

BH

Sermon Rosh Hashana 5772 Port Washington

IS ISRAEL'S ISOLATION A GOOD THING?

Rabbi misses bus to buffalo, where he is going for a wedding. He gets on the bus to Toronto and tells driver to wake him up when they get to Buffalo to let him off. But I sleep very deeply so you have to really shake me. He wakes up in Toronto and is livid, he screams and rants that he wasted his entire trip and his time, now that he is going to miss the wedding anyway, not to mention hundreds await him in Buffalo. The driver is very sorry and the rabbi stomps off. A colleague remarks to the driver that this was the angriest he has ever seen a passenger, The driver replies, well you should have seen the other rabbi I woke up and kicked off the bus in Buffalo...

It's the time of year we come to see the rabbi...

These are difficult times we live in.

Guy was introduced to forum as one who had made \$4mil in real estate in one week. he gets up and says:

I have to be honest:

It wasn't 4 mil, it was \$8 million

It wasn't real estate, it was commodities futures

It wasn't me, it was my brother

And he didn't make it, he lost it...

We live in difficult times. Politicians are at an all time low in terms of the trust they evoke:

A man dies goes to heaven and is shown around. He sees the wall clock, each clock spins at a different rate. He is told that every man has a clock on this wall and the clock spins to the ratio at which he lies, the more lies the faster it spins. SO where is my local congressman's clock? Ah, Satan uses it in his office for a ceiling fan.

Israel is suffering isolation – this is the big fear

NY Times writing: Israel, adrift at sea alone... people fear events will pull Israel deeper into global isolation.

My dear friends, my first message to you today is: don't panic... we've been through this before. We've been isolated throughout history. And we've turned out just fine.

From the beginning of time we are, and have always been, a single sheep surrounded by seventy wolves. Isolated and alone.

We don't need to go very far back in history. Just 60 years ago the Jewish people were singled out for extermination and the world (with a few exceptions) looked on in silence. We were completely isolated. And we had no one to turn to but our own faith in God.

The story has been repeated countless times: They have accused us of killing Jesus. They have accused us of poisoning wells and drinking Christian blood. They have accused us of the world's economic woes and of conspiracies to conquer the world. In fact, there is not ill in the universe that Jews have not been blamed for. It's completely irrational – but it is one of the most enduring facts of history.

Just as then, so now. They have spread blood libels about us, and we are left defending ourselves in a no-win situation.

We are in the position of the fellow who is asked, “When will you to stop beating your wife?” How does he even begin the respond when his guilt is considered a given? So it is pointless for us to even argue the issue.

We have survived and thrived through all these millennia – while our enemies and far greater nations have fallen – so we shall surely survive this.

A Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim and a Jew were in a discussion during a dinner.

Catholic: “I have a large fortune ... I am going to buy Citibank!”

Protestant: “I am very wealthy and will buy General Motors!”

Muslim: “I am a fabulously rich prince ... I intend to purchase Microsoft!”

They then all wait for the Jew to speak...

The Jew stirs his coffee, places the spoon neatly on the table, takes a sip of his coffee, looks at them and casually says:

“I’m not selling.”

So we’re survivors... so let’s no panic...

The second point I want to make is: The big fear is ISOLATION. As much as that’s not a good thing, it’s a sign of our strength and who we are as a people – “ A nation that dwells alone” – a people who are ISOLATED.

When the whole talk of Israel’s ISOLATION started heating up, especially in light of the current issue of the UN vote, of course I worried, like everyone else. I’m still worried...

At the same time, the word ISOLATION started to nag me.... I had heard it before, as it’s written in the Torah as a BLESSING to our people:

The non-Jewish prophet, the great Jew-hater Bilaam is hired by Balak the Moabite king to curse the Jewish people. (Curse these people... they’re getting in the way, winning all the Nobel Prizes... help...) He is paid well, given great honors, and he

awaits the inspiration. But instead of curses, what comes out of his mouth are blessings. The greatest blessings our people have ever been given.

Part of his opening statement is:

“How can I curse them, when G-d did not curse

How can I have anger towards them when G-d in fact loves them

They are a people that dwells alone

And is not reckoned amongst the nations”

ISOLATION is a blessing? How so?

Close to 1,000 years later, Haman said same idea: There is one singular nation, scattered and dispersed among the nations... whose faith/laws are unlike those of any other nation and who do not obey the laws of the king. Get rid of them.

Israel is a nation that from the beginning of time – starting from Abraham – resisted the temptation to conform to the mores and norms of a self-interest society, and instead embraced G-d and a higher calling.

Is Israel isolated and alone? Absolutely.

When the entire world and all its nations were pursuing their own needs and interests, Israel alone embraced the mission to reveal divine purpose by living up to the highest standards of morality, justice and compassion.

Is Israel isolated and alone? Absolutely.

When the nations of the world were still in the throes of paganism and cannibalism, Israel alone was standing at Sinai committing to a life of virtue and charity,— a principle that was ahead of its time by over 3,000 years!

You bet we were alone. It would take three millennia for the United

States to be the first country that would embrace the concept that all people are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights!

Is Israel isolated and alone? Absolutely.

Indeed, that is what irked Haman. Among all the king's subjects, Mordechai stood out alone and refused to bow to Haman. Israel does not bow to men and to man-made creation. Israel bows only to God.

This infuriated Haman and the Persians, just as it disturbed the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians before, and just as it would agitate the Romans, the Christians, the Muslims, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the English, French and Germans in the generations to come. Nothing new.

Is Israel isolated and alone? Absolutely.

Indeed very word Hebrew – Ivri – did you ever wonder what it means?

“The other side”...

You know what it means to be an Abraham, what Abraham was like? Imagine being the only Yankees fan at Fenway in a division clinching game... If you can handle it, and even win over a big portion of the crowd – you're a Hebrew...

Abraham was called Avraham Hoivri, Abraham the Hebrew, because he had the guts to stand alone against the entire world to introduce monotheism, charity and human rights.

And the world should thank us for it!

It's a badge of honor!

It is due to our aloneness, our singular commitment to G-d, that the world has the values we cherish today.

And the world should thank us for it! It is due to Israel's aloneness, its singular commitment to G-d, that we have the values that we cherish today.

Someone asked me - why did Mordechai have to be so stubborn and stand up to Haman...

If there was no Mordechai there would be none of the revolutions that brought about freedom in the centuries and millennia that followed...

Don't you realize... Religious freedom, the abolishment of slavery, civil rights, equal rights for all, can all be traced right back to Mordechai's refusal to bow to another human being.

We are a nation that stands alone!
It's our greatest strength.
It's our contribution to the world.

We're not the followers, we don't go along
We set the trends!!!

We Jews have no need to apologize.
We introduced civilization, Christianity and Islam.
They should be thanking us!

They're gonna judge us? It's thanks to us that they have their own faiths.

We Jews have no need to apologize to anyone. We introduced civilization to the world. The basic teachings of Christianity and Islam (and the rest of the civilized world) stems from Judaism. They have only profound thanks to give to the Jews for their contributions.

They're gonna judge us? It's thanks to us that they have their own faiths.

Some years back – the Vatican came out with an acknowledgement that Judaism is a legitimate religion... Jews were celebrating... I was thinking: What? They're legitimizing us?! For crying out loud... They're G-d was a Yeshiva Bochur! Their faith is based on ours!

There is a story told about a simple Jew who had the wonderful custom to always pray in a shul.

Wherever he went he would make his business to pray in a shul. One day he arrives at small town in England where there was no shul, so he thought what would be the closest thing to davening in a shul...praying in a church.... It was Sunday morning, he enters the church early, puts on his Talis and Tefelin and begins to daven.

Slowly and surely, people begin to enter Sunday morning mass...they see this Jew davening with his Talis and Tefelin they are astonished and shocked.

The priest begins his sermon but no one is paying any attention, all eyes are glued at this Jew in the back of the church. The priest is very annoyed....he makes an announcement:

‘Will all non-believers please leave the church.’

The Jew continues to daven as if nothing was said.

The priest is getting angry and he announces: ‘Will all non-Christians leave the church!’

The Jew continues to daven as if nothing is said.

Finally exasperated, the priest says: Will ‘ALL JEWS’ please leave the church.

The Jew packs up his Talis and Tefilin in his bag, walks over to the front, removes the large cross with an image of Yoshka on it and says: ‘Come, bubaleh, we are not wanted here any longer,’ and walks out.

Not to boast:

How many emperors and kings throughout history chose great Jewish leaders, such as Daniel, Mordechai and Maimonides as advisers and confidants... Many! why?

They saw the Hebrew factor – they would have the guts to stand alone and tell the truth. Not just look for expedience.

They saw in them the children of Abraham the Hebrew... who stood alone.

Again, not to boast, but it's important we know:

Converts throughout Jewish history include royals...

Keep in mind, this, while Jews were scape-goated far more than we've ever seen, Jewish blood meant absolutely nothing, it was literally dangerous, a liability to be a Jew. And yet, royals converted to Judaism...

Not once... time and again throughout history. Some famous ones –

Hagar, Abrahams hand maid, daughter of King of Egypt. She left royalty, not to be Abraham's wife... but to be his handmaid...

Batya, daughter of Egyptian Pharoh – the one who plucked baby Moses from the Nile, converted to Judaism and joined the Jewish people out of Egypt, even as her father's armies were drowning at sea

Ruth, grandmother of King David, whose mother in law Naomi insisted that she had nothing left to offer her, the husband had died, she urged her to go back

home... she uttered famous words: Your nation is my nation, your people are my people, your G-d is my G-d, only death shall separate us...

She could've gone back home... it was a pretty nice home... the home of her father, Eglon King of Moab. Instead she followed a penniless widow to the land of Israel...

Unkelus, arguably the greatest commentator on Torah, whose Aramaic translation appears in every chumash, was nephew to 1st century Roman king Hadrian, and heir to the throne...

Why? What were these royals looking for? What attracted them?

The Hebrews... the people who stand alone as trailblazers for goodness...

The children of Abraham the Hebrew... the man who stood alone!

Friends, we're all very proud of the PM of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, for the way he spoke with such courage and clarity at the UN.

He spoke of the words the Rebbe told him when he met the Rebbe at the beginning of his term as Israel's ambassador to the UN: You're going into a house of lies, but don't be afraid, because if you tell the truth it dispels all the lies. IN much the same way as one little candle can dispel a whole lot of darkness. In the house of lies, just tell the truth – in the house of darkness, shine some light of truth.

Bibi Netanyahu surely had the opportunity of meeting every prominent rabbi throughout his career in Israeli politics (including your own Rabbi Paltiel...) but he spoke of the Rebbe. (I assure you he's not a Chabadnik...) Why?

This was his moment to stand up tall for his people and tell the truth, even through its unpopular.

He looked for an inspiration for this task, a role model, a modern day Abraham. He thought of the Rebbe, the modern day version of Mordechai and Maimonides, who was unafraid to tell the truth, who refuses to bow to anyone... who stands up tall for the truth even if he's the only one.

Bibi said it so well: In this chamber they can vote anything... that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. I'm not here to get applause... I'm here to tell the truth...

Friends, we have nothing to be ashamed of.

Israel is demonized as the problem, when it's the only democracy in the Middle East.

Only place where Arab women have equal rights.

The Arabs have it better in Israel than in any Arab countries...

Let's be honest: If you are an Arab, and you need to choose a place to live, someplace in the Middle East, what are you going to choose...

Well, let's see: Iraq? Nah... Egypt? No thank you. Syria? Nah.

YOU'D CHOOSE ISRAEL. The one place you can choose to succeed at any field. You can decide to become an executive at Intel if you're good... You can run for the Knesset... You can follow your dreams in safety and comfort.

And Israel is the problem?

While they're educating their kids on how to become a shahid... we're preparing our kids to help civilization by developing advances in medicine and technology.

And we're the bad guy? We should look for excuses and apologize and try to negotiate?

It's a lie!

As Hitler infamously said: Tell a lie enough times and it becomes truth... He spoke of the Big Lie...

There's no need to apologize to liars. Simply tell the truth.

We don't have to worry so much about ISOLATION if we tell it as it is.

Truth has a way of cutting through everything.

“But rabbi, we're isolated... we're all alone...”

One lone voice of a little child: But, he has nothing on! That's all it takes to dispel the Big Lie!

Like the Rebbe told bibi –

One tiny candle dispels a whole bunch of darkness

One tiny lone voice of truth can dispel lots of lies

We've done it throughout history. We're gonna do it again!

But we must stop apologizing and start telling the truth...

Dear friends, on a personal level:

Apple is one of the great business success stories of our times.

(It's appropriate to take lesson on Rosh Hashanah from Apple, when we customarily eat apple dipped in honey as the symbol for a sweet new year...)

What made the 'Apple' company so successful is the approach used by former CEO Steve Jobs.

Asked why Apple doesn't do focus groups, Jobs responded: "We figure out what we want. You can't go out and ask people 'what's the next big thing?'"

He said: There's a great quote by Henry Ford. He said, "If I'd have asked my customers what they wanted, they would have told me 'A faster horse.'"

Steve Jobs said: "We've never worried about numbers. In the market place, Apple is trying to focus the spotlight on products, because products really make a difference." It doesn't matter that so many are doing things differently. Focus on the product etc.

Judaism needs to be thought of the same way. Jewish people need to lead, and they need to lead with the greatest product of all time - don't follow the lead of others and don't focus on what others are doing.

The Code of Law, which contains hundreds of chapters, begins (not with the "important laws of Yom Kippur and Passover... rather): Don't be impressed by those who mock:

I started going to shul on Shabbos... don't be embarrassed...
All the goyim are going to their shul on Sunday... thanks to YOUR
GRANDFATHER ABRAHAM!

Sometimes we're more impressed by what the Goldbergs say then by what the Joneses say. The Joneses are going to "Shul" on Sunday and understand full well

why you would want to go to Shul on YOUR Sabbath. The Goldbergs on the other hand, when they see you heading to shul on an ordinary Shabbat, approach you: Is everything ok?

Now you have the choice. You can give the excuse: It's a Bar Mitzvah – and ease all their fears...

Or you can say: Yes. My family and I decided we should be at Shul on Shabbat mornings. It's what Jews do. It's good for us on so many levels, spiritually, emotionally, familially.

Your friend Goldberg says: "You mean you don't use technology on Shabbat? Don't answer the phone? That's so middle ages..."

Really? Do you know huge international group called "unplug" - taking a weekly day off technology?

So when someone calls you on it, be proud. You're a trendsetter!

"I heard you're taking classes at Chabad... isn't that a bit much?"

Bibi – reads torah to children to calm and give him focus...

(I pretty sure the PM didn't become Orthodox... he just realized his heritage is rich and he should be proud of it).

In 1972, former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yisrael Meir Lau met David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. The Rabbi's first question was to confirm a story that had allegedly happened in 1937. At that time the Peel Commission, headed by Lord Peel, was trying to decide a solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict in then Palestine. Ben Gurion was the last witness to appear before this committee that actually suggested canceling the British Mandate.

Ben Gurion spent over three hours passionately explaining the linkage between the Jews and the land of Israel, stating, "This is our home." Lord Peel then asked Ben Gurion, "Where were you born?" "Plonsk" came the reply. "Where is Plonsk?" "Poland."

A deathly silence consumed the room. Finally, Lord Peel said in amazement, "Very strange indeed. All of the Arab leaders who have appeared before me were born in Palestine. Most of the Jewish leaders who have appeared before me were born in Eastern Europe." Lord Peel spoke up saying, "Mr. Ben Gurion, these same Arab witnesses have a Kushan entitling them to this land (Kushan was an Ottoman land deed). Do you have a document saying that Palestine belongs to you?"

At that point, Ben Gurion took the Torah (Bible) that he had sworn upon while taking the oath to be a witness to the commissioner, and he held it up triumphantly exclaiming "Here is your Kushan, here is your document. It is the world's most highly respected book that you British also revere. This document states hundreds of times that G-d gave Israel to His people, the Jews."

Thirty five years later, Ben Gurion smiled and confirmed that this story was indeed true.

Then Rabbi Lau asked Ben Gurion another question. "Imagine you have a document that entitles you to a land. If you crumple it up and shred it and then present it as proof of entitlement for a piece of land, do you expect the Peel commission to accept it in a tattered condition?"

Ben Gurion was a very smart man, so smart in fact that he refused to answer Rabbi Lau's question.

Dear friends –

New year is time to realign priorities
Normally we're too busy, have lots of good intentions etc.
New year is time to make meaningful changes

No need for big changes
Like the small candle goes a long way, small directional change results in huge difference in life down the road

As we dip the apple in the honey, let's resolve to add sweetness to life this year
By unveiling some new revolutionary trend setting ideas into our homes

Wherever you're holding... add another product, download another app on your iPhone, all at once would be too much...

Shabbos candles, shabbos dinner
Shul daily, weekly
Tefillin daily or once in a while
Kosher kitchen...
Mikvah...
Jewish school or Jewish camp for our children...

Let's open up our KUSHAN
Let's find time to study torah each week

If the PM of Israel, a secular Israeli, educated at American universities, sees how it gives him direction and peace of mind

Let's make a commitment to open up our KUSHAN on a regular basis,
our priceless deed that bequeaths us invaluable gifts
That makes us the people of the Land
That makes us the People of the Book
That makes us the nation that stands alone – leading the charge, bringing humanity
towards the direction of its ultimate destiny

When our father Abraham entered into the covenant to be the father of a nation that
will be carrier of the torch, the messengers to humanity, the witnesses to the world.

G-d warned him it wasn't gonna be fun.

But he also promised him his children would ultimately succeed in bringing all of
humanity to monotheism, and eventually to goodness kindness...

This is what we call the time of Moshiach & redemption

When the world is healed and is at peace

A world where nations are truly united
United with genuine love and respect for one another as Children of one big family
of humanity, all created equally in the image of the Great Creator,
And united with that Great Creator - our beloved Father in Heaven!