

MONTREAL JEWISH MAGAZINE

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PURIM

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MONTREAL JEWISH MAGAZINE

Imagine what the world would be like if people felt a genuine awareness of the common oneness that bonds all people. Imagine how different it would be. Would we wage war and use our resources to build weapons of mass destruction? Would we need police and courts to stop us from taking advantage of one another? Would we seek to manipulate economic systems and risk the security of others for personal gain? Would we rob the earth of its riches without thinking of the effects on our own children, let alone our neighbors? Would we be so cold and uncaring as we pass each other in the streets? Would we be so absorbed in our selfishness that we would ignore the needs of others?

When I look at the realities of the world we live in, this dream seems a bit far-fetched, I admit. I don't even see unity among my own people, and I see other nations and groups suffering the same pain, so how can we hope for unity amongst the diversity nations? Given the profound change for good that a paradigm shift in the perception of human unity would almost certainly and instantly achieve, I find it surprising that among Judaism's 613 commandments governing the minutia of human life – including the percentage of our income that should be given to charity, the best way to slaughter an animal, the proper order for tying one's shoes, and how to correctly wipe one's appendages after using the bathroom – I do not find any mention of a directive calling for unity. Perhaps unity is not as important as we assume. Perhaps the need for unity is rooted in some psychological weakness or primordial herd mentality, rather than a higher ideal. Or maybe the heavenly court finds our petty arguments and unending divisiveness to be entertaining – a source of amusement they are reluctant to relinquish. But given the undeniable benevolence that would result from unity, it is difficult to argue that Judaism, the linchpin of human morality, could overlook such an obvious way to improve and perhaps even perfect human civilization.

It is true that, by nature, humans abhor fragmentation. We have this need, perhaps bordering on obsession, to make sense of things. Have you ever lived your life for a few weeks without making enough time to process events? Personally, I am tortured by that unhealthy, disconnected feeling that results from the hundreds of random daily tasks I fulfill that, on the surface, seem to have no common thread. Without taking time to process where I'm going and what I'm doing, coming to some vision of purpose within this mundane reality and creating some semblance of order within the chaos, my sanity starts to slip.

One of the cornerstone Kabbalistic teachings is that everything in existence, and all people, are one. So perhaps there is no need for a unity directive, since unity is something that already exists, albeit on a metaphysical level. But that's exactly the point: The same thing could be said about so many of Judaism's teachings. The edict to "be holy," for example, seems superfluous in light of the fact that every individual is already holy by virtue of the soul. The purpose of these commandments is not to create a new reality, but to coax a hidden spiritual reality into the forefront of our consciousness and our material lives by guiding us to seek it, uncover it, and transform the latent potential into reality.

So, the question becomes what sort of ethos would enable the inherent oneness to shine? What is the secret to unity? If there was true unity, then we would act with sensitivity and openness toward each and every individual we encounter. Or, more accurately, if there was love between each and every individual, then by default there would be unity all around. And if not... well, we are all quite familiar with the "if not" reality, for it is the reality we find ourselves in today. If we have love between individuals, then the sum total will be unity. If not, then all the banners, slogans, and conferences in the world dedicated to the ideal of unity will not get us there. It's easier to wave a banner, chant a slogan and attend a conference than it is to really engage, accept and appreciate another person as an individual. But any directive toward unity is decidedly futile. Love, not unity, is the answer.

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think!
again.



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WHY GIVE FOOD GIFTS ON PURIM?

From the Rebbe's letters

I wish to acknowledge with thanks receipt of the *Shallach Monos* with the accompanying note. I also want you to know that I was gratified to meet several members of your group at our Purim celebration.

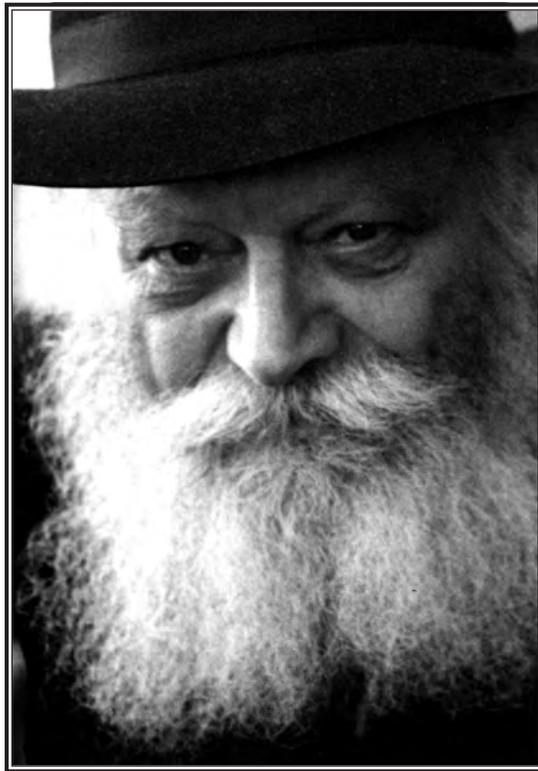
There are a number of topics which I should have liked to take up with you, but I must confine this letter to the acknowledgement, adding but a few lines on the subject of *Shallach Monos*.

You are surely aware that one of the explanations of this Mitzvah is that by observing it we rectify a corresponding transgression committed by some of our people in the days of Ahasuerus. As you are familiar from the Megillah, Ahasuerus arranged a sumptuous banquet. The food and drinks served at this feast were not kosher. At the same time degrading use was made of the holy vessels of the Holy Temple which were in the custody of the Persian conquerors. Nevertheless, some Jews participated in the banquet and partook of the non-kosher food. Therefore, when we commemorate the downfall of Haman and the frustration of his murderous plans after the Jews had completely returned to G-d, we celebrate the festival also by a sending each other *Shallach Monos* of ready-to-eat food and drinks, thus demonstrating our loyalty to G-d in general, and to His dietary laws in particular.

There is a more profound explanation also.

Persia, in the days of Ahasuerus, was the mightiest empire in the world. It also boasted of the most advanced civilization of those days. On the other hand, the Jewish people at that time were in despair. The Holy Land and the Holy Temple lay in ruins. The opinion was widely circulated that G-d had abandoned His people. This was supported by miscalculations purporting to show that the period of seventy years' exile prophesied by our prophets was at an end, yet the promised liberation had not come. This, in fact, was one of the reasons why Ahasuerus made that pompous feast and dared to profane the holy vessels.

Under the circumstances, when the head of the mightiest world empire and civilization arranged the royal feast, inviting



to it representatives of all nations, the Jews among them, many Jews could not resist the temptation. They were not deterred by the fact that this banquet was to mark the beginning of a new "era" of complete assimilation and were deluded by the friendly slogan of "no compulsion." Thus they became a party to the profanation of the holy vessels.

Symbolically, the profanation of the holy vessels of the Holy Temple marked also the desecration of the Divine soul which forms the sanctuary of every Jew and Jewess. The purpose and mission of this Divine spark is to light up one's immediate environment and one's share in the world at large with the light of the highest Divine ideals. Far from fulfilling their soul's mission upon this earth, those weak Jews lent aid and comfort to the forces of assimilation and darkness. By partaking from the "food" of Ahasuerus they contaminated both their bodies and souls.

Purim, therefore, reminds us not to be carried away by the outer sparkle of foreign civilizations or cultures, and not to be misled into assimilation by the notion that it appears to be in no conflict with our spiritual heritage.

We are a unique people, as stated in the Megillah: "There is one people (although)

scattered and spread among the peoples of the world, (yet) their laws are different from those of other peoples." We have preserved our unity and uniqueness despite our being dispersed in the world, because we have preserved our laws. It is by preserving our Torah and Mitzvoth that we Jews in general, and our youth in particular, can best contribute towards the enlightenment of the world at large and bring real happiness to ourselves, our people, and humanity as a whole.

To sum up. The Torah is the Truth. Therefore, there can be no other truth which is in conflict with it. It follows that anything which is in conflict with the Torah is not Truth. The purpose of science is to discover Truth. Therefore, any study which contradicts the Torah is not science but the opposite of it, and instead of leading the student to the truth, leads him away from it. Moreover, even where the science which one studies corresponds with the truth, there is no assurance that it will be applied to constructive purposes and not for the destruction of self and others, unless it is guided by the Divine truth of the Torah. Only then will the world become—as G-d intended it to be—a Sanctuary for the Divine Presence, that G-d may be manifested in it and in ourselves. EM

PURIM AND JEWISH FOOD

Simon Jacobson

Judaism makes such a fuss about food that you have to wonder if that is not the cause that so many Jews today find their tradition to be spiritually irrelevant and morally bankrupt. It seems that for every holiday there is another food...

What's this Jewish obsession with food and gastronomy? What is so spiritual about a sumptuous meal? What is significant and eternal about cuisine?!

Purim specifically is defined by its special meal – the Purim Feast. The Megillah specifically designates that this holiday be celebrated with a *mishta*, a festive party. We send friends gifts of food, *mishloach manot*. And of course, we say l'chaim, on tangible wine or vodka. Chanukah is commemorated with kindling lights – light representing spirit, celebrating the spiritual victory of the Jews over the Greeks who wanted to obliterate their souls, not their bodies. Purim on the other hand celebrates the victory over Haman who wanted to kill them physically. Hence, we celebrate with feeding our corporeal bodies.

Here's a beautiful analogy from the Baal Shem Tov that explains this thing with food and drink.

A king was preparing his child to inherit his throne. In order for his son to be a sensitive leader, the king determined to send him away from home. While the child was living in his palace, the king realized, he would remain isolated and protected by his comfortable surroundings. To be groomed as a great leader, the king knew that he has to send his son away from the palace, no matter how painful it is, to live among the common folk, the subjects. This would allow him to earn his way to be a compassionate and fitting leader.

The sad day comes. As the king bids farewell to his weeping son, the king promises him that he will stay in touch with him, and even in the most difficult times the son will be able to access his father, the king.

And so it happens. The son is sent off to a distant land in the kingdom where no one recognizes him. He must learn to make his way and earn his right on his own, with no one shielding him. As time passes, the son slowly forgets his past and the purpose of his journey.

But the wise king anticipated what

would happen. He understood that with time, his son would forget his roots, as he assimilates into the ways of the foreign land that he now inhabits. In order to counter this amnesia, the king sends his son a letter several times a year reminding him that “I am you father the king. You were sent to this distant land in order to prepare you for your destiny, to be a great leader of this nation. Never forget it.”

When the son receives the letter, he is ecstatic and wants to celebrate. He remembers the beauty of the palace and his home. He recalls the purpose of his mission to this strange land.

But he soon thinks better of it. He realizes that the townspeople will not understand or appreciate where he is coming from and that he is being groomed to be their leader. They would not believe him, thinking him insane. They might even be resentful.

But his desire to celebrate is strong. He thinks of an idea. After he receives the letter, he makes an announcement in town, offering everyone in town a free meal and drinks. Of course, all the townspeople are delighted. They accept the offer and celebrate for their free dinner and cocktails. Meanwhile, while they are distracted and celebrating their free meal, the king's son celebrates with them for the letter he received from his father.

G-d is the king and each of us is the king's child. Our natural environment before coming to Earth is the heavenly palace, a spiritual environment where our souls are completely comfortable. But in order for us to establish and demonstrate our true abilities, G-d sends us away from our comfort zone into a foreign, material world. A world that can be harsh and cruel.

And we forget. As we grow accustomed to our material existence, we forget our point of departure and our destination – the purpose of our journey to Earth.

But G-d sends us a 'letter' several times a year – He gives us the holidays, reminders that we come from a greater place, and we are here



to transform the material world into a Divine abode, a home for our souls. When we receive these letters, we naturally want to celebrate.

However, there is a small problem. Our physical bodies and the material world around us are not exactly prepared to celebrate with us; they do not understand or appreciate the spiritual message we have received. They are so consumed with the selfish world of matter, that they will not allow us to freely celebrate our spiritual awareness.

So G-d tells us: “Feed your body with good food and drink on the holiday. Provide it with free meals and cocktails. Allow your body to celebrate on its terms, while you celebrate the ‘letter’ that you have received from Me on this grand holiday.”

That's the secret of food. The body of food is the nourishment and gratification it gives your body. The soul of food is the Divine message which each holiday offers us.

You can eat and you can eat. You can indulge in your meals and drinks, which last as long as the taste is in your mouth and the food in your stomach, until your... next meal. Or you can bless and sanctify the food, eat it on your table which you transform into a sacred altar, and then eternalize the power of the spiritual message into a timeless experience.

Five seconds can go either way: Down your throat into your belly. Or up into eternity. It's up to you. [EM](#)

Rabbi Simon Jacobson is the author of [Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Rebbe](#) and the director of the [Meaningful Life Center](#) ([meaningfullife.com](#)).

WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?

Yitzchak Ginsbourgh

The month of Adar is the final month of the Jewish calendar. It is the month in which the story of our year ends, and also the month in which we go back to the beginning.

The holiday of Purim, which we celebrate in the month of Adar, is also the ‘end of the story.’ The beginning of the Jewish Nation as a nation is the exodus from Egypt, in the first month of the year, Nissan. From the exodus, the entire historical story related in the Bible continues: The giving of the Torah and the Nation of Israel’s entry into the Land of Israel, the era of the Judges, the days of the First Temple and its destruction, until the building of the Second Temple. It is precisely here, at the end point, that the story related in the Scroll of Esther, which we read on Purim, takes place. As the sages put it, “Esther is the end of all the miracles.”

The end, however, returns in circular motion back to the beginning, as our sages say, “Their end is tethered to their beginning.” Until we reached Purim, something very important was missing...our will. At the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah, it was G-d Who took action. The events that unfolded came down to earth from on-high and we more or less went along for the ride. Thus, the sages say that at the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, G-d “forced the mountain upon them like a bowl.” Essentially, we had no choice but to accept the Torah. True, we agreed and even said, “We shall do and we shall hear,” but that was after the Divine offer that we could not refuse. How could we decline after G-d had surrounded us with a cloud of love?

In the Scroll of Esther, on the other hand, G-d is in hiding. Instead of the high-profile miracles that He performed in Egypt, the Scroll is replete with politics, palace intrigues and suddenly – the Final Solution. This is a great trial. Will the Jews cling to their faith? Or will they attempt to assimilate? This requires self-sacrifice that reveals the Jews’ most inner will. In spite of all the hardship and when all is said and done, we want to be Jews, like Mordechai, the *‘ish Yehudi’* (Jewish man) which equals *ratzon* (will) in numerical value.

After everything turned about for the best,



the Jewish response was to add mitzvahs – all the mitzvahs of Purim – and this time, with our complete will. As the sages put it, “They returned and accepted it (the Torah) in the days of Ahashverosh.” This time, there was no mountain being held over our heads. The Jews accepted the Torah with their complete will. This is where the end of the story goes back to the beginning. After we really want to accept the Torah, we can relive the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah in a new light.

Will is the soul-power of the month of Adar. Where is will on the map of our souls? We could think that will is beneath our intellectual powers. If a salesman convinces me to purchase a product, that means that I want it. My intellectual recognition that this product is worthwhile/useful/enjoyable awakens my will, and my will motivates my actions. This can also apply to spiritual matters. For example, I heard a wonderful class on Shabbat, so I want to keep Shabbat.

The source of our will, however, is much higher, way above the intellect. It is in the Crown of the soul. This is the reason that sometimes, we may want something – not because of some information or thought that we had – but because of an inexplicable awakening of strong forceful will. More specifically, we can identify two levels within the lofty will of the Crown: Will that has no apparent reason. It is not clear why we suddenly will this, but upon second thought, we can assume (perhaps with the guidance of

a spiritual advisor) that there is some deep-seated reason that motivates us to will this. The highest level is that there is no reason for will. There is truly no intellectual reason why we want certain things. So why do we will them? Because! This lofty will is called “the will of the heart.” It is the will of the heart that longs for G-d, the source of the self-sacrifice of Purim – the true crown on Queen Esther’s head and on the heads of us all.

How do we know what we want? We encounter this question often. We reach a crossroads, we have to make a decision and we begin to think, “What do I really want?” The Lubavitcher Rebbe would tell people who asked his advice to “contemplate what he really wants.” After we have contemplated upon where our will rely lies, it is time to go for it! This is the best path that we can take.

Our question, however, remains. How are we supposed to know what we really want? After all, we have many conflicting interests inside. What is our true inner will and what is our deceptive, outer will?

Adar comes to answer this question. This is the month in which “cursed is Haman” and “blessed is Mordechai” intertwine. We all have a small Haman-Amalek inside, an evil inclination that seeks our detriment – even if it dons a smiling mask. It is no simple task to find the exact path but in the month of Adar, we have the power to defeat the wicked Haman within and to remain solely with the righteous Mordechai – to find our inner, positively good will. EM

YOU CAN SAVE THE WORLD

Tzvi Freeman

If I were hurtling down a rabbit-hole and a genie offered me one wish, I would likely request a tour guide. Now tell me that the past ten months haven't taken us all on a dizzying Ozian spin.

Look out the window of your space capsule and you'll find you've entered an insanely adversarial universe, one in which the major preoccupation of far too many people is "Who's on my side and who's against me?"

Problem is, the adversarial universe is swiftly heading for cosmic implosion. It's eating up civilization as we know it before our very eyes.

Tell me there's a tour guide, some wisdom, some leadership, somewhere, anywhere.

I guess that's why several people have asked me, "What would the Rebbe have said about the current mess?"

We're right on season to ask the question. Seventy years ago at this time of year, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of righteous memory, formally took upon himself the leadership of the weary and orphaned refugees that then comprised the core of Chabad-Lubavitch, and although few realized it at that time, leadership of the Jewish people everywhere.

He provided guidance at a time when all seemed lost for many, when an entire world had just been annihilated and a future for believing Jews seemed futile. He built that motley crew into a decisive force for goodness and wisdom in today's world.

The message? It's not a rabbit-hole.

It's not a wild and crazy jungle either, where man eats man and only the most brutish survive.

It's a delightful garden.

That's how this world is described in the Biblical Song of Songs, a divine garden, a wondrous and intimate place of meeting for G-d and His bride, the human soul. That's how the ancient Midrash describes this world—as G-d's original place of delight. And that is how the Kabbalah describes the core-essence of each creation: *Oneg*, divine pleasure, is the engine at the nucleus of every cell of this universe.

Yes, the garden is ridden with bugs, weeds, dry wood, and rotting cellulose. It's not just messy—it's a horrid disaster. The stewards of



the garden (that's us) have not exactly been diligent in their craft.

But don't let outward appearances deceive you. The world and all it contains is essentially a good place. A very good place—as G-d Himself stated when He created it, "And G-d saw all that He created, and behold, it was very good."

Now let's all get down and dirty to clean up the mess.

May I point out that this is not the language we have come to expect from Orthodox rabbis—or from spiritual guides in general. We're usually told that this is just a pit-stop—more pit than stop—on the way to heaven. Religion is then presented as some formula for journeying out of here and into there.

But the Rebbe told us this is it. We are here

already. This is the world we've been given. It's precious. It's a delight to its Maker. And we are here to make that discovery.

Describing the world as a divine garden presents a serious paradigm shift. Let's look at a few of the ways this mindset rearranges the plates upon which our universe rests, and most importantly given current circumstances, how this transforms the way we relate to one another as fellow humans of the garden.

How do people fall into this "with-me/against-me" attitude?

Perhaps because it's just such a neat and tidy way of organizing people, determining what narrative I believe and what I reject, along with what my policy is on any matter at hand. It saves all that neuro-transmission power for really useful things—like figuring

out how to skewer anybody who is against me.

But no, it's more sinister than that.

The Rebbe often cited a treatise by his predecessor, Rabbi Shalom Dovber of Lubavitch, in which he describes this attitude as the root of all causeless hatred and intolerance. It derives, he wrote, not from any reason or sensitivity, but from the coarse egotism endemic to our species. And it has always proven itself non-sustainable.

But once you understand that both you and the other guy occupy the same divine garden, the Rebbe explained, then you see that every bush, every rock, and even every human being—yes, even this guy—has a vital role.

If the Designer of the Garden put something somewhere, it's because it brings Him delight. And that includes your fellow human being.

Of course, in a garden, not everything's purpose is readily apparent. A garden has to be "worked and protected" much more than a home or a field. Every fruit comes with its peel, husk, pit, stem, etc. that requires extraction and disposal before getting to the juicy meat inside.

And so it is with people. In this raw, mixed-up garden-world of ours, there are good people who do rotten things and bad people who do fantastic things, so that dividing the world into good guys and bad guys gets really non-functional.

Better to just say, as the Mishnah says, "Do not despise any man, and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place."

I have a bush in my garden that seems a real waste of valuable space. While the other bushes and trees are blossoming and showing off their colorful berries, spreading their elegant branches and cooling us with their leaves, this bush just demands space and lots of my time pruning its branches.

But then, sometime in January, after the wind, hail, and snow have greyed out all the color of the garden, this bush opens wide its sleepy buds, blossoming into thick, textured petals of a deep, cabernet sauvignon red. In that month, it is the prince of the garden.

In some gardens, you will find an awkward, spooky sort of dwarf tree, sparse with leaves

and heavily-laden with horribly bitter, thick-pitted berries. You would certainly remove it, did you not know that by laying those berries beneath a press, you could acquire a precious, nourishing oil, for cooking, for salad dressing, for light, warmth, and for healing sun-parched skin.

Here's one neat instance from exactly 40 years ago, when the Rebbe spoke about "the peaceful transference of government." The circumstances were certainly different—in many ways, the opposite of all that shakes our world in these times. Nevertheless, some of the lines from that talk could have been spoken yesterday.

Such as the very first words:

In a democracy such as the U.S.A., an orderly transference of government is effected through the electoral process. The choice made by the people in the polling booths decides who will occupy the highest office in the land — the Presidency; thereby ensuring a smooth and peaceful transition from one administration to the next.

Yet a disturbing trend has been evident in past elections....

Jimmy Carter, the incumbent Democrat president, had just suffered a crushing defeat. What was to become known as the Reagan era had just begun.

In matters of foreign policy, the Rebbe had been highly critical of Carter. A naive observer, listening to the Rebbe's harsh criticism of Carter's Middle East policy and particularly his attitude towards Israel could have easily seen Carter almost as the Rebbe's nemesis.

Yet now the Rebbe continued by admonishing those who were "rubbing salt into the wound" of the defeated president. Yes, we know he made serious errors. But...

There were instances in the past four years, which, but for the endeavors of the President, could easily have led to war. Not only did he thus save millions of Americans from the horrors of such a consequence, but in all probability the rest of the world. And for this, he deserves our thanks and gratitude.

Beyond that, over the past four years, the Rebbe had cultivated a warm relationship with Jimmy Carter, vocally encouraging and supporting his push for the establishment of a

federal Department of Education. Until then, education was subsumed within the rubric of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The mechanisms, machinations, and agenda behind this move and the Rebbe's part in it are documented on pages 159-166 of Phillip Wexler's eye-opening book, *Social Vision—the Lubavitcher Rebbe's transformative paradigm for the world*. On the 14th of April, 1978, Carter endorsed the Department of Education proposal. Three days later, he signed a proclamation declaring the Rebbe's birthday "Education Day, USA" for posterity.

But now, as Carter was about to leave office, the Rebbe emphasized that his gratitude for the outgoing president's good achievements "is in no way to be construed as a retraction" of the sharp criticism he had offered regarding other policy decisions. Disagreement and partnership, criticism and gratitude—the Rebbe was saying—can be held together. Actually, they must be held together.

With what glue? With the superglue of wisdom. As the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, explained, wisdom is the power by which the good is discerned from the bad, so that each thing finds its part in the cosmic symphony.

Whoever you meet, wherever life takes you, toss out the cellulose wrapping and find the juice inside. Everyone and everything has something valuable to offer.

Work with those G-d has given you to work with. Even if you don't believe they're the best for the job.

It's not a waste of time. It's saving the world. You're bringing harmony between its parts, revealing the underlying oneness and beauty of our universe.

It's part of the hard work, the deep wisdom, and the delightful art of divine gardening. [EM](#)

Rabbi Tzvi Freeman, a senior editor at Chabad.org, is the author of Bringing Heaven Down to Earth and more recently Wisdom to Heal the Earth. To subscribe to regular updates of Rabbi Freeman's writing or purchase his books, visit Chabad.org. Follow him on FaceBook @RabbiTzviFreeman.

UNDERSTANDING MODERN ANTISEMITISM

Jonathan Sacks

The last two festivals to be added to the Jewish calendar prior to modern times — Purim and Chanukah — are both about antisemitism. There is one obvious difference between them: Haman, of the Purim story, wanted to kill Jews. Antiochus, of the Chanukah story, wanted to kill Judaism. It was the difference between Nazi Germany and Soviet Communism.

But there is another difference that has renewed salience after the horrifying attacks we have witnessed in the last year. What saved Jews on Purim was behind-the-scenes influence: Esther's influence in the royal court. But the danger of antisemitism remained. What if hatred returned and this time there was no Esther around to save the Jews? That is one reason, according to the Talmud, why we do not say Hallel on Purim.

On Chanukah, by contrast, Jews fought back and won. The Maccabees became a symbol of Jewish activism, of refusing to live in fear. As a symbol of this, the original custom was to light Chanukah lights outside the front door of the house, or at least in a window facing the street, to publicize the miracle. Today, we see the lighting of giant menorahs in the most prominent public face of cities throughout the world.

Chanukah tells us not to curse the darkness, but instead to bring light to the world. It tells us to fight back and not to be afraid.

The shocking events are proof that the darkness has returned. It has returned likewise to virtually every country in Europe. That this should have happened within living memory of the Holocaust, after the most systematic attempt ever made by a civilization to find a cure for the virus of the world's longest hate — more than half a century of Holocaust education and anti-racist legislation — is almost unbelievable. It is particularly traumatic that this has happened in the United States, the country where Jews felt more at home than anywhere else in the Diaspora. Why is it happening now?

First, because of everything associated with the internet, smartphones, viral videos and above all, social media. These have what is called a “disinhibition effect.” People are far more hateful when communicating



electronically than when speaking face-to-face.

Cyberspace has proved to be the most effective incubator of resentment, rancor and conspiracy theories ever invented. Antisemitism thrives on conspiracy theories, versions of the Blood Libel and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, updated for the twenty-first century.

Second, because of the way people encounter these phenomena: often alone, in the privacy of their own home. This allows them to be radicalized without anyone realizing it is happening. Time and again, we read of people carrying out horrific attacks, while those who knew them recall not having seen any warning signs that they were intent on committing evil attacks.

The most dangerous phenomenon of our time is the “lone wolf” attack, because it is so hard to predict. The internet is particularly dangerous for loners, people in whom the normal process of socialization — learning to live with others who are not like us — has broken down.

Historically though, the most important factor in the rise of antisemitism is the sense among a group that the world as it is now is not the way it used to be, or ought to be.

The far left has not recovered from the global collapse of communism and socialism as ideologies. Hence the assault on Jews as capitalists and libertarians.

The far right feels threatened by the changing composition of Western societies, because of immigration on an unprecedented scale and low birth rates among the native population. Hence white supremacists.

Many radical Islamists are troubled by dysfunctions in the Muslim world. Hence the emergence of anti-Zionism as the new antisemitism.

These concerns do not, in and of themselves, lead to antisemitism. One other factor must be added.

When bad things happen, good people ask, “What did I do wrong?” They put their house in order. But bad people ask, “Who did this to me?” They cast themselves as victims and search for scapegoats to blame.



The scapegoat of choice has long been the Jews. They were the archetypal outsiders. For a thousand years, they were the most prominent non-Christian minority in Europe. Today, the state of Israel is the most significant non-Muslim presence in the Middle East. It is easy to blame Jews because they are conspicuous, because they are a minority and because they are there.

Antisemitism has little to do with Jews — they are its object, not its cause — and everything to do with dysfunction in the communities that harbor it.

Antisemitism, or any hate, becomes dangerous in any society when three things happen: when it moves from the fringes of politics to a mainstream party and its leadership; when the party sees that its popularity with the general public is not harmed thereby; and when those who stand up and protest are vilified and abused for doing so.

All three factors exist in Britain now. The same must not be allowed to happen in America.

What, then, must we do? The first priority must be to strengthen security in Jewish venues, to intensify police patrols and to develop habits of vigilance. The British Jewish community has a fine example in its Community Security Trust which, with the support of government grants, monitors risks, enlists thousands of volunteers to stand security duty and works closely with the government and local police forces. “Lone wolves” tend to seek soft targets, and the Jewish community must ensure as far as possible that there are no soft targets.

Next, we must recognize that while we have enemies, we also have friends — and they are many and strong. In Britain, as we faced a leader of the opposition who many of us felt has made his party a safe haven for anti-Zionists and anti-Semites, it was enormously important that non-Jews from all walks of life came out in our support. It made us feel we were not alone.

Many surveys in the United States have shown that Jews are the most admired of all minorities. We cannot fight antisemitism alone. The victim cannot cure the crime. We need to make friends who will stand with us and help lead the fight. This is best done by explaining how antisemitism endangers everyone, because the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.

Lastly, we must never forget the message of Chanukah: Fight back. Never be afraid. Whatever the threats, be proud to be Jewish and share this pride with others.

At times our history has been written in tears, yet we have outlived every empire and every civilization that sought to destroy us. Our spirit, symbolized by the Chanukah candles, is indomitable. Where others spread darkness, let us bring light. EM

Rabbi Dr. Sir Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, was the former Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Commonwealth and a member of the House of Lords. He was a leading academic and respected world expert on Judaism. He was the author of several books and thousands of articles, appeared regularly on television and radio, and spoke at engagements around the world.



future tense MOSHIACH MUSINGS

Mystical texts note the analogy between the terms “Purim” and “Yom Kippurim.” Moreover, they state that the holiest day of the year is called “Yom Ki-purim,” which could be translated “A Day like Purim.” This suggests that Purim has an advantage over Yom Kippur.

The advantage of Purim is seen in the most obvious difference between these two days: Yom Kippur is a fast-day on which we must afflict ourselves by refraining from basic human needs such as eating, drinking, bathing, etc. Purim, on the other hand, is a feast-day celebrated with festive eating, drinking and merriment.

Purim thus celebrates man’s involvement with the physical reality of G-d’s creation. The use of material substances in context of man’s service of-and relationship with-G-d, imbues these substances with spirituality. It sublimates them to their Divinely intended purpose. Purim manifests the intrinsic oneness of the universe which is rooted in the Oneness of its Creator.

This, indeed, is the ultimate purpose of creation: to manifest its Divine origin by converting this world into a fitting abode for G-dliness. This is man’s mission for which he was created, and especially in the time of the *galut*, the time of our dispersion throughout the world. The achievement of this goal is the ultimate bliss of the Messianic era when “the earth shall be full with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea... and the glory of G-d shall be revealed and all flesh shall see together...” (Isaiah 11:9 and 40:5). Our efforts towards that end will hasten this goal and bliss, to happen very speedily in our days.

THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS ANALYZED

Alan Baker

Considerable discussion has been generated in the international and local media as well as in political circles since the signing of the peace documents at the White House in Washington, D.C.

The following analysis attempts to clarify some misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding the nature of the new relationships that are being forged, respectively, between Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates.

THE ISRAEL-BAHRAIN DECLARATION

Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations Between the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain

As its title and content imply, this document is a bilateral declaration between two sovereign and independent states, expressing their intention to open an era of “friendship and cooperation” and commence “a new chapter of peace.”

As a declaration, and similar to other such political declarations of intention such as the Israeli-Palestinian “Declaration of Principles,” September 13, 1993, and the “Israel-Jordan Common Agenda,” September 14, 1993, it is non-binding and declaratory, expressing the joint, bona fide intentions of the two parties to enter into negotiations on a series of bilateral normalization agreements.

The expression “constructive diplomatic and friendly relations” in the title of the declaration is unclear and does not appear to add substantively to the idea of diplomatic and friendly relations that speak for themselves.

However, in light of experience over the years in the bilateral relationships between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, the addition of the term “constructive” would appear to convey a message to those and other states to indicate an intention that such relationships will be fuller and more open and active.

The declaration constitutes an independent, sovereign, and reciprocal expression of intention by the parties to open-up relations between them. It is not pursuant to, does not emanate from, nor is it dependent on any UN resolution or other documentation regarding the Middle East peace process.

Since a state of war or armed conflict never existed between the parties (the Kingdom of



Bahrain evolved as an independent sovereign entity in 1971), no UN ceasefire, armistice, or conflict-solving resolution or requirement has ever been relevant or applicable to the relationship between Israel and Bahrain. There was no need to place the bilateral declaration in any context of such UN resolutions.

However, the declaration does make reference in its second paragraph to the parties’ shared commitment to advance peace and security in the Middle East and to the need to continue efforts “to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

CULTURE OF PEACE

The declaration’s third paragraph includes agreement by the parties “to establish diplomatic relations and to promote lasting security, to eschew threats and use of force and to advance coexistence and a culture of peace.”

The expression “culture of peace” (which also appears in the Israel-UAE Peace Agreement) would appear to be based on the internationally accepted concept of a culture of peace defined in various resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

In the third paragraph of the declaration, the parties agree to open negotiations between them to seek agreements regarding twelve fields of normalization, including

investments, flights, tourism, security, energy, technology, and opening of embassies.

It is clear from the text of the declaration and its provisional nature that it is a non-binding, independent, bilateral, and bona fide expression of intention to enter into definitive agreements in the near future.

ISRAEL-UAE PEACE AGREEMENT

Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel

The choice of the term “Peace Agreement” is significant and unique.

Generally, as was the case with Egypt and Jordan, states that have been in armed conflict and have chosen to terminate the state of war between them do so through a peace treaty. The treaty formally terminates the relationship of armed conflict from the legal, political, and security points of view and opens-up a formal relationship of peace, with all that it implies regarding reciprocal recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.

In the context of the relationship between Israel and the UAE as well as Bahrain, there has never existed a state of war or armed conflict. The UAE and Bahrain evolved as independent sovereign states in 1971. As such, neither were parties to the 1948 Arab League collective declaration of war.

However, in light of the formal absence of normal relations between Israel and other Arab countries, including the UAE and Bahrain since their establishment, it was evidently considered important and significant, as well as symbolic, to describe the new situation as the creation of a state of peace, with all it that implies regarding mutual recognition, sovereignty, and normalization.

While diplomatic relations and normalization constitute, by definition, integral and obvious components of any peace relationship, their specific inclusion in the title of the agreement evidently emanates from the difficulties experienced over the years in the peace relationships with Egypt and Jordan, especially in the fields of normalization and diplomatic relations. Legally speaking, this may not, in and of itself, have any legal significance, but it represents a symbolic message to Egypt and Jordan, as well to other Arab states considering establishing peaceful relations with Israel.

DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM

The preambular paragraphs of the peace agreement voice familiar, accepted, and standard platitudes regarding the common desire for regional peace, prosperity, economic development, and diplomatic relations.

However, they also include in the ninth preambular paragraph a specific and unique reference to the Arab and Jewish common heritage, as descendants of Abraham, and the concomitant need “to foster in the Middle East a reality in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and peoples of all faiths, denominations, beliefs, and nationalities live in, and are committed to a spirit of coexistence, mutual understanding, and respect.”

Preambular paragraphs 9 and 10 refer to efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, realistic, and enduring solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that “meets the legitimate needs and aspirations of both peoples, and to advance comprehensive Middle East peace, stability, and prosperity.”

The use of the term “realistic” in this context is indicative of an acknowledgment by both parties of the need for practical and pragmatic ideas to solve the conflict with the Palestinians, rather than unrealistic claims,

empty clichés, and buzzwords.

The establishment of peace, diplomatic relations, and full normalization in Article 1 of the agreement is phrased in similar language to the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty.

Critics of the agreement point to the fact that it contains no reference to those UN resolutions dealing with the Middle East peace process (such as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) or 338 (1973), which served as the basis for the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan as well as for the 1978 Camp David agreements and 1993-5 Oslo Accords with the Palestinians.

The reason and logic behind the lack of reference to such resolutions rest in the fact that unlike with Egypt and Jordan, Bahrain and UAE have never been in a state of armed conflict with Israel. Hence, there exists no need to move from a legal state of armed conflict and war to a legal state of peace.

Since there was no conflict, there was no need to rely on any UN conflict-resolving resolution. Since there exists no common border, there is no need for provisions on withdrawal from territory, agreed border arrangements, and security provisions of the type detailed in the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

Therefore, the parties sufficed, in Article 2 entitled “General Principles,” with the standard references to those provisions of the UN Charter and principles of international law governing relations among states, including recognition of sovereignty, the right to live in peace and security, friendly relations of cooperation, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The commitment in Article 3 to exchange ambassadors “as soon as practicable” is a further element that could imply confusion as to when such a central component of the agreement will indeed be implemented.

The provisions regarding the prevention of terror (Article 4) and normalization (Article 5) are drafted as intentions to further develop and negotiate future arrangements in these spheres, again, as soon as practicable.

The normalization spheres include finance and investment, civil aviation, visas and consular services, innovation, trade and

economic relations, healthcare, science, technology and peaceful uses of outer space, water, energy, maritime arrangements, telecommunications and post, agriculture, legal cooperation, tourism, culture, and sport, and other spheres.

These spheres are detailed in the Annex to the agreement and are similar to the list of civil affairs spheres detailed in the Third Annex to the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement.

Article 6 entails a reciprocal commitment to respect and foster mutual understanding, respect, coexistence, encourage people-to-people programs, interfaith dialogue, prevent incitement, and observe a “culture of peace.”

The concept of a culture of peace is based on universally accepted principles set out in resolutions of the General Assembly. (See above)

Article 9 is important in that the parties represent that there exist no inconsistencies between their obligations in this agreement and their other treaty obligations. This is especially significant in light of the UAE’s relationship with the Arab League and its member states. “An identical provision appears in the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.”

Article 12 regarding registration of the agreement with the UN Secretary General pursuant to article 102 of the UN Charter is a vital, legal provision that enhances the formal nature of the agreement as an international treaty between two independent sovereign states.

CONCLUSION

The instruments signed in Washington represent a significant symbolic and substantive breakthrough in the relationships between Israel and the Arab world. This will undoubtedly be further developed as the relationships strengthen, and mutual confidence and good faith are enhanced. EM

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