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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday October 27, 2023 ~ Parsha: Lech Lecha

All the News That's Fit to Print

Dear JCCP/CBT Family,

Since the horrific attacks in Israel on October 7, I've been reading and watching as much as I possibly can about Israel's current war with Hamas. I'm reading the American press, and I'm reading the Israeli press. I'm watching the major networks, as well as the cable stations. I'm reading articles and editorials and opinion pieces by those who know a great deal about the conflict, and I am reading articles by others that demonstrate so little understanding of the events that I can't imagine how they ever got past an editor. I've read things that should embarrass the people who wrote them. I've read and watched and followed the reporting of Israel's friends and allies, and yes, I have read articles by those who hate Jews (though they rarely come out and say so), and who hate Israel. Though it is painful to read their words, it is important to understand what our enemies are saying and thinking. After all, it was our blindness and inability (or should I say unwillingness) to understand what our enemies were actually saying, and what their actual goals are that led to years of poor decision making, and bad assumptions about Hamas.

So yes, I've been keeping up. But few things have literally stopped me in my tracks the way the [front page mea culpa](#), published by the New York Times earlier this week did, acknowledging that they misreported the story of the attack on the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza on October 17. Perhaps you saw it, or heard about this. I encourage you to read what *The Times* wrote in all its terrible entirety: But here are a few highlights:

On Oct. 17, The New York Times published news of an explosion at a hospital in Gaza City, leading its coverage with claims by Hamas government officials that an Israeli

airstrike was the cause and that hundreds of people were dead or injured. The report included a large headline at the top of The Times's website.

Israel subsequently denied being at fault and blamed an errant rocket launch by the Palestinian faction group Islamic Jihad, which has in turn denied responsibility. American and other international officials have said their evidence indicates that the rocket came from Palestinian fighter positions.....

The Times's initial accounts attributed the claim of Israeli responsibility to Palestinian officials, and noted that the Israeli military said it was investigating the blast. However, the early versions of the coverage — and the prominence it received in a headline, news alert and social media channels — relied too heavily on claims by Hamas, and did not make clear that those claims could not immediately be verified. The report left readers with an incorrect impression about what was known and how credible the account was.

Actually The Times did not really offer a real *mea culpa*, and certainly not the type of apology that we speak about on the High Holidays. You know, the type of apology that actually acknowledges not only the wrong committed but the damage that the error actually caused. Instead of acknowledging how it basically took the word of a news service that is wholly owned and operated as a propaganda arm of Hamas, *The Times* put it on their masthead and a week later basically said, “Oops—my bad. Let's move on.”

Last night I read another [similar](#) admission by a significant news service that is influential on the world stage. The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation, which has a long history of anti-Israel animus) similarly admitted it made serious mistakes over its reporting on that Gaza hospital by relying on the Gazan health ministry (also wholly controlled by Hamas).

But the damage has already been done. This emotional, narrative driven reporting, as opposed to judgement free assessment and critical evaluation of sources and facts — you know the very rules of journalism that every journalist is supposed to hold sacred — on the eve of President Biden's historic visit to Israel led to massive anti-Israel rallies throughout the Middle east and Europe. The King of Jordan, the Prime minister of

Egypt, and the President of the Palestinian Authority all cancelled scheduled meetings with President Biden and Secretary of State Tony Blinken because of Israel's "war crimes."

The world's most prestigious news agencies even took the words of a genocidal terror organization over that of the President of the United States and our Defense Department. American officials immediately questioned the "evidence" and within less than 12 hours placed the blame on another Gaza terror organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Yet it is not the end of the story. Though discredited, the lie that Israel attacked a hospital is still getting traction. As recently as last Sunday, the *Record* was still reporting the strike on the hospital as an Israeli attack. [Members](#) of congress are still [repeating](#) it, using it as fodder for their call for an immediate cease fire -- which has been rejected by Israel, most of the EU and the United States—along with their demand for an immediate halt to all military aid to Israel.

Good job, *New York Times*. I am sure you are feeling really great about your attempt to set the record straight and "to determine what additional safeguards may be warranted." I wonder how many more Jews will suffer before you figure it out.

The truth is that there is a lot of work to be done, and some real soul searching among our news organizations is in order. How about you start by making sure that "All the News That's Fit to Print," which still adorns the masthead of the newspaper is actually real news that is worthy of the confidence of its world-wide audience.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner