

Shabbat Shalom Fax

Parshat Ki Seitzei

Insights into life, personal growth & Torah

11 Elul, 5784

The Fax of Life

ת"סב

September 14, 2024

GOOD MORNING! Last week we received the soul-crushing news of the murders of six hostages by Hamas as Israeli soldiers were nearing their position. The bodies were discovered by the IDF on Shabbat. Jews around the world should pay close attention to the mostly muted media and political reactions to the executions of those innocent hostages.

Unfortunately, it has become almost *fashionable* to be antisemitic. France was once a good friend to the Jewish people; following the French Revolution it became the first country in Europe to grant citizenship and equal rights under the law to its Jewish population. In fact, there was a famous expression related to this: "*Un juif est heureux comme Dieu en France* – A Jew is as happy as God in France."

Today, not so much. "There is no future for Jews in France," said Rabbi Moshe Sebbag, Chief Rabbi of the Grande Synagogue of Paris, this past July. In fact, so many French Jews have emigrated to Jewish communities in Israel and the United States that we now publish a French version of the Shabbat Shalom Fax of Life.

Similarly, Jews no longer feel safe in England. Good friends of mine, originally from London, emigrated to the United States this year. They told me, "At every communal gathering; whether in synagogue, at weddings, or at bar mitzvahs, the main topic of discussion is where is the best destination to emigrate, and to ask, 'when are you leaving?'"

I am reminded of the joke about two elderly Jews who were sitting in a Berlin park in pre-war Germany, one of them reading a Yiddish paper and the other one scanning the pages of *Der Stürmer*. The latter Jew is laughing. His friend looks at him, "It's not enough you read that Nazi rag, but you find it funny?" "Look," replies the other, "If I read your paper, what do I see? Jews deported, Jews assaulted, Jews insulted, Jewish property confiscated. But I read *Der Stürmer* and there is finally some good news. It seems that we Jews run the government, control the economy, the banks, and the entertainment industry!"

Sadly, the joke is rooted in fact. *The Protocols of Zion*, first published in Imperial Russia in 1903, made the outrageous claim – using purported "evidence" – that there was an international Jewish conspiracy by a secretive rabbinic Jewish cabal to create a global Jewish domination. It was translated into multiple languages and widely distributed. Even though it was exposed as an absolute fraud by leading newspapers in Britain, in 1933 it was used as a factual text by schools in Nazi Germany.

This enduring fascination with the *Protocols* by antisemites persists to this day. Jews in America have been blamed for controlling the media, Hollywood, banks, and Wall Street, all to promote an "Israel agenda" that is supposedly against the national interests of the United States. These outrageous claims are not just made by fringe nut jobs, they are often advanced by famous personalities like Oliver Stone and Kanye West (aka Ye) – both public nut jobs with huge followings. These claims are provably false.

One would be hard pressed to name an industry more prone to hard-left liberalism and anti-Israel sentiment than Hollywood. The claim that the Jewish cabal controls Wall Street and the largest banks is, like everything else, pure fiction. The ten largest banks and financial behemoths are JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Charles Schwab, US Bancorp, Truist Financial, and PNC Financial Services. Of all these, only one was founded by a Jew (Goldman Sachs) and one was co-founded by a Jew (Citigroup). There are only two Jewish CEOs in this group, David Solomon of Citigroup and Charles Scharf of Wells Fargo.

While it is true that some of the media is Jewish owned and run (*The New York Times*, for example), they are quite unabashedly anti-Israel, and, in general, the US media leans hard to the left; think CNN, MSNBC, CBS, NBC, etc. Jon Stewart once said, "If we Jews own the media, why don't we get better press?" There are two major mainstream media outlets that are both conservative and pro-Israel; Fox News Corp and *The Wall Street Journal*, both of which are owned by News Corp. Rupert Murdoch, a non-Jew from Australia, owns and closely runs News Corp.

I am old enough to remember the 1979 hostage crisis in Iran. The lingering images in my mind are of the ubiquitous yellow ribbons that were tied onto trees outside of people's homes, as we all waited and pined for the hostages to be released. This symbolic act was based on the 1973 hit song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oak Tree." In fact, the song itself, which had been a #1 hit in 1973, had a resurgence in 1980 and was regularly played on the radio.

Among the hostages taken by Hamas were several American citizens. Sadly, over the last 337 days there has not been any collective outrage in the US for these American citizens or a collective pining for their return. But why would there be? The US government itself has only paid minimal lip service to its hostage citizens.

Instead, the media continually equates Palestinian suffering with the atrocities in Israel, highlighting the disparities in the number of dead (of course, those numbers are provided by an agenda driven terrorist organization, but why would Hamas lie?). Cenk Uygur, founder of the liberal progressive news outlet Young Turks, has argued that the Jewish people believe in genocide. He uses the fact that the Old Testament commands the genocidal elimination of the Amalekites. He then uses the sad situation in Gaza as "proof" that Israel is committing genocide.

This week's Torah portion contains the passage to which he refers, and it bears examination.

“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; how he attacked you on the way and struck at your rear those who were feeble [...] you must obliterate every memory of Amalek from under the heavens” (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

The Torah recounts the story of the nation of Amalek attacking the Jewish people shortly after they left Egypt. The Jewish people are commanded to never forget what they did and are exhorted to seek to destroy them until they are utterly blotted out...which does seem to imply that the Torah is advocating a genocide. How are we to explain this?

The sages point out that the Hebrew word that the Torah uses for Amalek's attack is *korcha*. This is an unusual word in this context, with no other similar usage in the entire Torah. One of the explanations is that the word *korcha* comes from the Hebrew word for “kor – cold,” and the following analogy is given.

There was a bath that was scalding hot to the point that it was unusable. A fellow came along and jumped into the bath and got severely burned. However, once he had jumped in, he succeeded in cooling it sufficiently for others to use. Likewise, when the Jewish people left Egypt in such a miraculous manner, they were a formidable power. Amalek's suicidal attack on the Jewish people was done with the express intent of “cooling” them to the point where other nations were able to conceive of the idea that they too could wage war with the Israelites.

This self-destructive behavior by Amalek made an incredible statement: This world is not worth living in if it is to be shared with the Jewish people; Amalek preferred to die rather than live in a world where God's presence is revealed and relevant. A nation that is so hell-bent on the total destruction of another nation, to the point that they would be prefer non-existence to a shared existence, is the only possible exception to the principle of “a crime against humanity.”

This Amalekite ideology teaches that there is no value in life if it means sharing a world with the Jewish nation. Consequentially, it is worth sacrificing themselves just to see that their enemy is destroyed as well. They prioritize the death of their enemy over their own lives and the lives of their children. A nation with that ideology forfeits its right to exist. It is for this reason that the Torah commanded that they be utterly obliterated.


Hamas and their ilk are the scions of this ideology. There is a reason that Hamas has forsworn the total destruction of Israel in their charter as their guiding principle – they prefer self-destruction to living peaceably with Israel – and it shows. Likewise, Hamas' principle of governance demands the same of their citizenry. This is the only possible explanation for taking billions of dollars and using it for war, weapons, and terror tunnels instead of building the basic humanitarian infrastructure like water and sewer and creating international commerce or tourism. The Palestinian people, too, are victims of this ideology, but let's not forget that they elected Hamas with a full understanding of their charter and desire to destroy Israel.

Implacable foes like Amalek and Hamas must be given no respite – no matter what pain they threaten to continually cause – because they will NEVER allow it to end in anything but the destruction of one or other. Still, even as we suffer, we must not despair – we must have hope. After all, living in a theocentric universe reminds us that it is God's creation of darkness that also informs us that ultimately there will be a profound light. We are all duty bound to do our part to help lift the veil of gloom and hasten the arrival of the dawn.

TORAH PORTION: Ki Seitzei, Deuteronomy 21:10 – 25:19

Topics in this week's portion include: Women Captives, First-Born's Share, The Rebellious Son, Hanging and Burial, Returning Lost Articles, The Fallen Animal, Transvestitism, The Bird's Nest, Guard-Rails, Mixed Agriculture, Forbidden Combinations, Bound Tassels, Defamed Wife, Penalty for Adultery, Betrothed Maiden, Rape, Unmarried Girl, Mutilated Genitals, Mamzer, Ammonites and Moabites, Edomites and Egyptians, The Army Camp, Sheltering Slaves, Prostitution, Deducted Interest, Keeping Vows, Worker in a Vineyard, Field Worker, Divorce and Remarriage, New Bridegroom, Kidnapping, Leprosy, Security for Loans, Paying Wages on Time, Testimony of Close Relatives, Widows and Orphans, Forgotten Sheaves, Leftover Fruit, Flogging, The Childless Brother-in-Law, Weights and Measures, and Remembering What Amalek Did to Us.

SHABBAT LIGHTING: *Jerusalem 6:11* Miami 7:08 Cape Town 6:18 Guatemala 5:46 Hong Kong 6:11 Honolulu 6:17

 Jo'Burg 5:42 LA 6:43 London 7:03 Melbourne 5:51 Mexico 6:22 Moscow 6:33 New York 6:49 Singapore 6:45 Toronto 7:12

“QUOTE OF THE WEEK”: Why would one ever lie when there are hundreds of ways to tell the truth?

Dedicated in Honor of my Amazing Husband
Harold Bobroff



Shabbat Shalom,

Yitzchak Zweig

Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig

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