicine:

"I met with the Red Cross; I handed them a box of medicine for some of the hostages shown here. Some of them really need it... I told a representative to take this box to Rafah; she said 'no.' It was a difficult conversation."

Perhaps the ICRC is unwilling to try, because they are Hamas sympathizers. Families of hostages held in Gaza reported that ICRC officials, who had invited to a meeting the parents of one hostage, Doron Steinbrecher, who is in dire need of her daily medications, rebuked the parents instead of telling them that their daughter would finally receive the much-needed medication.

"Think about the Palestinian side," the representatives of the Red Cross told the parents. "It's hard for the Palestinians, they're being bombed."

"We left there as we entered: without new information, without something new, and with disappointment," said Simona, the hostage's mother, about the meeting.

In another case, the ICRC refused to bring Elma Avraham, an 84-year-old woman, who has since been released from Hamas captivity, her medication. She was in critical condition upon her release.

"We were in meetings with the Red Cross and asked them to make every effort to bring the medications to her, because some hostages are just dying. From a medical and nursing standpoint, what we witnessed is unlawful neglect," said Dr. Nadav Davidovitz, who treated Elma after her release.

Even now, after an agreement was brokered between Israel and Hamas by Qatar to deliver medication to the hostages in Gaza, via France to Qatar and then through Egypt, the ICRC refuses to touch the medicines and has said that it wants nothing to do with them. The ICRC wrote in a statement:

"The parties negotiated the agreement, including how much medicines would be delivered and by whom, with Qatar brokering the deal. The mechanism that was agreed to does not involve the ICRC playing any part in its implementation, including the delivery of medication.

"The ICRC welcomes the agreement to deliver medications to the hostages and to medical facilities for the residents of Gaza as a positive humanitarian step."

Israel, incredibly has to rely on employees of the "Gaza Ministry of Health" – Hamas terrorists, in other words – to deliver the often life-saving medications to the hostages. As of this writing, while the medications have arrived in Gaza, no one, as far as we know, has distributed them to the hostages.

"We know that the medications effectively entered into Gaza. The modalities of their transfer to the hostages were dealt with under Qatar's mediation. We now expect to receive verifiable proof that the medications have reached their beneficiaries," a French unnamed official said on February 6.

On social media, the ICRC has made no secret of its anti-Israel bias and its complete lack of care for the Israeli hostages held by Hamas. According to a recent report by UN Watch, the ICRC "has adopted an overwhelmingly skewed approach to the Hamas-Israel war in its social media..."

"Out of 187 tweets published by the main Red Cross accounts on Twitter (now known as X), including those by ICRC president Mirjana Spoljaric Egger and director-general Robert Mardini, 77% were focused on criticizing Israel, expressly or by implication. Only 7% of the tweets criticized Hamas..."

"While statements against Hamas and Israel use emotive language, the ICRC has made 6 times more statements to criticize Israel and has often resorted to hyperbole to cast Israel as a 'limitless' destroyer to evoke sympathy for one side and demonize Israel. No statement was made speaking directly about the massacre of October 7th. Beyond language, only 2 statements condemning Hamas include videos and pictures while 38 tweets condemning Israel contain images, graphic testimonies, and videos designed to solicit greater attention and a stronger response. Through their Twitter, it is evident that the ICRC has dedicated large amounts of resources to interviewing doctors and victims in Gaza, to editing infographics and videos, and to appearing on the news to talk about the devastation in Gaza. Comparatively little to no attention was paid to Israeli victims."

As if to confirm the ICRC's cover-up for Hamas, the newly appointed head of the ICRC is Pierre Krähenbühl, who was the head of UNRWA, the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees from 2014 until 2019, when he was forced to resign after a damning internal ethics probe. UNRWA is effectively embedded with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On October 7, as the Hamas massacre of civilians in Israel unfolded, UNRWA employees in Gaza celebrated. In November, a released hostage revealed that he had been held hostage by an UNRWA teacher, a father of 10, who kept him locked up and barely gave him food or medical care.

UN Watch stated in a recent report:

"UNRWA has been a breeding ground for Palestinian terrorists from its early day... The perpetrators of the 1972 Munich Olympic Massacre, in which 11 Israeli athletes were murdered... almost all were raised and educated in UNRWA schools... Likewise, Mohamed Deif, the commander of Hamas's Al Qassem Brigades, who masterminded the October 7th massacre, was also educated in a UNRWA school,"

This is not the first time the ICRC ignored the plight of Jewish victims. During the Holocaust, the ICRC did nothing to help any of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and instead wrote a "favorable report of the good treatment of Jews in German camps."

One Holocaust survivor asked in May 1945: "Where, above all, was the International Red Cross Committee?"

Unfortunately, in our own time, we already know the answer: The ICRC is cheering for Hamas.

WHY ARE THERE STILL PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AFTER 75 LONG YEARS?

JAMES SINKINSON (JNS.org 13-2-24)

Refugee crises have afflicted millions of innocent war victims in the last century, but only one has stretched for a record-breaking seven decades—a problem precipitated and perpetuated by Israel's Arab enemies, including Palestinian Arabs themselves.

In 1948, following Israel's declaration of independence, five Arab nations launched a genocidal war to destroy the nascent Jewish state and annihilate its Jewish population. Despite overwhelming odds, Israel managed to repel

the Arab invasion and preserve its independence.

Because of this war, hundreds of thousands of Arabs—who would later call themselves "Palestinians"—found themselves homeless. Hundreds of thousands heeded the commands of Arab leaders to leave their homes, with the promise they could return pending extermination of the Jews—a promise unkept to this day.

But two sad, disturbing questions—almost always ignored by the media—loom: Why do more than a million Palestinians still live in refugee camps after 75 years? How could the number of refugees—just some 700,000 in 1948 (and most no longer alive)—magically mushroom to seven million today?

One thing we know: The world has avoided chronic war refugees because historically, the international community, especially the United Nations, has supported and directly taken on refugee resettlement.

Surely no group desires a perpetual refugee crisis? Surely no Arabs would decline to help their Palestinian brethren rise from refugee status? As we examine the Palestinians' plight, we see that decisions made by themselves and Arab leaders begin to answer those profound questions in strange, troubling ways.

In fact, the Arabs, not Israel, are responsible for creating the Palestinian refugee crisis. They rejected the U.N. partition plan for Palestine in 1947, because they refused to accept a Jewish state in what they regarded as Arab, Muslim land. Then, they invaded Israel, attempting to destroy the new Jewish state and its Jewish population. Note that without the Arab attack on Israel, there would be no Palestinian refugees at all.

During the war, Arab leaders ordered their kinsmen to evacuate, promising they could return after their armies had decimated Israel and the Jews. Some Palestinian Arabs also fled after hearing false Arab propaganda about Israeli atrocities. In short, the vast majority of the Palestinian Arab population was not forcibly expelled.

Moreover, some 170,000 Arabs remained in the new State of Israel and received full and equal Israeli citizenship. Many remained because their communities chose not to participate in the war, as was the case with Nazareth and Abu Ghosh. Today, about two million Arab Israeli citizens enjoy the same rights and freedoms as Israel's Jewish citizens.

Virtually all refugee crises in the last century have been resolved through resettlement. More than a million Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust and expulsion from Arab lands, for example, were welcomed by fellow Jews in Israel. Likewise, millions more refugees were resettled in the 20th century, including Germans expelled from Poland, Hungarians from Austria, Latin Americans from Chile, and Bosnians from the former Yugoslavia.

But the Arab states bordering Israel, to which most Palestinian Arabs fled, discouraged Palestinians from permanently resettling within their borders—refusing them citizenship, limiting their employment prospects and confining them to refugee camps. Surprisingly, Palestinian leaders have supported this dead-end strategy, helping them feed the lie that Palestinians have a "right of return" to "Palestine"—a state they never possessed.

Moreover, the Palestinians and the United Nations have rewritten the definition of "refugee" for the Palestinians only, to include both the original refugees and their descendants—children, grandchildren and offspring without end, now numbering seven million worldwide.

A "right of return" for these "refugees" would swamp Israel, negating its Jewish majority, and therefore, the Jewish state itself.

As long as Palestinians remain refugees, they can collect financial aid from the international community. Each year, for example, countries like the United States give over one billion dollars to UNRWA, the U.N. agency that provides basic services to the Palestinians, including healthcare and education. Over the decades, the international community has donated more than \$20 billion to the Palestinian Authority, though the Palestinian economy remains bankrupt and most of its people are destitute.

UNRWA was supposed to be a temporary organization set up to resettle Palestinian refugees. But to this day, it has failed to resettle even one refugee. Nevertheless, any attempts to shut UNRWA down are quickly rebuffed by the Arab states and Palestinians.

Nonetheless, many countries have suspended funding to UNRWA following revelations that some of its staff participated in the Oct. 7 massacre. In fact, UNRWA has become a bastion of antisemitism and terrorism, with about 10% of UNRWA's 13,000 Gaza staff belonging to Hamas or Islamic Jihad, according to Israeli intelligence.

Predictably, Palestinian and other Arab leaders have reacted angrily to the

suspension of funding to UNRWA, claiming Palestinians will suffer. Ironically, the very existence of UNRWA services saves the two Palestinian dictatorships— Hamas and the P.A.—the responsibility of providing sustenance to their own people.

Israel has tried to help the Palestinians emerge from refugee status by offering them land and statehood several times since 2000—only to be rejected. Just as in 1947, the Palestinians still refuse to accept the Jewish state. In fact, recent polls indicate that most Palestinians do not support a two-state solution. As Palestinian choices indicate clearly, they prefer to remain refugees than live alongside a Jewish state.

The Palestinians have nurtured a culture in which martyrdom in the service of killing Jews and destroying Israel ranks higher than building a thriving state. Palestinians frequently boast that “We love death like our enemies love life.” No surprise Palestinians have made little progress in creating a sustainable economy, institutions of governance, or political freedom.

And the Palestinians want to “free Palestine”—from repressive dictatorships, from poverty and from futile hate for their neighbors—they are better served creating a free state at peace with Jewish Israel.

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

SHABBOS CHALLAH

OU HALACHA YOMIS (OUKosher.org)

QUESTION: Can I use a frozen challah for lechem mishneh?

ANSWER: There is a disagreement among poskim as to whether a frozen challah that cannot be eaten at the moment may be used as the second loaf for lechem mishneh. The Shevet Halevi (6:31) writes that this should be avoided if possible, since it is questionable if bread that is currently inedible can be used for lechem mishneh. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l (Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasa 55:39) held that if one anticipates eating the bread when it defrosts later in the meal, it may be used. However, many poskim including Minchas Yitzchak (9:42), Rav Ovadya Yosef (Orach Chaim 8:32), and Tzitz Eliezer (14:28) held that a frozen challah may be used in any event. Minchas Yitzchak explained that since the bread is fully baked, and the thawing is something that happens on its own, the bread is viewed as being completely edible even while it is in a frozen state.

QUESTION: A small piece of my challah broke off. Can it still be used for lechem mishneh?

ANSWER: Ideally, one should use challahs that are completely intact. If a challah is missing a small piece, less than one part out of forty eight, there is a disagreement as to whether it is still considered whole (see Shaarei Teshuva 274:1). Many poskim are lenient (Minchas Yaakov, Machatzis Hashekel). The Aruch HaShulchan (274:5) writes that if one has no other bread, they should still use two loaves, even if they are both missing more than a forty-eighth.

If one can attach two halves of a loaf with a toothpick so that it appears that it is one complete loaf, then this may now be considered a complete loaf and used for lechem mishneh (see Magen Avrohom 168:4).

QUESTION: Can one use any type of bread product for lechem mishneh?

ANSWER: Matzos, bagels, pitas, or any other type of bread, may be used for lechem mishneh.

It is preferable to eat only pas Yisrael on Shabbos. One who does so, may use bread that is not pas Yisroel for the second loaf. Pri Migadim explains that if one only has loaves that are pas akum, they may be eaten on Shabbos, even though one is normally stringent. (Pri Megadim M.Z. 274:2).

One may borrow a challah (or any other bread) from a neighbor to use as lechem mishneh, even though it must be returned and cannot be eaten (Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasa 55:13).

Rivevos Efraim (1:202) writes that one may even use dairy bread (which was made according to halacha, either made in a small batch or with a unique shape) as the second loaf for a meat meal, even though it may not be eaten at the meat meal.

If one does not have a second loaf, hamotzi should be recited on a single challah.

QUESTION: Can I use a transparent challah cover (e.g., a see through plastic) to cover the lechem mishneh?

ANSWER: Rav Belsky, zt”l (Shulchan HaLevi 6:10) writes that there are three reasons why we cover the challahs. One reason is to remember the manna which was covered with dew (Tosfos Pesachim 100b). According to this

reason, a transparent covering would be sufficient. However, there are two other reasons why we cover the challahs:

We cover the challahs so they should not be “embarrassed” that we are reciting Kiddush before hamotzi. (Ordinarily, hamotzi is recited before borei pri hagafen.) (Tur Orach Chaim 271).

We cover the challahs to demonstrate that the challah is being served in honor of Shabbos. In theory, we should bring the challahs to the table after Kiddush, but because we don’t want to create a hefsek (disruption) between Kiddush and the meal, we set the challahs on the table before Kiddush and cover them. After Kiddush, by uncovering the challahs, it is as if the challahs were just brought to the table (Tosfos ibid.)

QUESTION: One of the reasons that we cover the Shabbos challoos is to remember the manna (manna) which was surrounded on the top and bottom with a layer of dew. The Bi’ur Halachah (Siman 242) asks, why do we make a remembrance for the manna on Shabbos when the manna did not fall on Shabbos?

ANSWER: Tosfos (Pesachim 100b) writes that the purpose of covering the challah is to remind us of the manna, and when we remember the manna, we are reminded that the manna did not fall on Shabbos. (Some explanation is needed why we wish to recall the absence of manna on Shabbos. Possibly, it helps us appreciate the elevated level of kedusha on Shabbos, that even the heavenly manna was suspended on Shabbos.)

The Bi’ur Halachah offers another reason to remember the manna, even though it did not fall on Shabbos. He explains that since Shabbos is a semblance of the world to come, the foods that we prepare for Shabbos are meant to remind us of the “meal” that Hashem will prepare for tzadikim in the world to come. We eat fish to correspond to the Leviathan (some type of large fish), meat to correspond to the Shor Habar—the “wild ox” (both are foods of the messianic meal), and challoos are covered like manna to correspond to the manna that will be served to tzadikim in the world to come.

CUTTING A DECORATED CAKE ON SHABBOS

RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT (Torah.org)

He will bless your bread and your water (23:25)

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan (26:15)

... They used to write on the planks to indicate their correct placement... and if one was incorrectly marked, the writing was erased so that it could be corrected (Rashi Shabbos 73a)

The Biblical prohibition of erasing letters on Shabbos applied to erasing for the purpose of preparing the surface for future writing. This was the nature of the “erasing” in the Mishkan, as quoted above. The Rabbis, however extended the prohibition to include any and all erasing, regardless of the purpose of the erasure and even when the erasure served no purpose at all, as in tearing the lettering of a package(1).

QUESTION: On Shabbos, is it permissible to cut letters or pictures which decorate a cake?

DISCUSSION: Rama(2) quotes a view that prohibits cutting or breaking off a piece of cake on which letters – or pictures(3) – appear. The fact that the person has no intention of erasing the letters and is interested only in eating the cake makes no difference; the letters are erased in the process, so cutting or breaking off a piece of decorated cake is forbidden based on the rule of inevitable consequences (pesik reisheh). It makes no difference, according to this view, if the erasure is done prior to eating by cutting the cake with a knife, or even if the letters are erased by biting into and chewing the cake(4). Either action is considered to be erasing and is prohibited.

Other poskim(5) differ with the Rama. They maintain that the Rabbis did not forbid cutting or breaking off a piece of cake because: 1) the erasing in this case is not done for the sake of future writing; 2) the erasing is destructive; 3) the erasing is done indirectly (k'lachar yad). According to this view, then, it would be permitted to cut a decorated cake, even before eating it, although the frosted letters would definitely be erased.

Latter-day poskim debate what the practical halachah should be. Some tend to be lenient(6), while others are stringent(7). The Mishnah Berurah rules that one may rely on the lenient view only when the erasing comes as a result of biting and chewing. Cutting the cake before eating it is prohibited. However, the following exceptions are discussed by the poskim:

It is permitted to cut between letters even if a word is destroyed(8). It is also permitted to remove a letter on the icing along with a thin sliver of cake on which it rests(9).

It is permitted to cut letters or figures that are baked into the body of the cake itself(10). It is also permitted to cut a cake or cookie that has a

meaningful shape⁽¹¹⁾, such as a gingerbread man.

It is permitted to cut letters which are made from fruit juice or from honey mixed with water. Decorations fashioned from those ingredients are not considered “permanent⁽¹²⁾.” The sugar-based frosting commonly found on cakes today which hardens when it dries is not included in this leniency⁽¹³⁾.

Some poskim allow a right-handed person to cut the cake with his left hand and vice versa⁽¹⁴⁾. Others do not allow this leniency⁽¹⁵⁾.

If the cake was cut before Shabbos, one is permitted to separate the pieces on Shabbos⁽¹⁶⁾.

A cake with lettering may be placed in front of a child even though the child may erase the lettering on the cake⁽¹⁷⁾. An adult may not, however, specifically instruct the child to erase the lettering⁽¹⁸⁾.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Mishnah Berurah 340:41 and Sha’ar ha-Tziyon 76.

2. O.C. 340:3.

3. Mishnah Berurah 340:16. Rabbi P.E. Falk (Zachor v’Shamor, sec. 33, pg. 13) maintains that pretty patterns such as a zig-zag design along the edges, criss-cross lines running across the surface, etc., are not included and are permitted to be cut.

4. Taz 340:2; Chazon Ish O.C. 61:1.

5. Dagul Mi-revavah O.C. 340.

6. Sha’arei Teshuvah 340:5 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 80:63. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan 340:23, who maintains that the entire prohibition is limited to letters that are formed from ink or paint. Nevertheless, he advises to let a child cut the cake, as quoted later.

7. Shulchan Aruch Harav (343:10) and Chazon Ish O.C. 61:1 who prohibit erasing letters even by biting and chewing.

8. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasah 9 note 48).

9. See The Shabbos Home, pg. 50.

10. Mishnah Berurah 340:15; Har Tzvi O.C. 214. In other places, however, the Mishnah Berurah seems to contradict himself and prohibits this – see 475:47 and 500:17. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasah 11 note 31) attempts to resolve this contradiction. See also Chazon Ish O.C. 61 who questions this leniency.

11. See footnote 8. In this case, however, even Chazon Ish seems to be lenient.

12. Mishnah Berurah 340:15. Chazon Ish questions this leniency.

13. Tifferes Yisrael (Kalkeles Shabbos – erasing); Ketzos ha-Shulchan (144:3); Be’er Moshe 6:94.

14. Eliyahu Rabbah 240:11.

15. Avnei Nezer 209. Mishnah Berurah, too, does not quote this option. See also Mishnah Berurah 340:22 quoting the Chayei Adam who maintains that – with the exception for the prohibition of writing – there is no difference between using the right and left hand in regard to all of the Shabbos prohibitions.

16. Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K’hilchasah 11 note 30).

17. Mishnah Berurah 340:14. See explanation in Shulchan Aruch Harav 340:4 and 343:10. See also Chanoch l’Na’ar 17:4-5.

18. Shulchan Aruch Harav 343:10.

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