

## **The Imperfect Must Strive For Perfection**

*Rabbi Howard Morrison – Yom Kippur Sermon 5779/2018*

I have never met a perfect person - Have you? I do not know of any perfect country - Do you?

In Pirkei Avot - The Ethics of the Sages, we are taught, "Lo Alecha Ha'Melacha Ligmor, V'Lo Attah Ben Chorin L'hibatel mimenah - You are not expected to complete the task, but you're not exempt from striving to do so."

I love the State of Israel! I marvel at her! What other place has come so far and accomplished so much in 70 years of Statehood? While colleagues and others may disagree with me, I do not feel that I have the right to publicly criticize Israel equal to Israelis. It is not enough that I contribute to Israel, invest in Israel, and have studied in Israel. Until I have lived in Israel and have donned the IDF uniform, my voice is not and should not be the same as one who does live in Israel and who dons the IDF uniform. I might wake up to loud traffic on Sheppard and Bathurst. But I do not wake up to the sounds of missiles in Sderot.

To say that Israel is imperfect is not to criticize Israel. It is the obvious. No human institution of any sort can claim to being perfect. When I lament at one of Israel's imperfections to the point that I become terribly upset, rather than write diatribes in Diaspora publications, I work with people who think like me and who have made the commitment to live in Israel to advance my cause which is also their cause.

Case in point -- This past July 19, a couple of days prior to Tisha B'Av, a Masorti (Israeli Conservative) Rabbi, Dov Haiyun, was detained by police officials in Haifa at 5:30AM for having performed a Jewish wedding in Israel. We all know that only weddings performed by the chief rabbinate's ultra - Orthodox office are legally recognized in Israel. We all know that Israelis leaving Israel to get married civilly, whether or not they be straight, gay, or interfaith can return to Israel with their marriage legally recognized by the State.

Did you know that in 2013, a law was passed in Israel which allows any officiant outside the chief rabbinate's office who performs a Jewish wedding in Israel to be imprisoned for up to two years? Did you know that the case of Rabbi Dov Haiyun was the first consequence of such actions? Did you know that hundreds if not thousands of non-recognized weddings have been performed in Israel by Reform, Conservative, and yes, even moderate Orthodox rabbis, where either a civil wedding license has been obtained in another country or not?

I did not protest about this issue publicly in Toronto or in New York. I did not write an article about it in the Diaspora Jewish newspapers. Rather, I added my voice of support to the Masorti Movement in Israel, the voice of Conservative Judaism by those who live for, die for, and breathe the air of Medinat Yisrael, the State of Israel, on a daily basis.

Yes - Israel is an imperfect country. So what? As I said last year and will say over and over again, our ancestors who lived two thousand years ago, and our grandparents or great grandparents who lived in lands of persecution and annihilation mere decades ago could only have dreamt for a strong secure State of Israel. Yes - Israel is imperfect and is struggling with the issues of religious pluralism within the Jewish community.

More importantly, Israel is faithful to the ideal of the imperfect striving for perfection, or as I quoted from Pirkei Avot, "You are not expected to complete the task, but you are not exempt from striving to do so."

My Israel will not be defined by an Israeli Conservative Rabbi in Haifa. My Israel will not be defined by a politicized ultra-Orthodox chief rabbinate. My Israel will not be defined by this past Summer's passing of a Nation-State list of principles which leaves as many questions as answers on a number of fundamental topics.

My Israel will be defined Operation Good Neighbor and Operation Doctor's Appointment. While barely reported, Israel has done so much good to help and treat the victims and casualties of the Syrian horrors for well over a year.

My Israel will be defined by Israeli technology will helped to rescue 12 cave trapped Thailand boys and their soccer coach. Did you know it was an Israeli company that made available to first responders the most sophisticated emergency mobile communications tools?

Three times seven days a week, the service basically concludes with the passage entitled, "Aleinu." In its second paragraph, one of the most important Jewish values is stated: "L'Takein Olam B'Malchut Shaddai - To perfect the world under God's sovereignty." Yes - The imperfect must strive to make an imperfect world perfect, notwithstanding the impossibility of doing so. Others understand the imperative of "L'Takein" as to repair, mend, or improve, since we really cannot make the world perfect. Still, I prefer to translate "L'Takein as "to perfect," to remind us of our ultimate mission at hand.

During the Summer, I purchased and read an amazing new book about how I like to define My Israel. "Thou shalt innovate - How Israeli ingenuity repairs the world." Okay - the author translated "L'Takein" as "repairs." Here are some excerpts to inspire you. It is a book worth acquiring:

"full of inspiring stories revealing the ancient roots of Israel's innovative spirit, and how that drive to IMPROVE the world continues to play out on a global stage... Thou Shalt Innovate tells the remarkable story of how Israeli technology has helped not only Israelis, but the entire world. No country in history has contributed so much to humankind in the first seventy years of its existence... The secret of Israel's innovation is about leadership, determination, and perhaps above all, about seeing opportunity when others predict failure... Israeli innovators that are collectively changing the lives of billions of people around the world . . . how Israelis are helping to feed the hungry, cure the sick, protect the defenseless, and make the desert bloom. Israel is

playing a disproportionate role in helping solve some of the world's biggest challenges by tapping into the nation's soul: the spirit of Tikkun Olam - the Jewish concept of repairing the world... If one paralyzed person can walk again, then perhaps no one has to be bound to a wheelchair. If one hungry person can eat, then perhaps we can solve world hunger... repairing the world through technology and innovation.

David Ben-Gurion once famously said, 'In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles.' Israel is proof positive that miracles do happen.'"

Judaism's universalism manifests itself in its concern for humanity at large, not merely for its own. The Talmud states (Gittin 61A): Our Rabbis teach: We sustain the poor of the non-Jews along with the poor of the Jews, visit the sick of the non-Jews along with the sick of the Jews; bury the dead of the non-Jews as well as the dead of the Jews - mipnei darchei shalom, because of the ways of peace.

What will you do this year to help perfect, repair, improve, and mend a world that is inherently imperfect, governed by people who are inherently imperfect? Amongst a bundle of worthy suggestions, invest in the State of Israel! Subscribe to the kind of Israel that I do. By purchasing an Israel Bond of whatever denomination; by twinning your Israel Bond with Beth Emeth's Israel Bonds, you will do a double Mitzvah with your Bond. More importantly, you will directly connect yourself to your brothers and sisters in Israel who are positively and productively changing the landscape of Israel, literally and spiritually, and who are also literally and spiritually changing the landscape of the world.

Gmar Chatimah Tovah!