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**Standing Up to His Own Government and the**

**World on Behalf of Israel**

**By Daniel Keren**

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**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein of South Africa**

 One of the most world-renowned rabbis today is Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein, the Chief Rabbi of South Africa. Born in Pretoria, South Africa in 1971, he has two Chief Rabbi distinctions – one that he was the first South African born rabbi to be appointed to the post of Chief Rabbi by the [South African] Union of Orthodox Synagogues and also at the age of 32 in 2003, the youngest rabbi to be elevated to that position to date.

 There are perhaps dozens of national chief rabbis and most are not well-known outside of their unique communities. Chief Rabbi Goldstein has broken those barriers with a couple of amazing and important projects that have benefited Jewish communities around the world.

**Originator of the Shabbat Project Around the World**

 The first was the Shabbat Project that Chief Rabbi Goldstein first launched in South Africa in 2013 that aimed to on one Shabbat (or Shabbos) unite frum (religious) and secular South African Jews to join together for a day of Shabbat celebrations. Videos of events promoting that Shabbos and the Havdalah ceremonies concluding the holy day went viral and made people around the world jealous and ask Chief Rabbi Goldstein if his Shabbat (Shabbos) Project could go international. With a team of trailblazing volunteer partners, his project has now spread to more than 1,500 cities and more than 100 countries.

 Indeed, his most recent book that has received much acclaim from both Torah observant and secular Jews is “Shabbat: A Day to Create Yourself.”

 The second project initiated by Chief Rabbi Goldstein was his Sinai Indaba, an annual collection of Torah lectures that attract some of the world’s best Torah personalities and speakers from the English-speaking Jewish world. More than 7,000 people attend the Sinai Indaba project each year in the three major South American communities of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, inspiring many South African Jews both religiously observant and secular to become more involved in and proud of their Judaism.

**Issued Various Videos Defending Israel After October 7th**

 However, since the barbaric Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians on October 7th (coinciding with the Jewish Yom Tov of Shemini Atzeres) Chief Rabbi Goldstein has released a number of very important and effective videos or podcasts defending Israel. He has issued two sharp podcasts attacking his own South Africa government, including one titled – “You Are Iran’s ‘Useful Idiots’ – a Response to Global Opponents of Israel” (24 minutes.)

 Chief Rabbi Goldstein has released two separate podcasts attacking the United Nations and the U.N. agency – the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with titles such as “Put the UN, ICJ on Trial – Not Israel,” and “This is Not 1938 – A Call to Fight Back Against the ICJ Verdict.”

On his attack against the UN, Chief Rabbi Goldstein declared: “The United Nations and its institutions have a credibility they do not deserve, and have become a threat to freedom and democracy in the world. Israel’s case before the UN’s International Court of Justice, brought by South Africa, should be used to expose this fact and begin the process of placing clear boundaries on the UN.

“The UN’s gross bias against Israel places it [the United Nations] in breach of the agreements signed at the establishment of the Jewish state to accept the authority of the ICJ to adjudicate its actions. Now, I believe, is the time to walk away from this dangerous farce.”

Another recent Rabbi Goldstein podcast that you should view or listen to is “From Hanakkah to Harvard – Forces of Evil and Rising Antisemitism in Ivy League Universities” (15 minutes.)

All of these podcasts above defending Israel and the Jewish people can be found on the Chief Rabbi of South Africa’s website: <https://www.chiefrabbi.co.za/category/videos/>.

 Another recent pro-Israel podcast that for some reason is not on the Chief Rabbi’s website that you should also view or listen to is: “Repent for Sins Against Israel (Chief Rabbi Tells Pope Francis.”) You can also google it at <https://youtu.be/FVijgOsjLxo?si=241UH7yv8UxU6nFi>

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of The Jewish Connection.*

**Thoughts that Count**

*This they shall give...half a shekel (machatzit) of the shekel of the Sanctuary* (Ex. 30:13)

The Hebrew word "machatzit" is spelled mem-chet-tzadik-yud-tav. The letter tzadik, which also means a righteous person, is exactly in the center. The two letters nearest to the tzadik are chet and yud, which spell "chay," meaning alive. The two letters furthest from the tzadik are mem and tav, which spell "meit," or dead. From this we learn that being close to a tzadik imbues us with life, and that giving tzedaka (charity, symbolized by the half-shekel) saves us from death. *(Sifrei Chasidut)*

The shekel is an allusion to the soul; the gematria (numerical equivalent) of "shekel" is the same as for "nefesh" (soul). Every Jew is given "half" of his soul from Above; his obligation is to elevate the other "half" under his control to the same level as the first, through serving G-d and performing good deeds. *(Rabbi Chanoch of Alexander)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Sisa 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Respecting Poor Children –**

**Our Future Talmidei Chachomim**

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In Mesichta Nedarim (81a) it says: – “They sent a message from Eretz Yisroel: ‘ – Be careful with the children of the poor, – because from them Torah will come.”

Torah comes from poor children. So, the Ran asks: Why from poor children? Why is it that especially from the poor families will develop Talmidei Chachomim? And he says that it’s because poor children have nothing else but Torah.

Do you hear that? A rich boy has a bike and maybe he has a radio too; an automobile and all kinds of expensive toys he might have. He has a lot of things to keep him busy. Boruch Hashem, when I was a boy, I never had a bike. I was such a poor boy that when I wanted to buy a little hammer – it cost twenty-five cents in those days – I couldn’t afford it! It took me a long time but finally I saved up twenty-five cents and I bought the hammer. That was a big thing for me! We didn’t have any toys.

Poor children have much less opportunities to waste their lives! Boruch Hashem! So – be careful, with the poor, because Torah will come from them. And the Ran says it’s because they have nothing else to do except learn. That’s the pshat there. So now you know that children who have so many good things, it’s a very big problem.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tetzaveh 5784 email of Toras Avigdor, based on the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l. Adapted from Tape #812 (January 1991).*

**The Jew’s Tzedaka via**

**The “Coin of Fire”**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



The Torah portion of Ki Tisa contains the mitzva of the half-shekel, symbolic of the mitzva of tzedaka (charity).

There are several ways in which an individual can give tzedaka. The first is when a person is kindly and giving by nature, or when he understands intellectually the need to help his fellow man. This is, however, considered to be the lowest level of giving tzedaka.

A higher level is when a person gives tzedaka because G-d has commanded him to. In this instance the incentive is not personal, but stems from the desire to obey G-d's will. A mitzva is an absolute that is not subject to intellectual or emotional considerations. Thus, when a person gives tzedaka out of a sense of obedience, his action is imbued with greater power. Yet even here there can be personal motivations mixed in, such as the fear of punishment or the desire to receive reward (material or spiritual) in this world or the next.

Above these two levels is the giving of tzedaka "without the intent of receiving a reward." In this instance, the mitzva is fulfilled out of pure and simple obedience to G-d, without any thought of recompense whatsoever. The person wants to fulfill G-d's will and enjoys doing so.

The mitzva of the half-shekel, however, represents the very highest category of giving tzedaka. On the verse in this week's portion, "This shall they give...a half-shekel...an offering to G-d" (the commandment for every Jew to give the half-shekel), the Jerusalem Talmud comments: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, removed a coin of fire from under the Throne of Glory and showed it to Moses, saying, 'This shall they give.' " Indeed, the "secret" of the half-shekel is related to the idea of "a coin of fire."

The nature of fire is to always ascend upward; it has no "weight" or fixed, definable form. Similarly, the optimal way to give tzedaka is with a fiery "flame" and enthusiasm, without any personal considerations or motives. In this scenario, the Jew just naturally desires to fulfill G-d's will, and doesn't even look for other reasons or justifications.

Nonetheless, it is significant that G-d showed Moses a "coin of fire," rather than just a flame. When a person gives tzedaka (or does any other mitzva, for that matter), theoretical abstracts are not enough. The point is to bring down that fiery enthusiasm to where it can actually help someone, and express it in the realm of concrete action.

When the mitzva of tzedaka is done in this manner, a Jew will give unconditionally, without waiting for specific times and without waiting to be asked. His inner "fire" will prompt him to seek out those in need, and he will give repeatedly, over and over again.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Sisa 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from Sefer HaSichot 5749, Vol 1.*

**More Thoughts that Count**

*The Tablets were written on both their sides* (Ex. 32:15)

The two sides of the Tablets are an allusion to the two aspects of Torah, the revealed (nigleh) and the hidden (nistar). If a person publicly denies the Divinity of the Torah's mystical teachings, it is a sign that inwardly, he also denies the sanctity of the revealed portion. *(The Chatam Sofer)*

*Moses stood at the gate of the camp and said, "Whoever is on G-d's side, let him come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him* (Ex. 32:26)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Sisa 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Ki Tisa 5784**



Even after millennia of analysis, commentary and sagacious insights, the story of the Jewish people creating and worshiping the Golden Calf, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, remains an enigma and a mystery. After all of the miracles of Egypt and the splitting of Yam Suf, manna from heaven and the revelation at Sinai, how is such a thing possible?

The fact that our great sainted priest Aharon, the most beloved of all Jews and the symbol of Jewish brotherhood and service to G-d and man, is not only involved but is described as being the catalyst for the actual creation of the Golden Calf, simply boggles our minds. One is almost forced to say that there is no logical or even psychological explanation as to how and why this event occurred.

The Torah tells us the story in relatively dry narrative prose. Apparently it comes to teach us that there is no limit to the freedom of thought and behavior of human beings, to act righteously or in an evil fashion as they wish. No logic, no series of miracles, no Divine revelations can limit the freedom of choice that the L-rd granted to humans.

The assumption of Western man and his civilization and society was and is that there is a logic and rationale for everything that occurs. This assumption is flawed and false. History is basically the story of the follies, mistakes and irrational behavior of individuals and nations. This week's Torah reading is merely a prime illustration of this human trait. Our freedom of choice is so absolute that we are able to destroy ourselves without compunction, thought or regret.

**The Absence of Moshe**

Nevertheless, I cannot resist making a point about what led up to Israel's tragic error in creating and worshiping the Golden Calf. The Torah emphasizes that perhaps the prime cause for the building of the Golden Calf by Jewish society then was the absence of Moshe.

While Moshe is up in heaven, freed of all human and bodily needs and restraints, the Jewish people are in effect leaderless. It is true that Aharon and Chur and the seventy elders are there in the midst of the encampment but they do not have the qualities of leadership that can guide and govern an otherwise unruly, stiff-necked people.

**A Leader Must be Able to Stand Up to His People**

Successful nation building is always dependent upon wise, patient, strong and demanding leadership. The leader has to be able not only to blaze the trail ahead for his people but he also must be able to stand up to his people in a manner that may be temporarily unpopular. The failures of both Aharon, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, and of King Saul as described for us in the Book of Samuel, are attributed to their inability to withstand the popular pressure of the moment.

Moshe, the paragon for all Jewish leadership throughout the ages, is cognizant of the wishes and wants of the people but he does not succumb to that pressure. The Torah describes Moshe as one whose “eye never dimmed.” He always sees past the present with a penetrating view and vision of the future. The absence of such a person, and leader, can easily lead to the creation and worshiping of a Golden Calf.

Shabbat shalom

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**Giving Non-Kosher**

**Food to Gentiles**

**By Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

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**Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

I’d like to buy lunch for my cleaning lady. Can I order it from a non-kosher eatery? Non-kosher foods forbidden in benefit—such as foods containing basar b’chalav or yayin nesech—may obviously not be given for a beneficial purpose. Giving them to a worker or acquaintance is a benefit since it will result in some benefit along the way.

**Chazal Cannot Prohibit What the Torah Permits**

Even if the food is permissible to benefit, Chazal set a prohibition to go into business with non-kosher foods. If the item came to him by chance—e.g., an animal that turned out to be a treifa or non-kosher fish that one caught—he may sell it, as he is not considered to be “going into business.” Another exception is chelev, forbidden fats, which the Torah explicitly permits to sell to non-Jews. (While Chazal may add decrees, they cannot go against the Torah’s words by prohibiting what the Torah permitted.)

Due to this prohibition, the Rama rules that one may not purchase non-kosher food to feed his non-Jewish workers. Since it was standard practice to feed workers, it is like paying a debt, and he is engaging in a form of “business” by using cheaper non-kosher food.

Other acharonim argue that buying food for workers isn’t considered commercial business. Some say that even the Rama only referred to purchasing non-kosher animals to raise at home for this purpose and not merely buying such food from the market.

**One Can Give a Non-Jewish Worker**

**Money to Buy Non-Kosher Food**

Providing money for the worker to buy himself food is certainly permitted, even if the worker will buy non-kosher food.

Some also permit if the worker buys himself food and the Yid pays the bill, since the Yid did not make the economical choice. (Yet, this would still not allow foods that are forbidden in benefit, since he would be benefiting from the lesser cost.)

If a Jew owns a nursing home, the food served there is considered part of his business. Thus, he cannot serve non-kosher food to the non-Jewish residents. Poskim write that he may hire a company to manage all food arrangements and expenses. In this manner, he is not considered to be the one engaging in business with non-kosher food.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Terumah 5784 edition of The Weekly Farbrengen. Rabbi Raskin is Rov of Anash in Petach Tikva, Israel.*

**Another Thought that Counts**

*Moses stood at the gate of the camp and said, "Whoever is on G-d's side, let him come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him* (Ex. 32:26)

The members of the tribe of Levi were not the only Jews who refused to worship the Golden Calf. This is obvious from the fact that only 3000 people were punished. Nonetheless, when Moses declared, "Whoever is on G-d's side, let him come to me," the Levites were the only ones who responded. Only the Levites were willing to pick up their swords and wage battle against idolatry, while everyone else stood by and refused to become involved in "controversy." *(Chidushei HaRim)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Sisa 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Bob Dylan & Israel, The Neighborhood Bully**

**By**[**Ruchama Feuerman**](https://aish.com/authors/48867547)

***It may not be his best song, but Dylan’s 1983 song about Israel is surprisingly resonant today.***

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**Bob Dylan at the Western Wall in 1983**

Anybody remember “Hurricane Carter”? This was the song that got an innocent black man triply convicted of murder exonerated and eventually released from jail. I still get the chills when I listen to it forty plus years later.

That was the Bob Dylan some of us fell in love with, the folk singer who pulled no punches and couldn’t stomach injustice.

Bob Dylan probably wouldn’t make any comment about what’s going on in Israel and Gaza today. Too fraught. Anyway, he’s too clever to paint himself into tight political corners he can’t get out of.

But here’s what he had to say about or sing about Israel in 1983. No, it’s nowhere near his best song, but the lyrics…see if you recognize what’s happening now in what he wrote way back then.

***Neighborhood Bully***

*Well, the neighborhood bully, he’s just one man
His enemies say he’s on their land
They got him outnumbered about a million to one
He got no place to escape to, no place to run
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

*The neighborhood bully he just lives to survive
He’s criticized and condemned for being alive
He’s not supposed to fight back, he’s supposed to have thick skin
He’s supposed to lay down and die when his door is kicked in
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

This stanza makes me wonder under what circumstances it would *ever*be considered legitimate for Israel to defend itself. In the Warsaw Ghetto, maybe? If God forbid, one of its Middle East neighbors dropped a bomb on the country? The warped thinking goes: Israel, and by extension Jews, only are “allowed” to defend themselves when they are at the razor edge of their entire existence, hanging on by a pinky, or even better, after most of them have died.

*The neighborhood bully been driven out of every land
He’s wandered the earth an exiled man
Seen his family scattered, his people hounded and torn
He’s always on trial for just being born
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

Imagine a world *before* there was a Jewish State. That was the world that Emma Lazarus saw, when in the 1880s, more than 250 pogroms in Imperial Russia caused more than 100,000 Jews to flee, mostly to the U.S. The more she became aware of their plight (and the rampant antisemitism in her own literary upper-crust circles), the more she became an advocate and spokesman for Jewish statehood. You easily could call the Jewish poet the mother of Zionism, because her ideas preceded Theodore Hertz’s by a good decade.

Emma wrote, “The Jewish problem is as old as history and assumes in each age a new form. All the magnanimity, patience, charity, and humanity, which the Jews have manifested in return for centuries of persecution, have been thus far inadequate to eradicate the profound antipathy engendered by fanaticism and ready to break out in one or another shape at any moment of popular excitement.”

It’s that phrase “popular excitement” that sends shudders through me. I’d say it captures too well the mood of what we’re all living through now.

*Well, he knocked out a lynch mob, he was criticized
Old women condemned him, said he should apologize
Then he destroyed a bomb factory, nobody was glad
The bombs were meant for him. He was supposed to feel bad
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

The bomb factory he’s referring to is the Iraqi atomic reactor that, back in 1981, was a few months away from completion. Such a bomb would’ve had the capacity to kill at least 100,000 people in nearby Israel. This was in the days of the Global Menace called Saddam Hussein. Would you want that volatile thug in your backyard toying with nuclear weapons — especially if he didn’t *like* you? Israel launched a strike and destroyed the reactor with stupefying precision, an act that brought in its wake world condemnation as well as the fulminations of the New York Times: “Israel’s sneak attack on a French-built nuclear reactor near Baghdad was an act of inexcusable and short-sighted aggression.”

Short-sighted? Hm. I’m not so sure the US troops who fought in the Gulf War in 1991, would agree with that assessment. They were pretty relieved actually, that the Madman of the Middle East didn’t have any nuclear bombs at his disposal.

*Well, the chances are against it, and the odds are slim
That he’ll live by the rules that the world makes for him
’Cause there’s a noose at his neck and a gun at his back
And a license to kill him is given out to every maniac
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

Oh, those customs, rules and especially laws that were enacted against Jews, no matter where they set their roots, no matter how many centuries they’d lived in a particular place. My mother and her family had lived in Morocco for centuries, and while Morocco treated its Jews the best of any Arab nation, there were some less than lovely aspects. I won’t bore you with the specifics. If you want to get a taste of life for a Jew — and for that matter a Christian — in Islamic lands, read this: [The Decline and Fall of Islamic Jewry — Bernard Lewis, Commentary Magazine](https://www.commentary.org/articles/bernard-lewis/the-decline-and-fall-of-islamic-jewry/)

*Well, he’s surrounded by pacifists who all want peace
They pray for it nightly that the bloodshed must cease
Now, they wouldn’t hurt a fly. To hurt one, they would weep
They lay and they wait for this bully to fall asleep
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

I guess a decent example of the above are the presidents of “elite” universities who exposed cancel-culture hypocrisy on their campuses, in their inability to condemn genocide against Jews. I’m sure there are better examples. Send them my way, if you can.

*Every empire that’s enslaved him is gone
Egypt and Rome, even the great Babylon
He’s made a garden of paradise in the desert sand
In bed with nobody, under no one’s command
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

Bob, maybe you should’ve omitted the above stanza, especially the line about making paradisiacal gardens out of wasteland. You don’t want to make the Jews looking too smart or good or successful, or G-d forbid too powerful in any area. It feeds on certain fears by the kind of people who enjoy reading the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

*What’s anybody indebted to him for?
Nothing, they say. He just likes to cause war
Pride and prejudice and superstition indeed
They wait for this bully like a dog waits for feed
He’s the neighborhood bully.*

*What has he done to wear so many scars?
Does he change the course of rivers? Does he pollute the moon and stars?
Neighborhood bully, standing on the hill
Running out the clock, time standing still
Neighborhood bully.*

This story may well be apocryphal but I want to end on something mildly hopeful: King Frederick of Prussia once asked his ministers for one single irrefutable proof of G-d. His physician, Jean-Baptiste du Boyer, the Marquis d’ Argens, is said to have answered, “The Jews, your Majesty. The Jews.”

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