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By

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U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson took leave from the Court to serve as the U.S's chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. He wrote that "the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice." He sharply criticized the role of judges and legal systems to legitimize tyranny and oppression.

Judge Jackson understood that the atrocities of the Nazis were all purported to be "legal". Laws were passed depriving Jews of all rights. Laws were passed to round up, imprison, and murder Jews. All those who participated in these heinous actions were following the law of the land!

The problem, though, was that the law itself was starkly immoral; the government that promulgated murderous laws was itself evil; the "legal system" which allowed such "laws" to be passed and implemented was the epitome of injustice, cruelty, and wickedness. Moral people should have denounced such "laws" and should have resisted the "legal system." If enough good people had risen against the tyrannical laws and the murderous Nazi regime, millions of lives would have been saved.

In our times, we also witness tendencies to legitimize wicked and immoral behavior by means of declaring such evil to be "legal". The United Nations is perhaps the world's most nefarious example of this tendency. The UN routinely passes resolutions condemning Israel--not because these condemnations relate to moral and sound judgment, but because a malicious cabal of Israel-hating nations muster the majority to pass anti-Israel resolutions. There isn't even the faintest element of fairness to these resolutions, not the slightest effort to understand Israel's position, not a word of condemnation of groups and nations who attack Israel in every way they can. The UN espouses resolutions and policies that are dressed in the garb of "international law" when in fact these resolutions and policies are classic examples of immorality, injustice and corruption of the value of law.

It's not just the UN that tends to cloak immorality in the dress of justice. There are groups of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic people who seek to undermine Israel; they insidiously pose as being interested in human rights, as guardians of international law. Yet, they operate with malice toward Israel and perpetrate the vilest

propaganda against her; they support boycotts of Israel; they constantly rebuke Israel for any real or imagined shortcoming. For these people, justice is not just at all; rather they pervert justice to further their own unjust and immoral goals.

Many seemingly good-hearted people get swept up in the “politically correct” anti-Israel bashing. They are gullible in the extreme, and don’t have the time or moral courage to try to find out actual facts. These people will condemn Israel for causing pain to Arabs in Gaza, but will never raise a word of protest when thousands of missiles are fired into Israel from Gaza. They will condemn Israel’s intransigence, but will never call to account Arab and Muslim leaders who unashamedly call for the destruction of Israel. Thinking that they are standing for “human rights” and for “international law”, these people are in fact accomplices in immorally seeking to deprive Jews of their rights. They foster “laws” and “resolutions” and “policies” that are in essence criminal, unjust, immoral.

In Psalm 81, we read: “lo yihye bekha el zar,” let there be no strange god among you. The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) offers a more literal and more profound interpretation of this phrase--you shall not have within yourself a strange god. According to this interpretation, the verse is not warning us against worshiping external idols. Rather, it is telling us to look within ourselves for strange gods, for evil inclinations, for false divinities. It is demanding that we introspect, that we maintain truth, that we reject the false gods that mislead us into false beliefs and corrupt behaviors.

This is a message of utmost importance for all people. None of us should allow “false gods” to fester within us, to blind our eyes to our moral responsibilities. All humans must strive to root out the evil inclination that leads to discriminatory attitudes, to corrupt laws and resolutions, to following along with the “politically correct” but morally bankrupt anti-Israel chorus. We must remember the words of Justice Jackson that “the most odious of all oppressions are those which mask as justice.”

This coming Shabbat is known as Shabbat haGadol—the great Shabbat recalling the Israelites’ preparation for their redemption from Egypt. Just as the ancient Israelites were redeemed from their cruel oppressors, so we pray that today’s Israelites will be redeemed from their oppressors. We pray that all humans will strive honestly and sincerely to remove the “strange gods” of hatred, hypocrisy and malice from within themselves.

Our rabbis taught: in the month of Nissan our ancestors were redeemed, and in the month of Nissan we will be redeemed in the future.

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