

# Tetzaveh: Chesed Le'umim Chatat

- Nisson Shulman.

A sermon delivered in 1969 demonstrating that nothing is really new, though we are far better off in Israel now than at that time, with all our Tzarot and challenges. Examples from that time of Hesed Leumim Hatat can be multiplied today. Sharet and Eban before the UN. Shlomo's prayer at the dedication of the Beth Hamikdash, and our prayer today

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[This sermon was delivered on February 22, 1969, during Israel's 20st year of existence. It is now more than 35 years later, and I include this sermon to demonstrate that very little has changed. It tells a remarkably current story, though it also gives hope and courage, for with all our tzarot today, it is clear that we have come a long way since those very uncertain times. The story of Geulah Shelemah with all the troubles on the way continues to unfold. "Honest Reporter" has given many examples of unfairness of the media, and they can be used to substitute for dated examples and materials in this sermon. Nisson Shulman]

King Solomon, in his book of Proverbs, had said, "Bitzedaka teromem goy vehesed leumila hatat". It is well to understand what he meant by the words, Hesed leumim hatat, the kindness of nations is wickedness.

It means that when Beirut was raided by Israel, no one spoke about the attack against innocent air travelers at Athens, which provoked the Beirut raid. But when, a few days ago, Arab terrorists attacked a plane at Zurich and wounded six people, there came an immediate demand to Israel, a firm and united response by all nations, telling her not to retaliate.

It means that when a bomb kills a mother and child and wounds thirty others in a Jerusalem supermarket, the Pope is silent, just as silent as he was when a bomb in the Mahane Yehudah market killed thirteen Israelis on another Friday afternoon. But wait and hear how firmly he speaks up when Israel will take the steps necessary for the protection of the lives of its citizens.

It means that Zurich authorities promptly arrest the Israeli hero who jumped off the plane and single-handedly, with a pistol against four machine guns, opened fire on the marauders, and succeeded in killing one of them. Since he succeeded in killing one of them, Zurich authorities are going to try him for murder. It seems that Arabs may shoot at Israeli airliners, but the victims may not shoot back in defense. That is the meaning of "Hesed Leumim hatat".

And so the Israeli will be detained in prison for up to two years, the time it takes to bring a murder case to trial in Switzerland, and may receive up to twenty years in jail, while the fortunate Arabs, who only tried to destroy scores of innocent travelers on the Airliner, but who failed to do more than wound some, will receive much smaller sentences.

One wonders; since the Israeli is accused of shooting after the Arabs ceased firing, what might have happened if one of their incendiary explosives had found its mark and blown up the plane, and if the Arabs might therefore have stopped firing a bit earlier, if this might not have strengthened the government of Zurich's case against the Israeli. Or if the Arabs had succeeded

in shooting back, would the Zurich government still have the hutzpah to arrest the Israeli, perhaps holding him to trial for illegal possession of a pistol, since he had jumped off the plane unto Zurich soil in order to fire the shot. Answer however you choose, to me it spells, "Hesed Leumim hatat".

Such an evenhanded policy of "Hesed leumim hatat" had been Israel's lot since the time it was born.

On April 27, 1948, Moshe Sharet, then Shertock, spoke before the United Nations, pleading that they do not overset and deny the establishment of the State of Israel, thus bowing to Arab demands. In that speech, Sharet said:

"Our fear that armed forces from neighboring communities might invade Palestine has materialized.

"The incursion of military formations from neighboring countries into Palestine has proceeded in broad daylight under the very eyes of British military and civil authorities. The British Navy has continued to blockade Palestine's seaboard against the arrival of visa-less Jewish immigrants, but the land frontiers, North, East, and South, were left open to aggression."

That was "Hesed Leumim Hatat".

In 1949, when after eight futile months Israel yet again applied for United Nations membership, Abba Eban had said:

"I should be giving the committee a false impression of sentiment in Israel if I did not express our indignation at the extraordinary spectacle of our application for membership in the UN being challenged by the Arab states. We are as one who, having been attacked in a dark street by seven men with heavy bludgeons, finds himself dragged into court only to see his assailants sitting on the bench with an air of solemn virtue, delivering homilies on the duty of a peaceful citizen." Eban was then attacking the hypocrisy of the nations who at that time followed the Arab lead to keep us out of the UN for so long. He was attacking the hesed leumim, which is not more than hatat, the kindness of nations, which is not more than wickedness.

Since that time, through three (now five) wars on Israel's soil, through blockade and siege, through political strife and terrorist attack, on defenseless settlements, on women and children, on innocent travelers, Israel has had ample opportunity to rediscover that "Hesed Leumim is hatat".

Eban continued, "Today, more than ever before, we realize that Israel is a people to whom nothing is freely given. Its sovereignty, its narrow land, its scanty water, its capital city, the safety of its homes and lives, its membership in the international family, its commerce with other countries, its maritime access to half the world - gifts which other nations inherit at their birth, are for us the fruits of bitter conquest. Her difficulties are the only possessions of Israel, which nobody has ever tried to take away.

"And today, for a year and a half, the minds of nations have been arrested by an urgent dialogue between a small people claiming its minimal tranquility, and a world society which for twenty years had left Israel to sustain its perils in solitude."

Ten years ago, Abba Eban prophesied about what Israel would be like, after its twentieth year. At this twentieth year, it behooves us to recall that prophecy. He said:

"The twentieth year will find Israel with her third million of population, with the Negev and Galilee abloom, with Jordan waters carried southward to the dry places. The pulse of commerce will beat strongly between Eilat and the Eastern continents, while the links grow tighter between Israel and her own Mediterranean world.

“Nuclear and solar energy will bring freedom from the servitudes of imported oil and give Israel a horizon as broad as its scientific disciplines can reach. The Hebrew faith and tradition will gain new strength everywhere through emanation of Israel’s example.

“These achievements are all within Israel’s power. Peace, the final gift is in the hands of others, although its pursuit is still amongst the first laws of Israel’s policy.”

So said Abba Eban.

The harsh needs of defense have not permitted all his hopes to be realized as yet. In these times, when we recognize that our only reliance is on Hashem, we remember the symbol of our trust in Him and His providence, the Bet Hamikdash. In today’s Sidrah, the instructions for building the first sanctuary and the Aron Hakodesh were given. It is well to remember the prayer that King Solomon recited at the dedication of the Bet Hamikdash, which he had built. One part of that prayer is especially meaningful today: “Veshamata hashamayim et tefilatam veet techinatam veasita mishpatam” ... (Melachim I, 8:45)

We pray that Hashem continue to do justice on our behalf. The blessing of Solomon as he concluded his prayer is also especially meaningful. “May the Almighty be with us just as he was with our forefathers, may He never forsake us or leave us”, “Yehi Hashem ... imanu kaasher haya im avotenu, al yaazvenu veal yitshenu”.

We are now at a moment that in history might be considered a watershed moment: if Arabs really want peace we will give them peace. If they seek war we will respond as effectively as in the past. Our prayer is for shalom over the entire world, and we firmly believe that for the world to live in peace Jerusalem must live in peace. We know that if terrorists seek a temporary truce to regroup, we will be worse off than before. But even the remotest chance of peace must be taken, though at the possibility of great cost. And we pray the time will soon come that Yirmiyahu’s prophecies about the rebuilding and securing of our land will come true, that it will be completely rebuilt as of old, and “Od yishama bearei Yehuda ubechutzot Yerushalayim, kol sason vekol simcha, kol hatan vekol kala, kol mitzhalot hatanim mehupatam, unearim mimishte neginatam”, and the Hatan and Kalah will be Hakadosh Baruch Hu, with His people, on His land which He gave them “yerushat olam”.