

Conscience

By Norman “Nourollah” Gabay

English Translation by Payman Akhlaghi

لطفاً نسخه فارسی این نوشتار را در فایل همراه مطالعه کنید.

The just person’s guide is but his inherent conscience.

**Think of how to pass through the day,
Undertake to worship the just God.
Adopt goodness and don’t hurt people,
For it’s the sole path to redemption.**

Above all other privileges, *conscience*, this inborn gift of God to us, signifies the words of the holy *Torah* (*Genesis*, 1:27), that God created humankind with His own qualities. This author believes that conscience is God’s representative within our body, and that which is witness to our deeds. At every step, those blessed with this gift follow the path of justice by the command of their conscience. Thence why it’s said of the unconscientious people that they have no God. A lack of conscience is a result of hatred, and hatred is born out of bigotry and prejudice. In some people, depending on their dispositions and abilities, conscience spreads light and gives warmth like a sun, whereas some unconscientious humanoids, out of the hatred in their callous hearts, commit cruelties and amass murderous crimes. Only three of such people devoid of conscience, namely Mao Zedong, Stalin and Hitler, had nearly 118 million people murdered merely in the past 150 years! And yet, there were another unconscientious group, who could have stopped those catastrophes, but would not — whereas according to the Jewish culture, to save but one person’s life is to save the whole world. Opposite to those cruel beings, scores of caring people have served humanity in so many ways **by the command of their conscience alone**, to the extent that their will and the means available to them would permit. For example, let’s suffice to mention three heroes of philanthropy over the past century, namely Misters Bill Gates, Warren

Buffett and Norman Borlaug, who have served billions of people, regardless of color, race or religion, and merely by the command of their clear conscience.

Altogether, Bill Gates and Warren Buffett have dedicated so far more than one hundred billion dollars in aids to provide for the vaccination and other hygienic and medical needs of those who live in the developing countries. On the other hand, the late Norman Borlaug, a man of no material wealth, yet one enriched with an excellent scientific perception, served humanity in silence by the way of teaching the better agriculture and offering the better seeds. Thus, as his biography tells us, not only he has saved hitherto a billion people from death and another billion from hunger, but also he has already provided for the future of billions more of people. And gladly, his achievements earned him a much deserved Nobel Prize in Peace.



(Photos from Wikipedia.org)*

Let us evaluate people by the measure of their conscience and not by the standard of their wealth. We don't need to be rich. Conscientious people deserve an award for every time they do some good, even though their greatest prize remains the very pleasure of doing good. **“You won't deserve to be called Human, / If you don't care about the others' suffering.”**

As I read in the papers, Bill Gates, one of the wealthiest people in the world, once said that he planned to leave ten million dollars to each one of his children, but to spend the remainder of his wealth in philanthropic causes. In contrast, many a rich person who doesn't see in the mirror of life but their own image.

Indeed, anybody can become rich, but not everybody can become generous. Wealth is a privilege, whereas generosity is a virtue. Likewise, knowledge is a skill, whereas wisdom is a virtue. And the powerful has not only endless wealth but also an alert conscience.

Having acquired a big fortune, a man sought the guidance of a sage. “O you the wise old man!” Said he. “Advise me, so that even though a rich man, I’ll remain as just and conscientious as I used to be.” The wise sage commanded him, “Take a look at the outside through the closed window... What do you see?” The rich man said, “I see people hard at work with life’s endeavors.”

The wise sage continued, “Now, face the mirror... What do you see?” “I see myself,” he replied. At this point, the experienced old man explained, “Notice how nothing more than a thin coating of silver or mercury on the back of the glass blocked your view, so that you couldn’t see but yourself. Try and don’t let the layers of silver and gold, that thin film of wealth, block your view of life. Don’t allow them to make you see but you, to ignore the others, and to isolate yourself from the world.”

**Our path to love is long and arduous,
Each step burdened by a rise or a fall.
The downhills are about us turning to dust,
But the uphill, they’re about self-sacrifice.**

Alas, too many people live their lives with closed eyes and open mouths, as when they were born. They don’t look around them, but they do speak, while their words fail to meet their deeds. For, the hubris of wealth destroys some people’s faculties of intellect and reasoning.

**My dearest! Goodness asks for more than talking good!
Already good with the words? Well then, it’s time to do good!**

Meanwhile, as we can see, modern societies suffer a social problem, that of the homeless families who live on the streets in most countries of the world, including our well-endowed United States. They are the outcome of more fundamental issues, and the mirrors which reflect the deficiencies of the society — and they trouble the conscience of the good people. It’s a collective problem that requires collective action for a solution. To that end, we must first uncover and frustrate the causes behind the ill, thence, saving our governments from further

embarrassment. Each of these people has had their distinct problems. Some of them could as well be the same youngsters who by the misguided custom of some American and European families, were encouraged by their parents to leave home, exactly when they most needed guidance and support. Nevertheless, be what may the reason, they're often some birds with broken wings who tell us in effect that even with those broken wings, whether inside a cage or in the freedom of the garden, whether inside a room or on the streets, they've been rendered desperate, wandering for their daily bread, even as the saying goes, "a hungry stomach knows no faith or religion."

One day, a hometowner ran into an old friend, only to find him homeless, sleeping along with his poor family in cardboard boxes on the street. The hometowner scolded his friend and said, "David! Is that you?! What did happen to you? How come you've ended up homeless? Why are you guys sleeping in boxes on this forsaken alley? Man, I haven't died yet!" Then, after much polite but empty offers, he decided for his friend. "Come on!" He said. "Get up! Let's go! Come over and sleep in *our* back-alley!"

As it's said, "The wound of a tongue hurts no less than the wound of a sword." It's not right to humiliate those who've fallen from grace, even if we do so in the guise of humor. As the **poet** said,

It's hard to cheer up a broken heart.

It's hard to fix a broken glass.

It's not as hard to pave a rough mountain,

As it is to pave smooth a harsh word.

My friends! Religion only aims to awaken the inert human conscience. The lawmaker intends to maintain the security of the society, even as he tries to help its impoverished sectors, because poverty leads to insecurity. In a way, the conscientious people are no different from one another, for they all want to implement justice. A good man builds and leaves behind a water reservoir at the heart of the desert, on the path of the caravans of strangers. Then some ignorant guy who lacks in conscience comes along and claims, "Who is thirsty but does not believe in what I believe, he has no right to drink from this water!" Still, another good person — yesterday in Europe or Turkey, and today, in Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, etc. — saves the lives of, say, the Jewish, Armenian, Muslim, Kurdish or Izadi children, even though it could cost his or her own

life. Indeed, to lack in conscience is not far from having no God. It's truly painful to imagine homelessness, and how it would be to have no support. And not all homeless people are to blame for their poverty; rather, most of them have been afflicted by this ill because they were merely down on the luck.

In my view, having no house of one's own and the high rental prices in the larger cities are among the many causes that lead to homelessness. In most cities today, more than 50% of an employee's income goes to pay their rent, a situation that is neither fair nor practical. I know an elderly couple with no-one else in the world, whose only income is the \$1500 which they receive in monthly government aid. Of that amount, they pay \$1300 in rent for their apartment, and they survive the month on the remaining \$200! But instead of their currently pointless tough disciplines and useless expenses, governments, Cities in particular, could in various ways aid and facilitate the process for the constructors to increase the production and raise the supply above the demand; and thus, help resolve the countless problems which involve the shortage of housing units and the high rental prices. For example, as I heard, the Canadian government gives a helping hand to the immigrants who want to buy their first house, so that once they've paid upfront 5% of the price, it provides them with a very low interest-rate loan to pay off the balance.

In 1979 and 1980 C.E., during trips to the very small yet wealthy country of Singapore, my Chinese-born friend told me that "due to the wisdom of our beloved President, Mr. Wee, all citizens of this small country own their houses, thanks to the wise aid provided by the government." It would be wonderful for the other states to follow suit, and instead of piling up billions of dollars in useless weapons, each make their people a society of home-owners. Thus, no doubt, they could bring about more comfort to their countries, and help sustain their socio-political order, better than any military power could.

According to the statistics, there are nearly 58,000 homeless people just within the Greater Los Angeles and its few surrounding cities. Awhile back, being witness to those painful scenes, I thought of a solution, which I laid out in a letter to President Donald Trump.

As I wrote, in order to house the immigrants, certain agricultural and industrial units namely the *kibbutzim*, pl. of *kibbutz*, were established in Israel, wherein no money would change hands. Instead, a large table has been spread, everybody without exception works, and each and every person benefits from the resources and enjoys the facilities of the kibbutz. Ever since they were

established, these kibbutzim have made so much progress and have brought in so much profit that a remarkable share of the Israeli export is traded via these kibbutzim.

Hence, I suggested that the American government could benefit from the experience of the Israeli government and establish several kibbutzim in this vast country, especially in the states of Florida and California. Therein, it could house the homeless for a limited time and under certain regulations and conditions, address their mental and physical illnesses, likely resolve their issues, provide them with the necessary education and training, and thereafter, return them to their normal lives — because every time that we learn something new, it's a life begun anew. I further expressed my hope that my suggestion would be examined carefully, and should it be deemed practical, it would be implemented.

Awhile later, I received a kind reply in the mail, signed by President Trump, a copy of which will be provided in the **Appendix** of this article. I hope that my suggestion will be studied.

My dear readers, We are in this world to make a difference. We are here to leave a good imprint behind. Let's do our share in resolving the issues. Let's enjoy the current freedom of speech, this blessing which was unavailable to us for thousands of years. **A nation is re-born with every new generation**, and to survive, a society must adapt itself to its times.

A miracle has happened to the generation of Iranian immigrants of the past few decades, and its most significant aspect has been the freedom of expression. Let's enjoy this blessing, point out the issues, and partake in resolving them.

The whole idea of religion and the reason for its resistance to change is to keep humankind's inherent conscience awake in our practicing of justice. On the other hand, the secret to our survival is our ability to change and to keep step with the modern knowledge and understanding, and this has no contradiction with the essence of religious observance. Religion stands still, while science destroys every day and builds anew for the better. Not long ago, we sent up smoke signals to relate the news. Today, thanks to science, by the movement of a finger, we can contact, speak to, hear and see anyone and anywhere in the world. "To be in step with Time" is to throw away those spoken words and writings which do not agree with modern science and comprehension, those obsolete beliefs which have expired long ago.

In the ancient times, “miracle” was a means to producing fear, acquiring power, recruiting members, and compelling obedience. The goal was to impose some incredible ideas upon the ignorant people, and to make them “understand” those ideas. Had that same mentality continued to this day, then the profiteering scientists and tricksters would have been enjoying millions of followers, and Las Vegas would be the capital of their kingdom! To this date, whoever has wished to prove their beliefs by citing miracles, they’ve sought merely to convince the others, instead of offering the truth. And, as **Nietzsche** said in effect, “What convinces us is still not the truth, but only something that has convinced us.”

Today’s “miracles” are the two miracles of Science and Freedom, whereas people nowadays rightly consider the “miracles” performed by the magicians as some kind of *léger de main* or “sleight of hand”, rather than some spooky way to contact the Almighty.

Rumors spread about a certain Agha, the chief cleric of a town, claiming that “every morning, all by themselves, Agha’s shoes pair up neatly before his feet!” A shrewd man went to Agha’s wife to solicit the truth of the matter. Agha’s wife says, “I don’t know about any miracle, but I sure know that every morning, when he wakes up, he shouts, ‘Where in the nation are my darned socks?!’”

Here’s hoping for the day when by the command of the conscience, people everywhere will be friends to each other and help one another, when each of them will understand what the **poet** meant, when he said,

To fast every day,	To pray every night!
To sit in for long	In temples and the mosques!
To part the lips for duty’s sake,	To say Aye to the call of God!
To ask His wantless being	To fulfill our needs —
Ah, by the Almighty,	None serves us as well
As opening a door	Before a hopeless man.

And that is, my friend, a fully awake conscience.

**Speak up, brother, whilst you can,
Speak up in joy and happiness!
For, when the messenger of Time arrives,
You'll have to choose silence anyway.**

Norman "Nourollah" Gabay

June 2018, Los Angeles

Appendix

**Copies of the Reply of June 2018 by President Donald Trump to the Letter by Norman
"Nourollah" Gabay.**

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20500



*Mr. Norman Gabay
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Thank you for your thoughtful suggestions on how to address important issues facing our Nation. I am honored to work on behalf of all Americans to grow our economy, protect our citizens, and strengthen American leadership around the world.

When America is united, there is no challenge too great. Together we will prosper, and we will get the job done. Thank you again for your suggestions.

Sincerely,

To receive copies of this and the other writings by Norman Gabay in Persian and English, including his other essays, as well as his three books, including *An Invitation to Reason*, *A Dictionary of the Jewish Dialect of Kashan*, and his upcoming book, *Be Up to Date*, please visit the following website: www.BabaNouri.com .

(The End)