

Through a Maamin's Eyes

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With the Hamas massacre fresh in the minds of people around the world, the Hamas murderers pulled off another terrible crime against the Jewish people. They made up a story that Israel bombed a hospital in Gaza, killing over 500 innocent people.

The lie spread like wildfire across the world. Jews are baby killers. They deliberately targeted a hospital full of the sick and those caring for them, killing masses of people.

Hamas, the same group that savagely killed babies, old people, young people, parents in front children and children in front of parents. The same group whose stated aim is to kill Jews and destroy Israel. The group that defines evil. Yes, that bunch of wicked people made up a story, and virtually every news organization in the world believed them. The media ran vicious headlines, and the story gained traction, reinforcing malicious, anti-Semitic stereotypes. The Jews are killers. All across the world, large demonstrations were held, calling for Jews to be gassed and killed.

That story and what it caused cannot be undone, even though the hospital was not bombed and 500 people didn't die. A Palestinian rocket shot towards Israel misfired and landed in a hospital parking lot. That's the beginning and end of the story. Anybody who cares about the truth could have found that out, and the media should know better than to trust statements of evil killers.

Back in the days when we were still in elementary school, there was always a kid who would make up stories. Everyone learned not to believe him and certainly not to quote him. Responsible media ought to know better, and they do, unless the story involves a chance at bashing Jews.

Hamas hates the Jewish people and their supporters hate the Jewish people. All those who attend anti-Israel rallies hypocritically calling for peace also hate Jews.

There is no moral equivalence between vicious, brutal torture and murder, and fighting barbarians in an attempt to defeat evil and restore a country's safety.

Those of us who live in the United States are pained when we see such rallies going on in the cities in which we live and the country's large and small towns. We are upset when we see members of Congress echo the lies and lead support for the butchers. We thought that it's different here. We have grown to feel comfortable here, as if this is our home and we belong here. We have forgotten that we are in golus, and although many people here are decent and kind, the latent hatred our people have dealt with since the days of Avrohom Avinu in this week's parsha is still around, just below the surface.

That has been the pattern of Jewish history. After enduring untold persecution and suffering in one country, we uproot and flee as refugees to a new country. Slowly, we get acclimated, until we feel that we have found a safe place for us to put down roots. But as we begin to prosper and become part of the country's fabric, the old Eisov sonei l'Yaakov kicks in again.

Much of the hatred is brought on by Arab attacks on Israel and then Israel's response. We have been seeing this for decades now. Palestinians attack Israel, either by sending rockets into population centers, by

unleashing terror, by blowing up busses, or by conducting shootings and stabbings. All their actions share the same aim of murdering and terrorizing innocent civilians.

Israel retaliates, as any country would, and promises to go after the bad guys until they have been severely weakened.

Palestinians and their Jew-hating supporters around the world rally to support the attackers. World-wide demonstrations, fake news media reports filled with half-truths and lies, and feckless politicians slowly begin to besmirch Israel and ramp up the pressure on it to tone it down and allow the Palestinians another moral and propaganda victory.

The media gets filled with articles, pictures and clips depicting poor Palestinians who were attacked by Israel. The true story is never told, explaining that Israel was acting in self-defense. Israel is always the aggressor, and the poor Palestinians are always the innocent victims. People who don't know better begin believing the fictitious propaganda they see wherever they turn.

As usually happens in such situations, Israel promises that this time they will take the battle to the end and erase the threat once and for all. But then world pressure mounts and the government decides to end the war ahead of a pronounced victory. The enemy regroupes and rebuilds for the next showdown, to be determined at the enemy's discretion.

For all of Israel's bravado, it is heavily dependent on material, financial and moral support from the United States. Each administration treats Israel differently. Some appreciate the history and the importance of a dependable ally in a treacherous spot on the map. Others have less use for Jews and their state. Leftist administrations remain locked in to long-ago-disproven theories such as the two-state-solution and do their best to vanquish anything they think will kill their dream.

To quote the New York Times, "Palestinians from all walks of life routinely experience exasperating impossibilities and petty humiliations, bureaucratic controls that force agonizing choices, and the fragility and cruelty of life under military rule."

There is no mention ever that Palestinians are subject to repeated security checks because of their history of terror. Everyone ignores that Israel's many attempts to arrange peace were foiled by Palestinians. Gaza is under Egyptian and Israeli blockades because it is a terror state that uses whatever is allowed into the area to arm itself to do battle, as evidenced by the many rockets and tunnels there. But instead of focusing on the lies concerning the formation of the Palestinian people and the reason they are in their current situation, the blame is always placed on Israel.

It's all about impressions and creating sympathetic facades and narratives. Israel had the world's sympathy for a little over a week this time, and then, following the hospital lie, the Israelis lost the propaganda battle hands down. That has serious repercussions there and around the world. Passions have been inflamed. The lies have taken hold and supporters of the people who are portrayed as suffering victims are seeking revenge. They are marching in capitals around the world and attacking Jews in cities where they have felt safe until now.

It is shameful that in the current war between Israel and the group that was elected to run Gaza, the gang that wants to destroy a democratic country is viewed by worldwide protesters as the side that wants peace, and the democratic country is perceived as the combatant that desires war. Is there anything more preposterous than

to claim that? If anything, this war was started by Hamas and Iran in an attempt to derail the peace deal that was brewing between Israel and Saudi Arabia. And then they created the hospital blood libel just in case it was necessary to offer a new justification for their genocide. Yet, the Hamas supporters have the nerve to call Israel the aggressor.

And if you believe their ridiculous claim that they desire peace, is there anything stopping the state behind Hamas from perpetrating the same carnage in the United States and then claiming that they are on the side that is fighting for peace and America is the aggressor?

The weak intellect of the collective media fills their publications and news shows with pictures of dead Palestinians, equating the number of dead on each side, as if the way to determine which side is virtuous is by counting the number of dead they have.

Had these journalists been reporting in the time of World War II, it appears that they would fill their pages with pictures of victims of America's atom bombs, creating sympathy for the poor Japanese who were allied with Hitler in a bid to take over the world and make it Judenrein.

Had these same leftist intellectuals and pro-Hamas protestors been around during World War II, it appears that they would have been calling for a ceasefire in the battle against the Nazis and to send food, water and fuel to the poor suffering Germans.

Hamas is funded and armed by Iran, as is Hezbollah to the north of Israel, yet the United States under the current administration has not exacted any punishment on the world's largest sponsor of terror for causing this mess.

It has been previously shown that appeasement of terror and of Iran leads to further terror, while standing up to them and freezing their income works. The worst approach is not to confront Iran as its clients, Hamas and Hezbollah, shoot rockets into Israel and worse. The Reagan doctrine preached that strength leads to peace. The current administration has awakened evil by demonstrating weakness.

But we are the eternal people. Many have tried to rid the world of us, yet we are still here. We take the long view and recognize that we are here for a higher purpose. Chazal teach that when "Torah yordah l'olam, sinah yordah l'olam." The intense hatred the nations have for us was manifested when we were given the Torah at Har Sinai. Greatness has its price, and ours is levied in the form of jealousy and deeply felt animosity.

The Torah gives us the strength of purpose to be able to withstand the punishment we suffer at the hands of our enemies. It provides us with chochmah and daas to recognize what is important and what is trivial, enabling us to excel at what is important.

The Torah provides us with the ability to shine light on our situation and find our way through the darkness. Studying Torah builds us into great people and enables us to separate fact from fiction, and good from bad, leading lives that are fulfilling and satisfying, regardless of what is going on around us and around the world.

The Torah tells us (Bamidbar 8:11) that Aharon Hakohein lifted the Levi'im and welcomed them to perform their avodah in the Mishkon. He raised them literally and figuratively, placing them on a higher level, where their lives revolved around holiness and they weren't hampered by the worries, concerns and pressures that

confound other people. They were enveloped by Hashem in His cocoon, studying and observing the Torah, and performing their responsibilities in the Bais Hamikdosh.

Even though there is no Bais Hamikdosh and we are living in troubled times, we can lead the blessed lives that they lived. The Rambam famously writes (at the end of Hilchos Shmittah) that every person who separates himself and dedicates his life to serving Hashem, learning Torah, conducting himself properly the way he was created to, and freeing himself from the many calculations, rationalizations and cheshbonos people make, is raised to be kodesh kodoshim, the holiest of the holy people. He will be rewarded in this world and the next, and will receive everything he needs to live on, just as Kohanim and Levi'im did.

Regardless of the world's situation and the bitter plans of our enemies, we can achieve holiness here and now if we tune out all the distractions and instead spend our time properly studying and observing the Torah and fulfilling our obligations.

The yeitzer hora creates many different ways for us to be steered from the path we belong on, wasting time on matters of no or little consequence. Instead of staying glued to our phones, not missing a morsel of information available on the war, we should be beefing up our study of halacha, so that we can be better Jews.

Instead of fretting over the army's plans and worrying about what Israel's enemies' next move will be, we should be learning seforim such as Chovos Halevavos, beefing up our emunah and bitachon, for the stronger our belief is, the better off we will be. A boteiach baHashem sleeps well at night and operates properly by day, for he knows that Hashem is arranging and managing everything and there is no room for fear.

Instead of talking incessantly about the war, the protests, and what this one said and that one said, we should concentrate our speech on tefillah, as Chazal teach us, "Ein kocheinu ela b'feh." The more Tehillim we recite, the slower we daven, and the more kavonah we have, the better our chances are for safety and victory.

It is said that Rav Yisroel Salanter once asked his students what they would do if they were given all the money in the world to disburse. How would they distribute the world's wealth? Each talmid had a different answer. One said that he would start with the lomdei Torah, and once they were provided for, he would work his way down to everyone else. One said that he would give the money to the rabbonim who pasken shailos to decide who should get how much. Another said that he would begin with giving the people who were poor what they need and then work his way through the rest of society. And so the conversation went until Rav Yisroel stopped it.

"You are all wrong," he said. "The world's money is distributed by Hakadosh Boruch Hu, who knows best how to do that. The proper course of action would be to leave everything the way it is and not to change it."

To be a maamin is to appreciate the depth of the veracity of Rav Yisroel's lesson. The optimal way to get through times such as these is by being maaminim, knowing and understanding that everything is from Hashem, who performs His job perfectly. Our job is to do ours as well as we can and to continually seek improvement.

May Hashem hear our tefillos, accept our avodah, and bring us peace, yeshuos and nechamos very soon.