

“Carrots and Sticks, Dreams and Plans: Coping with the Tragedy in Mumbai”
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It was October 4, 1957 and ten years into the Cold War that would last until 1991. October, 1957 was the year of the successful launch of the unmanned satellite *Sputnik I*, by the Soviet Union, which shocked and frightened many Americans. As the tiny satellite orbited the Earth, Americans reacted with dismay. They just could not believe that the Soviets could have gotten so far ahead of the supposedly, technologically superior United States. There was also fear that, with their new invention, the Soviets had gained the upper hand in the Arms Race. In addition, such a show of technological prowess could only help the U.S.S.R. in its efforts to achieve closer economic and political relations with third world nations in Africa and Asia.

Democrats scorched the Republican administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower for allowing the United States to fall so far behind the Communists. Eisenhower responded by speeding up the U.S. space program, which resulted in the launching of the satellite *Explorer I* on January 31, 1958. The "Space Race" had begun. Americans were afraid, they were terrified.

When the former first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, returning from a trip to Russia, was interviewed on, *Meet the Press*, on October 20, 1957, she said, “We are living in a time when everything is changing.” Then she became more animated when Richard Clurman of *Newsday* asked her about the prospects of U.S. peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union. She explained, “There must be changes there and there may be changes here. There is no use belittling your rival, there is no use in putting your head in the sand and saying, ‘I don’t want to know’. It is much better to know, because what we have to prove to the neutral world, or the world that is judging us all the time, is that with freedom we can do more for the lives of people than they can do with their system. That is the important challenge and that is the challenge we have to meet. It can’t be met with just guns.”

As true as that might have been for international relations and foreign policy during the Cold War, it is equally true of the wars in which we are engaged today. It may also be true of future conflicts that we may be thrust into, in the coming years. A few weeks ago on a Friday night, I stood before the congregation and suggested, a bit naively, that we ought to meet acts of terrorism with acts of love. Determined, I embraced greater kindness over violence. I stood proudly as a Jewish faith leader and preached understanding, while in stark contrast fanatic Muslim clerics spread aggressive rhetoric. The incipient nature of terrorism often gets into our subconscious and then it is not so easy to dismiss or rise above it. Therefore, life tends not to be as simple in this area and, once again, our Torah has much to teach. The genius of our tradition is its ability to hold the ideal in one hand and the realistic in the other. One night we dream of a perfect world, and the next night we dream of how to survive tomorrow. This week the pathos of Jacob begins to unfold. Jacob is a great dreamer. It’s as if we can’t wait for him to fall asleep to see what will happen to him. As exciting as his awake events are, it is his dreams that are infinitely more instructive. While conscious, he spends his life trying to outrun his brother, while asleep he tries to outrun himself, and he finds that it is simply impossible.

The entire Jacob narrative must be read on the backdrop of his complicated relationship with Esau, his brother. Jacob steals the birthright Esau legally purchased. He spends the next 20 years engaged in a cold war, trying to outrun Esau. The result is Jacob has one dream after another, with God reassuring

him that he will be fine. In several communications, again one after another, God comes to Jacob and says, “You’re OK, you will survive, you will endure, in fact, you will do well.” Every dream ends with the same refrain, “You are going to be fine.” However, no matter how many times, no matter who told him, whether it was his father or God himself, Jacob continued the struggle.

The key to Jacob’s ultimate self-realization comes, not in the transformational struggle dream we will read about next week, it comes in a very simple dream in which God comes to Jacob and reminds him to stand up for himself. God says to Jacob, “You do not need to rely on Lavan, you don’t need to take Lavan’s mistreatment, you deserve better, and you will do better.” In that moment, Jacob took his first real step towards independence. The message is so esoteric, “You are good enough, you deserve better.” It’s not a big, deep idea about self-worth and personal value. God simply instructs Jacob to decide which sheep he believes will do better, and then go broker a deal. So, Jacob does.

E.A. Speiser offers an incredible approach. God changes the conversation. God stops talking about how good Jacob is, or what God imagines will become of his life. God changes the conversation. God says, “Let’s talk brass tacks. You take these sheep and he can have those.” Enough theory, you must protect yourself. Yes, it would be wonderful for Lavan to begin to understand your innate value and prize you. (The Anchor Bible: Genesis, edited by E.A. Speiser, pp. 219-20) Yes, it would be wonderful if the world would wake tomorrow and see the values of democracy, liberty, equality – it would be wonderful if there would be a Muslim reformation in which the people of Pakistan would stand up to the radical Islamic influences in the country. We must dream of that day, but until that day is realized, we have to take care. We have to pray for a day when our brothers and sisters, serving in Jewish outposts around the world, no longer leave their two year old children orphaned. Until that is no longer our reality, we must take practical steps to insure our own safety.

This week, President-elect Barack Obama named a national security team given the task of strengthening our security and renewing our standing in the world. The experienced team he has assembled represents a vital balance of American power, diplomacy, and leadership that will be crucial in overcoming the challenges of the 21st century.

These appointees will be tasked with strengthening current alliances and forging new ones, protecting our citizens at home, defending against our enemies, and promoting our values and moral leadership throughout the world. President-elect Obama rightly described our current station in history. “The national security challenges we face are just as grave and just as urgent as our economic crisis. We are fighting two wars. Our old conflicts remain unresolved, and newly assertive powers have put strains on the international system.”

“Last week, we were, once again, reminded of this threat when terrorists took the lives of six Americans who were among nearly 200 victims in Mumbai. In the world we seek, there is no place for those who kill innocent civilians to advance hateful extremism. So, in this uncertain world, the time has come for a new beginning, a new dawn of American leadership. We need this to overcome the challenges of the 21st century and seize the opportunities embedded in those challenges. We will strengthen our capacity to defeat our enemies and support our friends. We will renew old alliances and forge new and enduring partnerships.”

“To succeed, we must pursue a new strategy that skillfully uses, balances, and integrates all elements of American power: our military and diplomacy, our intelligence and law enforcement, our economy and the power of our moral example.”

Jacob teaches us that we have two hands, one to hold on tight to our idealistic dreams, the big dreams that energize and motivate us to a better tomorrow. And the second hand, practical and pragmatic, the second hand reminds us that we live in a real world, one that requires practical solutions and protective measures.

The Seal of the United States has an eagle with arrows in one talon and an olive branch in the other. The same seal is found in the carpet of the oval office. Together they symbolize that the United States of America has "a strong desire for peace, but will always be ready for war." However, it is the reverse side that is even more interesting. *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, freely taken from Virgil, means "a new order of the ages." The pyramid that is found underneath that quote is unfinished and the point is a simple one. The democracy that we are and have been building for the past 200-plus years is unfinished. We are all unfinished. The conflicts that exist and the ones on the horizon abound. There is much work to do and we must be engaged. It sounds vaguely familiar – *lo alecha hamlacha ligmor, v'lo ata bein horim lihibatel mimena*, "There is much work to be done and ours is not to complete it, but nor can we shy away from the challenge. (Mishan Avot 2:21) However, the most amazing statement comes in the previous mishna. It seems almost an introduction to the idea that there is much work to be done and that task may seem insurmountable. It says *hapoelim atzelim*, "The workers are tired and I say, yes we are." So, if you can't work anymore, take a nap this *Shabbos*, get some rest and maybe you can minimally dream of a better tomorrow. At least that would be a start.

When I was a young child I was afraid to raise my hand with the right answer. I was also afraid to go up to the blackboard to fill in the correct math solution. This week, I went to the Law Committee and presented a paper in front of the greatest scholars of our Movement. I was sick to my stomach the day before and for the entire morning. I had a knot unlike anything I have experienced since grammar school. When I was done and all of the comments had been offered, my favorite Talmud teacher turned to me and said "*Yasher Koach*." He was proud. The lesson is simple. I dream of what we can do as a people, I dream of how we can change the world, and, in a blink, those dreams turn to nightmares. However, we will all wake up to a new day and we can try it again. We put one foot in front of another and start a new day. Terrorism makes us afraid to get out of bed. Terrorism makes us afraid to travel and it makes us afraid to hold on to our ideals. So, for today, in the safety of this sanctuary, affirm your faith and your faith in God, affirm your faith in humanity. That will be one practical step.

Today, I hope I have offered perspective. I believe I have offered insight. Today, I offer what the Torah asks of us which is to remain dreamers.