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**Great Torah Teachers Who Descended From Our Enemies**

**By**[**Yehudis Litvak**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/20542/jewish/Litvak-Yehudis.htm)



***Art by***[***Sefira Lightstone***](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

The Talmud tells us that one of the reasons the Jewish people were exiled from the Land of Israel and scattered throughout the world is so that righteous converts would be able to join our ranks. Throughout history, the Jewish people have been enriched by many sincere converts from different nations who became Torah teachers and left their mark on Jewish history. Some of these converts descended from our enemies who had tried to destroy us.

**Sisera’s Descendant Rabbi Akiva**

About a century and a half after the Jewish people, led by Joshua, settled in the Land of Israel, pockets of the land remained under the control of the Canaanite nations who terrorized the Jews living nearby. In the north, King Yavin and his subjects constantly attacked the Jews, forcing them to shelter in walled cities and avoid the main highways.

One of King Yavin’s generals, the powerful Sisera, oppressed the Jewish people for 20 years. Cruel and arrogant, he mocked the Jews and their G‑d.

Upon Divine command, the prophetess Devorah and Barak the son of Abinoam led the Jews in war against Sisera. The decisive battle took place on the banks of the Kishon stream, at the foot of Mount Tabor. Though greatly outnumbered, the Jewish army smote Sisera’s army. According to tradition, loud thunder confused Sisera’s troops and caused them to strike one another. They soon began to flee, with the Jewish army hot in pursuit.

**Runs into a Tent Belonging to a Woman Named Yael**

Realizing that he would be killed as soon as the Jews recognized him, Sisera jumped off his chariot and fled by foot, alone. In search of a place to hide, he ran to a nearby tent, which belonged to a woman named Yael.

When Yael saw Sisera heading toward her tent, she made a decision that changed the course of history. Yael invited Sisera in, told him not to be afraid, and provided him with a hiding place and a jug of warm milk.

Exhausted from his misadventures and relaxed by the warm milk, Sisera soon fell asleep. This was the moment Yael had been waiting for. She grabbed a heavy tent peg and drove it into Sisera’s temple, killing him instantly.

Sisera’s death completed the Jewish victory over King Yavin, who never dared to bother the Jews again.

**Rabbi Akiva**

The Gemara tells us that the descendants of Sisera learned [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm) in Jerusalem. Who were those descendants? Jewish tradition names Rabbi Akiva, the foremost Torah sage who lived during and after the destruction of the Second Temple.

Rabbi Akiva’s father, Yosef, was a convert. As a child, Akiva did not receive much of a Jewish education. Only at age 40, with the support and encouragement of his wife Rachel, did he begin to learn Torah. With immense dedication and perseverance, he compensated for his late start, moving up to more advanced learning and then to teaching.

Rabbi Akiva encountered many challenges on his path to greatness. His 24,000 students died in an epidemic, but instead of plunging into despair, Rabbi Akiva gathered five more students, who later carried on teaching and learning Torah through dangerous times.

When Rabbi Akiva was already an old man, the Roman rulers outlawed teaching Torah in an attempt to prevent Jewish rebellion against their rule. Ignoring the danger, Rabbi Akiva continued teaching his students. When asked why he was risking his life, he gave the famous reply that just like fish cannot survive without water, the Jewish people cannot survive without Torah.

Toward the end of his long life (he died at 120), Rabbi Akiva was arrested for the crime of teaching Torah in public. As he was tortured to death, he consoled his students, telling them that he welcomed the opportunity to give up his life for [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm)’s sake.

Rabbi Akiva left a tremendous legacy of Torah teachings, which are recorded in the Mishna and studied to this day.

**Sennacherib**

Over 500 years after Sisera’s defeat, an even more powerful enemy threatened to destroy the Jewish people. His name was Sennacherib, and he ruled Assyria, a kingdom northeast of the Land of Israel.

In those days, there were two Jewish kingdoms: the Kingdom of Judah in the south, where the tribes of Judah and Benjamin lived, and the Kingdom of Israel in the north, where the other 10 tribes lived. Sennacherib conquered the Kingdom of Israel and exiled the 10 Tribes. To this day, where the 10 Tribes went remains the greatest mystery of Jewish history.

On a quest to conquer the rest of the world, Sennacherib laid siege to [Jerusalem](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4246466/jewish/Jerusalem.htm), which at the time was ruled by King Hezekiah of Judah.

Greatly outnumbered, the Jews prepared for war and prayed. Through the prophet Isaiah, they received a message from G‑d that Sennacherib and his army would not enter Jerusalem but would go back the way they came.

What happened next was an open miracle. The Book of Kings tells us, “That night, an angel of G‑d went out and struck 185,000 in the Assyrian camp, and the next morning, they were all dead.” The Jews in Jerusalem were saved without shooting a single arrow!

King Sennacherib himself was not killed by the angel. He escaped back to [Assyria](https://www.chabad.org/calendar/view/day_cdo/aid/4367438/jewish/Ezekiel-Describes-Assyrias-Downfall.htm), only to be murdered by his own sons.

**Shemaya and Avtalyon**

Several centuries later, during the Second Temple era, some of King Sennacherib’s descendants converted to Judaism, including Shemaya and Avtalyon. Not much is known about their early lives, but at some point during the 1st century BCE, Shemaya became the *nasi* – the spiritual leader of the Jewish people, while Avtalyon became the head of the rabbinical court, a position of similar prominence.

Shemaya and Avtalyon were beloved by the Jewish people. A contemporary describes them as, “The two great [leaders] of the generation, Shemaya and Avtalyon, who are great scholars and great expounders [of the Torah].”

The respect the Jews had for Shemaya and Avtalyon is illustrated in a Talmudic story. One year, at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, a crowd of well-wishers escorted the High Priest on his way out of the Temple, as was the custom. When the people saw Shemaya and Avtalyon nearby, they left the [High Priest](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4195084/jewish/The-High-Priest-in-Jewish-Tradition.htm) and followed Shemaya and Avtalyon.

The High Priest, clearly not the humblest person in history, took offense. When the two Sages approached him, he greeted them with, “Let the descendants of foreigners go in peace.” This allusion to Shemaya’s and Avtalyon’s descent from the enemies of the Jews was intended as an insult. However, the two Sages were not ashamed of their origins. They replied, “Let the descendants of foreigners go in peace, who performed the acts of Aaron [referring to Aaron’s reputation for peacemaking and lovingkindness], and let the descendant of Aaron [referring to the High Priest] go in peace, who does not perform the acts of Aaron.”

**Nero’s descendant Rabbi Meir**

Nero was the Roman emperor in 54-68 CE. The commonly accepted view is that in 68 CE, Nero committed suicide due to political pressure. Even back in those days, however, not everyone believed that Nero had died. Shortly after his presumed death, a rumor spread that he was alive. At least three impostors managed to convince some Romans that they were Emperor Nero himself.

The [Talmud](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2537389/jewish/Talmud.htm) tells a different story of what happened to Nero. Suspecting Jews of planning a revolt against the Romans, Nero traveled to the Land of Israel. There, he looked for a sign from Above that would solidify for him whether or not to attack the Jews. Nero shot an arrow to the east, and it landed in Jerusalem. He then shot an arrow to the west, and it also landed in Jerusalem. The same occurred with arrows shot north and south.

Nero tried another sign. He stopped a Jewish child and asked him which verse he’d learned that day. The child replied with the verse from Ezekiel: “And I will lay My vengeance upon Edom (progenitor of Rome) by the hand of My people Israel.”

The signs were only too clear, and Nero was afraid. “The Holy One, Blessed Be He, wishes to destroy His Temple, and He wishes to wipe His hands with me,” he said. Nero realized that if he, descendant of [Edom](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1892051/jewish/The-Red-Heifer-Esau-and-Striking-the-Rock.htm), were to proceed with his plan to attack the Jews and destroy the Temple, although he would fulfill G‑d’s plan, he would eventually incur His vengeance. He escaped and converted to Judaism. Rabbi Meir was one of his descendants.

**Rabbi Meir**

Rabbi Meir was one of the five students with whom Rabbi Akiva rebuilt Jewish scholarship after the devastating plague mentioned above. The Talmud attests that G‑d Himself knows that no sage of his time was equal to him.

During times of Roman persecution, Rabbi Meir risked his life to receive his rabbinical ordination and was subsequently forced to flee the Land of Israel.

Years later, when the persecution abated, he returned and was appointed *Chacham*– a high position in the Jewish Supreme Court. A scribe by profession, Rabbi Meir became a beloved Torah teacher, able to convey powerful messages through parables. He was known as a humble, compassionate, and holy man. Despite experiencing much hardship and tragedy, such as the sudden death of his two sons, Rabbi Meir remained positive, optimistic, and committed to teaching Torah. He is one of the most frequently cited scholars in the [Mishna](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4329319/jewish/The-Mishnah.htm).

**Begs Her Husband to Rescue Her Sister**

Rabbi Meir was married to Beruria, herself a formidable Torah scholar. Beruria’s father, Rabbi Chananya ben Teradyon, was cruelly executed by the Romans for the crime of teaching Torah. The Romans also seized Beruria’s sister and placed her in a brothel. Beruria begged her husband to rescue her sister.

Rabbi Meir bribed one of the guards at the brothel and freed his sister-in-law. When the guard asked Rabbi Meir what he should do if his superiors were to find out that he’d let a Jewish woman go, Rabbi Meir told him to bribe them in turn.

“What if the money runs out?” the guard asked.

“Then call out, ‘G‑d of Meir, answer me!’ and you will be saved,” replied Rabbi Meir.

And that’s what happened. The guard was caught and sentenced to the gallows. When he was about to be hanged, he cried out, ‘G‑d of Meir, answer me!’ The rope tore, and the guard’s life was saved.

Since then, Rabbi Meir became known as *Baal Hanes* – miracle worker.

**In Our Times**

Stories of descendants of our enemies becoming Torah teachers are not limited to ancient history. Even today, there are converts, living in Israel, whose parents or grandparents were Nazis. These converts denounced their ancestors’ antisemitism and decided to join the Jewish people and devote their lives to learning and teaching Torah.

The Torah teaches us to love converts. The abovementioned converts, as well as many others, made eternal contributions to Judaism, and they deserve our tremendous appreciation.

*Reprinted from the current website of Chabad.Org*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Saying “Everything is Good”**

**Even When You Don’t Feel it**

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| --- |
|  Should we say that “all is good” even though we don’t feel it? And the answer is yes! Because v’halachta b’drachav – you have to walk in the ways of Hashem, and it says in the Torah: Hashem saw all that He had made,„– and behold the whole thing is very good (Bereishis 1:31). Hashem said this is a very good world!  And so, instead of walking around and grouching, “It’s too hot. It’s so humid,” or “It’s too cold – it’s nasty; it’s raining;” instead of that, we should always speak well of Hashem’s world.  It’s hot? Wonderful! The apples are getting red on the trees. The pears are becoming sweet on the trees. If it wasn’t hot, they wouldn’t become sweet.  It’s cold? That’s also wonderful! The earth now is taking a rest from producing and while it’s taking a rest it’s recuperating all the minerals it lost, all the materials it lost during the summertime. Without the winter, there can’t be a summer.  If it was summer all year, the earth would keep on producing and it would become arid and infertile. That’s why the earth takes vacation in the wintertime. Cold is wonderful. Cold forces the earth to stop producing. **Rain is Wonderful!** Rain is wonderful! Without rain, we’re nothing. When it rains, we’re coming down from the sky. You came down in the rain once upon a time! We’re almost 80% rain. We came down from the sky once. And people are grouching and complaining about the rain. Here we were coming down from the clouds and they were complaining against us.  That’s our chance to come to this world! That’s rain! And therefore, when rain comes down, all the boys of the yeshivos are coming down and their future brides, the kallos from Bais Yaakov, are coming down. They’re all coming down together from the sky. So, rain is wonderful. So, Hashem says it’s a very good world, and He wants us to keep on saying that all the time.– Give praises to Hashem that He gave a very good world; and if you keep on saying it, after a while, after some time, you’ll begin to feel it.Reprinted from the Parshas Yisro 5784 email of Toras Avigdor. (Tape #799 from September 1990). \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**If you afflict them in any way, and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry* (Ex. 22:22)It is forbidden to chastise anyone too harshly, even if one's intentions are good. Because Penina inadvertently caused pain to Hannah (the mother of Samuel) in trying to influence her to pray to G-d for children, we find that she was punished. One must be very careful not to cause someone to "cry out" to G-d, for He will "surely hear their cry." *(The Vilna Gaon)**And holy men you shall be to Me* (Ex. 22:30)G-d wants us to sanctify that aspect of us that makes us human, and to perform holy, "humanitarian" actions. G-d desires good and holy people, as He already has plenty of angels to do His bidding. *(The Rabbi of Kotzk)**Reprinted from the Parshat Mishpatim 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly* |

**The Supernatural Revelation vs.**

**The Mundane Realities of Life**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



In last week's Torah portion, Yitro, we read about how the Torah was given "amidst thunder and lightning." This week, in the Torah portion of Mishpatim, we begin learning the commandments that were given at Mount Sinai. In contrast to what one might expect after such an extraordinary event, the mitzvot enumerated in Mishpatim involve simple, straightforward matters between man and man, the kind of laws logic would dictate even without specific commands in the Torah.

At first glance, the two portions seem to symbolize opposite extremes: Yitro describes the supernatural revelation of G-dliness on Mount Sinai, whereas in Mishpatim, the Torah deals with the mundane details of daily life.

**Bridging the Gap Between the Spiritual**

**Plane of Existence and Physical Reality**

On a deeper level, however, these two portions represent two necessary stages in the transformation of the world that was initiated at Mount Sinai: The Torah was given to man for the purpose of bridging the gap between the spiritual plane of existence and physical reality. With the revelation of the Torah, holiness could be introduced into the material world, thereby uniting the spiritual with the physical.

The objective was not for holiness to nullify or negate the physical world. Rather, G-d wanted it to continue to function as before, albeit suffused and permeated with a higher sanctity.

The first stage in the fusion of the spiritual and physical is described in Yitro: "And G-d descended on Mount Sinai." All of creation held its collective breath when the Torah was revealed, as the Midrash relates: "Not one bird screeched, not one fowl flew, not one ox bellowed...the whole world was silent and soundless." The Jewish people were so nullified by the intense revelation of G-dliness that they fled several miles and had to be brought back.

**How a Jew is Supposed to Observe G-d’s**

**Commandment in One’s Day-to-Day Life**

Such a state of nullification, however, was not the ultimate goal, as G-d wants the world to exist as a "regular" physical entity. Accordingly, the second stage is described in Mishpatim, which deals with monetary regulations and the laws of damages, i.e., how a Jew is supposed to observe G-d's commandments within the framework of his day-to-day life. In fact, it is precisely through observing these "simple" mitzvot that holiness is brought into the world and becomes part and parcel of it.

Being holy does not mean being disconnected from the world or having to transcend it. On the contrary, holiness can also be expressed in compensation for damages, respecting deposits and pledges, paying employees on time, etc. - mundane, concrete actions carried out according to Torah that make the world holy.

With faith in G-d as his foundation, every Jew has the power to sanctify all aspects of his life.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Mishpatim 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from Likutei Sichot, vol 16.*

**Thoughts that Count**

*If a man digs a pit... the owner of the pit shall make it good, and return money (kesef) to the owner* (Ex. 21:34)

Every person "digs a pit" with his sins into which other people fall and get hurt. The way to correct this situation and "make it good" is by "returning kesef (related to the word kisuf - longing and yearning) to the owner" - with a sincere desire to return to the "Owner" of the world in repentance. *(Likutei Sefat Emet)*

*If fire breaks out and finds thorns, and shocks of corn are consumed, or the standing corn, or the field* (Ex. 22:5)

It states in the Talmud: "Punishment comes to the world only on account of the wicked, yet begins with the righteous." When G-d brings punishment ("fire") into the world, it is directed primarily against the wicked ("thorns"). However, as long as righteous people exist, their merit protects everyone. Therefore, if G-d determines that punishment is absolutely necessary, the righteous are often the first to be stricken, so that their merit can no longer shield others. *(Pardes Yosef)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Mishpatim 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Mishatim 5784**



The Torah reading of this week deals with the difficulties and pettiness of human life. I find this to be extraordinary since only last week the Torah dealt with the exalted principles and values system of holiness as represented by the Ten Commandments.

**A Seeming Let Down for a Kingdom of Priests**

It seems to be a letdown to have to speak about oxen goring and people fighting, enslaving and damaging one another when we were apparently just elevated to the status of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The beginning point of the education of many a Jewish child in Mishna and in Talmud is located in the very prosaic laws of torts and damages discussed in this week's Torah reading. In effect the law book part of the Torah begins by showing us people at their worst behavior and weakest moments. Would it not be more inspiring if the Torah somehow began this detailed part of Jewish law with more inspiration and spirituality?

Yet we are all aware that the most studied volumes of the Talmud - the real meat and potatoes - are those tractates that deal with many of the laws presented in this week's Torah reading. The rabbis in fact advised us to study these laws of torts and of human failures, translated into negative actions and behavior, in order to sharpen our brains and somehow make us wiser.

**The Moral Strength to Prevent**

**these Very Damaging Efforts**

And most of the study effort concerns itself with how to deal with the damage and hurt that has already been done and very little time and effort, so to speak, with the moral strength necessary to prevent these very damaging events from occurring.

The Torah is a book of reality. It does not gloss over situations nor is it in the least bit hagiographic in dealing with the main characters that appear in its narrative. The perfect Torah speaks to a very imperfect world. The Torah does not allow us to have illusions about how people will behave when money, emotions, negligence and spite are present in society and in the lives of people.

**Slavery Breeds Inequity**

Slavery is wrong, perhaps the greatest wrong, but it has been a fact of life in human history till and including our time. Slavery breeds inequity and as we have witnessed time and again ending slavery does not in any way end bigotry.

The Torah comes to address the how and why of overcoming this inequity and of making slavery subject to such rigorous legal restraints as to prompt the Talmud to say that he who acquires a slave for himself in reality is acquiring a master for himself.

**The Torah is a Book of Reality**

**And the Most Holy of All Works**

People will be people, damages and hurts will occur and the temptation of wealth and money will not disappear from the face of this earth. We have to have a set of rules and an ability to deal with these problems so that they do not completely consume us. The Torah, of necessity, must propose a program of compensation to help the victims and restrain the perpetrators. It is this recognition of human behavior that sets the Torah apart from all other so-called spiritual and religious texts. These assume the best of behavior and values. The Torah makes no such assumption. It is the book of reality and the most holy of all works.

Shabbat shalom

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**Wine: The King of All Drinks**

**By Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

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**Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

When hearing kiddush from someone else, do I recite Shehakol on other beverages? Halacha considers wine to be chief among all drinks. Therefore, if you recited hagafen over wine, that covers any subsequent beverages you drink in that setting, and you needn’t recite shehakol on them. Additionally, if you drank a revi’is of wine and recite al hagefen, you needn’t make a separate borei nefashos after the other drinks.

There are two reasons given for this halacha:

(1) Due to the prestige of wine and

(2) because wine earns its own bracha.

Inferior wine or grape juice would qualify for the second reason but not the first. Contemporary acharonim therefore debate whether grape juice would exempt other drinks, and many say that one should avoid entering this doubtful situation.

 If you mistakenly recited ha’etz over wine, you are yotzei b’dieved (since it is a fruit extract), but it’s questionable whether the bracha exempts other drinks. The exemption of wine’s unique bracha would not apply, yet the exemption of a prestigious drink is still relevant.

The Mishna Berura holds that if you drank less than a cheekful of wine, it is questionable whether the hagafen exempts other drinks, but the Alter Rebbe doesn’t mention such a distinction. Even just hearing the bracha of hagafen from another (e.g., when hearing kiddush) can exempt other drinks, provided that you drank some wine.

But if you drank less than a revi’is of wine, the other drinks will still require a borei nefashos afterward. This exemption applies as long as the other drinks were on the table when you made hagafen, or if you had in mind other drinks that might show up later.

The exemption is also limited to drinks and not to other shehakol foods, even liquid-based ones like ice cream. Whenever there is a doubt of exemption, one should recite shehakol on a non-drink and cover the beverage, or hear shehakol being recited by someone else and be yotzei.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Yisro 5784 edition of The Weekly Farbrengen. Rabbi Raskin is Rov of Anash in Petach Tikva, Israel.*

**Civilian Deaths in Gaza:**

**Are Relatively Low**

**By Alan Dershowitz**

You wouldn't know it from the hectoring decision just rendered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel, but the death toll among civilians in Gaza — even including children and women — is among the lowest in the history of comparable warfare. Over the past several months, it has become even lower.

According to *The New York Times*, "The daily death toll in Gaza has more than halved in the past month," and has fallen almost two-thirds since late October. Moreover, the percentage of civilian to combatant causalities has gone down considerably as well.

**Considerable Reductions in Civilian Deaths**

In a massive understatement, *The New York Times* also reported that these considerable reductions in civilian deaths have been "somewhat overlooked" by the media and critics. "Somewhat"! They have been totally buried and ignored. *The New York Times* also opined that Israel's "harshest critics are wrong to accuse it of wanting to maximize civilian deaths."

It is no accident that this reduced civilian death toll has been "somewhat overlooked" by the media and by Israel's critics, including previously by *The New York Times* itself. Israel is subject to a discernible double standard when it comes to covering its military actions.



Even before the recent dramatic reduction in civilian deaths, Israel's military actions produced far fewer deaths and a far lower ratio of civilian-to-combatant deaths than in any comparable urban warfare. This is especially significant considering the reality that Hamas deliberately *increases* civilian deaths by using women and children as human shields and by hiding its military personnel and equipment among civilians. The current ratio of civilian-to-combatant is well below two-to-one, which compares extremely favorably with ratios achieved by other Western democracies in urban warfare.

**The Omission Creates a False Impression**

Critics of Israel almost never cite comparable data from other military encounters. This omission creates the false impression that the civilian death tolls in Gaza are among the highest in history, when they are in fact among the lowest.

Every actual death of an innocent civilian — especially among babies and very young children — is a tragedy. It is these deaths that are always highlighted by Hamas to the media, but no one knows how many such deaths are actually among this most vulnerable segment of the population, and how many of those are the result of Hamas deliberately using young children as shields.

**Hamas Figures Do Not Count Gazans**

**Killed by Their Own Errant Rockets**

The Hamas figures for *total* deaths do not purport to distinguish combatants from what they consider civilian deaths. They never give the ages of the "children" they claim have been killed, although they regard anyone under the age of 19 as a child, even if they are active combatants. Hamas has recruited fighters as young as 13 to 19. The Hamas figures also do not count the Gazans who were killed by errant rockets launched by terrorists, or Gazans who were killed by Hamas for refusing its orders not to move to safer locations.

*The New York Times'* conclusion that the new data suggests that it is "wrong to accuse [Israel] of wanting to maximize civilian deaths" is highly relevant to the false charges of genocide that are being considered by the International Court of Justice.

Nations engaged in genocide do not go to such great lengths trying to reduce civilian casualties, including placing its own soldiers at heightened risk by employing focused ground forces instead of relying exclusively on air and sea bombardments. The ICJ should immediately reject the genocide charges against Israel and initiate war crime charges against Hamas and Iran, both of which willfully try to increase civilian deaths.

The decreasing civilian death rate among Gazans should also end the campaign to impose a ceasefire on Israel before the IDF completes its legitimate mission to destroy Hamas' military capacity. Successfully completing that mission will save civilian lives in the long run, by reducing Hamas' capacity to keep its promise of repeating the barbarism of October 7 and also by reducing its use of civilian shields.

**Israel Has Struck a Better Balance**

Israel's conduct in its defensive war, started by Hamas, has been exemplary. It satisfies all international standards, and its effort to minimize civilian deaths while accomplishing its legitimate goals has generally been successful. There is always a tradeoff between reducing enemy civilian deaths and increasing risks to one's own soldiers and civilians. Israel has struck a better balance than most, following the unprecedented Hamas barbarisms.

The time has come, indeed it is long overdue, for the world to stop imposing a double standard on the nation-state of the Jewish people. Double standards are a form of bigotry, and when bigotry is addressed to the only nation-state of the Jewish people, it becomes a form of international antisemitism against the Jew among nations. It must stop.

*Repinted from the current website of aish.com This op-ed originally appeared in*[*The Gatestone Institute’s website*](https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/20343/gaza-civilian-deaths)*.*