

FEBRUARY 9, 2015

## Parashat Mishpatim

### The Divine Imperative to Heal

And he shall cause him to be thoroughly healed (Exodus 21:19)

ורפא ירפא (שמות כא:יט)

Eden Ka'atabi, a 15-year-old suffering from epilepsy, used to experience continual seizures so severe that he needed a helmet, the [Washington Post](#) reported. But after Eden's neurologist prescribed cannabis oil in May, his seizures dropped by half. Ka'atabi is one of thousands of Israeli patients who have benefited from the new Israeli industry of medical cannabis. While Israeli law prohibits recreational marijuana use, it permits the growth of cannabis for medical purposes. Israel's policy has also allowed Israeli companies the freedom to develop different strains of marijuana to cater to different medical needs. Yuli Edelstein, Israel's former Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, [said that](#) Israel's medical marijuana industry "could be helpful for explaining what we are about in this country."

This imperative to heal the sick has long been the subject of philosophical debate. What right do we have to intervene against the forces of nature to bring about "unnatural" healing? Adherents of Christian Science believe that "the sick should be treated... by a form of prayer that seeks to correct the beliefs responsible for the illusion of ill health." Judaism rejects this line of thinking. Quoting the verse from Parashat Yitro regarding the requirement that if one injures another he "shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (21:19), the Talmud (Berachot 60a) explains, "From here we derive that permission was given for the doctor to heal." Maimonides considers this imperative to heal to be an important mitzvah. He writes, "The doctor is obligated according to the law to heal the sick of Israel, and this is included explicitly in the verse, 'And you shall return [the lost item] to him' (Deuteronomy 22:2). This includes his body, for if one saw an individual lost and could save him, he is obligated to save him with his body, his money or his knowledge." (Maimonides' Commentary on Mishnah Nedarim 4:4)

Israel began cannabis research 50 years ago, for this reason; Colorado doctor Alan Shackelford decided to conduct research in Israel into promising applications for illnesses that conventional medicine cannot help. This year he will lead studies in Israel on pain, skin disorders, seizure disorders, several types of cancers, migraine headaches and post-traumatic stress disorder. Many Israelis have already benefited from this research. "A few years ago, we found we had lost the way," Inbal Sikorin, the chief nurse at Hadarim retirement home at Kibbutz Naan told the [New York Times](#). "We had learned to prolong life, but without quality." The residents became part of a project to test the broader use of marijuana. As a result, the feeding tubes are gone and the residents are less restless. "It was as if there were divine intervention," she said. ■

### Hypocrisy

He shall pay double (Exodus 22:2)

שנים ישלם (שמות כב:ב)

The dictionary defines hypocrisy as "a pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles, etc., that one does not really possess." Today, Hamas serves as an example of everyday hypocrisy.

Jeffrey Goldberg in the Atlantic [writes](#) that Hamas official Khalil al-Haya warned that should the international community fail to make good on the \$5.4 billion of pledges it had been promised, "The territory could become a breeding ground for extremism... [a] delay in rebuilding Gaza and the continuing blockade against it will make it a

ripe environment for the spread of extremism and terrorism.” While Hamas claims that it would like to prevent terrorism, a recent [Washington Post article](#) describing Hamas’ summer camp for boys, indicates otherwise. “More than 17,000 fresh-faced teenagers and young men, ages 15 to 21, mustered at a dozen camps over the past week in the Gaza Strip to climb ropes, practice close-order drills and fire Kalashnikov rifles, all of them pledging to defend the coastal enclave and ready to fight the next war against their Zionist enemies.”

According to the Torah, when a thief is caught with contraband, he must not only return the item, but repay double its value. “If the theft be found in his hand...he shall pay double.” (22:3) The Talmud applies this rule only to the burglar (*ganav*) who steals in stealth, and not to the mugger (*gazlan*) who robs in broad daylight. The mugger must repay his theft, but not an additional fine. Why? Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai explains (see Bava Kama 79b) that we punish the thief for his hypocrisy. Only the thief hypocritically maintains a respectable face, while not caring that God knows his transgressions. At least the mugger – who robs with impunity – treats God and mankind with the same indifference. Another passage (Hagigah 16a) states: “Anyone unconcerned with the honor of his Maker should not have come into this world.” What does this refer to? ... R. Yitzchak said: “Whoever sins in secret, it is as if he pushed away the legs of the Divine Presence, as it says, ‘Thus says the Lord: The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.’” (Isaiah 66:1) One who sins in secret demonstrates his indifference to the glory of God, as he fears the disapproval of human society, but not that of his Creator.

When William Schabas resigned last week as chairman of a United Nations panel investigating possible war crimes in the 50-day Gaza conflict last summer, Israeli leaders were relieved. According to the [New York Times](#), Israeli officials were particularly incensed over Professor Schabas’s declaration a few years ago that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel would be his “favorite” choice as a defendant at the International Criminal Court. Israel’s United Nations ambassador, Ron Prosor, equated the professor’s appointment with choosing ‘Count Dracula to run a blood bank.’

Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz once said that, “Hypocrisy is not a way of getting back to the moral high ground. Saying you’re moral is not the same as acting morally.” If the international community cares about war crimes, it should investigate Hamas for firing rockets at civilians and using its citizens as human shields. Were Hamas concerned about extremism and violence, it would stop firing rockets and using aid to rebuild its terrorist infrastructure, and instead build schools, hospitals and homes. Sadly, all the people of Gaza are getting from Hamas today is hypocrisy. ■

## The Damage Caused By Liars

**Keep far from a false matter (Exodus 23:7)**

**מדבר שקר תרחק (שמות כג:ז)**

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Commenting on the verse, “Keep far from a false charge, do not bring death upon those who are innocent.” (23:7), the Magid of Kelm teaches that a liar is worse than a thief or a brigand, because a thief only steals at night, and although a brigand steals during the day and night he only steals from a single person, but is afraid to steal from an entire community. A liar though lies during the day and at night to both a single person and to the entire community.

Senators and statesmen from both parties have spoken out about concerns with the trustworthiness of Iran and the state of the current negotiations. The Washington Post Editorial Board stated in a recent [editorial](#), Iran has a long history of lying and cheating. Quoting Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), the editorial notes that Iran is, “A nation that has proven to be very untrustworthy...” Senator Kaine further notes that without requiring Iran to dismantle its nuclear infrastructure, “the end result is more likely to be a North Korean situation.” The same editorial quotes the Republican former secretary of state George P. Shultz as being “very uneasy” with the ongoing negotiations.

Iran has a long history of lying about its nuclear ambition. Believing those lies threatens not only the community of Israel, but the entire Gulf region and beyond. ■

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