

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHOFTIM

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 51:12-52:12

AUGUST 25-26, 2017 4 ELUL 5777

DEDICATION: Le'Refuah Shelemah Elisheva Bat Esther

And in memory of of Mrs. Shirley Dweck, Shirley bat Bahiyeh a"h.

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EDITORS NOTES

"You shall appoint for yourselves judges and officers in all your cities that Hashem has given to your tribes for an inheritance, and they shall judge the people with honest justice." (Devarim 17:18)

Do you judge others by a certain standard, but when it comes to yourself, do you change those standards? Many people immediately answer of course not, but as we begin Elul with the admonition in the opening words of this week's portion to appoint judges and police officers, its certainly the time for self-reflection with regard to personal accountability.

I was terribly bothered by the following story: One Sunday morning, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l (1910-1995), gathered his students in Yeshivas Kol Torah and said, in a somber and serious tone of voice, "A terrible thing happened in my neighborhood and I must make you aware of it."

The students gathered around in anticipation of the dire news that the gaon was about to deliver. A hush of trepidation fell over the study hall as the gaon began to speak.

R' Shlomo Zalman related that on Shabbos, he had seen a man dragging benches to the Shul for a seuda in honor of his son's engagement. The man's son, who was walking at his side, did not so much as lift a finger to help his father.

"I could not contain my bewilderment," the Rav told the students, "and I asked the chassan to explain why his father was doing all of the shlepping. He proudly explained that even where there was an eruv, he himself did not carry on Shabbos and was therefore unable to lend a hand."

"This reply enraged the Rav. The very idea of so-called religiosity taking precedence over honoring one's father was anathema to him... the gaon viewed this as a prime example of distorted logic." (And From Jerusalem His Word by Rabbi Hanoch Teller, p.139-141)

The problem that enraged this great sage is a problem we see all around us.

King Solomon writes: "Go to the ant you lazy one, consider her ways and become wise. She has no ruler or overseer, yet she prepares her sustenance in the summer, gathering in her food during the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8)

What did Shelomo HaMelech infer that we should consider the ant's ways and become wise? The Rabbis pointed out a special quality that the ant has; she is very strict concerning theft. R' Shimon bar Chalafta once saw that an ant dropped a grain of wheat and all the other ants came and smelled it (to see if it was theirs), but not one of them took it. They waited for the ant who dropped it to come and retrieve it.

Just imagine each of those little ants passing by the dropped piece of grain. They think aloud, "It cannot be mine. It was not meant for me. It belongs to someone else."

I saw a beautiful thought quoted in the name of The Chidushei Harim, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir. (He was in many ways raised by his adoptive grandfather, the Koznitzer Maggid and became a student of Rabbi Simcha Bunem of Pshischa and Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk, eventually succeeding the Kotzker becoming the founder and first rebbe of the Ger dynasty). He asks, Is Shelomo teaching us that if these little ants can live and be trustworthy not to take what does not belong to him, how much more so is expected of us? Is Shelomo asking then why do we need police officers and judges?

He answers: Maybe the answer is much deeper. Although the ants are admirable in not stealing from each other, the question remains as to where did they get the food from in the first place? Don't the ants steal what they can from wherever they can?

Perhaps the Midrash is explaining King Solomon's advice to remind us that many times, we as people are in fact like the ants. On the one hand, we may emulate their piety. But then we fail to recognize our own faults. Man tends to justify everything man does and therefore one need judge and police one's self. .

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha

Shoftim - Mitsvot relevant to establishing a society (judges, kings, war) in Israel

- 1- The mitzvah to appoint judges and law enforcers. An individual who worships avoda zara. The rebellious elder.
- 2- The mitzvah to appoint a king in Israel. Halachot of a king
- 3- Benefits and obligations of the Leviim
- 4- A kohen who desires to serve not during his assigned time. The mitzvah not to use sorcery, witchcraft or other avoda zara to learn the future.
- 5- Hashem sends us prophets (in place of sorcery used to learn the future). Laws regarding cities of refuge
- 6- Edim zomemin (false witnesses). Laws when Israel goes to war (who goes to war).
- 7- Laws when Israel goes to war (offering peace, who is killed), eglaruf

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

“You shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left.” (Debarim 17:11)

The Torah commands us not to deviate from the words of the judge. If so, the words “right or left” seem superfluous. What does it add? The Ramban cites Rashi's explanation: “Even if the judges tell you that right is left and that left is right [you must nevertheless obey them]. The Ramban then explains the meaning of Rashi's statement: “And the meaning of this statement is that even if you think in your heart that the judges are mistaken, and the matter is as obvious in your view as you know to differentiate between your right and your left, you shall nonetheless act in accordance with their command, and do not say ‘How can I eat this piece of outright forbidden fat?’ or ‘How can I kill this innocent man?’ Rather you should say ‘This is what the Lord Who issued all the commandments in the first place has commanded me, that I should act regarding all his commandments in accordance with what I am instructed by those judges. For He gave me the

Torah to follow on the basis of their understanding even if they should err, even if they will be in your eyes as one who exchanges the right for the left.

After having explained Rashi's comment, Ramban adds another insight into the subject: “And all the more so should you obey them because you should think that, contrary to your opinion, they are in fact saying about the right that it is right and about the left that it is left. For the spirit of G-d, may He be blessed, rests on his servants (the judges), and He will not forsake His devout ones. They will be eternally protected from error and from stumbling.”

It turns out that, according to the Ramban, there are two reasons that obligate us to follow the decisions of our Sages: 1) The Torah law was given according to their explanation, even if they are mistaken. 2) Hashem guarantees that they will not make mistakes.

Rabbi Hanoach Leibovitz zt”l asks, why do I need the first reason? Since I have the second reason that they don't err, I don't need to believe in the first reason that they should be followed even if they make a mistake! They never do make a mistake!

His answer is amazing. We must believe in the first reason, to listen even if they make a mistake, because if we didn't believe in it, we would never be able to believe in the second reason that they don't make a mistake. This is because it is the nature of man, that it is almost impossible for him to admit that he is mistaken because he always believes that he is right, even if the Sages of the great Sanhedrin tell him he is wrong. Therefore, he needs to believe in the first reason, that even if he is right and they are wrong, he must listen to them anyway. Since he has nothing to gain if he is right, he can now be more open-minded to believe the second reason that they never really make a mistake. Otherwise he can never really believe in the second reason that they don't err.

From this we learn how difficult it is for a person to realize that he is mistaken in his logic. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The Torah tells that we should give a person “whatever he is lacking to him” Hazal learn from the words “to him” that we must give charity according to each individual's needs. If a person was wealthy and lived an extravagant lifestyle and then became poor, we must give him to the extent that he can live in accordance with his previous standing. If he used to drive a fancy car, we must get him that car. The question arises: if I would myself would never pay so much, why must I pay for him?

Rabbi Eli Scheller explains: An important factor in the act of giving charity is to ensure the emotional well-being of the beneficiary. When a person loses his assets, the emotional strain may be greater than

the physical one. When a wealthy person loses his fancy car, the embarrassment is unbearable. It is equivalent to a pauper who is evicted from his apartment, even though the wealthy person can still live a normal life. Therefore, providing the wealthy person with his fancy car is literally giving him his life back just as much as paying the rent for a pauper.

It is for this reason that one who provides a poor person with money and adds kind words of encouragement receives twice as many blessings from Hashem for adding the kind words as he does for simply giving the money!"

It takes a special person to be able to recognize the emotional needs of another, especially one from a different background. The Talmud relates that Hillel, who was perhaps the poorest Torah scholar, raised money for a wealthy man who lost his money to purchase a horse to ride upon and a slave to run before him. On one occasion, he could not find a slave to run before him, so Hillel took his place and ran for three miles! Despite Hillel's poverty, he was able to understand the needs of a wealthy man – to the extent of personally providing those needs! Rabbi Reuven Semah

Joy Factor

Our Sages instituted various types of blessings that are to be said by all Jews throughout each day of their lives. We have blessings that we say before performing a misvah. We also have blessings that we say when we partake of the pleasures Hashem has provided for us.

Some complain that they cannot keep up with all the blessings they have to say in a single day. Well, it becomes easier to do if we realize how much reciting the blessing does for us. The Kuzari says: "Surely a mature person experiences pleasure far more than a baby or an animal. Similarly, if a drunkard were to be given all possible pleasures while he was intoxicated, when he sobers up and realizes what he has missed, he will surely regret the fact that he was numb to the enjoyment."

"This is the benefit of berachot (blessings). They are instrumental in helping us take notice of life's many pleasures...One who does not take to heart the meaning of each and every blessing does not enjoy life like a human being, but rather like an animal or a baby."

Enough said? When you are about to partake of one of the pleasures of life, stop for a moment. Appreciate the simple pleasure as the kindness of your Maker. If appropriate, say a blessing – with feeling. This appreciative pause will increase the joy factor in your life as you begin to consider how much good you receive every day. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com, MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com The Knock On The Door

King Shelomo, in Shir Hashirim, describes a man knocking on the door of his beloved as she sleeps in her bed, begging her to open the door for him because his head "is filled with dew" (5:2). This description symbolizes the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. God seeks to have a close relationship with us like a young man courting a young woman. And He goes so far as to "knock on our door," waking us up and inspiring us to return to Him.

But why does Shir Hashirim describe God as "filled with dew"? What is the significance of dew in the context of Hashem coming to inspire us and bring us back?

An important difference exists between rain and dew. Rain is formed by the evaporation of water on the earth. The vapor rises to the heavens and then returns to the earth in the form of rain; in other words, rain actually originates from the earth. As such, rain is symbolic of the phenomenon described in the Zohar as "Hit'oreruta De'le'tata" – the awakening from down below. When we take the initiative of performing Misvot, we "awaken" blessing from the heavens. Our initiative is like the water's evaporation, as our good deeds ascend to the heavens and then return to us in the form of divine blessing. Dew, by contrast, originates from the heavens, not from the earth. And thus dew symbolizes "Hit'oreruta De'le'ela," the inspiration initiated from above. Sometimes, when we "sleep," when we feel uninspired and are lax in our Torah observance, when we become too preoccupied with the daily rigors of life to give time and attention to God, He comes and knocks on our door. He comes to wake us up from our lethargy and draw us closer to Him. This could be in the form of a Torah class that we are invited to attend, an insight that we happen to hear, or some event, conversation or thought that opens our minds and reminds us of our religious duties. This is "dew," the inspiration that originates from the heavens, from God, and not from us.

And this is the phenomenon described in Shir Hashirim. While we are "sleeping," when we are uninterested in or distracted from Torah, God comes to knock on our door. "My head is filled with dew" – He comes out of His own initiative, without our being deserving of it. In Shir Hashirim, God comes to us, while we sleep, and tries to wake us up.

The numerical value of the Hebrew word "Tal" (dew) is 39, which corresponds to the thirty-nine days from Rosh Hodesh Elul through Yom Kippur (29 days of Elul, and the first ten days of Tishri). This is the period of "dew," when God comes to "wake us up" from our spiritual slumber.

How fortunate we are that God comes to bring us back. A king or government gives its citizens one chance, maybe two chances, but not much more than that. God, however, gives us as many chances as we need. Just as dew descends from the heavens each and every night, without exception, similarly, God is willing to come and inspire us regardless of our past, regardless of how many times we have sinned and how many mistakes we have made.

Imagine the Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel calls us on the phone to ask if he could stay with us for Shabbat. Would we refuse the invitation? Would we tell him, "Sorry, I'm busy that weekend" or "I don't have time for guests"? Of course not; we would never refuse such a great honor. During Elul, God Himself is making this phone call. He wants to enter our lives and our souls. How can we turn Him away? Even if now we are "asleep," shouldn't we "wake up" and let Him in?

May we all hear the Elul "knock," and may we all answer the door. This is a precious opportunity that none of us can afford to forfeit. Let us let God into our lives, and we will then enjoy His unlimited blessings and be granted a year of health, happiness and success, Amen.

**VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein
ELUL**

In Eastern Europe as well as in other European, Balkan and Middle Eastern Jewish communities, the advent of the month of Elul was greeted with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation. Both feelings were engendered by the fact that Elul immediately precedes Tishrei, the month that combines judgment and joyful holiday celebrations.

Because of the awesome aspect of judgment associated with Tishrei, there was a Jewish folk saying that when Elul arrived even the fish in the rivers began to tremble. Even though we still pay lip service to this concept of trepidation in our

generations as well, the deep emotional angst that the month of Elul once generated in the Jewish world has pretty much disappeared today.

The pressures of modern life, the never ending struggle for financial security and well-being and the constant information bombardment that gives us no peace or respite, all combine to dull the impact of Elul on our thoughts and emotions. In a certain respect, Elul has lost its uniqueness; it is like any other month of the year and the fish in our rivers no longer tremble at its arrival. One of the myriad casualties and victims is the month of Elul. And we are poorer spiritually because of this.

We perforce arrive at the days of awe and judgment unprepared, not really in the proper mood and mindset, unexcited and almost indifferent as to the process of judgment itself. The life force that once permeated these months of the year has slowly ebbed away.

I know that at my advanced years I am now given to nostalgia. King Solomon in Kohelet warns us of the dangers of nostalgia. He cautions us that we should never say that the good old days were always good. That only leads to pessimistic view of today and a sense of frustrated defeatism. The old world was far from perfect. The secularization of much of the Jewish world took place in Europe in the nineteenth century. Yet there was an atmosphere that existed that touched even the hardened leftist Jews of that time. Everyone was aware that Elul had arrived and that Tishrei was not far behind.

Maybe the fish stopped trembling but they were aware that the temperature of the water was different, higher and more turbulent. I remember the roar of prayer and tears, the sounds that accompanied the services of Selichot, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In our time the roar has become a muted silence.

Concentration in prayer is not to be measured in the volume of sound that accompanies it. And it may very well be that more is accomplished with truly devotional silent, private prayer than with shouts and tears. But I for one long to hear that roar of beseeching prayer uttered from the throats of ordinary hard working Jews asking to be judged favorably on the days of Heavenly judgment.

Elul is the month of the year set aside for personal introspection and self-evaluation. This is not an easy process because it is emotionally and mentally taxing. We do not always like what we see when looking at our inner mirror. But if Elul teaches us

anything it is that honesty is always the best policy. And that begins not with honesty towards others, which is a given in Jewish life, but with honesty with one's own self.

Judaism is built on the foundation that one is forbidden to fool others and that includes the prohibition against fooling one's own self. Elul is the time that such a light needs be shone on our inner self, to view our true motives and ultimate goals in this earthly bound existence of ours.

If we are unable to make the fish tremble any longer, we need to retain the ability to really and truly know ourselves and, in that process, discover knowledge of our Creator and to connect to eternity even in this world. Psychology has confirmed the ancient Jewish wisdom that the key to holiness and sanctity in life is the ability to know one's self. And Elul has retained that quality of being the month of introspection and self-evaluation. We should not squander this opportunity. For after Elul arrives, the days of Tishrei bring the time of judgment. Knowing one's self is the best defense in the court of Heaven.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Consent of the Governed

The contribution of Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, to political thought is fundamental, but not well known. In this study I want to look at the institution of monarchy. What does it tell us about the nature of government as the Torah understands it?

The command relating to a king opens with these words:

“When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,” be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses...” (Deut 17:14-15).

It continues by warning against a king acquiring “great numbers of horses for himself”. He “must not take many wives”, nor may he “accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.” He must write a Sefer Torah, and “he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and . . . not consider himself better than his brothers, or turn from the law to the right or to the left.”

The entire passage is fraught with ambivalence. The dangers are clearly spelled out. There is a risk that a king will exploit his power, using it to acquire wealth, or wives, or horses (one of the status symbols of the

ancient world). This is exactly what Solomon is described as doing in the Book of Kings. His “heart may be led astray”. He may be tempted to lord it over the people, considering himself “better” than everyone else.

The most resonant warning note is struck at the outset. Rather than commanding the appointment of a king, the Torah envisages the people asking for one so that they can be “like all the nations around us”. This is contrary to the whole spirit of the Torah. The Israelites were commanded to be different, set apart, counter-cultural. To want to be like everyone else is not, for the Torah, a noble wish but a failure of imagination and nerve. Small wonder then that a number of medieval commentators held that the creation of a monarchy is not a biblical imperative. Ibn Ezra held that the Torah did not command it but merely permitted it. Abarbanel – who favoured republican government over monarchy – regarded it as a concession to popular sentiment.

However, the key passage is not here but in I Samuel 8.[1] As predicted in Deuteronomy, the people do eventually request a king. They come to Samuel, the prophet-judge, and say: “You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.”

Samuel is displeased. God then tells him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected Me as their king.” This seems to be the heart of the matter. Ideally, Israel should be under no other sovereign but God.

Yet God does not reject the request. To the contrary, God had already signalled, through Moses, that such a request would be granted. So He says to Samuel: “Listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.” The people may appoint a king, but not without having been forewarned as to what are the likely consequences. Samuel gives the warning in these words:

“This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots . . . He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants . . . and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and

the Lord will not answer you in that day.”

Despite the warning, the people are undeterred.

“No!” they said. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.’ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, ‘Listen to them and give them a king.’”

What is going on here? The sages were divided as to whether Samuel was setting out the powers of the king, or whether he was merely trying to dissuade them from the whole project (Sanhedrin 20b). The entire passage, like the one in Deuteronomy, is profoundly ambivalent. Is God in favour of monarchy or against? If He is in favour, why did He say that the people’s request was tantamount to rejecting Him? If He is against, why did He not simply command Samuel to say no?

The best analysis of the subject was given by one of the great rabbis of the 19th century, R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes, in his *Torat Nevi'im*. His thesis is that the institution of monarchy in the days of Samuel took the form of a social contract – as set out in the writings of Locke and Rousseau, and especially Hobbes. The people recognise that they cannot function as individuals without someone having the power to ensure the rule of law and the defence of the nation. Without this, they are in what Hobbes calls a “state of nature”. There is anarchy, chaos. No one is safe. Instead, in Hobbes’ famous phrase, there is “continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Hobbes was writing in the wake of England’s civil war). This is the Hobbesian equivalent of the last line of the Book of Judges:

“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”

The only way to escape from anarchy is by everyone agreeing to transfer some of their rights – especially the use of coercive force – to a human sovereign. Government comes at a high price. It means transferring to a ruler rights over one’s own property and person. The king is entitled to seize property, impose taxes, and conscript people into an army if these are necessary to ensure the rule of law and national security. People agree to this because they calculate that the price of not doing so will be higher still – total anarchy or conquest by a foreign power.

That, according to Chajes, is what Samuel was doing, at God’s command: proposing a social

contract and spelling out what the results would be. If this is so, many things follow. The first is that Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel were right. God gave the people the choice as to whether or not to appoint a king. It was not compulsory but optional. The second – and this is the fundamental feature of social contract theories – is that power is ultimately vested in the people. To be sure, there are moral limits to power. Even a human king is under the sovereignty of God. God gives us the rules that are eternal.

Politics is about the laws that are temporary, for this time, this place, these circumstances. What makes the politics of social contract distinctive is its insistence that government is the free choice of a free nation. This was given its most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence: “to secure these rights (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” That is what God was telling Samuel. If the people want a king, give them a king. Israel is empowered to choose the form of government it desires, within the parameters set by Torah law.

Something else follows – spelled out by R. Avraham Yitzhak haCohen Kook (Responsa Mishpat Cohen, no. 143-4, pp. 336-337): “Since the laws of monarchy pertain to the general situation of the people, these legal rights revert [in the absence of a king] to the people as a whole. Specifically it would seem that any leader [shofet] who arises in Israel has the status of a king [din melekh yesh lo] in many respects, especially when it concerns the conduct of the people . . . Whoever leads the people may rule in accordance with the laws of kingship, since these encompass the needs of the people at that time and in that situation.”

In other words, in the absence of a king of Davidic descent, the people may choose to be ruled by a non-Davidic king, as they did in the age of the Hasmoneans, or to be ruled instead by a democratically elected Parliament, as in the current State of Israel.

The real issue, as the Torah sees it, is not between monarchy and democracy, but between government that is, or is not, freely chosen by the governed. To be sure, the Torah is systematically skeptical about politics. In an ideal world, Israel would be governed by God alone. Given, however, that this is not an ideal world, there must be some human power with the authority to ensure that laws are kept and enemies repelled. But that power is never unlimited. It comes with two constraints: first, it is subject to the overarching authority of God and His law; second, it

is confined to the genuine pursuit of the people's interests. Any attempt by a ruler to use power for personal advantage (as in the case of King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard: 1 Kings 21) is illegitimate.

The free society has its birth in the Hebrew Bible. Far from mandating a retreat from society, the Torah is the blueprint of a society – a society built on freedom and human dignity, whose high ideals remain compelling today.

[1] For a brilliant recent study, though one that does not touch on the issues raised here, see Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes, *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*, Princeton University Press, 2017.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"You shall be wholehearted with Hashem your G-d" (18:13)

'Tamim' means "complete" or "perfect". Rabbenu Yonah (Shaare Teshuva 3:17) explains that perfection in Trust in Hashem (Bitachon) is here commanded. This comes to exclude the practices enumerated in the preceding verses (18:9-12). These practices demonstrate an appeal for the favor of non-existent spiritual forces, and like idolatry, they constitute some measure of disloyalty to Hashem.

But just as it is wrong to transfer any trust to any strange imaginary gods, so also it is forbidden to transfer our trust to our own abilities and resources. Or to trust in men (no matter how righteous and powerful they may be). Or to trust in the forces of nature.

"Complete" Trust in Hashem is required, even when one is energetic and capable of earning his livelihood.

And even when he is diligent in maintaining his good health, and even if he lives in a community or a nation that maintains law and order and is secure against all foreign enemies. Even the young man must look to Hashem every day for his life to continue on the morrow.

Certainly, every man must seek to earn his livelihood and to preserve his health and safety. But all of his Trust must be solely in Hashem.

Quoted from

"Fortunate Nation" by R' Miller

RAV KOOK TORAH The Jerusalem Police Officer

"Appoint judges and police in all of your cities..." (Deut. 16:18)

Rav Kook was overjoyed with the good news: David Tidhar, a Jewish officer serving in the British Mandatory police force, had announced that he was engaged to be married. The rabbi insisted that the wedding be held in his own residence and that he would provide the wedding meal. Rav Kook even invited students from the yeshiva to join in the festivities.

Many people were surprised. Why was Rav Kook so fond of this particular policeman?

Rav Kook explained that David Tidhar had zekhut avot — ancestral merits. His father, Reb Moshe Betzalel Todrosovich, was a wealthy Jaffa philanthropist who had been instrumental in bringing Rav Kook to serve as rabbi of Jaffa. Reb Moshe Betzalel supported numerous religious projects in Jaffa, especially anything related to Jewish education and assisting those in need. This fine man, Rav Kook declared, is certainly deserving of our thanks and gratitude.

The Run-Away Husband

Jewish policemen during the British Mandate (PikiWiki)

But Rav Kook's appreciation of David Tidhar was also based on his appreciation for the young man's own character and deeds. Their close ties took on greater importance when Tidhar became an officer in the Jerusalem police force. The Chief Rabbi would often turn to him for assistance in releasing a prisoner or to ameliorate a prisoner's conditions in jail.

On one unusual occasion, however, Rav Kook requested Tidhar's help in placing a man under arrest.

A certain resident of Jerusalem had decided to abandon his family, intending on leaving his wife without a proper divorce. Lacking an official bill of divorce (a get), the poor woman would become an agunah, trapped in her marriage and unable to remarry.

The scoundrel intended to flee Jerusalem on the early morning train. Legally, there was no way to stop him. The request to detain him had been submitted to

the regional court, but the order could only be approved after the judge arrived at ten o'clock mid-morning.

Hearing of the situation, Rav Kook turned to Tidhar. The resourceful police officer came up with an unconventional solution to deal with the case. He dispatched an undercover detective to the train station. The detective found an excuse to start a fight with the man. The altercation began with harsh words and quickly progressed to fisticuffs.

Policemen instantly appeared and arrested the two brawlers, hauling them in to the Me'ah She'arim police station. At that point, Tidhar arrived at the station. He detained the man until Rav Kook sent word that the court order had been obtained. He was then able to officially place the man under arrest.

The Would-Be Expulsion

In another incident, Tidhar sought to prevent the deportation of Jewish immigrants — a deportation that he himself had been detailed to carry out.

The British passport office sent Tidhar a long list of illegal immigrants. The list included many details: names, addresses, ages, and so on. Tidhar was astounded. How had the British obtained so much information about the immigrants?

The answer was not long in coming. British immigration officials had posed as Jewish aid workers, going from house to house in the Jerusalem neighborhoods. Using this ploy, they tricked the immigrants into divulging their identifying details.

As police commander, Tidhar was the officer ordered to expel forty hapless families — on the day before Yom Kippur! It would have been a heart-breaking sight. Tidhar met with the Jewish city council. He requested that the refugees be provided with food and clothing, and he gave them a twelve-hour reprieve before executing the deportation.

The council's immigration department agreed. They provided for the immigrants' immediate needs and secretly transferred them to distant neighborhoods, thus forestalling the deportation orders.

In order to assist the refugees, Tidhar needed to work on Yom Kippur. Following Rav Kook's advice, he dressed as an Arab. This way, the Jewish immigrants would not be disturbed by the sight of a Jew desecrating the holiest day of the year — even if his labors were for their own benefit.

"There are two men," Rav Kook would say, "who assist me in maintaining order in religious affairs in Jerusalem. The first is the British High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel. And the second is police officer David Tidhar."

"However, there is a difference between the two," the rabbi observed. "The commissioner always confers first with his legal advisor, so his assistance is often delayed. Officer Tidhar, on the other hand, is diligent and energetic. He does whatever he promises, quickly overcoming all obstacles."

David Tidhar admitted, "The British officers thought that they were my commanding officers. But my true commanding officer was Rav Kook. For me, any request of the rabbi was an order, which I tried to discharge to the best of my ability. I considered it a great privilege to fulfill the Chief Rabbi's wishes."

(Stories from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Hayei HaRe'iyah, pp. 303-304; Malachim Kivnei Adam, p. 151)

We would like to thank two wonderful friends for this extraordinary and interesting e-mail. We thought you would appreciate this letter written by Alan Zimmerman, the President of Congregation Beth Israel in Charlottesville, Va. We think it is worth reading and sharing.

PREJUDICE IS UN-AMERICAN! **Sybil and Dave**

At Congregation Beth Israel in Charlottesville, VA, we are deeply grateful for the support and prayers of the broader Reform Jewish community. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of Heather Heyer and the two Virginia State Police officers, H. Jay Cullen and Berke Bates, who lost their lives on Saturday, and with the many people injured in the attack who are still recovering.

The loss of life far outweighs any fear or concern felt by me or the Jewish community during the past several weeks as we braced for this Nazi rally — but the effects of both will each linger.

On Saturday morning, I stood outside our synagogue with the armed security guard we hired after the police department refused to provide us with an officer during morning services. (Even the police department's limited promise of an observer near our building was not kept — and note, we did not ask for protection of our property, only our people as they worshipped).

Forty congregants were inside. Here's what I witnessed during that time.

For half an hour, three men dressed in fatigues and armed with semi-automatic rifles stood across the street from the temple. Had they tried to enter, I don't know what I could have done to stop them, but I couldn't take my eyes off them, either. Perhaps the presence of our armed guard deterred them. Perhaps their presence was just a coincidence, and I'm paranoid. I don't know.

Several times, parades of Nazis passed our building, shouting, "There's the synagogue!" followed by chants of "Seig Heil" and other anti-Semitic language. Some carried flags with swastikas and other Nazi symbols.

A guy in a white polo shirt walked by the synagogue a few times, arousing suspicion. Was he casing the building, or trying to build up courage to commit a crime? We didn't know. Later, I noticed that the man accused in the automobile terror attack wore the same polo shirt as the man who kept walking by our synagogue; apparently it's the uniform of a white supremacist group. Even now, that gives me a chill. When services ended, my heart broke as I advised congregants that it would be safer to leave the temple through the back entrance rather than through the front, and to please go in groups.

This is 2017 in the United States of America. Later that day, I arrived on the scene shortly after the car plowed into peaceful protesters. It was a horrific and bloody scene.

Soon, we learned that Nazi websites had posted a call to burn our synagogue. I sat with one of our rabbis and wondered whether we should go back to the temple to protect the building. What could I do if I were there? Fortunately, it was just talk – but we had already deemed such an attack within the realm of possibilities, taking the precautionary step of removing our Torahs, including a Holocaust scroll, from the premises.

Again: This is in America in 2017.

At the end of the day, we felt we had no choice but to cancel a Havdalah service at a congregant's home. It had been announced on a public Facebook page, and we were fearful that Nazi elements might be aware of the event. Again, we sought police protection – not a battalion of police, just a single officer – but we were told simply to cancel the event. Local police faced an unprecedented problem that day, but make no mistake, Jews are a specific target

of these groups, and despite nods of understanding from officials about our concerns – and despite the fact that the mayor himself is Jewish – we were left to our own devices. The fact that a calamity did not befall the Jewish community of Charlottesville on Saturday was not thanks to our politicians, our police, or even our own efforts, but to the grace of God. And yet, in the midst of all that, other moments stand out for me, as well.

John Aguilar, a 30-year Navy veteran, took it upon himself to stand watch over the synagogue through services Friday evening and Saturday, along with our armed guard. He just felt he should. We experienced wonderful turnout for services both Friday night and Saturday morning to observe Shabbat, including several non-Jews who said they came to show solidarity (though a number of congregants, particularly elderly ones, told me they were afraid to come to synagogue).

A frail, elderly woman approached me Saturday morning as I stood on the steps in front of our sanctuary, crying, to tell me that while she was Roman Catholic, she wanted to stay and watch over the synagogue with us. At one point, she asked, "Why do they hate you?" I had no answer to the question we've been asking ourselves for thousands of years.

At least a dozen complete strangers stopped by as we stood in front the synagogue Saturday to ask if we wanted them to stand with us.

And our wonderful rabbis stood on the front lines with other Charlottesville clergy, opposing hate. Most attention now is, and for the foreseeable future will be, focused on the deaths and injuries that occurred, and that is as it should be. But for most people, before the week is out, Saturday's events will degenerate into the all-to-familiar bickering that is part of the larger, ongoing political narrative. The media will move on — and all it will take is some new outrageous Trump tweet to change the subject. We will get back to normal, also. We have two b'nai mitzvah coming up, and soon, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur will be upon us, too.

After the nation moves on, we will be left to pick up the pieces. Fortunately, this is a very strong and capable Jewish community, blessed to be led by incredible rabbis. We have committed lay leadership, and a congregation committed to Jewish values and our synagogue. In some ways, we will come out of it stronger – just as tempering metals make them tougher and harder.

Has the Heat of Worldwide Antisemitism Become Too Hot for the Jewish People? by Gabriel Groisman / JNS.org

The stinging heat of antisemitism is being felt around the world. Whether you live in Miami, Rome or Santiago, the goosebumps we all got when we heard the chants of the white supremacists in Charlottesville — “Jews will not replace us” — are the same.

Similarly, the lump in my throat when I learned that the pedestrians who were mowed down in Barcelona last week were standing outside two kosher restaurants is the same feeling that was felt by Jews in Brussels, Sydney and Toronto.

These feelings have reminded me of Robert De Niro's character in the 1995 movie, *Heat*. In that film, De Niro's character famously says that you have to be ready to drop everything and leave if you feel the “heat” coming around the corner. With the heat index of antisemitism on the rise, we must ask: Is it time for Jews to drop everything and move to the Jewish homeland of Israel?

In 2015, then-Vice President Joe Biden said that the only country in the world that can guarantee the safety of the Jewish people is Israel. Biden received a lot of criticism for that comment. American Jews felt slighted and concerned. Yet I believe that he was absolutely correct. As Biden said, “No matter how hospitable, no matter how consequential, no matter how engaged, no matter how deeply involved you are in the United States ... there's only one guarantee. There is really only one absolute guarantee, and that's the State of Israel.”

A clear look at today's political landscape shows that this is true, especially because of the resurgence of antisemitism on both sides of the political spectrum. On one side, there is the “progressive” movement's aggressive and antisemitic support of boycotts of Israel, often revealing that anti-Zionism is a thin veil for classic antisemitism. On the other side, we saw that the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville was filled with Nazis and white supremacists. None of this is new.

At the same time, another source of “heat” is the cheapening of Jewish life in mainstream society. This may seem like a bold, inflammatory statement — but it doesn't make it any less true.

For example, in January 2017, a group of people were patiently standing on a pedestrian promenade in Israel. A truck came barreling down the street, veered intentionally up the sidewalk and ran right

over the group, killing four and injuring 15. The driver was then shot as he was reversing the truck to try and kill more people.

Yet since this terrorist attack took place in Jerusalem, the BBC covered the story with a headline that read, “Driver of lorry shot in Jerusalem after allegedly ramming pedestrians, injuring at least 15, Israeli media report.” This is not just one news outlet. This is not just one incident. This is the new trend in the international media, including in the United States. Therefore, one must ask: is the value of Jewish life beginning to diminish yet again?

This brings me back to my initial question: Has the proverbial heat of antisemitism reached a level dictating that Jews should pack their bags and move to Israel?

As a patriotic American citizen — and as the mayor of an amazing US municipality — I believe that the answer for Jews in the US is “no.” America is still a very safe country, where the government — at every level — protects the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, including Jews.

I know that in my municipality of Bal Harbour, and throughout the US, most in the Jewish community feel safe and are thriving. In fact, the Jewish people have never lived a safer and freer existence — outside of Israel — than we have in the US during the last century.

Despite this reality, and given the lessons of history, it is imperative for Jews to always ask the question: Am I still safe here?

Jews around the world cannot be blind to the reality surrounding them. We cannot ignore the rising heat levels of the past several years. We must keep our eyes wide open, even if we live in what seems to be a paradise. The rise of antisemitism must be fought without hesitation and without equivocation — whether it comes from the left or the right. Antisemitism cannot only be challenged when it is politically convenient. We must never again allow antisemitism or any form of racism to become tolerable in our society.

Gabriel Groisman is the mayor of Bal Harbour, Fla. Follow him on Twitter: @gabegroisman.

Why Anti-Semitism On The Left Is More Dangerous Than Anti-Semitism On The Right Benjamin Moalem - August 21, 2017

Much ink has been spilled over the past week about president Donald Trump's failure to adequately

condemn white nationalists in Charlottesville, VA, and rightfully so. As Stephen Colbert so eloquently put it, how could the president “shank a softball like that so hard?” The car ramming attack in Charlottesville was no less a terror attack than any “radical Islamic” attack the president would not have hesitated to forcefully condemn. Instead, in this case, he called out the violence on “both sides.”

So, let’s talk about the other side. I’m not quite sure who the President was referring to when he referred to the “other side” in his condemnation, seeing as only one side produced a murderer who drove a car into a crowd of innocent people and only one side instigated a riot by holding a rally for Nazis. But there actually is another side to the ugly face of racism in this country, and it’s that other side I want to address. For left wing racists are no less anti-Semitic than the despicable individuals who marched in the August 12 rally. Those who couch or color their anti-Semitism are no less culpable than those who publicly express their racist views (as is their right), even if those on the left manage to successfully hide their racism behind the fig leaf of one form of progressive ideal or another.

Take for example the Chicago Dyke Walk, who famously expelled individuals from its march for waving gay flags emblazoned with a Jewish star, a star that was a universal symbol of Judaism long before the rise of modern Zionism. Many on the (extreme) left were either quick to defend the actions of the Chicago Slut March or, at the very least, tolerated it. While the question of which views are considered “legitimate” in a free society is beyond the scope of this article, the exclusion of individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs or nationality is textbook racism.

How are the acts of the Chicago Dyke Walk any different than the actions of the White Nationalists in Virginia? While the organizers Chicago Slut March did not use the imagery of the alt right marchers in Charlottesville, their actions were no less anti-Semitic.

Likewise, why hasn’t Roger Waters been widely condemned for his overt displays of anti-Semitism? How can we “enlightened progressives” expect the President to condemn a group of tiki torch wielding mobs wearing quasi Nazi uniforms (as we should), but have no qualms when Roger Waters fills up stadiums wearing a similar Nazi-looking uniform and floats a balloon in the shape of a pig with an image of a Jewish star alongside a swastika on it? Is Waters’ uniform any less Nazi looking? How is the caricature of a Jewish star alongside a swastika on an inflated pig (widely known to be an “unclean” animal in Jewish tradition) not anti-Semitic imagery? Why is Roger Waters’ anti-Semitism ok?

At college campuses across America, ostensibly liberal groups are excluding Jewish students and Jewish students are increasingly feeling threatened. A recent study by Tel Aviv University researchers found that while violent attacks against Jews has dropped in the last ten years, college campuses in the U.S. have become a “hotbed of anti-Semitism.” Hiding behind the mantra of “anti-Zionism” while attempting to support their position by stating that they feel “unsafe,” these self-styled liberals are getting away with covert and even overt anti-Semitism and, unlike the racists in Charlottesville, their words and actions are becoming increasingly acceptable.

In America today, we’ve come full circle: The number one enemy of the Nazis is the same enemy as some of those standing on the opposite extreme of the political spectrum.

But left wing anti-Semitism is even more dangerous than its Nazi counterpart in some respects, for the simple fact that while Nazis are considered beyond the pale of what is accepted by civil society, left wing anti-Semitism is increasingly considered “legitimate” because it can hide behind widely accepted liberal ideas like anti-Zionism, for example.

According to Jewish law, for an animal to be kosher, it must have split hooves and chew its cud. The Midrash expounds on this and teaches that the pig symbolizes deceit because when it lies down and extends its feet it shows the passerby its split hooves as if to say, “I’m kosher,” when it is not because it does not chew its cud. Because Nazis and white supremacists are not ashamed to say they hate Jews (and black people and anyone else not deemed “white enough”), they at least do us the favor of letting us know they are the enemy. By contrast, the left-wing racists profess tolerance and acceptance and pay lip service to political correctness when in fact, they are no different than those who marched in Charlottesville.

While we should be careful not to quickly label those we disagree with as anti-Semitic, as a society, we must do a better job of rooting out racists who attempt to fool us with their otherwise progressive views. It is time we make it clear that all forms of anti-Semitism are unacceptable, instead of conveniently ignoring the anti-Semitism of those we may be otherwise closer aligned with ideologically. Anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism no matter what form it takes.

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