

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE****MISHPATIM**

Haftarah: Melachim II 11:17 - 12:17

FEBRUARY 14, 2015 25 SHEBAT 5775

**DEDICATIONS: In memory of Sarina Bat Victoria – Sally Azrak – 24 Shevat  
Happy Anniversary to Ellen and Isaac**

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**Editors Notes: I had no newsletter prepared as of  
12:30, but all these emails and calls came in  
asking me where it was. I apologize. Editor's  
notes I took from last year and the rest is current.  
( Rabbi Mansour did not post this week – we  
doubled up Rabbi Wein) Sorry for the delay ....  
Shabbat Shalom,**

JANUARY 2014 - I have received hundreds and  
hundreds and hundreds of notes, emails, texts and  
messages from so many of you sending condolences  
after our recent loss. I know I responded to most of  
them and if I missed yours, I am so sorry. It's been a  
crazy few weeks and I still feel like I'm lost in some  
strange dream. A day hasn't gone by without me  
needing to ask my dad something, and then  
remembering that I can't. When my friend Jack  
Maleh's dad, Moe passed away last night, I wanted to  
call my dad who could tell me about all the communal  
work that Moe did over the last half century and then  
some. My dad was the community historian. But I  
couldn't..... I received a picture that dated back to  
when I met Haham Ovadia Yosef in Ahi Ezer Yeshiva  
and wanted to ask my dad who everyone in the  
picture was, but I couldn't.... I had a question in work  
about a furniture design, and have no one to ask.... I  
actually forget he's not here for a brief second. Its just  
so strange ....

I wrote the following for the Jewish Voice on Tuesday  
and it was read by my cousin Ruby at the Areyat held  
on Tuesday afternoon in Miami. I am deeply grateful  
to Rabbi Galimidi who spoke in Aventura and to  
Rabbi Saul Maslaton and Rabbi Benoliel who spoke  
in New York. I am very proud of my nephews Joseph  
Jemal, Joseph Bibi and Ezra Bibi who spoke so well.  
And my brother Ruby blew me away with stories I

never heard before. Between Ruby's stories and  
what I learned during the Shiva there is so much  
more to discover about my dad. Pity that I didn't ask  
more!

**VeEleh HaMishpatim Asher Tasim Lifnechem.  
These are the statutes which you shall place  
before them.**

Society requires laws and statutes to live by. As Jews  
we are expected to follow the law and go beyond the  
letter of the law.

My father Joe Bibi, AH, passed away this week. My  
father in his humility probably arranged for his funeral  
to fall on Tu Bishvat and at the outset of yeshiva  
vacation week to avoid crowds and eulogies at his  
funeral. Even today Tuesday as we plan his areyat -  
his seventh day memorial service for this afternoon,  
the skies are open with snow falling. Did he  
manipulate that too so that less people come?

With so many families away, I received hundreds and  
hundreds of emails from people who knew, loved and  
respected my father.

One email I received Friday stopped me in my tracks.  
The gist of it began:

"Dear David,  
You may or may not know me, but I will be saying  
Kadish for your father, my brother Joe Bibi. "

Today in America if someone received a letter like  
this, he might think. Oh my gosh, what did my  
grandfather do?

But anyone who knew my grandfather knew better.

The note continued, "I came to America when I was  
15 years old. I had no relatives here nor any friends.  
I moved into Reuben and Esther Bibi's home and  
stayed there as their child for years. Your father was  
my brother".

The stories about the chesed of my grandparents are  
legendary. As we sat for the shiva we heard from  
Rabbi Maslaton how his father took him to see a true  
sadik, my father's grandfather Isaac Mizrahi. We all  
heard the amazing stories of my dad's other

grandfather Yosef Obadiah Bibi. But being the son and grandson of righteous people is no guarantee of being righteous.

My father was a man of tremendous midot. One might argue if his greatness was in his service to others, in his encouragement of others, in his trust in G-d, in his humility or in his patience. Rabbi Ben Oliei suggested that even one born with these merits is still tested every day.

On Wednesday after hearing of my dad's passing, I stopped by my office. As I left to get the car, the attendant was crying at my father's passing. The building concierge, a truck driver, the guy in the coffee cart, people we pass after day and rarely give a thought to were distraught.

Joseph Bibi had the amazing quality of seeing the selem elokim, the G-dly image within every person. Not only did he see it, but he drew it out and made everyone feel important. People would come to him with their problems and would leave feeling great.

A man told us that twenty five years prior he had a disagreement with another man in the synagogue over work that was done. They didn't want to be in the same room with each other. They approached my dad and each spoke to him. The matter was settled and they became best of friends. What did my dad say? We think it's not what he said, it was his tremendous skill of being an active listener. He heard them. He made them feel better.

Given all the tremendous communal accomplishments of my father, whether for the Synagogue, school or lodge; the edifices built, the synagogues, the Torah centers, the senior citizen residences, children's camps, community centers and schools, the accolades could have gone to his head. Everyone wanted to honor him, yet he ran from honor. He never expected anything, never asked for anything for himself. It was always about everyone else.

Last year when a nurse in error caused my father severe damage which caused tremendous pain and lasted for many weeks, instead of anger my father accepted it as some tikun, some heavenly reparation.

My brother insisted that my father's greatest midah was his patience. He said that a thousand times my father waited for us and never complained. At a light he would never honk when the guy in front didn't move. He never stared after the train on the tracks.

When it comes, it comes. Who am I to think it should come for me?

One of the rabbis said he caught himself after hearing the stories when he thought he was rushing his wife from the house. He committed to giving patience a try.

I tried it waiting for my kids that night. I also tried it on the road in the morning. It's not easy even once let alone thousands of times my father seemed to be patient without effort.

Is patience required of us? Or is it going beyond the requirement of the law? Whatever the answer, exercising patience can make us better people. So next time your tempted to look at the watch, to honk the horn, or to press someone else, stop. Take a breath, pause, think of my dad and exercise patience. It takes tremendous effort but will bring tremendous reward. Do it in his memory.

May the soul of my father and teacher, Yosef Ben Esther be bound in srer hachayim.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi David Bibi

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The Jewish slave, Jewish maidservant, manslaughter, murder, injuring a parent, kidnapping, cursing a parent.

2nd Aliya: Killing of slaves, personal damages, injury to slaves, the killer ox, a hole in the ground, damage by goring, penalties for stealing.

3rd Aliya: Damage by grazing, damage by fire, the unpaid custodian, the paid custodian, the borrowed article, seduction, occult practices, idolatry and oppression, lending money.

4th Aliya: Accepting authority, justice, strayed animals, the fallen animal.

5th Aliya: Justice, the Shmitah (7th) year, Shabbos, Pesach, Shavous, Succos, prohibition against milk and meat.

6th Aliya: Hashem (G-d) instructed the nation to respect the authority of His messengers, the Prophets and Rabbis. He promised to chase out the seven nations who inhabited Canaan and forewarned

us against making a treaty of peace with them, or being influenced by their practices and values.

7th Aliya: Hashem stated the means by which the seven nations would be chased out of Israel, and promised that if we do as instructed no woman would miscarry. The borders of Eretz Yisroel (The Land of Israel) were defined. The conclusion of the Parsha returns to the aftermath of Revelation. Moshe built an altar, offered a sacrifice, and in 24:7 the nation proclaimed "we will first obey Hashem's commands and then attempt to understand". Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and the 70 elders have a shared vision in 24:10 and then Moshe is told to ascend Sinai where he would remain for 40 days and nights.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

#### **"Distance yourself from a false word." (Shemot 23:7)**

We are commanded to distance ourselves from a lie. What is the reason for this? As an opener we understand this in the following manner. We know there are certain instances where the Torah wants us to lie. For instance, for the sake of peace, it is permitted and recommended to lie. There are also other situations where this is true. Therefore, to counter a possible laxity in this regard, the Torah gives a specific command not to tolerate falsehood.

But a further explanation is necessary. Many of us think that lying is a problem only when this causes a damage or a hurt to someone else. But, if someone asks you your name and nobody knows you and you say your name is Joe but your name is really Sam, that's not a problem, because who cares what your real name is? Nobody! So if you don't want anyone to know your real name it is not a problem. This is the basic view of truth and falsehood.

However, this is a fundamental mistake. For even if there isn't anyone in the world who cares what your name is, when a falsehood is said it ruins the world! The mere existence of a lie contradicts the existence of the world, which is based on truth. It is quite common amongst public speakers to "mis-speak" in order to change the impression of the listener. But this is very wrong.

It has been told that the Hafess Hayim would get very upset if someone would ask what time it is and the person would begin to respond, "I think it's around..." He would get upset at those words. "Either say what time it is or say I don't know!" The person who hears this doesn't understand. "Am I responsible for what time it is? For the person who

asked, it's enough to know that it's around five o'clock. What difference does it make if it's really five after five?" The person doesn't understand that at five o'clock the stars and the planets are at a certain location and at five minutes later this all changes. Hashem's creation, our universe, is exact and based on truth.

Truth is the essence of the world and the reality of the entire creation. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

#### **"And these are the laws that you shall place before them" (Shemot 21:1)**

From the word *לפניהם* b%o p^k, before them, Rashi tells us that we must bring disputes before our court system; that is, one must go to Bet Din rather than go to secular courts. This is indeed the halachah that we may not go to a secular court to adjudicate a case between two Jews. It may seem to us that this would only apply when the power of Bet Din was absolute, like in the old days, whereas nowadays, when Bet Din is limited in enforcing its laws, we should not have to go to Bet Din. This is incorrect. We must always go to Bet Din first and only when Bet Din allows us to go to civil courts do we have the right to do so. It is considered a Hilul Hashem and a denigration of the Torah if we go to civil courts rather than Bet Din. Today, most civil courts recognize any agreement which was worked out in Bet Din, and will uphold it without having to reopen the case, which makes going to Bet Din more advantageous. We should hopefully never have to go to court for any reason, but if it ever becomes necessary, we would be doing a great misvah by following the halachah and going to Jewish courts. We will be upholding the Torah and making a Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying the Name of Hashem, which is certain to impact favorably on the outcome of the case. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

#### **Rabbi Wein EXPECTATIONS**

A great deal of our reactions to events is dependent upon what our previous expectations regarding those events or personalities were. If we have very high expectations of success, morality or altruistic behavior from our individual leaders, be they political or religious, national or personal, we are invariably doomed to disappointment - the higher the expectation, the more bruising the disappointment.

Much of this disappointment is engendered by our heroes engaging in normal human behavior in circumstances when somehow we expect super human behavior from them. Our expectations are fed by the public image and persona of those leaders who invariably portray themselves as being all-wise, selfless and beyond pettiness and human foibles.

Since they have portrayed themselves in such a fashion, the rule of society – the bigger they are the harder they fall – invariably is invoked. We are witness to this on a national scale regarding the attitude of much of European political leadership, academia and intelligentsia towards the state of Israel.

Not long ago one of the foreign ministers of a Scandinavian country openly stated: "We expect much more from Israel than we do from the Palestinians or the Arabs. Therefore, it is true that we do have a double standard when it comes to events and policies regarding the Middle East." This revealing statement emphasizes the truth that throughout history Jews were expected to be more Christian than the Christians, more liberal than the liberals and certainly more pacifist and peace-loving than anyone else.

This expectation, unfair and unrealistic as it may be, was somehow fostered by the Jewish self-image. This attitude has been carried over today by the unrealistic and unfair expectations that many Jews have today of Israel. When Charles de Gaulle called us an "elitist" people he was reflecting the attitude that many Jews have about themselves. So, when Jews do not behave in an "elitist" fashion, the disappointment of the world and of the Jewish people is truly magnified.

The Jewish world, especially the observant Orthodox section of it, is currently reeling from a number of scandalous incidents involving yeshivot, Chasidic courts, Kabbalistic savants, differing ideologies, corruption and criminal charges against revered rabbis, powerful political leaders and public representatives of our faith. Great people and seemingly holy institutions have been brought low by sad and unworthy incidents loudly trumpeted by the press and the media both here and in the United States.

What makes all of these incidents so much more painful is that we were led to expect more. If rioting factions in one of the greatest yeshivot in the world can break up a prayer service for the sake of turf and self interest, it is difficult to see how Torah and meaningful prayer can be advanced amongst the

masses of the Jewish people. And this is simply because the antagonists themselves have portrayed themselves as the paragons of virtue and see themselves as being the true owners of the tents of Jacob.

We expect better from them. We expect restraint and holiness, tolerance and peace and the willingness to abide with agreed-upon settlements crafted by the religious court system. When these expectations are dashed by what unfortunately can be called "normal" human behavior – selfishness, self-interest, turf and greed – the despair and hardship of the observer is compounded.

There are apparently only two possible antidotes to this disease of scandal and dispute. One is to simply lower our own expectations of our leaders and institutions - to admit that they are not infallible; they are not necessarily as holy as they portray themselves to be and that in their human errors – even shameful ones - can and will occur.

Apparently this is the way that the Bible and the Talmud chose in discussing the lives and events of the great leaders of the Jewish people in First and Second Temple times and thereafter. No one gets a free pass. Paradoxically, this does not seem to diminish anyone's greatness or heroic stature in the eyes of the Jewish people. Rather, it enhances their humanity and our ability to identify with them and learn from their challenges and circumstances of life. In effect, we are taught to have realistic expectations of humans and thus minimize the angst and despair that unrealistic expectations will always bring upon us.

A second path in this area is to truly demand high achievements from our leadership, that they truly live up to their public persona and press clippings. Covering up faults and ignoring the obvious circumstance that the emperor has no clothes can only lead to public shame and private disaster. I think that perhaps both of these attitudes can be pursued simultaneously and that Jewish society will strengthen and enhance it.

## MISHPATIM

One of the most puzzling, if not even disturbing subjects, discussed in biblical and halachic detail, appears in this week's Torah reading. That subject matter concerns itself with the institution of slavery – of literally owning another human being and defining

them as human chattel. Certainly, the entire subject matter grates on the ears and sensibilities of Western citizens in our current twenty-first century.

We remember the words of Abraham Lincoln that if there is any wrong in human society, slavery is certainly that wrong. Yet, as a matter of cold hard fact and reality, slavery still exists in a large part of human society today and was certainly the norm in all human societies for many millennia. Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did Western societies begin the slow, painful and always violent change of mindset and practice and legally abolish slavery.

Large parts of the Moslem world today still incorporate slavery as part of their social and economic fabric of life. So, we moderns ask the question, certainly to ourselves if not publicly, why does it seem that the Torah accepts and even condones the practice of slavery? It devotes a great deal of space and thought to regulating it, limiting it, and making it more humane and less brutal.

Yet, in the final analysis it does not speak out against the practice nor does it forbid it as being a moral and legal wrong. To the true believer, this question like all questions regarding religion and faith, has really no validity. To the nonbeliever, there never is an acceptable answer to any of one's doubts and questions regarding faith and revelation.

To many if not most of us who, though believing are nevertheless troubled by seeming moral inconsistencies and who search for Torah relevance in our everyday lives, this type of question gnaws at us.

The Talmud many centuries ago pointed out the inefficiencies and economic backwardness that slavery inflicts upon society. Its famous statement was: "One who purchases a slave to serve one's self is in reality acquiring a master over one's self." Yet, even here it is the impracticality of slavery that is being attacked and not the immorality of the institution itself.

Many of the great Torah commentators, especially of the last few centuries, have attempted to deal with this issue. They saw in it – in this Jewish attitude toward slavery - an institution that could rehabilitate the criminal, give opportunity to the helpless poor, educate the ignorant and bring the pagan to monotheistic society and its enlightened practices and attitudes.

As true and high sounding as these goals are at best, they still do not sound a ringing condemnation of the

institution of slavery itself. I think that we are forced to say that since the Torah was given to all societies and all times – an idea emphasized by Maimonides throughout his works – the Torah, as was its wont in many cases, spoke to a current and long-lasting society that could not imagine a world where slavery should no longer exist.

It regulated the institution and look forward to a time such as ours where, in most human societies, that institution would no longer exist. The Torah never commanded the acquisition of slaves. It tempered the practice, waiting for the time when it would cease to be an issue.

### **Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Healing the Heart of Darkness**

Jobbik, otherwise known as the Movement for a Better Hungary, is an ultra-nationalist Hungarian political party that has been described as fascist, neo-Nazi, racist, and anti-semitic. It has accused Jews of being part of a "cabal of western economic interests" attempting to control the world: the libel otherwise known as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a fiction created by members of the Czarist secret service in Paris in the late 1890s and revealed as a forgery by The Times in 1921.

On one occasion the Jobbik party asked for a list of all the Jews in the Hungarian government. Disturbingly, in the Hungarian parliamentary elections in April 2014 it secured over 20 per cent of the votes, making it the third largest party.

Until 2012 one of its leading members was a politician in his late 20s, Csanad Szegedi. Szegedi was a rising star in the movement, widely spoken of as its future leader. Until one day in 2012. That was the day Szegedi discovered he was a Jew.

Some of the members of the party had wanted to stop his progress and spent time investigating his background to see whether they could find anything that would do him damage. What they found was that his maternal grandmother was a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz. So was his maternal grandfather. Half of Szegedi's family were killed during the Holocaust.

Szegedi's opponents started spreading rumours about his Jewish ancestry on the internet. Soon Szegedi himself discovered what was being said and decided to check whether the claims were true. They were. After Auschwitz his grandparents, once

Orthodox Jews, decided to hide their identity completely. When his mother was 14, her father told her the secret but ordered her not to reveal it to anyone. Szegedi now knew the truth about himself.

He decided to resign from the party and find out more about Judaism. He went to a local Chabad Rabbi, Slomó Köves, who at first thought he was joking. Nonetheless he arranged for Szegedi to attend classes on Judaism and to come to the synagogue. At first, Szegedi says, people were shocked. He was treated by some as "a leper." But he persisted. Today he attends synagogue, keeps Shabbat, has learned Hebrew, calls himself Dovid, and in 2013 underwent circumcision.

When he first admitted the truth about his Jewish ancestry, one of his friends in the Jobbik party said, "The best thing would be if we shoot you so you can be buried as a pure Hungarian." Another urged him to make a public apology. It was this comment, he says, that made him leave the party. "I thought, wait a minute, I am supposed to apologize for the fact that my family was killed at Auschwitz?"

As the realization that he was a Jew began to change his life, it also transformed his understanding of the world. Today, he says, his focus as a politician is to defend human rights for everyone. "I am aware of my responsibility and I know I will have to make it right in the future."

Szegedi's story is not just a curiosity. It takes us to the very heart of the strange, fraught nature of our existence as moral beings.

What makes us human is the fact that we are rational, reflective, capable of thinking things through. We feel empathy and sympathy, and this begins early. Even newborn babies cry when they hear another child cry. We have mirror neurons in the brain that make us wince when we see someone else in pain. Homo sapiens is the moral animal.

Yet much of human history has been a story of violence, oppression, injustice, corruption, aggression and war. Nor, historically, has it made a significant difference whether the actors in this story have been barbarians or citizens of a high civilization.

The Greeks of antiquity, masters of art, architecture, drama, poetry, philosophy and science, wasted themselves on the internecine Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta in the last quarter of the fifth century BCE. They never fully recovered. It was the end of the golden age of Greece.

Fin de siècle Paris and Vienna in the 1890s were the leading centres of European civilization. Yet they were also the world's leaders in antisemitism, Paris with the Dreyfus Affair, Vienna with its antisemitic mayor, Karl Lueger, whom Hitler later cited as his inspiration.

When we are good we are little lower than the angels. When we are bad we are lower than the beasts. What makes us moral? And what, despite it all, makes humanity capable of being so inhumane?

Plato thought that virtue was knowledge. If we know something is wrong, we will not do it. Aristotle thought that virtue was habit, learned in childhood till it becomes part of our character.

David Hume and Adam Smith, two intellectual giants of the Scottish Enlightenment, thought that morality came from emotion, fellow feeling. Immanuel Kant believed that it came through rationality. A moral principle is one you are willing to prescribe for everyone. Therefore, for example, lying cannot be moral because you do not wish others to lie to you.

All four views have some truth to them, and we can find similar sentiments in the rabbinic literature. In the spirit of Plato, the sages spoke of the tinok shenishba, someone who does wrong because he or she was not educated to know what is right.[1] Maimonides, like Aristotle, thought virtue came from repeated practice. Halakhah creates habits of the heart. The rabbis said that the angels of kindness and charity argued for the creation of man because we naturally feel for others, as Hume and Smith argued. Kant's principle is similar to what the sages called sevarah, "reason."

But these insights only serve to deepen the question. If knowledge, emotion and reason lead us to be moral, why is that that humans hate, harm and kill? A full answer would take longer than a lifetime, but the short answer is simple. We are tribal animals. We form ourselves into groups. Morality is both cause and consequence of this fact. Toward people with whom we are or feel ourselves to be related we are capable of altruism. But toward strangers we feel fear, and that fear is capable of turning us into monsters.

Morality, in Jonathan Haidt's phrase, binds and blinds.[2] It binds us to others in a bond of reciprocal altruism. But it also blinds us to the humanity of those who stand outside that bond. It unites and divides. It divides because it unites. Morality turns the "I" of self interest into the "We" of the common good. But the very act of creating an "Us" simultaneously creates a

"Them," the people not like us. Even the most universalistic of religions, founded on principles of love and compassion, have often seen those outside the faith as Satan, the infidel, the antichrist, the child of darkness, the unredeemed. They have committed unspeakable acts of brutality in the name of God.

Neither Platonic knowledge nor Adam Smith's moral sense nor Kantian reason has cured the heart of darkness in the human condition. That is why two sentences blaze through today's parsha like the sun emerging from behind thick clouds:

You must not mistreat or oppress the stranger in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt. (Ex. 22: 21)

You must not oppress strangers. You know what it feels like to be a stranger, for you yourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt. (Ex. 23: 9)

The great crimes of humanity have been committed against the stranger, the outsider, the one-not-like-us. Recognising the humanity of the stranger has been the historic weak point in most cultures. The Greeks saw non-Greeks as barbarians. Germans called Jews vermin, lice, a cancer in the body of the nation. In Rwanda, Hutus called Tutsis inyenzi, cockroaches.

Dehumanize the other and all the moral forces in the world will not save us from evil. Knowledge is silenced, emotion anaesthetized and reason perverted. The Nazis convinced themselves (and others) that in exterminating the Jews they were performing a moral service for the Aryan race.[3] Suicide bombers are convinced that they are acting for the greater glory of God.[4] There is such a thing as altruistic evil.

That is what makes these two commands so significant. The Torah emphasizes the point time and again: the rabbis said that the command to love the stranger appears 36 times in the Torah. Jewish law is here confronting directly the fact that care for the stranger is not something for which we can rely on our normal moral resources of knowledge, empathy and rationality. Usually we can, but under situations of high stress, when we feel our group threatened, we cannot. The very inclinations that bring out the best in us – our genetic inclination to make sacrifices for the sake of kith and kin – can also bring out the worst in us when we fear the stranger. We are tribal animals and we are easily threatened by the members of another tribe.

Note that these commands are given shortly after the exodus. Implicit in them is a very radical idea indeed. Care for the stranger is why the Israelites had to

experience exile and slavery before they could enter the Promised Land and build their own society and state. You will not succeed in caring for the stranger, implies God, until you yourselves know in your very bones and sinews what it feels like to be a stranger. And lest you forget, I have already commanded you to remind yourselves and your children of the taste of affliction and bitterness every year on Pesach. Those who forget what it feels like to be a stranger, eventually come to oppress strangers, and if the children of Abraham oppress strangers, why did I make them My covenantal partners?

Empathy, sympathy, knowledge and rationality are usually enough to let us live at peace with others. But not in hard times. Serbs, Croats and Muslims lived peaceably together in Bosnia for years. So did Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. The problem arises at times of change and disruption when people are anxious and afraid. That is why exceptional defences are necessary, which is why the Torah speaks of memory and history – things that go to the very heart of our identity. We have to remember that we were once on the other side of the equation. We were once strangers: the oppressed, the victims. Remembering the Jewish past forces us to undergo role reversal. In the midst of freedom we have to remind ourselves of what it feels like to be a slave.

What happened to Csanad, now Dovid, Szegedi, was exactly that: role reversal. He was a hater who discovered that he belonged among the hated. What cured him of antisemitism was his role-reversing discovery that he was a Jew. That, for him, was a life-changing discovery. The Torah tells us that the experience of our ancestors in Egypt was meant to be life-changing as well. Having lived and suffered as strangers, we became the people commanded to care for strangers.

The best way of curing antisemitism is to get people to experience what it feels like to be a Jew. The best way of curing hostility to strangers is to remember that we too, from someone else's perspective, are strangers. Memory and role-reversal are the most powerful resources we have to cure the darkness that can sometimes occlude the human soul.

[1] See Shabbat 68b; Maimonides Hilkhos Mamrim 3: 3. This certainly applies to ritual laws, whether it applies to moral ones also may be a moot point.

[2] Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon, 2012.

[3] See Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003.

[4] See Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and the (un)making of Terrorists*. New York: Ecco, 2010. The classic text is Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*. New York: Harper and Row, 1951.

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

"You shall not be after many for evil (matters)" (23:2)

This is an injunction of the greatest importance in our history. Our Nation has always been a minority in its principles and practices as opposed to the nations of the world. When the entire world served idols, Israel was the tiny minority that opposed the world. But even among the people of Israel, the opinions of the many should be carefully scrutinized before one decides to follow them, unless the majority of the righteous hold those opinions. Thus two principles here are enunciated:

- 1) You shall not follow the many of the people unless you are convinced that their opinions are justified.
- 2) You should follow the many (the majority) of those that are not for evil, i.e. the Sages of the Torah; for from the negative command (You shall not be after the many for evil) we derive the positive command (the many of the righteous should be followed).

Thus the more earnest servant of Hashem should not be swayed by the less enthusiastic that perform the Mitzvot mechanically. "Evil" includes even attitudes of jesting, lack of introspection and all forms of superficiality.

An additional injunction is here included: "You shall not be after the many that are for evil," meaning that you should refrain from uniting with evil men even for good purposes (Shaare Teshuba, R. Yonah, 3:50). By joining the evil men in any capacity whatsoever, you encourage them and also lend prestige to them, in addition to exposing yourself to their undesirable influences.

But this injunction means even more: "You shall not be complacent, or even quiescent, when you see evil." Even when many evil men participate in a wicked project, you shall not allow them to think (because of your silence) that you are in agreement with them. This was the blame upon the nation when a small number made the Golden Calf. You must speak up and counteract their influence.

"After many to incline" (23:2). You shall not be after the many to incline to them for evil, but for virtue you should be after the many. This means; even if many speak up and advocate righteous deeds or opinions, do not be an inactive spectator and rely on others to speak for you. "You (also) should be after the many" for virtue. Just as Shem took a garment to cover his father's nakedness (Beresheet 9:23) and then Yefeth also participated, even though he was not needed, and thereby Yefeth gained a blessing (ibid. 9:27). So also should each one of us participate in righteous endeavors even when we are not needed. But Ham,

because he failed to take hold of the end of the garment at least in symbolic participation, gained a severe reproof.

"If he that joins the sinners is punished together with them (although his participation accomplished nothing); Then how much certain is the reward of one that joined those that performed a Mitzvah (even though he was not needed), as those that (were needed and) did the Mitzvah". (Sanhedrin 9A).

Quoted from "A Nation Is Born" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

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