בס"ד

מכון יצחק

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TSAV 5786

Please Take Out the Garbage

RABBI JAY KELMAN (TorahinMotion.com)

One of the ideological revolutions of the Zionist movement was the notion of the inherent value of physical labour. Jews traditionally like to think of themselves as pursuing intellectual wisdom; earning their livelihood with their brains, not their hands. Zionism preached the concept of the holiness of manual labour, and through it succeeded in turning a barren wasteland into a land flowing with milk and honey.

The importance of "blue collar work" is, of course, not a new notion and was well accepted by our Sages. "Flee carcasses in the marketplace, and do not take from charity" (Pesachim 113a), they said. No honest work is menial or "beneath us". It is thus no coincidence that some of our greatest sages were not only doctors but blacksmiths, winemakers, and carpenters.

The importance of "menial" work is underscored at the opening of this week's parsha. The Torah tells us that the first mitzvah performed each and every day in the Beit Hamikdash was that of Terumath Hadeshen--the cleaning of the ashes that had accumulated due to the constantly burning fires of the altars. "Janitorial work" thus was the fulfillment of the Divine will. Setting up chairs, taking out the garbage, and sweeping the floors in order to beautify our own Mikdashei Me'at (miniature sanctuary, our shuls) is transformed into a mitzvah.

The Mishnah in Yoma records that even though the Terumat Hadeshen was performed at the crack of dawn, the kohanim vied for the privilege of cleaning the altar. In fact, a lottery system was eventually instituted in order to fairly distribute this honour. Unfortunately, on one occasion, a kohen was actually murdered while attempting to perform this mitzvah because of another's intense jealousy. While it is desirable to be zealous in one's religious observance, there is no greater danger than that of misplaced religious fervour.

Sadly, our generation has not applied the lessons of the Terumat Hadeshen in our service of G-d. It is difficult to find individuals willing to perform the "menial" but vital tasks that every organization needs; volunteers are harder and harder to find. While there is no doubt that people are busy, we always do find time for the important things in life. The positions of honour, with their prestigious titles, are often fought over (often to the disservice of all involved); but it is the people in the background who are the lifeblood of organizational work. No task is beneath their dignity as they perform their mitzvoth with pride.

Many Chumashim have a note in this week's parsha (8:7) telling us that this verse is the midpoint of all the verses in the Chumash. The Torah here describes how Moshe helped to dress Aharon with the special priestly garments in preparation for his consecration as high priest. But does the Torah really have to tell us how Aharon got dressed? This is the central verse of the entire Chumash! The lesson that the Torah wants to stress is that the essence of Judaism is helping others with the little things in life. Moshe was honoured to have a share in the mitzvah, even though he had no actual role to play in the Temple.

His help was all the more remarkable when we consider the fact that our Sages note that deep down, Moshe wanted the priesthood for himself. The Chumash alludes to this in verse 23, where we have only one of four shalshelets in the Chumash. This liturgical note symbolizes hesitation, as is evident when we hear it. Moshe was not really sure he wanted to continue preparing Aharon for the priesthood. However, he did not let his personal feelings stand in the way of performing his duty.

Instead of worrying about what is best for the community, too many base our decisions on political or other considerations. We must strive to act solely with the best interest of the Jewish community at heart; willingly doing our part, however minor it may appear. This is the essence of nation-building, a task upon which we focus on Pesach, and it is the essence of Torah.

Room for a Broom

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

This week's portion begins with Hashem telling Moshe to teach Ahron and his children a few laws. Hashem does not tell Moshe to speak to Ahron, He does not even tell Moshe to teach Ahron. He tells Moshe "Tzav es Ahron." Command Ahron.

"Tzav," Rashi explains, "is a very powerful word. It means command with a charge that is to be executed with speed and diligence. The word tzav," Rashi continues, "is also used only for situations that have eternal ramifications." If we analyze the next few commands, we may be left wondering: why do those charges need the powerful preface Tzav?

The next verse is about the Korban Olah. A Korban Olah is a sacrifice that is committed entirely to Hashem, no part of the animal, save the skin, is left for human benefit or consumption. The person who brings it wants to make sure that it is offered within the highest standards of Halacha. The admonition, tzav surely is appropriate. However, the Torah only spends one verse on the Olah. It proceeds to tell us about the daily cleaning of the ashes of the altar. A Kohen must wear linen vestments, remove the ashes, and place them near the altar.

Why is this menial job mentioned together with the holy Olah? To what end does it merit the powerful command, tzav?

The Steipler Gaon, Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Kanievski, was a paradigm of holiness. The stories about his sanctity were well known throughout the Torah community. At seventeen, he had already survived the Russian army without compromising Shabbos or Kashrut.

The Steipler was not known for lengthy conversation. He had lost his hearing standing as a sentry on freezing Siberian nights during his tenure in the Czar's army. People would write questions to him or beseech him to pray on behalf of the sick or unfortunate. The Steipler would read the note, hardly lift his eyes from the large volume on his old table, and would start to pray. He would often condense his advice into on or two sentences, but it would be potent. People asked, and he gave answers. Within days miraculous salvation came. And so did the people. They stood in lines outside his modest home, and the very old man would find the time to see anyone who walked in with the problems of the world bearing down on his or her shoulder.

An aspiring young man, whose quest was to be as great a scholar as the Steipler himself, came with a problem. The young man felt that this particular predicament was impeding his spiritual growth and surely a man like Rabbi Kanievski, who persevered in the face of life-threatening problems, could relate to his!

The young man had written the situation in detail for the Steipler to grasp its severity. "Every Friday," wrote the young man, "I come home from Yeshiva, and the scene in the house leads me to despair. The table is not set, the kitchen is hardly clean, and the children are not bathed! What should I do? How can I concentrate on my studies when I have such problems?" The aspiring scholar expected the Steipler to advise him how to deal with a wife that was not keeping to his standard.

The Steipler looked up from the paper and made a grave face. The young man smiled. The Steipler must have realized the severity of the situation. Then he

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

spoke in his heavy Russian-accented Yiddish. "You really want to know what to do?" The young man nodded eagerly. The Steipler looked austere.
"TAKE A BROOM!"
Rabbeinu Yonah of Girondi (1180-1263) explains the juxtaposition of the command to sweep ashes with that of the Korban Olah. A person must realize that sometimes what is considered menial work in human eyes merits the highest accord in Hashem's eyes. The mitzvah of sweeping the Altar is prefaced with the word tzav and placed next to the Korban Olah. One must realize that the little, unglorified acts also yield great sanctity. In the quest for spirituality, one must never demean the simple chores. For no matter how holy one is, there is always room for a broom.

Enthusiasm

RABBI BEN A. (Chabad.org)
"A constant fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall never go out"— 6:6.
There is a tradition that interprets this verse as a specific warning against the fire on the altar going out even under two conditions where one might reason that it should: during the Sabbath and in a state of ritual impurity. On the Sabbath one might reason that inasmuch as it is a day of rest, the flames of the altar should rest as well. In a situation of impurity, one might assume that first there must be a purification of whatever is impure and then to relight the flame afterward.
On a deeper level, this verse also speaks to the individual regarding the "flame" – that is the passion – that burns on his internal "altar" in his heart. We must always be enthusiastic in the service of our Maker. Apathy, depression, sloth and other "cold" emotional states are antithetical to being of true service to G-d.
However, one could still try to reason that under certain conditions, it would be unnecessary or even inappropriate to feel excitement and passion. Aren't there cases where a different emotional disposition is called for? In answer to this argument we are told that the flame must be kept burning always—even on the Sabbath, even in a case of ritual impurity.
The Sabbath is more than a day of rest. It is a day when we disengage ourselves from worldly affairs and live life on a more spiritual plane. Ritual impurity represents the very opposite state, being immersed in the material to the point of becoming disconnected from spirituality.
When one is in a Sabbath-like state, standing above the fray of mundane, day-to-day concerns, he may feel that he is already in a good place. He no longer needs to feel the passion that he did while working his way to where he is now. Indeed, he'd like to relax at this point and bask in the serenity in which he has finally found himself.
The alcoholic in recovery may find that after much honest and hard work, he has finally found a bit of peace. Of course, he knows that it took passion to get where he is. But now that he's finally made it, he doesn't see the great need to be as excited as he was when he was a giddy newcomer riding the pink cloud of early sobriety. He's an old timer now. He'll stick to his program, but he'll do it in a more calm and cool manner.
Then there is the opposite situation—impurity. One has become enmeshed in petty and selfish things and feels disconnected from his Source. In this case, it wouldn't seem right to be excited. After all, in a situation like that, what is there to be excited about? Sometimes the alcoholic has allowed life's problems to overwhelm him and finds himself in a state of depression, anxiety or isolation. Maybe he has even had a slip or is emotionally drunk without actually taking a drink. It's difficult to be excited when you're down in the dumps. In this sort of case, he might argue, "Let me get out of my slump first and then I'll have something to be charged up about."
Nevertheless, we are told that the fire on the altar must be kept burning in both of these cases—Sabbath and impurity. There is no situation too lofty and no situation too bleak that it precludes the constant need for exuberance, joy and warmth.

KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING

KATIA BOLOTIN (Aish.com)
Judaism views every activity in life as an opportunity to bring ourselves closer to G-d. Everything can be utilized as a means toward achieving a connection with the Almighty. What we do—and what we don't do—matters.
Nothing is neutral, trivial, or without value. We've been given specific mitzvot to raise up the seemingly insignificant parts of our lives, yet we can lose ourselves in the daily grind. One's true essence can become subsumed by the superficial.
The allure of counterfeit success beckons us. It's easy to mistake illusion for truth. Rather than clearly viewing one's endeavors as a means toward a higher end, the success and recognition for which we strive can morph into ends in themselves. Material achievements can become the sole goal of one's toil and efforts. Self-absorption literally can encapsulate one's spirit. The larger picture, the broader, more expansive vision, becomes blurred and out of focus. If work, as a means to provide for your family, morphs into an all-consuming demand on your time, thoughts, and energy, ask yourself this question: What am I living for? Without continual awareness of one's greater purpose, one's spiritual inner fire will burn out.
Burnout is a real issue, both in the workplace and at home. It poses a threat, both personally and professionally. Burnout negatively affects productivity, morale, relationships, and personal success. Much has been written about how to prevent, recognize, and deal with it. These are the pervasive symptoms of burnout:

1. Feeling lethargic and depleted of energy
2. Feelings of negativity and isolation
3. Reduced productivity

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah provides a lesson in the prevention of burnout.
A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished.
The constant fire on the Altar of the Mishkan symbolizes the union between G-d and the people. It sheds light on the spiritual cause, and means for prevention, of burnout. Spiritual depletion can contribute to burnout. If one's inner essence, the soul, isn't properly nourished, eventually one will feel the effects. Take an example from a plant. If it goes unwatered for a period of time, it will begin to droop— a signal that it needs to be nourished. So too, a depleted soul will signal a person's mind and body that something is amiss and lacking.
Let's look deeper into what the continual fire on the Altar represents in our lives. Fire can represent the soul's yearning to ascend, to be unified with its source—G-d. It also represents the exuberant love of life and one's inner desire. Rabbi Moshe Alshich explains in his Torah commentary that the "fire burning in the Mishkan symbolizes the love for G-d that burns within every soul." I'd like to suggest that, perhaps, this fire also represents G-d's love and constant presence in our lives. Thus, this continual fire is a reciprocal love. We see on the Altar a blending of both Divine and human fires, synthesized as one.
The Divine fire within our hearts and souls is fueled by our enthusiastic desire to come close to G-d. Studying His Torah, revealing His Presence in the world, and fulfilling His commandments are the means by which to achieve this great end.
It is often noted that the Hebrew words mitzvah and tzav (the name of this Torah portion) share a common root that means "command." The root of these words, however, is also the root of the Aramaic word tzavtah, which means "connection." Creating a connection is at the root of each of G-d's mitzvot. The mitzvot act as connectors, creating a spiritual connection between the Almighty and His creations. They are imperatives, not suggestions. Of course, a person has free choice to ignore them or to pretend that they don't apply to him or her, but that doesn't change the fact that they are commandments, not just recommendations.
What would happen if you repeatedly ignored your electric bill or pretended that traffic laws didn't apply to you? Eventually these things would catch up with you, wouldn't they? Likewise, there are consequences to ignoring G-d's commands. Such consequences can manifest them- selves spiritually and physically.
Chassidic thought and philosophy teach how to renew one's zest and enthusiasm for life on a daily basis. Without daily rejewvenation, most of us can become complacent and unable to move outside of our comfort zones. We may start to stagnate.
A story is told of the founder of the Chabad movement, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi. When he was a young student, his teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, repeated the following verse from this Torah portion ten times: "A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." He explained that the Hebrew words "lo yichbeh—it shall not be extinguished" could also be read as "the 'no' [i.e., all negativity] shall be extinguished." He went on to expand on how the deep teachings of Chassidus ignite and fan the soul's natural tendency to light up with a passionate love for G-d. As this fire burns, it "extinguishes" all negative influences that try to derail the positive drive for holiness and the burning desire to be nearer to G-d.
This teaching can remind us that our inner flame must be maintained continually. We must provide our souls with spiritual fuel, so that the innermost sparks will ignite a flaming fire—a fire that will burn perpetually and not be extinguished. Such is the secret of ongoing vitality: the fire of faith and living with renewed purpose.
Remember: "A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." Studying G-d's Torah, fulfilling His mitzvot, and revealing His Presence in the world are ongoing purposes. Yet somehow, one can become passive and complacent, without a sense of renewal. Our ongoing relationship with G-d and His Torah must not become merely intellectual or

overly academic. This lacks emotion, warmth, and spirit. Torah study and observance should set our souls, minds, and hearts aflame. We should feel spiritually illuminated by its brilliant clarity.

The spiritual inner flame needs to burn continually. Should there be a lapse, negativity can fill the resulting void. During those times, life's circumstances can cause us to feel pessimistic. We can find ourselves distant from the Torah's refined and lofty expectations of us.

Even in times of struggle, we need to keep our fire burning. We must, as the saying goes, "keep on keeping on." Yet, when we are burdened with negative spiritual baggage, it may seem nearly impossible to live up to the Torah's imperatives and ideals. But it's just the opposite! Being overcome by negativity and self-doubt are the real obstacles to overcome.

The Divine flame may be dormant in some of our hearts, but the embers are still there, awaiting to be reignited. Gradually, you can overcome every impediment, eventually reclaiming and rejewvinating that holy spark within you. Only this time, because of, not in spite of, your struggle, you'll attain an even greater spiritual vantage point than ever before. Your inner flame is waiting to be reignited.

PRIVACY

AVROHOM YAAKOV

Continuing the laws of the various sacrifices, the Torah moves onto the Chatos, the sin offering. The person brings the animal, confesses the sin and the animal is slaughtered.

"In the place where the Olah (the burnt offering) is brought, bring the Chatos." (6:18)

Why was the Olah and Chatos sacrificed in the same area in the Temple courtyard?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yevamos 8:13) explains that this protects the sinners from being shamed as their offering could be construed as being an Olah, not for any actual wrongdoing.

Beyond protecting the sinner from public embarrassment, Oznayim LaTorah notes that this placement also serves as a warning to the Kohanim themselves conducting the Chatos service. They are the ones that hear the confession and then complete the service. They know exactly why the korban is brought and the 'dirty washing'.

Just as the Torah takes precautions to reduce the embarrassment of the person bringing the Chatos, the Kohanim are expected to protect the reputations of those bringing the Korbanos by not disclosing the confession.

Without such a precaution, people would soon balk at bringing a Chatos since there would be no guarantee of their privacy or the protection of their reputation. Consequently, they would be unable to properly correct their error and cease to visit the Temple.

If repentance is met with exposure rather than protection, people will choose silence over growth.

The site where the Chatos is brought teaches us that naming and shaming is not the Torah way.

Holy Leftovers

RABBI MENACHEM FELDMAN (Chabad.org)

If we think about how we live our lives, most of us will come to the realization that the majority of our day is not spent on the things we value most. We work all week in order to enjoy time off on the weekend. We spend all day making a living to provide for our families, which, in many cases, leaves us with few waking moments to actually spend time with our loved ones.

This is all the more so when it comes to our spiritual life. Most of our day is dedicated to providing for our material needs—eating, drinking, earning a living, sleeping, exercising, relaxing, etc.—which leaves us with but a few moments each day for the needs of our soul. Our soul, too, desires to be nourished; our soul, too, needs moments of self-expression. Our soul desires to transcend, to engage in holiness, to pray, to study Torah and to do good deeds. Yet, we spend most of our day, and most of our life, feeding the body instead of feeding the soul.

For some spiritual seekers, this is too painful an existence, and they instead pursue a life of asceticism. They seek to minimize the time spent on the needs of the body and maximize the time spent on feeding the desires of their soul. And even during the time they must attend to the needs of the body, they do so with a sense of pain, as they would prefer to focus exclusively on the soul.

Judaism, however, has a completely different outlook, resulting in a vastly different approach to life.

Judaism teaches that if we begin the day with a moment of holiness, if we offer even a small portion of our time to G-d in the morning, then that experience will affect the rest of the day, infusing it with significance and holiness. The rest of the day, when we tend to our material activities and needs, is a continuation of the spiritual experience and is considered holy, for it is infused with the holiness of the moments we offered to G-d.

This is the inner meaning of the description of the meal offering that we read about in this week's Torah portion. When the Jew brings an offering of grain, which symbolizes all of his material needs, only a handful of the flour is actually burned on the altar. Only a few moments of our day are completely dedicated to the spiritual service of G-d. Yet, the Torah assures us that while the rest of the flour is eaten by the priests, it is nevertheless holy, as it is considered the remainder of the offering.

The Torah tells us:

And this is the law of the meal offering: that Aharon's sons shall bring it before the L-rd, to the front of the altar. And he shall lift out of it in his fist, from the fine flour of the meal offering and from its oil and all the frankincense that is on the meal offering, and he shall cause its reminder to [go up in] smoke on the altar as a pleasing fragrance to the L-rd. (6:7-8)

The fistful of flour represents the moments that we dedicate to G-d. The Torah then continues to describe the leftover flour:

And Aharon and his sons shall eat whatever is left over from it. It shall be eaten as unleavened bread in a holy place; they shall eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. It shall not be baked leavened. [As] their portion, I have given it to them from My fire offerings. It is a holy of holies, like the sin offering and like the guilt offering. (6:9-10)

The leftovers, the remainder of the day, is also holy. For the holiness of the morning mitzvahs—reciting the Modeh Ani, reciting the Shema, laying tefillin—spills over to the rest of the day, impacting the rest of our pursuits, reminding us that our material needs, too, serve a holy and spiritual purpose.3

Based on the teaching of the Rebbe, Reshimot 134.

Grasp the Moment

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

Not everyone has the privilege of saying "thank you" to the Creator by bringing a thanksgiving offering to the Holy Temple. The Talmud tells us that only people who were recently delivered from extreme danger – an ocean voyage, a desert journey, a serious illness, a term of imprisonment – can bring this special sacrifice. Why is this so? Why can't we express our gratitude for other momentous occasions in our lives by bringing this selfsame thanksgiving offering?

Furthermore, we find an anomaly in the laws of this sacrifice. The thanksgiving offering falls into the general category of shelamim, peace offerings. However, we read in this week's Torah portion that there is less time allowed for eating the meat of the sacrifice. The peace offering can be eaten for two days, but the thanksgiving offering for only one day. Why does the Torah reduce the eating time of this sacrifice?

The answers to these questions are rooted in the fundamental concepts of the sacrificial service. The purpose of the sacrifices is to foster closeness between the Creator and ourselves. When we bring a sacrifice to the altar we are symbolically offering ourselves up to Him, subsuming our hearts, our minds, our souls, our very lives in the universal embrace of the Divine Presence. Eating the meat of the sacrifice, the Talmud explains, is an extension of the sacrificial service. Through the act of ingesting the sanctified meat, we connect to the transcendent concepts and symbolism of the sacrifice not only through our intellectual and emotional faculties but through our purely physical ones as well. In this way, the experience becomes total and the connection is absolute.

When we bring a thanksgiving offering, we take advantage of moments of outstanding inspiration to forge a closer relationship with our Creator. Life is full of little inspirations and numerous opportunities to express our gratitude to Hashem. Most of these, however, do not move us to our core, and therefore, they are not powerful enough to warrant a sacrifice. But when a person is reprieved after staring death in the face, he is totally energized and exhilarated, and the words of thanksgiving and joy he directs heavenward emanate from the essence of his being. This sort of inspiration can be brought to the Temple and presented to Hashem in the form of a thanksgiving sacrifice. This sort of inspiration can be channeled to foster an everlasting closeness.

But inspiration is an ephemeral thing. Like a flash of lightning, it illuminates our surroundings in painfully sharp clarity and then is gone, leaving only a memory that slowly fades away. During that moment, we gain a totally different and highly vivid perspective of what is important and what is trivial. During that moment, we have the ability to find new direction and meaning for our daily existence. Later, it is too late. Therefore, the Torah limits the time period for eating the thanksgiving offering. Grasp the moment! If we wait, it will be gone.

A high-level royal minister was deeply involved in a national crisis situation. During this time, while the king and his ministers conferred daily to discuss developments, the king's birthday came and went without the customary celebration. The crisis eventually passed, and the conduct of government

affairs returned to normal. Shortly thereafter, the minister purchased a beautiful birthday gift and sent it to the king.

A few weeks later, the king and his minister were discussing the crisis and what could be done to prevent future recurrences.

"We can't afford to go through something like this again," said the king with a wry smile. "Do you realize that I didn't even receive any birthday gifts this years because of the crisis?"

"Your majesty, have you forgotten?" the minister protested. "I sent you a very beautiful gift. Didn't you receive it?"

"Indeed, I did," said the king. "And I thank you. Had you given it to me on my birthday, I would have perceived it as an expression of your joyous celebration of such an important day in my life. But it was given several weeks later. It did not represent your sense of joy but rather your sense of obligation. Much as I appreciate it, I do not consider it a true birthday gift."

In our own lives, we are often profoundly inspired during times of great joy or, Heaven forbid, great distress. On these occasions, we are inclined to take stock of our existence and resolve to make important changes, either to improve our relationship with our Creator, to correct our flaws and shortcomings or simply to spend more time with our families. When this happens, it is important to translate our inspiration into action immediately, for if we wait until we get around to it, more often than not we never will.

If You Touch It, You Bought It

ADAM LIEBERMAN (aish.com)

This week's Torah portion spells out more of the laws regarding the sacrifices the Jewish people brought. And G-d said that:

"... flesh that touches any contaminated thing may not be eaten, it shall be burned in fire..." (7:19)

Why would flesh that was pure suddenly become contaminated by merely "touching" something else that was contaminated?

This actually teaches a valuable and powerful lesson: we are profoundly influenced by our surroundings. We do become a product of our environment.

Being around any type of behavior that we don't want to fully engage in ourselves is never a good idea. The fact is, when you're around people you don't want to become more like, their behavior - whether you decide to presently do it or not - will eventually rub off on you. You can't just declare that "I will never become like them." Good or bad, your environment will affect you. The sages have said this since the beginning of time.

This is true even if people aren't involved. If someone has a problem controlling his drinking, then it's clearly unwise for him to keep alcohol in his possession. Merely seeing the alcohol or knowing that's it's easily accessible could tempt an otherwise strong and determined person. In many cases, you just have to completely distance yourself from any behavior you don't want to engage in.

Whether we like it or not, we're influenced by the company we keep. And given enough time, we can eventually become more and more like those who surround us. So choose your environment wisely. Because no matter how much willpower and conviction we have to stay "true to who you are," we're all human and for better or worse, we'll change every day whether we like it or not.

Bad Hair Day?

RABBI LEVI AVTZON (Chabad.org)

We all have moods. Moods that affect the clothing we wear (I am in the brown shoes mood today), the lunch we eat (apricot jelly and peanut butter sandwich), the music we listen to (classical), and almost everything else in our lives, from the way we wake up in the morning to the nature of our nighttime dreams. And when we act in regrettable fashion, we, of course, blame it on the mood: "I am just having a bad day. Too bad!"

Unfortunately, moods can sometimes infringe on our relationship with G-d, and with our fellows as well. "I am just not in the mood for prayer," "I'll put on tefillin tomorrow," "I am not in the mood for my kids," "I am in the mood of wasting five hours of my life surfing the Web."

As always, we find relevant counsel in the Torah for all the issues concerning our lives. In the seventh chapter of Vayikra, we read regarding an interesting ritual that pertained to the peace offering. The one who was bringing the offering, along with the priest who processed it, would take certain parts of the animal and "wave them before G-d." Rashi, the foremost biblical commentator, explains: "He would move them forward and backward, upward and downward."

Following the chassidic axiom that the animal sacrifices are actually a reflection of an inner sacrifice, that of offering to G-d our natural ("animalistic") instincts and temptation, we must learn a relevant personal lesson from this curious ritual too.

Let's get back into the mood:

"Upward" and "downward" refer to our mood roller coaster. No matter where our moods score on the Richter scale, the sacrificing must continue! Our duties in life cannot be interrupted because of a foul mood. Torah and mitzvot must be fulfilled regardless. Our responsibilities don't take a vacation, and our connection to G-d doesn't and shouldn't swing with the moods.

"Forward" and "backward" refer to our responsibility vis-à-vis the world around us, the world that is not in any way affected by the fact that I woke up in a grouchy mood. The world needs so much fixing; how can we afford to hibernate because of a bad hair day?

Let the moods dictate the shoes, their color, and perhaps even the amount of chocolate we consume. But when it comes to the important things in life (sorry, chocolate addicts), let the moods be subservient to you, and you be the master!

News & Views

Israeli forces foil assassination plot against Ben-Gvir

JNS Staff (JNS.org 24-3-26)

Israeli security forces recently thwarted a suicide attack targeting Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, arresting an eastern Jerusalem resident who was in touch with terror operatives in Yemen and Turkey, the Israel Police revealed on Monday.

"Over the past month, following intelligence received from the Israel Security Agency [Shin Bet], investigators from the Central Investigations Unit of the Israel Police Jerusalem District opened an investigation against a 20-year-old resident of eastern Jerusalem," according to the police statement.

The suspect was said to have made contact with an individual in Yemen via social media. The two encouraged each other to carry out terror attacks and become martyrs, with the suspect allegedly writing, "I take every opportunity I have to confront the occupation—may I die a martyr's death."

Police said the suspect also maintained contact with a terrorist operative in Turkey, adding that their conversations included "expressions of praise and support" for the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, massacre in southern Israel.

Prosecutors on Monday declared to the court their intention to charge the suspect with serious security offenses, including contact with a foreign agent, threats to carry out an act of terrorism and conspiracy to commit a terror act. His detention has been extended pending the filing of an indictment, police added.

"The Israel Police and the Israel Security Agency will continue to act decisively to thwart any attempt to harm the security of the State of Israel, its citizens and its elected officials," police stated.

Ben-Gvir, whose office oversees the Israel Police, on Monday night thanked all security agencies "that acted with determination and professionalism and thwarted the attempt to harm me."

"This is, thank G-d, the seventh time they have unsuccessfully tried to eliminate me," he tweeted. "I say this clearly: They will not deter me or frighten me."

"I will continue to lead a determined and uncompromising policy for the security of Israel's citizens—in the Negev, in the Galilee, and in Jerusalem," Ben-Gvir continued.

"It is no coincidence that we saw a historic result of the quietest Ramadan since 2013," he said. "This is the result of policy, of governance and of backing for the fighters in the field. We will continue to act with strength, responsibility and determination."

Ben-Gvir concluded by stating that "whoever believes does not fear."

In September, a Hamas terrorist cell from the Hebron area was arrested by Israeli security forces for plotting to assassinate Ben-Gvir using explosive-laden drones. The joint operation by the Shin Bet and Israel Defense Forces uncovered that the suspects had acquired drones with the assistance of Hamas's Turkey offices.

Israeli security forces have thwarted numerous attacks in recent years targeting the right-wing minister, who heads the Otzma Yehudit Party.

In March 2023, Israel Police arrested a man from eastern Jerusalem who confessed to plotting to assassinate Ben-Gvir. The Arab suspect planned to steal police license plates and affix them to a car to get close to him.

Six months later, the Israel Security Agency arrested five suspects who Iran allegedly recruited to murder Ben-Gvir and former Knesset member Yehudah Glick, both staunch advocates of Jewish prayer rights on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

In April 2024, the Shin Bet foiled a plot to kill Ben-Gvir using a rocket-propelled grenade. According to authorities, terrorists also planned to attack Ben-Gurion Airport, the government complex in Jerusalem, IDF bases, other sensitive sites and the town of Kiryat Arba.

Seven months later, three Arab terrorists from Hebron were charged with plotting to murder Ben-Gvir and his son. The main defendant, Ismail Ibrahim Awadi, was in touch with the Hamas and Hezbollah terror groups for

assistance in carrying out a series of planned attacks.

EUROPE STUNNED AS TRUMP'S IRAN WARNINGS PROVEN RIGHT

FERN SIDMAN (tjvnews.com 22/3/26)

A profound sense of unease has settled over Europe following a failed but deeply consequential missile launch by Iran—an event that has fundamentally altered the continent's perception of its own security. What might have once been dismissed as distant geopolitical tension has now assumed an immediate and unsettling proximity, as evidence mounts that Iranian missile capabilities extend far beyond previously acknowledged limits.

The attempted strike on the joint United States–United Kingdom military installation at Diego Garcia, a remote base in the Indian Ocean, has become a pivotal moment in this reassessment. Although the missiles did not reach their intended target—reportedly failing midflight or being intercepted—the implications of the launch have reverberated far beyond the isolated atoll. For European policymakers, analysts, and citizens alike, the episode has raised an alarming question: how far can Iran's missiles truly reach?

World is One News first pointed out this claim 3 weeks ago, in the above report

From a purely tactical standpoint, the launch may be categorized as unsuccessful. Yet strategically, it has proven anything but. The distance between Iran and Diego Garcia—estimated at approximately 3,700 to 4,000 kilometers—far exceeds the range that Tehran has historically claimed for its ballistic missile arsenal.

For years, Iranian officials maintained that their missile program was deliberately limited, often citing a range cap of roughly 2,000 kilometers. This assertion was presented as evidence of restraint, intended to signal that Iran did not seek to threaten distant nations. However, the recent launch has cast serious doubt on these claims, suggesting that the true capabilities of Iran's missile systems may have been significantly understated.

Military analysts across Europe have been quick to note that a missile capable of traveling such distances could, in theory, reach a wide array of European capitals. Cities such as London, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Rome, and Oslo—long considered outside the immediate sphere of Middle Eastern missile threats—now appear to fall within a plausible range envelope.

The psychological impact of this realization cannot be overstated. What was once a theoretical concern has become a demonstrable capability, transforming abstract risk into tangible vulnerability.

The current moment has also prompted a reevaluation of past warnings issued by President Donald Trump, who consistently argued that Iran was concealing the true extent of its missile development. Throughout his tenure and beyond, Trump emphasized that Tehran's public statements regarding its arsenal were incomplete at best and deliberately misleading at worst.

At the time, these assertions were met with skepticism in many European capitals, where diplomatic engagement and multilateral agreements were often viewed as the preferred means of managing Iran's ambitions. The recent developments, however, have led some observers to reconsider those earlier assessments.

Media coverage has amplified this narrative shift. Broadcast analyses have highlighted the apparent alignment between Trump's warnings and the newly revealed capabilities, with commentators noting that the Diego Garcia launch appears to validate concerns that had previously been dismissed or downplayed.

This retrospective validation has not only reshaped perceptions of past policy debates but also introduced new urgency into current strategic discussions.

For European governments, the implications of Iran's expanded missile reach are both immediate and far-reaching. Defense planners must now grapple with the possibility that key population centers and critical infrastructure could be within striking distance of a state actor whose intentions remain a subject of intense scrutiny.

This recalibration is occurring against a backdrop of already heightened geopolitical tension. The broader conflict involving Iran, the United States, and regional actors has created a complex and volatile environment in which escalation can occur rapidly and unpredictably.

In this context, the Diego Garcia incident serves as a stark reminder that geographic distance is no longer a reliable buffer against emerging threats. Advances in missile technology have effectively compressed the strategic landscape, bringing distant regions into closer proximity in terms of potential risk.

European defense systems, including missile interception capabilities, are now under renewed examination. Questions about readiness, coverage, and coordination have taken on heightened importance, as policymakers seek to ensure that existing frameworks are sufficient to address the evolving threat.

Another critical dimension of the current situation concerns the accuracy and completeness of intelligence assessments. If Iran has indeed developed missile systems with ranges significantly exceeding its stated limits, this raises important questions about how such capabilities were evaluated and communicated within the international community.

The discrepancy between public declarations and demonstrated performance underscores the challenges inherent in assessing opaque military programs. It also highlights the potential risks associated with relying on self-reported limitations in the absence of comprehensive verification mechanisms.

For European nations, this realization may prompt a reassessment of intelligence-sharing practices and analytical methodologies. Ensuring that policymakers have access to accurate and timely information will be essential in navigating the uncertainties of the current environment.

The revelation of Iran's extended missile capabilities is likely to have significant diplomatic repercussions. European countries, many of which have historically advocated for engagement and negotiation, may find themselves under pressure to adopt a more assertive stance.

At the same time, the situation presents a complex challenge. Escalating tensions could further destabilize an already fragile region, while inaction could be perceived as complacency in the face of a growing threat.

Balancing these considerations will require careful calibration of policy responses, combining elements of deterrence, diplomacy, and strategic communication.

The internal dynamics within Europe are also likely to be affected. Differences in threat perception and policy preferences among member states could lead to divergent approaches, complicating efforts to formulate a unified response.

Beyond the realm of policy, the developments have had a noticeable impact on public discourse. The notion that major European cities could be within range of Iranian missiles has captured public attention, contributing to a sense of unease that extends beyond traditional security circles.

Media coverage has played a significant role in shaping this narrative, with visual representations of potential strike ranges and highlighted city targets reinforcing the immediacy of the threat. Such imagery, while informative, also carries the potential to heighten anxiety and influence political debate.

In this environment, leaders face the dual challenge of addressing legitimate security concerns while avoiding the amplification of fear. Clear communication, grounded in factual analysis, will be essential in maintaining public confidence.

The attempted strike on Diego Garcia may ultimately be remembered as a turning point in how Europe perceives and responds to missile threats. By demonstrating capabilities that extend well beyond previously accepted parameters, the incident has forced a reassessment of long-standing assumptions.

For years, the focus of European security policy has been shaped by a combination of regional conflicts, counterterrorism efforts, and relations with major powers. The emergence of a credible long-range missile threat from Iran adds a new dimension to this landscape, requiring adjustments in both planning and prioritization.

This shift is likely to influence a range of policy areas, from defense spending and technological development to alliance structures and international cooperation.

As Europe grapples with the implications of Iran's demonstrated missile reach, the broader significance of the Diego Garcia incident continues to unfold. What began as a failed strike on a remote military base has evolved into a catalyst for strategic introspection and recalibration.

The convergence of technological capability, geopolitical tension, and historical warning has created a moment of reckoning—one that compels policymakers to confront uncomfortable realities and make difficult choices.

In the final analysis, the events of recent days underscore a fundamental truth: in an era of rapid technological advancement and shifting power dynamics, assumptions about distance and security can no longer be taken for granted.

For Europe, the challenge now lies in translating this realization into effective action—ensuring that the lessons of the present are not only understood but also acted upon in a manner that enhances resilience and preserves stability in an increasingly uncertain world.

Netanyahu: Iran Threat Now Encompasses the Entire World

ARIELLA HAVIV (tjvnews.com 22-3-26)

Standing amid the debris of a missile impact in the southern Israeli city of Arad on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered one of

his starkest warnings yet about the widening scope of the current conflict with Iran. The visit, which followed a series of escalating attacks across Israel, served not only as a show of solidarity with affected residents but also as a platform for a broader message: that the threat posed by Iran, in his view, now extends far beyond Israel's borders and into the global arena.

According to a report by Israel National News, Netanyahu described the missile strike in Arad as a deliberate attempt to inflict mass civilian casualties. Although the attack did not result in fatalities, he emphasized that this outcome was due to circumstance rather than intent. "This was not restraint," Netanyahu said at the scene, as cited by Israel National News. "This was chance."

The missile that struck Arad hit a civilian area, underscoring what Israeli officials describe as a shift in targeting patterns. Israel National News has highlighted that the attack occurred in a residential environment, raising concerns about the increasing exposure of non-military populations to direct harm.

Emergency responders quickly secured the area, and while damage to infrastructure was reported, the absence of fatalities provided a narrow margin of relief. Nevertheless, Netanyahu used the moment to underscore the seriousness of the situation, arguing that the targeting of civilian zones reflects an intentional strategy rather than collateral impact.

The prime minister's remarks align with broader Israeli assertions that recent attacks have demonstrated a willingness by Iran to escalate beyond traditional military targets. Israel National News has documented additional incidents cited by Netanyahu, including missile activity near religious sites in Jerusalem, further amplifying the sense of vulnerability.

Central to Netanyahu's message was the assertion that Iran's capabilities are no longer confined to regional boundaries. He referenced a recent long-range missile launch as evidence of an expanding operational reach, one that could potentially threaten areas well beyond the Middle East. "Iran is putting everyone in its sights," he declared, a statement that Israel National News has described as indicative of a broader effort to galvanize international attention.

This framing reflects a strategic recalibration in Israel's messaging. By emphasizing the global implications of Iran's actions, Israeli leadership appears intent on broadening the coalition of concern, urging other nations to view the conflict not as a localized dispute but as a shared security challenge.

Israel National News has consistently reported on the growing apprehension among international observers regarding Iran's missile capabilities, particularly in light of recent demonstrations of extended range. The Arad strike, while geographically limited, is being presented by Israeli officials as part of a larger pattern with far-reaching implications.

Netanyahu also drew attention to Iran's actions in maritime domains, specifically its role in disrupting international shipping routes. These activities, he argued, constitute an effort to destabilize global security and exert pressure on the international community.

Israel National News has noted that the obstruction of key maritime corridors has already begun to affect global trade dynamics, particularly in the energy sector. The convergence of missile strikes and maritime disruption creates a multifaceted challenge that extends beyond traditional military considerations.

By linking these elements, Netanyahu sought to reinforce the argument that Iran's actions are part of a coordinated strategy aimed at reshaping the regional and global order. The implication is clear: what is unfolding is not merely a bilateral conflict but a broader confrontation with systemic consequences.

A significant portion of Netanyahu's remarks focused on Israel's coordination with the United States, particularly under the leadership of President Donald Trump. While declining to provide specific operational details, the prime minister emphasized the closeness of the partnership. "We act together, and as much as possible, we do so discreetly," Netanyahu stated, according to the Israel National News report.

This acknowledgment of coordination underscores the strategic alignment between the two countries, even as both navigate the complexities of escalating tensions. Israel National News has reported that such cooperation extends across multiple domains, including intelligence sharing, military planning, and diplomatic engagement.

The emphasis on discretion reflects the sensitive nature of these interactions, particularly in a context where public disclosure could have significant implications for operational security and international diplomacy.

Addressing Israel's own military actions, Netanyahu sought to draw a clear distinction between Israel's approach and that of its adversary. He asserted that Israeli operations are conducted "with great force" but are specifically aimed at Iranian leadership and infrastructure rather than civilian populations.

According to the Israel National News report, Netanyahu identified key targets as including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as well as associated leadership structures, installations, and economic assets. This focus, he argued, reflects an effort to degrade the operational capacity of the Iranian regime while minimizing harm to non-combatants.

The delineation of targets serves both a strategic and communicative function. Strategically, it aligns with efforts to weaken Iran's capabilities. Communicatively, it reinforces Israel's claim to adherence to international norms regarding the conduct of military operations. Such distinctions are central to Israel's messaging, particularly in the context of international scrutiny and the broader information landscape.

Netanyahu outlined two primary objectives for Israel's ongoing campaign. The first is the dismantling of Iran's nuclear and missile programs, which Israeli officials have long described as existential threats. The second is the creation of conditions that could enable the Iranian population to challenge its governing authorities.

These objectives reflect both immediate security concerns and longer-term strategic aspirations. The emphasis on internal change within Iran introduces a dimension that extends beyond military operations, suggesting a broader vision for regional transformation.

However, the feasibility of such goals remains a subject of debate among analysts. While military actions can degrade capabilities, the extent to which they can influence internal political dynamics is less certain.

Throughout his remarks, Netanyahu repeatedly called on other world leaders to take a more active role in addressing the threat posed by Iran. The report at Israel National News characterized this appeal as part of a sustained effort to mobilize international support.

The framing of Iran as a global threat is intended to resonate beyond traditional alliances, encouraging a wider coalition to engage with the issue. Whether this call will translate into concrete action remains to be seen, particularly given the varying priorities and perspectives of different nations.

Amid the strategic and political considerations, the visit to Arad also highlighted the human impact of the conflict. Residents of the city, many of whom witnessed the aftermath of the strike firsthand, are left to contend with the realities of living under the threat of missile attacks.

The Israel National News report documented the resilience of these communities, as well as the challenges they face in maintaining a sense of normalcy. The absence of fatalities in this instance provides a measure of relief, but the broader context ensures that uncertainty remains a constant presence.

The scene in Arad, marked by damage but not devastation, serves as a microcosm of a conflict that is both intensifying and expanding. Netanyahu's remarks, as reported by Israel National News, reflect a leadership perspective that views the current moment as a critical juncture with implications far beyond Israel's borders.

By framing the threat in global terms, emphasizing coordination with key allies, and outlining clear strategic objectives, Israel is seeking to navigate a complex and evolving landscape. Whether these efforts will succeed in altering the trajectory of the conflict remains uncertain.

What is clear, however, is that the stakes continue to rise. As missiles fall and rhetoric sharpens, the line between regional conflict and global confrontation appears increasingly tenuous—leaving the international community to grapple with a challenge that is as urgent as it is far-reaching.

Why Netanyahu and Trump Were Right on Iran

AHMED CHARAI (GateStoneInstitute.org 25-3-26)

On October 7, Israel was not merely attacked. It was meant to be broken.

Israel did not collapse. It stood up. It buried its dead, fought for its hostages, and absorbed a shock that would have shattered many nations.

Israel also understood something essential: if October 7 was to remain a horror rather than become a model, it was not enough to strike only the hand that carried out the massacre. The source had to be confronted.

Recklessness would have been to let Tehran continue believing that it could arm militias, terrorize its neighbors, destabilize capitals, and remain beyond consequence.

For too long, Iran's rulers had assumed that democracies would hesitate forever and confuse fear with prudence.

Courage is the willingness to act when the cost of inaction has become greater than the risk of action.

The Abraham Accords were never just a diplomatic ceremony. They were a strategic and civilizational choice: a decision in favor of modernity, sovereignty, development, and peace against a regional order built on militias, intimidation, and permanent war. This conflict did not change that choice. It tested it—and it held. That may be one of the most important political facts emerging from this war.

Netanyahu... did not choose comfort. He chose responsibility. And Trump, whatever one may think of him on other issues, grasped something many others did not: there are moments when deterrence cannot be restored by speeches, conferences, or carefully worded illusions. It must be restored by force.

That is not recklessness. That is leadership.

On October 7, Israel was not merely attacked. It was meant to be broken.

The massacre was designed not only to kill innocents but also to deliver a message: that terror could humiliate Israel, traumatize it, isolate it, and force it into retreat. In the hours and days that followed, amid scenes of slaughter, kidnapping, and national grief, one could hear an old fantasy returning. Many voices, openly or quietly, suggested that the massacre was the beginning of the end of Israel. They were mistaken.

Israel did not collapse. It stood up. It buried its dead, fought for its hostages, and absorbed a shock that would have shattered many nations. But Israel also understood something essential: if October 7 was to remain a horror rather than become a model, it was not enough to strike only the hand that carried out the massacre. The source had to be confronted.

Built influence through proxies

That source was not only Gaza. It was the system behind Gaza: the regime in Tehran that for decades has financed, armed, trained, and ideologically nourished a regional infrastructure of terror. Iran did not build influence through diplomacy or development. It built it through proxies, militias, blackmail, sectarian warfare, and the deliberate weakening of sovereign states.

This is why the decision by Prime Minister Netanyahu, together with President Donald Trump, to confront Iran was not recklessness. It was courage.

Recklessness would have been to absorb October 7, speak of resilience, and leave intact the machinery that made such barbarism possible. Recklessness would have been to punish the executioners while protecting the architects. Recklessness would have been to let Tehran continue believing that it could arm militias, terrorize its neighbors, destabilize capitals, and remain beyond consequence.

What happened instead was the opposite. The political decision was sound. The strategy was clear. And the military results were real. The Israeli-American strikes did not merely produce symbolism; they reduced capabilities, disrupted chains of command, degraded the reach of the Revolutionary Guards, and shattered the illusion that this regime was untouchable. For too long, Iran's rulers had assumed that democracies would hesitate forever and confuse fear with prudence. Netanyahu and Trump proved otherwise.

That matters, because courage in statecraft is often misunderstood. It is not loudness. It is not impulsiveness. It is not the pleasure of escalation. Courage is the willingness to act when the cost of inaction has become greater than the risk of action. After October 7, that moment had arrived.

Once one understands that reality, Hezbollah inevitably takes center stage in the argument.

Hezbollah is not merely a threat to Israel's northern border. It is a regional disease. Hezbollah has taken the Lebanese state hostage, subordinated Lebanese sovereignty to Iranian interests, and condemned the Lebanese people to bear the cost of wars they did not choose. It has transformed a proud Arab country into a platform for Tehran's ambitions. And its threat extends far beyond Lebanon and Israel.

That is why the broader regional picture matters. The exposure of networks linked to Hezbollah and Iran in the Gulf is a reminder that this menace is not local; it is transnational. Bahrain has long lived under the shadow of Iranian subversion. The UAE has faced the same logic of infiltration and destabilization. Morocco understood the danger years ago when it severed diplomatic relations with Tehran over Iranian support for the Polisario. Different geographies, same method: penetrate, arm, radicalize, and weaken sovereign states from within or through proxies.

The UAE stood firm. Bahrain stood firm. Morocco raised the alarm early.

These states deserve more than praise; they deserve strategic backing. The UAE has every legitimacy to reclaim its three occupied islands. Morocco has every legitimacy to consolidate international recognition of its sovereignty over the Sahara. And Bahrain—a frontline kingdom that stood firm when others hesitated—deserves meaningful economic and strategic support equal to the burden it has carried.

These countries must be recognized for what they represent. The Abraham Accords were never just a diplomatic ceremony. They were a strategic and civilizational choice: a decision in favor of modernity, sovereignty, development, and peace against a regional order built on militias, intimidation, and permanent war. This conflict did not change that choice. It tested it—and it held. That may be one of the most important political facts emerging from this war.

The real divide in the Middle East is no longer the old one that so many continue to recite out of habit. It is not simply Arab versus Israeli. It is between those who want functioning states and those who thrive on collapsed ones; those who build and those who blackmail; those who choose order, prosperity, and coexistence, and those who glorify permanent revolution and conflict.

Israel's role in this confrontation should be acknowledged honestly.

Israel is a small country in a brutal neighborhood, yet it has built sovereign institutions of extraordinary resilience. Its strength is not accidental. It is the product of discipline, excellence, technological sophistication, democratic vitality, and a profound understanding that survival requires seriousness. Mossad, the IDF, and Israel's wider security institutions have repeatedly demonstrated what a capable state can do when intelligence, operational excellence, and political will converge.

But institutions alone are not enough. Great militaries and great intelligence services cannot fulfill their mission if political leaders are too timid to act. That is why leadership matters. Netanyahu should be judged in that light. He did not choose comfort. He chose responsibility. And Trump, whatever one may think of him on other issues, grasped something many others did not: there are moments when deterrence cannot be restored by speeches, conferences, or carefully worded illusions. It must be restored by force.

That is not recklessness. That is leadership.

The Iranian regime is currently operating under a precarious timeline. That does not mean it will disappear tomorrow. Dictatorships often survive longer than expected. But something fundamental has changed. The aura of inevitability has been broken. The image of invulnerability has been shattered. Fear has begun to change sides. The regime still possesses prisons, propaganda, weapons, and fanatics. But it no longer possesses the same myth of untouchable power.

The next chapter must therefore be prepared with wisdom. Not against the Iranian people, but with them. Instead of harboring hatred towards Iran, we should harbor hope for a transformed Iran. The Iranian people are not the mullahs. They are the first victims of a regime that has humiliated their civilization, crushed their freedoms, and squandered their nation's greatness on terror, corruption, and ideological war.

After October 7, Israel had every reason to remain trapped in grief and defense. Instead, it chose a more challenging path: to confront the source of terror.

That was not recklessness. That was courage.

And history may yet record that when so many were predicting the end of Israel, Israel instead helped begin the end of Tehran's terror order.

Malta: A small island with a long Jewish history

MICHAEL FREUND (JNS.org 24-3-26)

Perched in the heart of the Mediterranean between Europe and North Africa lies the island nation of Malta, a place best known for its ancient fortresses, sun-drenched harbors and strategic location. Yet like so many corners of the world where Jews have quietly lived, traded and prayed, Malta has a Jewish story—one that reflects both the suffering and resilience that have characterized Jewish life across the ages.

Today, Malta's Jewish community numbers perhaps 100 to 200 people in total. They gather for Shabbat prayers, maintain Jewish traditions and welcome Jewish visitors from around the world. But behind this small community lies a rich historical tapestry woven through centuries of migration, persecution and renewal.

The Jewish presence in Malta dates back nearly two millennia and possibly more. While some scholars speculate that Jewish traders may have arrived during the Phoenician period nearly 2,900 years ago, the earliest clear archaeological evidence emerges in the late Roman era.

Discoveries in the catacombs of the Maltese town of Rabat include burial chambers carved with menorahs, strong evidence that a Jewish community lived on the islands during the fourth and fifth centuries. It is believed that the community may have numbered several hundred people at its peak during this era, living alongside Christians and pagans in the cosmopolitan environment of the Mediterranean world.

In the centuries that followed, Malta passed through the hands of various rulers—Byzantines, Arabs and Normans—with each leaving their imprint on the island's culture. Jews appear to have lived relatively peacefully under some of these regimes, participating in trade and commerce that connected the Mediterranean's bustling ports. Notably, the Maltese island of Comino hosted the renowned Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia in the late 13th century, where he lived in seclusion and composed several of his mystical writings.

But like so many Jewish communities in Europe, Malta's Jews were not immune to the sweeping forces of history.

Malta was under the Crown of Aragon, and when Ferdinand and Isabella issued the Alhambra Decree in 1492, expelling Jews from Spain, the edict

extended to Spanish-controlled territories across the Mediterranean, including Malta. Jews were forced to convert, flee or face expulsion, often at great financial cost imposed by the crown. The result was the disappearance of an organized Jewish community on the island for centuries.

When the Catholic military order known as the Knights Hospitaller took control of Malta in 1530, Jewish life took on a darker dimension. The knights, who conducted naval campaigns against Ottoman shipping and coastal towns, frequently captured Muslims, Jews and others during their raids and brought them back to Malta as slaves.

Some 1,000 Jewish captives were imprisoned in harsh conditions in the island's slave quarters, often awaiting ransom from Jewish communities elsewhere. Across Europe, Jewish leaders mobilized resources to redeem their brethren. Most of the enslaved Jews were freed thanks to the efforts of the Society for the Redemption of Captives, a Venice-based group dedicated to the mitzvah of pidyon shvuyim, the "redemption of captives." Correspondence from this era recounts harrowing stories of Jews held in chains while their families and communities scrambled to raise the funds required to secure their release. In some cases, captives languished for years before their freedom was obtained. An English traveler who visited the prison where the Jews were held in 1663 noted that they were singled out from the non-Jewish slaves and forced to wear "a little piece of yellow cloth on their hats or caps."

The National Library in Malta's capital of Valletta, a fortified city founded in 1566 by the Knights of St. John, on May 15, 2020. Credit: Scramble58 via Wikimedia Commons.

The National Library in Malta's capital of Valletta, a fortified city founded in 1566 by the Knights of St. John, on May 15, 2020. Credit: Scramble58 via Wikimedia Commons.

Yet even amid such darkness, the Jewish spirit endured. Rabbis among the captives organized religious life, arranged divorces when necessary and offered spiritual guidance to fellow prisoners. Their resilience serves as a testament to the enduring strength of Jewish faith even under the harshest conditions.

It was not until the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 that the institution of slavery on Malta was finally abolished. Under French and later British rule, a new chapter began, one in which Jews were gradually able to return and rebuild a small but stable community.

During the 19th century, Malta's position as a British naval hub attracted Jewish merchants and traders from across the Mediterranean and Europe. A Jewish cemetery was established in the town of Marsa in 1879, symbolizing the re-emergence of a permanent Jewish presence on the island. An older cemetery in the village of Kalkara, opened in 1784, is the oldest surviving Jewish burial ground in Malta, with 12 graves dating from 1820 to 1834.

By the early 20th century the community remained small but vibrant. Jews were active in commerce and business, and Malta's strategic location made it a crossroads of cultures and peoples.

One of the most remarkable chapters in Malta's Jewish story came during the dark years preceding World War II.

As Nazi persecution intensified across Europe, hundreds of Jews desperately sought refuge from the growing menace by fleeing to Malta, which proved to be a rare sanctuary at a time when much of the world was closing its doors. During the war itself, Malta's strategic position led to intense Axis bombing, but the island's role as a British stronghold also protected its small Jewish population from direct Nazi occupation.

Following the establishment of the State of Israel, Malta gradually developed friendly relations with the Jewish state. Diplomatic relations between Malta and Israel were formally established in 1965, and cooperation has grown steadily in fields such as tourism, education and trade.

Today, although Malta's Jewish community remains small, it continues to flourish in modest but meaningful ways. Rabbi Chaim Shalom opened the Chabad Jewish Center of Malta in 2013 and received approval three years ago to build a new center that will include a synagogue and kosher restaurant. The community imports kosher meat from Belgium due to local slaughter bans and flies in mohels from Israel or Europe for brit milah ceremonies.

For Israel, Malta's story carries a quiet but meaningful resonance. Both nations are small Mediterranean states whose histories have been shaped by geography and by the powerful empires that surrounded them. Both sit along vital maritime routes that have for centuries linked Europe, Africa and the Middle East. And both understand, perhaps better than most, the strategic importance of this narrow sea that has served as a crossroads of civilizations since antiquity.

In the sweep of Jewish history, Malta may appear to be little more than a footnote. Yet the story of the Jews on this small Mediterranean island reflects a much larger truth about our people. For nearly 2,000 years, Jews found ways to survive and sustain their identity even in the most unlikely places: sometimes flourishing, sometimes suffering, but always enduring.

Indeed, Malta stands as a reminder that wherever Jews have wandered, they have carried their faith, their traditions and their hope for redemption. And in that sense, even this tiny island has earned its place in the remarkable saga of the Jewish people.

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

Kosher L'Pesach Oils

RABBI YITZCHAK HANOKA (Ok.org)

Oil is a liquid with unique properties that make it different from all other liquids. Oil is extracted by crushing and squeezing the source to release the valuable oil inside. When it is spilled, oil spreads out and is not readily absorbed by even a porous surface. Oil does not mix when it is combined with other liquids and it rises to the top of whatever liquid with which it is combined.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe writes1 about oil as it compares to the Jewish people in Exile. Like oil, the Jewish people have undergone crushing challenges that brought out inner greatness. Like oil, the Jewish people have spread out across the world and disseminated the wellsprings of the Torah wherever we have gone. Just as oil remains apart from other liquids, the Jewish people retain our unique character and traditions, remaining true to Torah and mitzvos. And finally, the Jewish people rise above the mundane, elevating even worldly pursuits, like the oil that rises to the top of all other liquids. Even in the difficult Golus of Mitzrayim, the Jewish people remained true to these properties, which led to our salvation as Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim and chose us to be His Nation.

When it comes to Passover certified food items, the fewer steps involved in the production, the lesser the chance of Pesach related challenges. This is true both commercially and in home-based settings.

For those Sefardim who eat kitniyot on Pesach, the following oils can potentially be used when certified for Pesach "l'ochlei kitniyot" by a reliable hechsher: canola, soybean, sunflower, peanut2, and corn. Canola, soybean, and sunflower oils may be problematic even though they are derived from kitniyot sources because there is a possibility that they have been grown in fields that also grow wheat on a rotating basis. These oils require a reliable hechsher for Passover kitniyot use. A reliable kashrus agency knows to check the gluten level of the crude oil as part of the process in determining whether or not it can be approved l'ochlei kitniyot.

It is not enough to ascertain that the source of the oil is kosher l'Pesach; the production process, from start to finish, needs to conform to Pesach requirements.

In general, edible oils are derived from fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers, or nuts, and generally via one of two methods – pressing or refining. Refined oils, in their original form, are called crude and they undergo a multi-step process to remove any impurities before they reach your grocer's shelves. Since refinery equipment is very difficult to clean, the certifying agency must ensure that the equipment is acceptable for Pesach use at every step along the way. Very often, refined oils for Pesach are done on a production basis, which means that special runs are made for kosher l'Pesach oils.

THE 4 GENERAL STEPS INVOLVED IN THE REFINING PROCESS ARE:

DEGUMMING – improves edibility and storage, and enables the neutralization step in the refining process

NEUTRALIZATION – alkaline agents are added so that the fatty acids in the oil will bind to them and create a soap-like substance, which can then be removed

BLEACHING – agents are added to help remove color

DEODORIZATION – live steam is added under vacuum conditions to help remove any undesirable flavors and odors

When it comes to food production, if the product is made on a dedicated line it is easier to certify kosher. For example, palm oil is suitable for Pesach use (with a reliable hechsher) even though it is refined because it is typically produced on dedicated equipment along with a very basic ingredient that is suitable for Pesach.

Pressed oils, as the term implies, are derived from a straightforward process that involves squeezing the source to extract the oil, which can be done cold or using heat extraction. After the oil is extracted, it is filtered to

remove impurities and debris. From a quality perspective, the cold process helps preserve the original properties of the oil's source. Since cold pressing is a straightforward process that does not involve the use of other ingredients and/or shared processes with other non-Pesach products, as long as the source is not chometz or kitniyot, cold-pressed oils are ideal for Pesach use. In addition, because these oils contain only a single ingredient, they can often be certified for Pesach year-round. Some examples are extra virgin olive oil, pistachio oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil.

The most commonly used oils for Pesach are cottonseed3, grapeseed, olive, walnut, avocado, coconut, and palm. This year, we can add OK-P-certified pistachio oil, a newly released product by Setton International, to the list.

Due to the limited choice of ingredients for Pesach, one of the biggest challenges we face in the kitchen is creating tasty and nutritious meals with ingredients that conform to family customs. We are lucky to have an abundance of Kosher for Passover products available in our stores, but they are often variations of the same base products. Even when something new hits the market for Pesach, it is often just another version or application of a product already on the shelves. Therefore, when a truly new and unique kosher for Pesach product enters the market, it is a cause for excitement.

Already well known for its high-quality pistachios, nuts, and dried fruit, Setton International recently launched a kosher for Pesach pistachio oil, just in time for this year's Pesach season. Now, for the first time, kosher consumers can avail themselves of this unique new product which is already on track to becoming a household staple, not only for Pesach but for year-round use as well.

While there are many kosher for Pesach oils on the market, pistachio oil is unique. Some of the kosher l'Pesach oils you are most likely familiar with are cottonseed, walnut, olive, avocado, and grapeseed. Due to the stringencies associated with Pesach, many people prefer oils that are minimally processed, and while some of these oils are cold-pressed and, therefore, more mehudar in terms of processing, others are hot expelled in a more detailed process, making them less desirable options. Also, nut-based oils that are kosher for Pesach are typically distilled (another level of processing) to remove the aromas and flavors attributed to the nuts from which they are made.

The Setton family has gone to great lengths to ensure a top-quality product that is produced following the most stringent Pesach standards. To start, Setton Farms produces its pistachio oil using only raw, unprocessed premium pistachios from their farms in California's Central Valley. Produced on dedicated equipment, the oil is handcrafted in small batches to ensure freshness, quality, and consistency. It is light green, has an attractive aroma, and the well-balanced flavor doesn't overpower the food in which it's used. The pistachio oil has a low smoke point, making it ideal for use in cold applications such as dressings, dips, salads, and as a finishing oil.

In terms of health benefits, pistachios are known to be a complete protein food high in antioxidants and a natural source of Vitamins A, B6, E, as well as Omega 6 and 9. Due to the minimal processing of the pistachios, pistachio oil retains many health benefits associated with pistachios because you are truly getting only raw pistachios, in oil form.

In conclusion, may we be zocheh to live elevated lives and, like oil, rise to the top in our avodas Hashem and in our quest to bring Moshiach.

KITNIYOT is a loshon hakodesh word meaning legumes; however, when used in connection with Pesach, it also includes foods such as rice, corn, and millet, as well as seeds such as kimmel, mustard and sesame. Ashkenazim and some Sephardim are prohibited from consuming kitniyot on Pesach based on rabbinic rulings which originated in Europe over 700 years ago.

The two main reasons for these rulings are because kitniyot and the five grains closely resemble each other when they grow in the fields, and also because kitniyot can be prepared in a way that resembles food made from the five grains which are prohibited on Pesach in any form other than matzah specially prepared for Pesach. There is also a concern in some cases that kitniyot crops can be rotated with chometz crops in the same field, and this would be problematic for Pesach.

1. Igros Kodesh, Volume 2, page 279.
2. The minhag is to consider this oil kitniyot (see Igros Moshe Orach Chaim, vol. 3, Teshuva 63).
3. The Minchas Yitzchak (Vol. 3, page 240 and Vol. 4, page 248) holds that cottonseed oil should not be consumed on Pesach.

Candles (Melb) Friday 27 March 2026, 10 Nissan 5786 7.03pm/7.59pm