

# לשכת יוצרים

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## Shoftim 5785

### JUSTICE AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

RABBI BEREL WEIN ([RabbiWein.com](#))

We are all in favor of equality and justice. The goal of all democratic societies is to have, as far as humanly possible, an incorruptible and fair judicial system. Since, however, judges are only human – no matter how knowledgeable and altruistic they may be, the perfect judicial system has never yet been achieved.

Nevertheless, in order to make society livable, we are bidden to obey the decisions of the court. As the Talmud itself points out, "even if they proclaim to you that left is right and right is left, you want to listen to them." The Talmud acknowledges that judicial error is a facet of life...for after all, left is never right and right is never left. So, how are judicial errors ever to be corrected?

The answer to that question usually comes with the passage of time and with the application of common sense to the realities of life. The famous dictum in Jewish life has always been "what wisdom cannot accomplish, time will." Heaven, so to speak, also takes a hand over time in adjusting erroneous judicial decisions and somehow making things come out right in the end.

Yet, the Torah emphasizes to us that even though judicial error is possible if not even probable, we are to follow the decisions of our judges for otherwise anarchy will reign and society will dissolve. The decisions of judges may be analyzed and even disagreed with, but judges are to be respected and their judgments eventually are to be fulfilled. Ultimate justice is relegated to the provinces of Heavenly guidance.

Jewish tradition ascribes judicial decisions not merely to book knowledge and even to precedent, but also to common sense and an intuition of fairness and equity. The great Rabbi Israel Lipkin of Salant often pointed out that Heaven alone can take into account all of the facets, consequences and results of judgment, reward and punishment. The human judge is limited in perspective and foresight.

We are all aware of the law of unintended consequences, which dog all legislation and judicial decision. It is because of this that the Talmud ruefully has G-d, so to speak, busy undoing many of the decisions and actions of leaders and ordinary people in order to achieve the Divine will and purpose in the actions and decisions of humans.

All judicial systems contain a process of review and appeal from decisions made by lower courts. This is an inherent realization the judicial error is present and likely in all human affairs. It is of little wonder then that the phrase "trial and error" is so well known in the English language. The judicial system always attempts to correct and analyze itself. However, even in so doing, it is always subject to bias, preconceived notions and erroneous logic and decisions. Nevertheless the Torah emphasizes that judicial systems are mandatory for society to function. It is one of the basic seven laws of Noachide tradition. So, as in every other facet of life, the Torah bids us to do the best that we can but to be aware of our human limitations.

### THE FINAL FRONTIER OF SECURITY

RABBI ARI SHISHLER ([Chabad.org](#))

Security is a global hot topic.

Here in Johannesburg, where security is a very local concern, many have surrounded their homes with high walls, electric fences, security gates and burglar bars. Since 9/11, airports around the globe have introduced security

screenings that unnerve even the most ironclad heart. Our home PCs and office networks are protected with firewalls.

It's now not only acceptable, but fashionable to limit access on just about every level of our lives. We know how to keep the burglars, terrorists and spammers out.

Ironically, however, we still remain vulnerable to trespass of a different kind.

A wise man commented: "Jews have always considered it taboo to enter a church, yet nowadays they bring the church into their own homes."

"Church" is more than a place of worship; in a broader sense it symbolizes any idea antithetical to Jewish values.

You could sit in the comfort of your Jewish home, flanked by a silver mezuzah, Shabbat candlesticks and a portrait of your grandfather sporting a flowing white beard. Press a button on your remote control and you invite people, images, sounds and themes that are contrary to every Jewish value.

"Judges and policeman you shall place at all your gates," the Torah tells us (16:18). You could read that at face value—a Jewish town needs to have a judicial system. Or you could approach this line as a Jew should: as a personal lesson. As with every verse in the Torah, if you cannot find the relevant personal lesson, you have missed the larger point.

Let's read that sentence again, with different emphasis this time: "Judges and policemen you shall place on all your gates." Your gates are the access points to your soul: your eyes, ears and mouth.

It's important to keep unwanted visitors out of your house; it's just as important to keep them out of your head (and your kids' heads).

We've invested a fortune in physical security, we should at least equal the effort for our spiritual security.

### BRANCHES OF THE JUDICIARY

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY ([Torah.org](#))

Juxtapositions. The Talmud analyzes them and expounds upon them. After all, every word of the Torah is as important as the next, and the positioning of each law in the Heavenly ordained book bears a great symbolism if not halachic (legal) implication.

Perhaps that is the reason that our sages expounded upon a very interesting juxtaposition in this week's portion.

This week's parsha is named Shoftim – Judges. That is exactly what it begins dealing with. It commands us to appoint judges. They should be honest, upright and unwavering. It prohibits taking any form of bribery as it attests that even the most brilliant and pious of souls will be blinded and perverted by bribes. Conspicuously placed next to those laws is the prohibition of the planting of the asheira tree. The asheira tree appeared as any other tree, but it had another purpose. It was worshipped as an idol.

Those two sections adjoin. The sages comment that there is a stark comparison. "Anyone who appoints an unworthy justice is as if he planted the asheirah tree in his midst."

The obvious question is: though both acts are terribly wrong, there must be a greater reason other than the fact that they both are wrong and immoral. What is the connection?

*There was a period in the 1970's when a group of rogues were smuggling valuables in Tefillin (phylacteries) and other religious articles that would usually evade inspection; thus the thieves assumed their scheme would be successful. Often they would send these religious articles with unsuspecting pious Jews and asked to deliver them to certain locations near their final destinations.*

When United States customs officials got wind of this scheme they asked a few observant agents to help crack the ring. In addition to preserving the sanctity of the religious items, the customs authority felt that Jewish religious agents would best be able to mete out knowing accomplices from unsuspecting participants who had been duped into thinking they were actually performing a mitzvah.

The Jewish custom agent in charge of the operation decided to confer with my grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky on this matter. Though his advice on how to break the ring remains confidential, he told me how he explained how the severity of the crime was compounded by its use of religious items.

"Smuggling diamonds in Tefillin," he explained, "is equivalent to raising a white flag, approaching the enemy lines as if to surrender and then lobbing a grenade. That soldier has not only perpetrated a fraud on his battalion and the enemy; he has betrayed a symbol of civilization.

With one devious act, he has destroyed a trusted symbol for eternity – forever endangering the lives of countless soldiers for years to come.

"These thieves, by taking a sacrosanct symbol and using it as a vehicle for a crime have destroyed the eternal sanctity and symbolism of a sacred object. Their evil actions may cause irreparable damage to countless honest religious people. Those rogues must be stopped, by any means possible," he exclaimed.

Rabbi Chaim Soleveitchik explained the comparison of the asheirah tree to the corrupt judge. An asheirah tree is a very deceiving object. It is as beautiful as any other tree in the world. However, man has turned its aesthetic beauty into a vehicle for blasphemy. "A judge," Rabbi Chaim Soleveitchik explains, "has all those attributes. He may have an honest appearance, even a regal demeanor. In fact, he could have a long kapote and a flowing beard. His very image exudes traits that personify honesty, integrity, and morality. However if he is inherently dishonest he no better than a lovely tree whose sole purpose is to promote a heretical ritual of idolatry."

They both may look pretty and could be used as a vehicle to promote G-d's glory but in this case, they are not. In fact, quite the opposite. Those formerly beautiful objects now bring disgrace to the Creator.

And so, the Torah tells us this week that trees may have outer beauty, but cannot be classified unequivocally as being an ever-sounding testimony to Hashem's glory. Likewise a judge whose demeanor may be noble, may be a source of deception who will bring disgrace on an entire nation. After all, as the saying almost goes, "you cannot book a judge by his cover!"

## DOCTORS AND PILOTS

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

Seeing is believing. Most of us are natural skeptics, and it is difficult to convince us of something we have not seen with our own eyes. And even then, we are apt to have lingering doubts. Indeed, we take pride in our skepticism, because we know it protects us from all sorts of fraud and deception. We are nobody's fools.

In this week's portion, however, the Torah goes directly against this tendency. The Torah exhorts us not to deviate one whit from the words of our Sages, neither to the right nor to the left. What does this mean? The Talmud explains that even if they tell us that our right hand is our left and our left is our right we are to follow them with implicit faith. Of course, our Sages would obviously never tell us something that is patently ridiculous. Rather, the left and right hands are a metaphor for something that is seemingly erroneous according to our perceptions. Nonetheless, we are required to follow their lead rather than our own judgment. The Torah demands that we have faith.

How do we understand this requirement to have faith? Why does the Torah demand of us to go against our natural instincts? Why should we follow blindly rather than take a stand as independent thinkers and demand explanations?

If we pause to consider, however, we will discover that faith forms an integral part of our everyday lives. In fact, without faith we would be practically immobilized. When we get into our cars, we do not worry that our brakes may be defective and will suddenly fail when we are traveling at high speeds. Why? Because we have faith in the manufacturers. When we get on a plane we do not worry that the pilot is incompetent or drunk. Why? Because we have faith in the pilot. When we go to doctors, we generally accept what they tell us. Why? Because we have faith in our doctors.

Without faith, we would be afraid to switch on the lights or put food into our mouths or believe a word anyone tells us. Clearly, Hashem created us with the innate ability to have faith. Why then, if we so easily have faith in our doctors and pilots, do we find it so difficult to have faith in Hashem even when we believe in His existence? Why do we find it so hard to accept all His deeds and commands without question?

The answer lies in our egotism. Doctors and pilots are there to serve us. Accepting them on good faith may result in physical restrictions, but it does

not require us to surrender our personal independence in any way. We are still in control of our destinies. They advise. We make the decisions. Such faith comes easily.

Faith in Hashem is an altogether different matter. If we forfeit the right to question His deeds and commands, we acknowledge that we are subservient to Him. We surrender our independence, and that is a very difficult thing to do. But still, we must. For if we believe in Hashem yet refuse to give Him our faith and trust, we would be living a lie.

Therefore, the Torah exhorts us again and again to have faith in Hashem, to overcome the stiff, illogical resistance of egotism and submit to His higher intelligence. Certainly, He is at least as deserving of our good faith as our doctors and pilots.

After attending the yeshiva of a great sage for a number of years, a young student suddenly declared himself an atheist and announced that he was leaving. Naturally, this came as great shock to the other students and the faculty, and they begged him to consult the sage before he left.

The sage nodded gravely as he listened to the young man.

"I agree that if you are an atheist this is not the place for you," he said. "But tell me, what made you become an atheist?"

"It is because I have lost my faith," the young man replied.

"Indeed? And why did you lose your faith?"

"Because I have questions."

The sage smiled sadly. "No, my young friend, you do not have questions. You have answers. You have decided that you want to live a certain lifestyle, and in order to do so you have to be an atheist. Now that you've come up with this answer, you have found questions to support your foregone conclusion."

In our own lives, we experience the egotistical resistance to faith in our children, who find it hard to admit that their parents may be right but would willingly accept the same statements from others. The difference is simple. When we acknowledge the wisdom of parents, we pay a high price in personal independence. Similarly, we pay a high price when we acknowledge the awesome might and wisdom of the Master of the Universe. But if we overcome our stubborn egotism and acknowledge the obvious truth, we will find that the rewards of faith are well worth the price we pay for them.

## A TRUE KING CHANGES THE DIAPERS

RABBI AVRAHAM KOVEL (Aish.com)

"Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely." - Lord Acton

How do you keep a leader with absolute power — a king — from becoming corrupt? In this week's Torah portion, the Torah gives us its solution:

"And it shall be that when [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a scroll... It shall be with him and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them, so that his heart does not become haughty over his brothers and he does not turn from the commandment right or left, so that he will prolong years over his kingdom, he and his sons amid Israel." (Deut. 17:18-20)

The Torah commands the king to write two Torah scrolls and carry one with him constantly—from his throne to the battlefield to public addresses. By reading from his Torah each day, he learns to "fear G-d," recognizing that a Supreme Being stands above him, that his kingship can vanish instantly, and that he'll answer for his actions in this life and the next. Could there be a more perfect medicine to prevent the corrupting influence of absolute power?

We can all appreciate the wisdom of this commandment, but if we look a little deeper, we'll see another fascinating detail of this mitzvah. According to the verse, the king must personally write two Torah scrolls. Why two scrolls?

According to the Talmud<sup>1</sup>, one travels with him everywhere while the other remains locked in his treasury. We understand the value of portable Torah guidance, but why invest equal energy in a scroll destined for storage?

### THE DOUBLE LIFE DILEMMA

To understand why the king needs two scrolls, we must first examine how leadership typically unfolds in our world today. Too often, we see the greatest public figures living double lives. Even when these leaders achieved extraordinary external impact, they often failed to master their inner worlds.

Society often excuses these private lapses, focusing instead on public heroism and leadership. But Jewish wisdom takes a radically different approach.

### LEADING ON EVERY LEVEL

The Torah's vision of leadership rejects any separation between public achievement and private character. The Talmudic sage Rabban Gamliel

refused to let anyone into his academy who wasn't "tocho c'boro"—whose insides did not match their outsides.<sup>2</sup> This same Rabban Gamliel taught, "Do not judge your fellow until you reach his place" (Ethics of Our Fathers 2:4). The Meiri, a classic 13th-century commentator, explains this teaching: one cannot judge a person by their actions out in the world. One must go to where that person lives and see their private life in order to judge their true character.

The Kuzari presents perhaps the most striking definition of authentic leadership. When asked to define a saintly person, the Rabbi responds: "A saintly person is one who is concerned with his country... He leads them justly, does not oppress any one of them." When challenged—"I asked you about a saintly person, not a leader!"—the Rabbi replies: "The saintly person is a leader. All of his senses and attributes—both spiritual and physical—submit themselves to his command... He has shown that he is fit to govern—that were he to rule over a country, he would preside over it justly just as he has done with his own body and soul."<sup>3</sup>

A clear hierarchy emerges from these sources: before one can lead others, one must first master oneself and one's home. This reflects Judaism's approach to leadership, which operates through three expanding circles of mastery:

Level 1: Internal Leadership - In Ethics of Our Fathers (4:1), Ben Zoma teaches, "Who is mighty? He who subdues his inclinations." Only through self-control against life's many temptations can one embark on the path to true leadership.

Level 2: Familial Leadership - Rabbi Chaim Vital taught that 99% of a person's judgment in mitzvot between man and fellow man comes from relationships at home.<sup>4</sup> All the charity, heroism, and world-changing impact someone makes in their lifetime adds up to only 1%. The small daily acts of love and care given to spouse and family account for 99%.

Level 3: External Leadership - Once you've mastered yourself and built a stable home, you might be ready to expand your concentric circles to include community, nation, and world. At each stage of expansion, the individual must never be forgotten in favor of the collective, for the collective consists of individuals.

Now that we understand the Torah's vision for leadership, we can solve the mystery of the two Torah scrolls. One scroll accompanies him as an ever-present reminder of his role as G-d's trusted servant in leading the Jewish people. The second remains locked in his personal treasury, reminding him of the equal—if not greater—importance of self-mastery and proper conduct within his home. The treasury scroll embodies the Torah's most radical leadership principle: private character matters more than public achievement.

#### A VISION OF DUAL-SCROLL LEADERSHIP

Rabbi Moshe Shapira, one of the greatest teachers of the last generation, exemplified this dual-scroll wisdom. He taught over 35 classes and mentored over 1,000 future rabbis each week, wielding influence across the Jewish world. Yet he never lost sight of individual dignity, as the following story demonstrates: During one neighborhood mediation, when the cleaning lady offered him tea, he politely declined and continued working. Hours later, after helping settle the dispute, he walked down two flights of stairs to where his student was waiting with the car. As he was about to get in, he suddenly exclaimed, "I forgot something!" Before his student could reply, he rushed back upstairs, searching room by room until he found the cleaning lady. He smiled, wished her a cordial goodbye and left.

The same Rabbi Moshe who shaped thousands of future leaders also cared for one forgotten woman, sustained a 60-year marriage and, according to all who knew him, exercised complete control over himself in every movement and word.

#### CHANGING THE DIAPERS

Two takeaways emerge from the Torah's dual-scroll vision of leadership. First, like the king's public scroll, if you've been granted any leadership position—as CEO, president, father, or mother—take a moment at the start of your week to remind yourself of your dependence on G-d for your life, abilities, and power. Second, like the king's treasury scroll, assess whether you've given enough attention to the less glamorous moments of your life—the ones that don't earn fame and success yet form the backbone of true Jewish leadership.

Just as the king needed both scrolls to lead properly, we need both dimensions of leadership. The public scroll reminds us to use our leadership to serve something higher than ourselves. The treasury scroll asks: Metaphorically, have you been changing the diapers?

#### MISPLACED MERCY

##### AVROHOM YAAKOV

Discussing the laws of an intentional murderer, the Torah notes that the murderer is executed.

The Torah stresses that the murderer will not be pitied.

"And you shall not pity him, but you shall abolish [the shedding of] the blood of the innocent from Israel, and it will be good for you."<sup>(19:13)</sup>

Rashi, based on the Sifri, notes that "you should not say, 'The first [person] has already been killed; why should we kill this one too and cause two Israelites to be killed?'"

Rabbenu Bachya expands on Rashi, "... that you refuse to hand him over to the blood-avenger. You should not argue: 'what is the point in another person being killed seeing the first one cannot be brought back?' This is one instance when pity is not only misplaced but is a form of cruelty."

One would have thought that this was obvious. Someone murdered another person intentionally and deserves to be executed. Yet the Torah acknowledges that the proper course of action may not take place due to misplaced pity. Why destroy a second life? What will it achieve? You cannot bring back the original victim.

We see the world's response to the largest attack on Jews since the Holocaust is to ask, 'but why should the whole population suffer and why do the terrorists need to be punished? What does it really achieve?'

They ignore the declarations that the terrorists boast of their achievements and promise to do the same again and again and again. The world ignores the fact that the population in question actually selected the terrorist to lead their country.

So how else can you deter and eliminate the possibility of a recurrence. By wagging the finger and asking the terrorists to behave?

This is the cruelty that Rabbenu Bachya alludes to – if you fail to seek the maximal penalty and allow the murderer to live, then he will murder again. Allow the terrorists to survive through misplaced mercy and they will just kill again.

#### DON'T MOVE THE MARKERS!

##### RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (Chabad.org)

Many countries have legislation dealing with unfair competition and monopolies. The term used in halachah (Torah law) to describe these offenses is *hasagat g'vul* ("moving the boundary markers"). The scriptural source for this prohibition is found in this week's Parshah:

*You shall not move the boundary of your fellow, which the early ones marked out (19:14).*

The literal meaning of this law is that one mustn't move the markers, pegs or any other landmarks that are employed to demarcate the boundaries between neighbors' properties. To go in the night and move the landmarks to take some of your neighbor's land for yourself carries an additional prohibition over and above the normal laws against theft.

Let's spend a moment, though, looking at some of the boundaries and borders of Jewish life. We, too, have neighbors. Some are friends and some are less so. Many of us live in communities beyond the ghetto. Many of us are exposed to cultures, lifestyles and business environments that are very different to our own. How is a Jew, surrounded by a sea of neighbors who are nice, friendly people but who are, culturally, very different still able to retain his or her Jewish distinctiveness?

The answer is that we need landmarks. We, too, require boundaries and borders to help us draw the lines between being good neighbors and sociable colleagues—and losing our own traditions. Otherwise, we become the same as everyone else on the block or at work. When we try hard to be "normal," we run the risk of losing our own uniqueness in the process.

This American Jewish girl joined the Peace Corps and went to do humanitarian work in Africa. After a two-year stint, she returned home to the Bronx. She rings the bell and her mother is shocked to see standing next to her a boyfriend she brought back from Africa. And he's not just any boyfriend. He is a big, burly Zulu warrior with bald head, loincloth, beads around his neck, a spear and a shield. And to top it off, he's carrying a bag of bones in his pouch.

The Jewish mother stands there stunned and speechless. Finally, she recovers somewhat and shouts at her daughter. "Idiot! Meshuggeneh! I said a rich doctor!"

Maybe this story is an exaggeration but similar ones are happening daily. Ma, I'm in love! What difference does it make what religion he is? He's a great guy and we are both very happy together. So, what's the problem?

Dad, all the Jewish girls I meet are spoiled princesses. I finally found someone who cares about me. Please don't stand in the way of my happiness.

And Jewish parents are visiting their rabbis and asking, "Rabbi, where did we go wrong? How can this be happening to us?"

Well, rabbis are also nice guys and aren't looking to cause any more pain and anguish to these distraught parents than they already have. So they don't actually answer the question of where they went wrong. But if they did, it might go something like this:

The Torah teaches us not to move the markers. Losing everything begins by losing a little bit at a time. When we move the landmarks of Jewish life, slowly and inexorably we lose our borders and the lines are blurred. Children, in particular, need clear, solid lines to understand the boundaries, the dos and don'ts of living correct and meaningful Jewish lives. G-d gave us certain landmarks to help us see who we are and where and how we live. When we remove those landmarks we lose our borders and we lose our distinctiveness.

Long ago, G-d gave us a Shabbat, a day on which the Jew behaves very differently from his neighbors. He gave us Kashrut so that we eat differently, too. And He urges us to educate our children Jewishly so that they will understand, feel and know why they really are distinctive.

But if we move those markers, things become hazy and young people become confused. And then they wonder why we are suddenly putting up barriers that we ourselves previously took down.

A rabbinical friend of mine once asked a prominent businessman why he, a nice Jewish boy, was marrying out of the faith. Couldn't he have found a nice Jewish girl? The fellow answered in all honesty, "Rabbi, I just don't mix in those circles anymore." But had this entrepreneur retained the landmark of a kosher home, for example, he would have still been mixing in kosher circles. By preserving our landmarks, we preserve our identity.

Let's try to find some of those missing markers in Jewish life. Who knows? We may discover our own distinctiveness and our children may find out who they really are.

## MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

The Torah includes 613 mitzvot, ranging from the obvious ("Honor your father and your mother") to the esoteric ("Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk"), from the well-known ("Keep the Shabbat") to the obscure ("Do not muzzle an ox while it is threshing"). One of them — prohibition #57 by Maimonides' count — is Lo Tashchit, "Do not destroy," the prohibition to destroy or waste of any part of G-d's creation.

Interestingly, the commandment not to destroy appears in the Torah as part of the laws of war. When laying siege to a city, the Torah instructs, do not cut down fruit trees to build siege towers from which to attack the city. Use regular trees. This injunction becomes the basis for the law that forbids all forms of wanton destruction or waste: "One who breaks a utensil, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops a spring or disposes of food in a ruinous manner, transgresses the prohibition of Lo Tashchit" (Mishneh Torah and Codes).

War is basically a destructive act. So is cutting down a tree. Yet when the Torah wishes to tell us that it is forbidden to destroy, it gives us a case in which war is a necessity, and cutting down a tree is a necessity — and then tells us which trees not to cut down.

The Torah is in the details. We may be in a situation in which waging war is a necessity and a duty, but we are still obligated to distinguish between moral war waging and immoral war waging (indeed, the chapter containing the Lo Tashchit law includes numerous other rules and regulations on how to conduct a war). The fact that we're supposed to be cutting down trees right now does not absolve us from the duty to distinguish between non-wasteful cutting and wasteful cutting.

The same is true in the reverse. Also when we're doing something useful, we should constantly challenge ourselves: Am I using this the best way? Am I optimizing its — and my — potential? To achieve less than our capacity is like cutting down a fruit tree to build a siege tower.

The Chassidic masters take this a step further, applying this principle to all our resources — not just trees, buildings and food. Every thing that we have been given — time, energy, intelligence, experiences — has been given us for a purpose. Nothing is meaningless or superfluous in G-d's world, and neither is any aspect or detail thereof.

A classic application of this principle is the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that "Everything that a person witnesses or hears about, should serve him as a lesson in how to serve his Creator." I'm walking down the street and I see something happen. Like everything in G-d's world, the event serves a useful purpose. Often, the purpose and utility of this event may be obvious. But then there's also the fact that I saw it happen. So it's not enough to ask myself "Why did this happen?" — I must also ask, "Why did I see this happen?" The purpose of the event is served regardless of whether or not I am aware of its occurrence. So is this detail — the fact that I saw it — superfluous? If it does not teach me anything, then that aspect of the event has been wasted.

(See Pushcart Prophet, The Tightrope and A Million Little Cables for examples of this attitude in practice)

A common Jewish practice is to memorialize the dead by naming things, projects and institutions after them. There is nary a shul bench in Mineola or

a park bench in Jerusalem, an ambulance in Brooklyn or a day school in Florida that does not bear an inscription attesting that it exists "In memory of..."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains this phenomenon as deriving from the Lo Tashchit principle — from the Jewish idea of usefulness.

For the soul of the departed, death is not a loss or a waste. On the contrary: it is an advance to a purer state of existence, an ascent to a loftier and more spiritual rung in its journey towards fulfillment.

But what about us, those left behind in the physical world? What about our experience of the event? To us, the death of a loved one is a loss, a void, an awful, terrible waste.

That is why it is so important to translate our feelings of loss and futility into the impetus to create something, to do something useful. This assures that not only is the soul of the departed elevated in the cosmic sense, but that no detail of the event of death — including the responses it provokes in the lives of those who remain within a physical world and perspective — should ever, G-d forbid, be a waste.

## EVERY LIFE IS PRECIOUS

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Aish.com)

A murder victim is found in a field out in the open country between two cities. There are no witnesses and no clues to the identity of his assailant. The Torah demands an exact measurement to determine the closest city. The elders of that city have to declare, "We were not derelict in our responsibilities to this traveler. Our hands did not spill this innocent blood." Then they go through a process of atonement called the eglah arufah, the decapitated calf.

These laws seem to be incongruously wedged in between two chapters that talk about going out to war. What is it doing there?

Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, my Rosh Yeshivah, explains that the Torah is teaching us a lesson. In times of war, life becomes incredibly cheap. People are dying left and right, men, women, children, soldiers, civilians. Life somehow loses its value.

Therefore, right in the middle of the discussion of war, the Torah interrupts to present the laws of eglah arufah, laws that underscore the extreme preciousness of each individual life. An entire city must bring atonement for the loss of one unidentified person who may or may not have passed through unnoticed.

The Shemen Hatov suggests that this may be why Yaakov learned the laws of eglah arufah with Yosef on their last day together. Perhaps Yaakov's soul felt intuitively that Yosef would become the leader of a huge and powerful nation, that he would have the power of life and death over millions and millions of people. Therefore, it was important to teach him about eglah arufah to impress on him the importance of every single human life.

*Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, the rav of Brisk, once called a special meeting in the shul. "My dear friends, we have a serious problem. The Czar's police have arrested a young Jewish boy."*

*"What did he do?" asked a congregant.*

*"He burned the Czar in effigy."*

*The man slapped his forehead in frustration.*

*"Regardless of what he has done," Rav Chaim continued, "the boy is in danger. We must get him out immediately. It is a question of money. Just money."*

*"How much money?"*

*Rav Chaim mentioned the sum. It was an exorbitant amount, and people gasped audibly.*

*"We are faced with a great mitzvah," said Rav Chaim. "This is true pidyon shevuyim, ransoming captives."*

*"Who is the boy?" one man wanted to know. "Is he a yeshivah boy?"*

*"No," said Rav Chaim.*

*"Is he a member of our shul? Is he someone we know?"*

*"No."*

*"Is he religious?"*

*"I'm afraid not. At least not yet."*

*One of the men threw up his hands in frustration. "How will we raise money for a boy like that? And such a large sum!"*

*"I don't know," Reb Chaim said, "but somehow it must be done. I am not coming to shul on Yom Kippur until the money is collected."*

*Time passed, and only a small amount of money was raised.*

*Yom Kippur came. It was time for Kol Nidrei, and Rav Chaim still had not come to shul. The elders of the community went to his house.*

*"I told you," he said. "I am not coming until you raise the money. It doesn't matter if the boy is religious or not. A Jewish soul is a Jewish soul!"*

*The community raised the money to ransom the boy.*

*Every life is precious.*

# News & Views

## UN-BACKED REPORT BASED ON 'FABRICATED' VIEW OF GAZA 'FAMINE'

MIKE WAGENHEIM (JNS.org 22-8-25)

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a tool associated with some 25 global partners, including U.N. agencies, said on Friday that it confirmed with "reasonable evidence" that there has been "famine" in Gaza since Aug. 15.

"After 22 months of relentless conflict, over half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions characterized by starvation, destitution and death," per a new IPC report.

"Between mid-August and the end of September 2025, conditions are expected to further worsen with famine projected to expand to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis," it stated.

The Israeli government stated that "although the IPC has previously confirmed famine in other crises, this was the first time such a declaration was made for Gaza, and the first time it rested on evidence that fell far short of the standard normally required."

"Famine classifications are intended to be exceptional, applied only when mortality and malnutrition rates clearly and indisputably exceed the most extreme benchmarks," it stated.

The Jewish state said that the "famine" determination contradicts recent, publicly available data and uses "outdated figures while downplaying or disregarding newer information that directly undermined the famine classification."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry stated that the IPC "bent its own rules to fit Hamas's campaign. They lowered famine thresholds, ignored criteria and laundered Hamas lies."

"Meanwhile, reality tells a different story: over 100,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since the war began. Markets are stocked, food prices are falling," it said. "The IPC could not find famine, so they forged one."

"You know who is starving? The hostages kidnapped and tortured by uncivilized Hamas savages," stated Mike Huckabee, the U.S. ambassador to Israel. "Maybe the over-fed terrorists could share some of their warehouse full they

"Just when it seems there are no words left to describe the living hell in Gaza, a new one has been added: 'famine,'" he stated. "This is not a mystery. It is a man-made disaster, a moral indictment and a failure of humanity itself."

The IPC report is based on data from July 1 to Aug. 15 and states that the threshold to determine a "famine" has been met despite a lack of mortality figures available.

"Assessment of mortality in the Gaza Strip is constrained by the collapse of health and civil registration systems, severe restrictions of humanitarian access and the protracted conditions of the war," according to the report. "In the absence of face-to-face household surveys and a functioning vital registration system, the Famine Review Committee has reviewed and triangulated available sources."

Among those sources listed in the report is data from the Gaza health ministry, which Hamas controls. (The word "Hamas" doesn't appear anywhere in the IPC report.)

The Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories also refuted the report.

"Instead of providing a professional, neutral and responsible assessment, the report adopts a biased approach riddled with severe methodological flaws, thereby undermining its credibility and the trust the international community is able to place in it," stated Maj. Gen. Ghassan Alian, the COGAT head.

"We expect the international community to act responsibly and not be swept away by false narratives and unfounded propaganda, but rather to examine the complete data and the facts on the ground," Alian said.

Several independent metrics have shown food prices dropping in Gaza in recent weeks, as more aid has entered the Strip.

Some agencies of the United Nations have claimed in the past that there has been "famine" in Gaza, while others have stated that there is no evidence of such a phenomenon. A spokesman for the U.N. secretary-general suggested the discrepancy was due to a lack of "brand management."

## IN GAZA, THEY FILM; IN SUDAN, THEY DIE

MICHAEL EHRENSTEIN (Jpost.com 25-8-25)

The UN-affiliated Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has published a report claiming "mass famine" in Gaza. The announcement

made instant headlines worldwide. But behind the drama was a quiet, extraordinary shift in methodology. Instead of the accepted global standards for measuring malnutrition, the IPC downgraded its criteria, relying on mid-arm circumference instead of weight-to-height and lowering the threshold for acute malnutrition from 30% to just 15%.

These drastic changes appeared only in a footnote. However, the global media treat them as hard facts, blasting headlines that Israel is responsible for "starving Gaza." Amnesty International has gone even further, accusing Israel of running a "deliberate starvation project."

The real question is not about the numbers themselves but about perspective. Why does Gaza dominate the global stage while large-scale famines – such as the one unfolding right now in Sudan – barely register? The answer: political humanitarianism.

According to that very same IPC report, nearly 24 million Sudanese face food insecurity. Over eight million are in emergency conditions, and tens of thousands are already in famine. Unlike the disputed Gaza numbers, these are facts that no one contests. Yet, Sudan earns almost no front-page coverage, no mass demonstrations in Western capitals, and no urgent debates in the UN.

Why? Because Hamas has perfected the art of weaponizing human suffering. It blocks aid, manipulates data, and circulates shocking images, all to increase international pressure on Israel. Western media, predisposed to highlight Israel's faults, plays along.

Sudan's generals, by contrast, are not running a global PR campaign. There are no glossy NGO videos, no Hollywood stars hugging starving children, no UN resolutions on endless repeat. Most of all, there is no link to Israel or the Jews. The result: Mass death in Sudan remains invisible.

Advertisement

THE DOUBLE STANDARD is hardly new. Between 2015 and 2022, the UN General Assembly passed 140 resolutions against Israel, more than double the number against all other nations combined. In 2022 alone, Israel was condemned 15 times; Russia, after invading Ukraine, only six. The UN Human Rights Council even maintains a permanent agenda item, Item 7, dedicated solely to Israel. No other country in the world is treated this way.

This obsession now extends to the famine narrative.

While 249 million people around the world are hungry – across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – international headlines obsess over Gaza, even if it means bending research standards and parroting Hamas talking points. This is not humanitarian concern. This is politics.

OF COURSE, THE HUNGER of even one child is a tragedy. But that is precisely why the world's selective outrage is so outrageous. If the global community were truly motivated by humanitarian concern, its focus would be on Sudan, Nigeria, Yemen, and other countries, where millions die. It would pressure all regimes that weaponize food, whether Hamas in Gaza or warlords in Africa.

The fact that this doesn't happen tells the whole story. The campaigns for Gaza are not about humanitarianism. They are about politics, dressed up as humanitarian concern. Once again, Israel is cast as the convenient scapegoat.

And while the world indulges this obsession, millions of children in Sudan and beyond continue to die quietly, not because their suffering is any less but because it cannot be used as a weapon against the State of Israel.

## THE LEFT'S OCTOBER 7 REVISIONISM

GADI TAUB (Tabletmag.com 21-8-25)

October 7 presented the Israeli left with a daunting challenge: how to prevent the Hamas massacre from sounding the death knell of its most cherished dream, the so-called two-state solution. Having witnessed the vast majority of the Palestinian public cheer Hamas' savagery, the last thing Israelis wanted to hear was plans for future partition of their land, never mind a peace agreement. Faced with this popular rejection of its central platform, the left first had to focus on preventing the right from consolidating its growing majority, to avert total collapse.

But how could the left leverage an event that showed its side was wrong in its fundamental assumptions about Israel's neighbors against the right, whose position was vindicated? The answer is simple: Lay Oct. 7 at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's feet.

And so, the left launched a campaign to blame the man who had presciently warned that Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005 would give rise to a terrorist "Hamas state." Netanyahu's accurate understanding of Israel's neighbors didn't matter. All that mattered was that Oct. 7 happened on his watch.

The campaign required a new narrative that tailored the historical record to suit the left's political objective. A recent example of this revisionism is an 11,000-word New York Times Magazine piece by Patrick Kingsley, Ronen Bergman, and Natan Odenheimer, titled "How Netanyahu Prolonged the

War in Gaza to Stay in Power.” The piece presents itself as a work of investigative journalism, with new revelations and intimate details “reported here for the first time,” along with scores of interviews and documented sources.

The imaginary account of ‘The New York Times’ entirely distorts how Netanyahu has had to struggle to make sure Israel doesn’t end the war prematurely before achieving its objectives.

The piece puts forward a neat storyline that echoes the Israeli left’s articles of faith: Netanyahu could have ended the war with a hostage deal in April 2024. However, he keeps prolonging the war to satisfy the radical, irrational hawkish wing of this coalition, all to stay in power. The real reason Netanyahu is desperate to remain in office, the piece argues, is so that he can appoint a new attorney general and thereby quash his prosecution on corruption charges.

Only, there isn’t a single true link in this imaginary chain of political logic. Netanyahu never wanted to end the war with a hostage deal. While the prime minister has pursued a deal for the release of the hostages, the caveat was his absolute refusal to end the war short of achieving all of Israel’s declared goals: the dismantling of Hamas as a military and governing force, the return of all hostages, both the dead and the living, and the assurance that Gaza never again poses a threat to Israel’s security. Meanwhile, Hamas never agreed to anything other than a complete Israeli surrender with the full withdrawal of the IDF from every last inch of Gaza, along with funds to reconstruct the strip under its rule, and internationally binding guarantees for the survival of its regime—conditions the overwhelming majority of Israelis would never agree to.

The truth is, nothing would serve Netanyahu politically better than ending the war, so long as it ends in victory. The longer the war drags on without victory, the more support he bleeds, especially among his base. In other words, both The New York Times Magazine’s depiction of Israel’s interests and its assumptions about Netanyahu’s political calculations are wrong.

The same goes for the assertions about Netanyahu’s coalition partners, which the piece gets backwards. The so-called radical wing of the coalition has been pressing for a swift end to the war through a decisive victory. The criticism it has leveled at Netanyahu has been over his prolonging the war with endless negotiations over yet another temporary deal that prioritizes the hostages over Israel’s victory. Had Netanyahu moved to satisfy his coalition partners, we would now be in the final leg of this war, single-mindedly focused on crushing whatever remains of Hamas. Of course, Israel did not take this course of action during the period described in the magazine’s alternative history.

The imaginary account of The New York Times entirely distorts how Netanyahu has had to struggle to make sure Israel doesn’t end the war prematurely, before achieving its objectives. From the moment it began, Netanyahu came under overwhelming pressure to shut down Israel’s military campaign. He faced the combined, and often coordinated, efforts of the Iran-appeasing Biden administration, Israel’s peacenik opposition, a leftist media obsessed with overthrowing him over any other consideration, the weaponization of criminal law designed to impair his ability to govern, and a reluctant IDF brass that preferred a compromise deal over the reoccupation of Gaza.

The many forces opposing Netanyahu, including those in his coalition, wanted to end the war even before the invasion of Rafah, which would have left Hamas in power in Gaza, Hezbollah perched ominously on our northern border with 150,000 rockets pointed at our civilian centers, and Iran with a clear path to a nuclear weapon and regional hegemony. Such an outcome would have put Israel’s very existence in a danger it has not experienced since the spring of 1948.

When all looked bleak and the whole country was still in shock, Netanyahu vowed to change the regional order. Against all odds, he managed to keep the war going, maneuvering patiently and skillfully toward this goal, which no one at the time imagined was possible. Now we sit with Israel in a far stronger position than it was in before the war, with the American alliance system reconstructed and poised to resist the ambitions of the China-Russia axis in the region. Sustaining the war effort to achieve all these aims was not driven by the prime minister’s personal considerations. Rather, it was the result of his dogged pursuit of Israel’s vital interest, which is also shared by the United States. That continues to be the reason why Netanyahu refuses to stop the war short of victory. What the Times portrays as the cynical prioritizing of his career is Netanyahu’s single-minded focus on securing Israel’s existential needs.

The piece’s assumptions only underscore that the authors are merely confirming the left’s cartoonish pieties, not providing serious analysis. The proposition that Netanyahu defied the will of the majority to satisfy the radical fringe of his coalition is pure fantasy. A leader who would drag his country through a needless war only to cater to a minority within his

coalition would provoke the ire of the majority in his coalition and would be unceremoniously ousted. The simple truth is that Netanyahu has to win this war. He knows this, the majority of Israel’s voters know this, the coalition knows this, and so do Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, which is why they continue to urge him to push for a decisive victory.

Equally fantastical is the piece’s theory that behind all of Netanyahu’s maneuvering is his desperate need to appoint a more friendly attorney general who would help him escape justice. The article’s authors do not tell their readers that the “corruption trial” they’re hyping is a fiasco. Charges are collapsing in court daily, to the manifest discomfort of the judges, who had already suggested the prosecution withdraw the single serious charge in the indictment: bribery. Nor do the article authors explain that in the Israeli system, there isn’t a ghost of a chance that any attorney general would extricate Netanyahu from an ongoing trial without the approval of the Israeli Supreme Court, which, given its hostility to the prime minister, would be impossible for him to influence. In fact, the only way the court would approve halting the trial is if it suspects that Netanyahu’s lawyers might turn the tables on the prosecution and expose the weaponization of the law by the left—of which the Supreme Court itself is part. Last, the court’s retired president Judge Aharon Barak laid the cards on the table when he mused that Netanyahu could get a pardon in return for retiring from political life. And so, Kingsley, Bergman, and Odenheimer’s tale is an inversion of reality: Leaving politics, not staying in power, is the only path for Netanyahu to possibly avoid the continuation of his legal travails.

But the piece’s most egregious deception is its distortion of the historical record regarding the responsibility for the immense intelligence failure that led to the Hamas invasion. Kingsley, Berman, and Odenheimer exonerate the security officials directly responsible and blame the man whom these officials didn’t bother to brief until after the attack was underway.

In the authors’ rendering, military and Shin Bet intelligence saw the attack coming, but Netanyahu refused to heed their warnings. As they tell it, “In late July 2023, Israel’s military-intelligence directorate produced an alarming report that synthesized all intercepts gathered by Israeli intelligence in recent months.” The report’s bottom line—as Brig. Gen. Amit Saar, the army’s top intelligence analyst, told Netanyahu in a letter—was that “internal crisis,” resulting from the government’s proposed judicial reform, “exacerbates the damage to Israeli deterrence and increases the likelihood of escalation.”

But Netanyahu, in The New York Times’ morality play, was hell-bent on pushing through the reform to limit the Supreme Court’s power in order to satisfy the “ultranationalist” flank of his coalition, which sees the court as a threat to further settlement in Judea and Samaria, as well as to Likud’s ultra-Orthodox partners. Even the growing number of reservists threatening to walk out on their posts did not deter Netanyahu from pursuing his judicial reform.

The longer the war drags on without victory, the more support Netanyahu bleeds, especially among his base.

Israel’s responsible adults, such as former IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi, the piece adds, “tried to reach Netanyahu, in a previously unreported effort to get the prime minister to read Saar’s findings,” to no avail. Netanyahu stubbornly ignored repeated, written warnings by the security establishment. Shin Bet head Ronen Bar also tried to convince Netanyahu that real danger was looming, the piece adds. Netanyahu turned a deaf ear to his warnings, too.

This is not a misinterpretation. It is a falsification of the record. Netanyahu was not exactly forewarned. He was threatened by the rebellious top brass and a rogue chief of the secret police to stop a judicial reform that they opposed. They refused to deny rumors that they will disobey the elected government in case of a constitutional crisis, and they did not work to enforce discipline among reservists, in the service of security. Instead, they attempted to leverage the mutiny to advance their political agenda, and they weaponized intelligence, as well as their institutional authority, to pressure the prime minister.

And yet, these same chiefs who warned the prime minister of the looming catastrophe mysteriously took no steps to prepare for a Hamas invasion they allegedly saw coming—which was why the surprise attack caught Israel off guard. These officials were so confident that no danger from Gaza was imminent that, even after the signs of an impending invasion were accumulating during the night between Oct. 6 and 7, they dismissed them and left the soldiers in the perimeter sound asleep to be slaughtered in their beds by Hamas.

The security chiefs’ mutiny against civil authority persisted until 6:29 a.m. on Oct. 7, as they did not inform the minister of defense or the prime minister of what was happening throughout the night. We now know from the little we can glimpse of their considerations that they seemed to have been more worried about “miscalculation”—a euphemism for their fear that their

hawkish boss would overreact to intelligence and start a war—than they were about an impending Hamas attack.

As for Brig. Gen. Saar's warning, which is the cornerstone of the piece's theory about how Netanyahu ignored professional intelligence, the story seems to be very different from what the Times would have its readers believe. As Saar himself complained to Channel 11 in January 2025, far from trying to impress the prime minister with the seriousness of his report, his bosses in the IDF ignored it, including Halevi. The story about Halevi desperately trying to draw Netanyahu's attention to the report seems to be a complete fabrication, possibly originating with Halevi himself.

In fact, the two chiefs specifically mentioned in the piece as urgently trying to jolt Netanyahu out of his alleged complacency—Halevi and Bar—have spent their long months in office after the disaster trying to cover their tracks and spinning yarn designed to exonerate themselves. The state comptroller accused Halevi of intimidating officers under his command so they wouldn't cooperate with the investigation into the failures that led to Oct. 7, by forcing them to be chaperoned by members of his staff and secretly—not to mention illegally—recording their interviews with the comptroller's office.

Halevi and Bar had their offices produce inquiry reports to shift the blame onto Netanyahu. The Shin Bet report was transparently dishonest. According to what was released to the press, it claims that Shin Bet saw the previous round of violence in May 2021, Operation Guardian of the Walls, as a success for Hamas—and, consequently, has been warning of a possible attack ever since. But this claim is belied by the testimony of the then-head of Shin Bet, Nadav Argaman, who, on video, boasted to the press in real time that Guardian of the Walls was a brilliant success for Israel, which resulted in a changed, chastened Hamas. A source in the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee told me that in the two years preceding the war, both Shin Bet and IDF intelligence insisted that Hamas was deterred. The source added that not a single report was presented to the committee during this period that warned about the possibility of a Hamas plan of attack.

The bogus Shin Bet report is further contradicted by Ronen Bar's assessment of the situation in Gaza a mere week before Oct. 7, as reported by Israel's Channel 12 News:

The renewal of understandings between Israel and Hamas regarding security calm in return for relaxation of restrictions will allow the preservation of stability in the long run. Hamas is continuing Sinwar's strategy—advancing the organization's goals without being drawn into fighting. [Israel should] strive for a framework that will include considerable dividends in return for calm.

We now know that IDF intelligence had the full Hamas plan of attack and that the intelligence brass dismissed it as “fantasy.” The women at the scouting centers watching the border up close, some of whom were slaughtered or taken hostage on Oct. 7, likewise warned of Hamas training in plain sight at the border fence. The confidence of the security chiefs in their mistaken assessment never wavered. They overruled this evidence, too.

It's fitting that Kingsley, Bergman, and Odenheimer, who wrote this piece of propaganda masquerading as “investigative journalism,” are the recipients of a Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the Gaza war. Their prize is all too reminiscent of the one awarded to the Times team that parroted the intelligence services' baseless Russiagate allegations against the U.S. president.

## **EVERYBODY WANTS A PALESTINIAN STATE, EXCEPT THE PALESTINIANS**

JONATHAN S. TOBIN (JNS.org 22-8-25)

It's back in fashion. If Palestinian statehood were a stock, its price would be soaring. In the past several weeks, France, Britain, Canada and Australia have all said that they will recognize a Palestinian state next month at the annual meeting of the U.N. General Assembly. That's on top of the 147 U.N. member states that already recognize the state of “Palestine.”

None of them seems to think there's something wrong with rewarding Palestinians with statehood after the Hamas-led terrorist attacks on southern Israeli communities on Oct. 7, 2023. Indeed, that orgy of mass murder, rape, torture, kidnapping and wanton destruction seems to have fulfilled the hopes of Hamas terrorists by leading to a revival in interest in the scheme around the globe. The issue had gone stale for many years, due to the failure of negotiations to create one, sponsored by the Obama administration, and because of Palestinian intransigence. But a new spate of terrorism has suddenly made it quite popular.

A lot of Americans agree with the idea. According to a Reuters/IPSOS poll published this week, 58% of adult Americans favored recognition of a Palestinian state. That figure largely hinges on party affiliation, with 78% of

Democrats agreeing, while only 41% of Republicans favor such recognition. Interestingly, the question was paired with another about whether the State of Israel should be recognized. In that case, backing for Israel was higher, though far from unanimous, with 18% of Democrats, 12% of Republicans and 21% of those who didn't identify with either party opposing the existence of the one Jewish state on the planet that has already been in existence for 77 years.

### WHAT PALESTINIANS BELIEVE

That's a key point. While a lot of people may think that it's just fair play to give the Arabs a state if the Jews have one, the fact is, this state of Palestine that will be so popular at the General Assembly doesn't actually exist.

More importantly, the Palestinian Arab population doesn't want statehood as long as it would require them to live in peace alongside Israel. That's been made abundantly clear for the last century as they have rejected numerous offers of statehood dating back to the 1947 U.N. partition resolution, which divided up what was then the British Mandate for Palestine, into Jewish and Arab states. More recently, along with the United States, Israel offered the Palestinians a sovereign state in Gaza, a share of Jerusalem, and almost all of Judea and Samaria (with territorial swaps for Israeli land) in 2000, 2001 and 2008 as part of negotiations seeking a two-state solution. Each time, they said “no” or walked away from the talks. And according to the Palestinian Center for Policy and Research, which generally tilts its results toward the so-called “moderates” living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, that's still how they feel. The most recent poll they've conducted finds that only 40% of them favor such an entity as part of a two-state solution.

The Palestinian Authority, which autonomously rules most Arabs living in Judea and Samaria, has observer status at the United Nations. But neither it nor Hamas, which ruled Gaza from 2007 to 2023, qualifies for statehood under all the normal rules of international law. It doesn't control a defined territory and doesn't have a functioning government in any meaningful sense of the term.

The U.N. charter also requires it to be “peace-loving,” which, considering that neither the P.A. nor Hamas has shown itself willing to recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state, no matter where its borders might be drawn in the future, cannot be said of this putative Palestinian state that so many wish to create.

To give you an even better sense of Palestinian opinion these days, as the war begun by Hamas on Oct. 7 drags on, that same poll showed that even after the disastrous impact of that war for their people is evident, fully 59% of them still support the Oct. 7 attacks on Israel. Only 18% of Gazans blamed Hamas for the suffering they've gone through as a result of the fighting. A strong majority—56%—are confident that Hamas will win the war. A staggering 87% of them denied the atrocities committed on Oct. 7, even though the attackers—a majority of whom were ordinary Palestinians and not Hamas or Islamic Jihad fighters—proudly filmed them and posted them on social media at the time.

The poll also showed that two-thirds of Palestinians, 67%, opposed the demonstrations against Hamas by Gaza residents, begging them to relinquish control of the Strip and end the war. Another large majority, 59%, claim that those demonstrations, which have received little or no coverage in the international media, are fake and the result of foreign plotting. An overwhelming majority of Palestinians also oppose the disarmament of Hamas, with only 18% favoring it.

Interestingly, the survey also asked Palestinians who they would vote for if an election were held today between Mahmoud Abbas, the 89-year-old Fatah leader who is president of the P.A., and a representative of Hamas. The results showed the Hamas leader getting 68% and Abbas only 25%. The results illustrate why the authoritarian and corrupt P.A. government has not held an election in two decades, with Abbas now serving the 20th year of the four-year term he was elected to in 2005.

### ANOTHER HAMAS STATE?

That gives the lie to the line often expressed by the Biden administration and even Republican members of the foreign-policy establishment like former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who keep telling us that Hamas doesn't represent most Palestinians. The truth is that there is little difference between the ultimate goals of Hamas and Fatah. Both seek Israel's destruction and view talk of a separate Palestinian state as merely a way to further that objective, just as the late terrorist Yasser Arafat said all along, even when he signed the Oslo Accords in 1993.

And that explains why a recent Gallup survey showed that only 21% of all Israelis (and only 16% of Jewish Israelis) think the Palestinian state that everyone but the Palestinians want is compatible with peaceful coexistence.

The truth is that the Hamas state that existed in Gaza before Oct. 7 was an independent Palestinian state in all but name. Many hoped after Israel

withdrew every soldier, settler and Jewish community from the Strip 20 years ago—in the summer of 2005—that the Arab residents there would create a prosperous or at least peaceful enclave on the Mediterranean with the tens of billions of dollars in aid that poured into the coastal enclave during those years. Instead, it was utilized to build an underground terrorist fortress.

The aim of that Hamas government—then and now still supported by most Palestinians—wasn't to better the lives of its population or build a state. It was to use their power to advance the Palestinians' century-old war on the Jews, destroy the Jewish state and achieve the genocide of its population, Jewish and otherwise. The unspeakable horrors of Oct. 7 were just the trailer for what the Palestinians aimed to do to all of Israel.

Why, then, are so many countries lining up to give them a state with which they can try to do the same thing again?

#### A PROPAGANDA VICTORY

The main impetus for the uptick in advocacy for a Palestinian state is the success of Hamas propaganda about the war they started.

The international media has bought Hamas's lies about Palestinian civilian casualties, starvation and Israeli genocide, hook, line and sinker. Palestinians are definitely suffering as a result of the war they started. But thanks to sympathetic coverage that largely ignores Hamas's use of civilians as human shields, coupled with its stealing of the massive amount of food and other supplies allowed into Gaza only to create food shortages for civilians, most people around the world believe the destruction and the harm being caused by the war is solely Israel's fault. That includes many in the United States, particularly among youth.

That it is unprecedented for the party that was attacked to be asked to feed the very people who prefer them dead hasn't deterred international opinion from demanding that the Jewish state do so and to declare that its efforts in that regard remain insufficient.

Hamas has achieved this signal triumph even as its army of terrorists has been defeated by the Israel Defense Forces because of its ability to control the media operating in Gaza. As was the case before Oct. 7, there are only three kinds of journalists who cover the Palestinian population in Gaza, whether they are local Palestinians working for Arab media like the Qatar-run Al Jazeera or stringing for international outlets. Those consist of the journalists who are influenced by and sympathetic to Hamas; those who are intimidated by Hamas into doing their bidding; and those who actually are Hamas members (including some who participated in the Oct. 7 massacres).

Yet there is more to this than just media bias.

Another major factor is domestic politics. In countries like France and Britain, a bizarre red-green alliance of Marxists and Islamists who may differ on many things but are united by their antisemitism is a powerful factor in determining government policy. A massive influx of Muslim immigrants from North Africa, South Asia and the Middle East has become a powerful political force in France and the United Kingdom.

The left comes to this position through its embrace of toxic Marxist ideas like intersectionality and settler-colonialism, in which Jews and Israel are falsely labeled as "white" oppressors of downtrodden Palestinians, who are "people of color." That's why the same thing is happening in Canada and Australia, where left-wing parties currently in power have now adopted the Hamas blood libels about Israel committing genocide. It also explains the willingness of Democrats in the United States to buy into the same lies.

#### A SURGE OF HATRED

Yet underlying this embrace of Hamas propaganda about Israel and the growing support for Palestinian statehood is the post-Oct. 7 surge in antisemitism.

The increase in Jew-hatred around the globe is partly a result of the lies about Israel, as well as the way the victimization of Jews has always encouraged animosity against them. But it builds on the hostility to Jews that is part of the history of the West, as well as is built into the mindset of Arab and Muslim culture.

No other nation in the world would be asked to deliberately endanger itself by allowing its sworn enemies to be put in a stronger position to achieve its destruction. No other nation would be or ever has been judged by such double standards about its conduct. Only the State of Israel and its people are expected to experience the worst slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust and not seek to prevent that from happening again.

Two states for two peoples sounds logical and a nice idea. And in a world where one of the two states was not inhabited by people whose national identity and political culture are inextricably tied to a futile war for the destruction of the other one, it might work.

That and that alone is why the Palestinians still don't have a state. It's also why the overwhelming majority of Israelis—and people who support Israel, like the overwhelming majority of Republicans in the United States—refuse

to let one be created after trying to give them one to them time and again, only to discover that they were trading land for terror, not peace.

All of this leads one to ask whether those advocating for a Palestinian state now that they've repeatedly shown that they don't want one except as a platform from which they can further their war on Israel understand such facts and history.

Given the abysmal lack of knowledge about the history of the Middle East and the biased news coverage of the conflict, it explains why many think that a Palestinian state is a fine idea or wrongly believe that Jews are colonizers in the country where they are the indigenous people.

It's also true that many of those advocating for Palestinian statehood or chanting "From the river to the sea" or "Globalize the intifada"—in effect, cheering for Jewish genocide and terrorism against them everywhere—on college campuses and the streets of Western cities are not just ignorant. They, too, seek Israel's destruction.

And so, it's time to be honest about the push for Palestinian statehood.

Support for the idea is not about fairness or alleged Israeli misbehavior. It's rooted in prejudice against Jews, and a willingness to erase Jewish history and rights. And even to acquiesce to the mass slaughter of Israelis as a possibility that is debatable, rather than abhorrent.

Whether the result of political calculations, dishonest journalism or leftist ideologies, the growing support for Palestinian statehood is a function of a desire on the part of many people—whether on the left or a loud minority on the right—to envision the eradication of the sole Jewish state on the planet. This issue is thus a test of international morality as much as anything else. Decent people, whether they are Jewish or non-Jewish or where they are on the political and religious spectrums, must oppose it.

### MOUNTING CASUALTIES MAY FORCE HAMAS TO USE ADULT FIGHTERS

DAVE SWIDLER (PreOccupiedTerritory.com 21-8-25)

Gaza City, August 21 - The impending Israeli offensive into this urban center in the Gaza Strip threatens to put such a strain on the Islamist terrorists invested in the city that they may have no choice but to staff their ranks here with over-18 militants, perhaps even men, a battalion commander acknowledged today.

Hamas has lost tens of thousands of fighters since their invasion of southern Israel in October 2023, putting serious pressure on the organization's manpower reserves, estimated before the war at about 30,000. Replacements have had insufficient time to train, relegating many of them to ancillary non-combat roles. If, as expected, Israel begins its Gaza City offensive soon, to put further pressure on Hamas to release the 50 remaining October 7 hostages and hostage bodies, Hamas will find itself forced to plug the line with adults, stated Hamza Ashraf.

"We are running out of front-line children," Ashraf admitted. "If you want front-line troops, you must recruit the most motivated candidates. But we have slim pickings now. As much as it pains me to say so, we might have to start putting adults in the line of fire, and maybe even adult males."

"In retrospect, we could have used fewer children in digging the tunnels," he observed. "Or, at the very least, we could have implemented some real safety protocols so we wouldn't lose so many. But that's water under the bunker. Right now, we have some agonizing decisions to make if we're going to resist this upcoming assault."

The challenge for Hamas commanders, analysts say, lies in conflicting interests: slowing or stopping Israel's offensive through the infliction of heavy casualties, which does not square with the strategic Hamas approach of putting children in harm's way to exploit the images of their death and suffering to demonize Israel and isolate the Jewish State internationally. While the strategic approach has enjoyed much success, it has not deterred Israel from a stated commitment to crush Hamas and permanently remove the threat of another October 7.

"We have always considered the Zionists weak, and weak-willed," explained a Khan Yunis operative who specializes in booby-trapping buildings to collapse on IDF soldiers. "Our expectations for the [October 7] Al Aqsa flood were that the Jews would start fleeing. That's our expectation after every operation, really. We have no other way of thinking about things. So we figure, enough dead Israeli soldiers and they'll stop fighting. Our allies in Qatar, Moscow, and NGOs are very good at fomenting 'domestic' opposition to continued fighting, and that's part of what happened in every previous round. Sure, the enemy is more determined this time, but we don't expect the dynamic to change in quality, only quantity. But if we only use children, we inflict fewer casualties and that would squander the opportunity to hurt Jewish morale."

*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](mailto:info@kosher.org.au) or visit [www.kosher.org.au](http://www.kosher.org.au)

## COLOR

RABBI DOVID COHEN (cRcweb.org)

Q. How do they make “colors” for food? Are they kosher-sensitive?

A. Food colorings can be divided into two groups: artificial and natural. The artificial ones, such as FD&C Blue #1 or FD&C Yellow #5, are typically made from petroleum and similar innocuous sources and do not present much of a kashrus concern when they are “pure”. However, they are sometimes blended with glycerin or other kosher-sensitive ingredients, and in those cases, they would obviously require hashgachah.

Many of the natural colors are also free of inherent kashrus concerns. This includes green, orange, and purple colors created with or from chlorophyll, carotenoids, and red cabbage, respectively. However, the same is not true of certain other natural colors. For example, enocianina (a.k.a., eno, E-163) is created from the solid remains after grapes have been squeezed for grape juice and wine production. These will be assur mid’rabannan as stam yayin, unless specially made under hashgachah. Another example is carmine, which is made by crushing cochineal insects to create very stable red, orange, pink, and lavender colors. This product is assur mid’oraisah like the bug it is made from. [Carmine is also known as carminic acid, E-120, crimson lake, CI 75470, and cochineal extract.]

We have already noted that enocianina is assur mid’rabannan, and carmine is assur mid’oraisah. Of course, from a l’chatchilah perspective, we would, therefore, not add any of these colors to a kosher food. However, there is a significant halachic difference between these two colors as relates to b’dieved cases, where they were used in a finished food product. This is because these colors are invariably used in tiny proportions where they would be batel b’shishim in any food product. However, some Poskim rule that anytime something non-kosher provides color (chasuzah) to a food, that makes that ingredient so “important” that it cannot be batel even if it is used in very small amounts. There are many opinions regarding that issue, and it is generally accepted to follow the ruling of Pri Chadash YD 102:5, that when the color is assur mid’oraisah one should be machmir, but we can be lenient if the color itself is only assur mid’rabannan.

This means that if carmine was used to give a “strawberry” yogurt its pinkish/red color, the carmine cannot be batel, since it is assur mid’oraisah, and, therefore, the yogurt would be forbidden. [Even so, utensils used with that food would not require kashering, since the tiny amount of carmine does not provide any ta’am/taste, and kashering is only required when there is non-kosher ta’am that must be extracted.] However, if enocianina was mistakenly used to give a candy its purple color, then b’dieved the candy would remain kosher.

One common consumer question about colors relates to fresh, raw salmon which is labeled as being “artificially colored”. The average person reading this thinks that this means that the fish was dyed with some coloring agent. In fact, that is not at all what it means. Rather, it just indicates that these fish were raised in a “fish farm” (basically, a large swimming pool), and their food purposely included something called astaxanthin, so that the fish can develop their natural pinkish/orange color. [Fish which live in the sea also eat food that contains astaxanthin, and the requirement to label farm-raised salmon as being “artificially colored” is a government way to support fishermen who sell wild-raised salmon.] Thus, this type of statement on salmon does not raise any kashrus concerns.

**Candles (Melb) Friday 29 August 2025, 6 Ellul 5785 5:38p/6:36p**