

# Honorable Men Saving Everybody's Honor

An Essay in Three Parts

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برای مطالعه نسخه فارسی این مقاله به فایل همراه مراجعه کنید.

## Part I

Human happiness is summed up in three points: Learning from yesterday, benefitting from today, and hoping for tomorrow. Sadly, humanity wastes their lives on three other habits: Wasting today, fearing tomorrow, and hating the others.

**Immanuel Kant** said, and I paraphrase, that "to be humiliated is worse than to be insulted." Indeed, ever since religion, based on some inciting texts, was turned into a means of oppression and cruelty, every religion, sect and minority group — including Jews, these scapegoats of history, and always in the minority — has been subjected unfairly to humiliation, insults, discrimination and oppression. As an outcome of such predicament, this people in particular have been often deprived from the opportunity to choose a private business or to receive a proper education. This ill has led to severe material and informational poverty imposed on them throughout the ages of the diaspora; although naturally, the problem has led in turn to an admirable habit common among them, that is, giving charity to both their own community and to the strangers. We may observe that the minorities, particularly in those underdeveloped countries which lack the sophistication to tolerate anyone who thinks differently — such as the Muslim minority of the Buddhist Myanmar (Burma), the Coptic Christians within the Muslim Egypt, and so forth — are still often poor. To this date, every minority of whichever sect or religion, who lives amongst a religious majority, it is subjected to humiliation, insult and discrimination by their cruel oppressors; and with no support or hope for a better tomorrow, they find it necessary

to aid and assist one another. In the meantime, a group of religious fanatics, at times in Europe, in Asia or in Africa, have made the world into a hell, both for themselves and for the minorities among them, **by drawing upon the vacuous hope of going up to Heaven!** For an evident case in point today, think of the oppressed Kurdish and Izadi minorities in the Middle East. Tragically, as late as the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a vicious group continues to sell their captive women and daughters in the name of religion; another bunch of people without a conscience are buying the victims in the name of religion; and a dumbfounded world is gaping at the brawl! Where humanity is absent, so is the conscience! As **Hafez** said,

**Humankind is not to be found in this world of dust,  
But we must build another world for a new human.**

In the millennia-old Jewish culture, we can see two fundamental points when it comes to charity. First, Judaism says that who gives the charity ought to be careful and protect the honor of who receives it, so far as his right hand wouldn't know of the left hand giving the money away. Second, in Judaism, the best mode of charity is to help someone in need by finding them a job, teaching them a skill, or helping them learn an art, so that they would no more need the aid. This concept is similar to that famous English proverb, "Give a man a fish, and you fed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you fed him for a lifetime."

**The religion didn't ask to shame the faithful,  
But it wrote and wished to redeem his honor.  
The true faithful is an example to follow; and  
Praiseworthy is the tongue that tells the truth.  
Wherever did the religion call misery a matter of fate,  
Or that an arrow was the answer to the word of truth?**

Indeed, the true faithful is an example of the humanity to follow.

Let's talk a bit more about the chronic poverty of the minorities. In Iran before 1924, when the Pahlavi dynasty emerged on the scene, the majority of Iranians, but especially the Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian and Baha'i religious minorities, had remained poor, due to the inhumane treatment that they had received during the reins of the Safavid and Qajar dynasties, which largely did not let them have an education or own their private business. Discrimination in Iran went so far as until 1906, the year when the Constitutional Law was signed, the Jewish people —

a people ever more Persian than most other Persians, with 2700 years of documented life in Iran — they were still deemed “foreign subjects” or “aliens” (what “foreign”?! I may ask); and the internal affairs of this group of Iranian citizens were assigned to the Foreign Ministry! The anti-Semites were even jealous of the Jewish poverty (sic!); and if the French philanthropic foundation Alliance Israélite Universelle had not come to the rescue, things may have not turned out at all the way they look today. This was a poor people with no support, who instead of leading fulfilled lives, could only hope for surviving the day. Thus, they had no way but to be calculating and frugal, and to use what they earned today with utmost thrift. **Those who could not tell the difference between “calculating” as opposed to “meanness” and “prudence” as opposed to “fear”**, they referred to Jews as “miser and fearful”; whereas the Jewish person’s thrift was out of reasonable calculation, their fear was from care and prudence, their poverty was a result of discrimination, and the three of these symptoms were mere reflections of their old and long bitter experiences.

In other words, **justified fear has roots in reason, while misplaced fear is a sign of weakness**. A wise man once said, **“The wind has nothing to do with a lantern left unlit**. So when faced with the hostile wind, you know that you’re a kindle, shining bright!” Jews have been a case in point for these words. They have always been faced with discrimination, but they never lost their light; and the best proof for this claim is the flourishing Jewish State in our time.

As **Victor Hugo** said, and I paraphrase, “Prudence is the eldest son of reason;” although too much prudence may be a sign of “obsessive compulsions.” A caravan traveling through the sizzling hot summer desert found a man lying almost dead on the road. They fed him water and food till he came to. Going through his baggage, they found a watermelon. They asked, “Why didn’t you eat the watermelon, when you knew you could die?” **The poor man, who apparently was from the city of Kashan known to be faint of heart, explained, “I had saved the watermelon for a rainy day!”** Ah, to save diligently even at the apex of poverty! Back then, everyone’s “credit card” for the rainy days was their “honor”; and they kept their proverbial cheeks glowing red by slapping themselves in the face to maintain that honor. Today, many of them have become rich, yet some of them continue to hold on to the sad heritage of their times of poverty! On the other hand, there are many among them who hold no reservations when it comes to helping the others, many of whom are philanthropists perhaps without a plumage of their own, who nevertheless serve as the feathers and wings for the others. There is much difference

between a prudent and calculating person versus a miser. The outcome of calculation is success and wealth; while the outcome of meanness is backwardness and humility. One problem with being stingy is that this chronic illness may become hereditary and keep repeating itself *ad infinitum*.

**It's the custom of the world to repeat everything, and  
We have yet to see the outcome of these repetitions.  
Our eyes see many an incident and think of it to be new,  
Whilst the old eyes of the world saw it many a time before.**

Freud said, and I paraphrase, “The world is not built on a foundation of goodness. And this shouldn't come as a surprise, for the sickly forces within the unconscious mind dominate the human personality.”

Amid the above, one thing that has helped the Jewish individual survive the 2000 years of *galout* or the diaspora, it has been a feeling of mutual help and the deep belief of this people in the *mitzvah* or the “good deed” of “helping their kind”, which stems from the command of the *Torah*, “*ve-Ahavta le-re-acha ka-mocha*” (*Leviticus*, 19:18), commonly rendered as the Golden Rule, “Love thy neighbor as you love yourself.” Thus, by giving away a loaf of bread yesterday, or a billion dollar today, this people have continued to fulfill this command; and their engraved names mounted on the walls of numerous nonprofit organizations, hospitals, and such other institutions, are testaments to this claim. That is besides the evident quick response and cooperation of the Jewish people in helping those in urgent need around the world, not to mention the growing number of their countless useful innovations, which speak to the same truth.

The city of Kashan was one of the oldest Persian cities with a large Jewish population, so far as at a time, the number of the Jewish families living there reached the thousands. As with the other towns and cities, an invisible poverty ruled the mass of the honorable people, and men and women both worked to make ends meet. Most of the Iranian Jewish women of Kashan, including all women in our family, spun silk threads at home to be dyed and used in weaving Persian carpets, and some of them weaved such carpets themselves. The Kashani worker was noticed for their remarkable work, so far as by the order of Amir Kabir, the famed prime minister of the

Nasseraddin Shah court, the young men of Kashan and Yazd were exempt from the Iranian military draft; and within the Jewish community, there were no poor Kashani beggars.

In Kashan, those Jews who worked in the silk thread business, such as my father and grandfather, as well as the late Chacham Yedidia Shofet and his father Davoud “David”, they tried and found work for the housewives, all of whom were skilled in the art. Once a week, I would go to the homes where the silk threads had been spun, collect the spindles, and take them to my father’s store in the big bazaar. Notice that in all Iranian towns, even the rabbis had a regular occupation, because for them, religion was



not the means to earn a living, and the religious services were carried out on a voluntary basis.

According to our custom, every Friday afternoon, families who could afford to help, they would donate a loaf of bread called *challah* to the *gabbay* of the community, who collected them and pass them on to those in need. (The word *gabbay* meant the “treasurer of the synagogue in matters of charity.”) Speaking fondly of bygone youth! I remember vividly how 83 years ago my late **grandfather, Agha Rafael Gabay**, one of the *gabbays* of the time in Kashan, took me along with him to the homes of the people whom we knew. Every week, grandpa would ask me to knock on the doors, one by one, and tell them that we were there for the *challah*. The woman of each family, who had prepared the loaf of bread, opened the door and placed the bread on my hands. Once the loaves of bread had been collected...

**To be continued...**

## Part II

... we set out to visit the homes of those in need. Grandpa stood afar and told me, “This is a large family, so give them six loaves; give two loaves to the other one; three to another;” and so forth. Afterwards, as the sun was about to set, I felt like a 4 or 5-year old champion, singing happily all the way back to home — until the next week, when we would go again to distribute the bread. I don’t forget the joy of fulfilling this *mitzvah*, this “good deed.” For many years, I didn’t understand why my grandfather, took me with him on these trips, until I realized that **he didn’t want to embarrass the recipients of the bread.** I wept two times over this: first, when I gave the bread to a poor mother and saw the reactions of her children; and the second time, today, as I am writing these lines.



A few hours before he died, I asked grandpa to give us an advice to remember. He paused briefly, then he said, “Do not greet the wicked people with as much as a *shalom aleichem* (“peace be upon you”, or “hello), for you would be corrupted. And never hold back from helping those in need.” I have preserved a tape of his voice pronouncing these words.

It should be noted that the greatest reward for doing good is the personal satisfaction that we receive from the deed. Otherwise, you shouldn’t expect as much as a “thank you” for doing it.

In 1942, a typhus outbreak was taking its daily toll of lives in the poor neighborhoods of Tehran. The late Uncle Jacob Massaband “Matzo Baker”, a beloved philanthropist of our community, walked into the Amir Chamber of the Grand Bazaar of Tehran, visited every store, collected some money for charity, and left to distribute the fund. A few hours later, we saw him back at our store, hardly able to control his laughter. We asked, “Uncle Jacob! What’s there to laugh about?!” He said, “I got the reward of my services! While in the *mahalleh*<sup>1</sup>, I gave 2 toumans<sup>2</sup> to a poor woman who was single, whereas I gave 5 toumans to a mother with few kids. The single lady told me, **‘Uncle Jacob! I pray to God for you to be hit by a horse-wagon!**

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<sup>1</sup> The *mahalleh* or “neighborhood”: The old Jewish neighborhood of Tehran known as Oudlajan; sometimes referred to as the Jewish Ghetto of Tehran.

<sup>2</sup> One *touman* equalled 10 Persian *rials*.

Why did you give me just 2 toumans, when you gave 5 toumans to that other woman?’ I asked, ‘Why the horse-wagon and not a big truck?’ She said, “Because I wished you a slow and painful death!”” Then, Uncle Jacob emphasized as he laughed, “And this was my reward for the day!” It is wrong to judge people in any society, including their philanthropists, based on their religion, and it is wrong and disastrous to judge the citizens of any country based how their governments have behaved so far. That is, we may get to know a person based on his or her actions, but not based on their religion or the government that rules over them.

In all cities, in all ages, and within all societies, many Jews were ardent philanthropists, so far as any attempt to name them all would prove to be an impossible task. Some of them could have sacrificed their lives to serve a good cause, not only to save their communities, but also for the sake of humanity at large — whether it was at the local level of a Jewish neighborhood, or on the grand scale of the international scene. Among them, Dr. Jonas Salk, who discovered the life-saving vaccine for Polio, first injected himself with the vaccine, and only once he was assured that it was safe for humans, he tested it on children. Later, asked to patent his own discovery, he refused to do so on the grounds that “the honor belongs not only to me but to humankind.” This author believes that not only this great discovery by an American Jewish scientist, but also every other discovery, invention and innovation, **it has been another step on the ladder of human evolution toward perfection.**

Serving the others has no end, nor limits. In the old Tehran, amongst our very small community, there were many such philanthropists — among whom we shall remember the late Dr. Rouhollah Sapir, Abdollah Nayeb, Ms. Bibi Eliahoo Beroukhim, Haji Yeshoua, Madame Cohen-ka, Mousa “Moses” Elyassian, Davoud “David” Abdollah-zadeh, and thousands of others. They must be counted among the 36 anonymous righteous people around the world, of whom the late **Nourollah Kharrazi** spoke in his essay in Persian entitled *36 Righteous People*<sup>3</sup>, and by the virtue of whom, as the mystics believe, the world persists. One needn’t be a prophet to hear the sorrowful song of those in need, but a feeling of empathy and a desire to help would suffice. I am fond of a faith in God, piety and religious practice, which is based on reason and humanity; and I believe that conscience is God’s presence within human beings; and that serving our kind is the foundation of humanity. That’s why the unconscientious people are referred to as

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<sup>3</sup> صدیق 36.

“godless people”. What’s written on the sands will be wiped away by the first wave that washes the seashore. What’s drawn on the rocks is eroded by the passage of history. But what’s engraved on the minds of people, it remains forever a guest of their hearts.

Here’s another fond memory of my grandfather, Agha Rafael, may he rest in peace. One cold snowy day, he was told that a young and honorable couple had given birth to a child, but they didn’t have as much food for a single meal. Grandpa, leaning slightly on his walking stick, walked to their home through the snow, and arrived there with the gift of a box of white Persian candies known as *noghl*. He congratulated the couple for the newborn and asked them to “please accept this 5 toumans from me, and in return, promise me that on the day of the *brith milah*, this tradition of Abraham, I’ll be sitting on the chair and holding the child on my knees as the *sandAk*; and I won’t leave you now till you’ve promised me as much!” The couple accepted his offer. On the day of the *brith milah*, i.e. the Jewish ritual circumcision of the male newborn, grandpa appeared at the ceremony, but to their surprise, he took the hand of the father of the baby and told him, “You sit down and hold your child!” I may add that regardless of their particular religions, the likes of grandpa have been found among all societies, and among our 36 anonymous righteous.

**The philanthropist** who wishes to help a fellow human, he or she can find the way to do it; whereas who doesn’t want to help the others may only find an excuse to avoid offering them aid. What will solve the problem at hand is the viewpoint and the intent of whom carries out the good deed; otherwise,

**The tiny stomach can be filled with a few bites of the bread,  
But all the blessings of the earth can’t fill the jealous eyes.**

Think of the generous spirit of philanthropists, and consider the hitherto outcome of helping those in need, and you will realize the growing necessity of such assistance. Take my word that I knew many students years ago who had qualified for their free education, and especially, one family who used to receive the loaves of bread; today, they are among the generous people who help the others in our society. In the Jewish culture, to help our kind, to commit to offer aid, it is something to be proud of; and it’s a shame if we do not fulfill such an obligation. On the other hand, to receive help that is unnecessary, that is also considered to be a shame.

In the Persian culture, a man named **Hatam Tayee** has become synonymous with ideal generosity. It's said that Hatam lived in a garden with 40 gates. Upon his death, his brother took over everything and announced that he would follow the ways of his late brother. Within days from Hatam's passing, a beggar knocked on a gate of the garden, and Hatam's brother donated a few coins to him. Another beggar knocked on another gate, and he received help, as well. But as Hatam's brother opened the third gate, he was confronted with the same beggar who had appeared a moment earlier at the first gate! Upset, Hatam's brother scolded the beggar for this behavior. The beggar said, "You aren't a second Hatam, and you'll never be! I used to knock on all 40 gates of the garden and ask for help, and Hatam knew me, and he'd still help me each and every time without shaming me for my need. But you couldn't endure me as much as a second time and hastened to embarrass me for it!" **O Saadi! Don't hurt the living souls, for the entire realm of being / It's not worth hurting a single heart.** Generosity isn't just about how much we own, but it's an intrinsic aspect of a person's nature; otherwise, **it'll be easy to become a second Hatam Tayee, / when it's the guest who's paying for the costs!**

Every morning, for 22 consecutive years, I went for our daily walk and discussed things with my friend, the late **Nejat Gabay**, who was a member of the Conflict Resolution Committee of the Iranian American Jewish Federation. Even though he was actively engaged in resolving family conflicts within our community, he never told me that he paid from his own pocket to take a psychologist with him to help resolve such conflicts; and I did not know this, until recently, when **Dr. Nehzat Farnoudi**, the beloved psychologist of our society, told me that the late Nejat Gabay used to take her along to help solve the family issues. Generosity isn't about showing off our actions and cawing about it; rather, it is an intrinsic and quite natural attribute. Here's a beautiful poem, which spells out everybody's wish:

**O God! Please, don't make me miserable before the people!**

**Please, don't test me in the crucible of patient endurance!**

**I'm not afraid of friends' mockery, but please,**

**Don't make me wanting of their pity and clemency!**

My friends, I'm aware that I've been repeating some quotes, poetry and points at length, but what else could we do when such precious gifts of the mystic suit the topic at hand? At any rate, if you find anything worth your while among these words, then please visit [Babanouri.com](http://Babanouri.com) to

download and share copies of this and my other writings, in Persian or English, for your children to read. I've provided the English translation of most of my essays and articles to have them read by the younger generation, and to help these words last in the minds. As **Nasser Khosrow** put it,

**Life is my teacher, and it is**

**The best teacher we could ever have.**

New York City, 1940. One evening, an old man ran into a child evidently lost, wandering about the streets, shaking from the cold. He asked the child, "My dear boy, what is your name, and where do you live?" The 12-year old boy answered in Yiddish, "I'm hungry, I'm cold, and I have nobody and no place to go." (The Yiddish language, largely a mixture of Hebrew and German, has long been the main dialect of the European Jewry.) The poor old man, who knew the language, realized that the child didn't speak any tongue other than Yiddish. He took the child to a McDonald's, bought him some food and hot tea, and asked him, "Where are your parents?" The boy replied, "My parents, fleeing Europe, sent me alone to New York, until they could join me afterwards!" The old man understood then that the poor parents of the child, hard pressed by the necessities of Time, had thrown their beloved son out of the sinking ship of Life, so that he might survive the wreckage.

The old man said, "I can only do one of the two things for you...."

**To be continued...**

### **Part III**

... I can either buy you some warm clothes or a train ticket to Los Angeles, since over there you won't need warm clothes." The child said, "As you say." The wise and farsighted old man gave no money to the child, but instead, he held his small hand and took him to the train station. There, he bought him a ticket from New York to Los Angeles, and **with the remainder of his money**, he bought him two sandwiches for the road. He helped the child climb the train, kissed him goodbye, and told him to go to the Fairfax neighborhood of Los Angeles, where a sizeable group of people spoke Yiddish. Thus, with two sandwiches in the bag, and with the help of the other travelers, the child made the long trip to the City of Angels; and albeit with some considerable trouble, he arrived at the Fairfax area. People helped him for awhile. A few days

later, a man offered him “3 dollars a day to clean my 20 apartment units.” The child accepted the offer, spent the days cleaning the apartments, and slept the nights in the hallway of the building. Little by little, as he learned the language, the landlord assigned him to manage more of his apartments, and gave himself an apartment to live in. For the next many years, the boy worked for the man.

Time went by fast, and the talented but haplessly lonely child grew up into a knowledgeable young man. One day, he noticed that a worn and torn two-bedroom was put up for sale. He offered his boss to “sell the old unit to me. I’ll leave my current apartment, so you can rent it out. I’ll fix the worn-out apartment, and I’ll pay your money back in two years.” The kind owner of the apartment accepted the offer. Our young man fixed the place with his own hands, sold it at a profit, and paid back the original investment. Within 35 years, our hero in America, this land of golden opportunities, acquired a 300-million dollar fortune, worth billions in today’s value. Sadly, however, he had just secured his place among the greatest when he fell sick. At a party, he ran into Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister, and they spoke in Yiddish to one another. Golda asked the man, “Do you have any plans for the future?” The man, who had never got married, answered her, “Yes, I’ve established a nonprofit foundation to be managed by seven of my friends. They will have the full control of my fortune, and they will only aid the charity organizations of Los Angeles from the revenue generated by my properties. I earned my wealth in Los Angeles, and I’d rather have it spent only on this city.” He died shortly afterwards, in 1975.

In 1980, I had a close friendship and professional relation with one of the directors of this foundation. When I asked him for aid to the Iranian philanthropic organizations, to my surprise he answered, “By the law, we can only help public nonprofit organizations, and not any special groups.” Awhile afterwards, the director left the foundation.

I’d like to paraphrase a quote attributed to Shakespeare, “Some are born great, and some achieve greatness. But for some, greatness is forced upon them.”

**This author believes** that many meritorious people are akin to raw diamonds: they will either be rubbed smooth by Time and glisten, or they’ll live unknown and die wasted. About a thousand years ago, long before matchsticks would be invented, people often carried home a flame taken from a fire temple, a public bath or a bakery, and multiplied it for cooking purposes.

In those times, a mother ordered her 4-year old son, "Sina! Go to the local baker and ask him for a burning charcoal!" The child walked to the store and asked the man, "Hello Mr. Baker! Mom asked you to give me a burning charcoal!" The man said, "Boy! Where is your pot to carry it with you?" The child said, "We won't need a pot," as he filled his cupped hands with some cold ashes, and explained, "Here! Place the burning charcoal on this. My hands won't hurt." He then took the fire and left for home. Touched by the scene, the baker told his customers, "Look, people! See what great talents are sadly wasted!" So it is, indeed. **This author believes** that most of humankind's gifts, talents, and fine potentials, continue to be wasted away. Sometimes, this happens deliberately, as in wars or such incredible catastrophes as the genocide of the Armenian people, or the Holocaust; but sometimes it may happen simply due to a lack of conditions necessary to nurture such talents and help them flourish. Fortunately, the gifts of our smart little hero were not wasted, as Abu-Ali Sina, better known as **Avicenna**, grew up to become the man who made Iran proud.

God knows that among the countless innocent victims of the catastrophe of Holocaust, there were hundreds of other Einsteins who perished in the hands of the bestial humanoids, **all in the celebrated name of religion, which was meant originally to bring peace and prosperity to people, but instead turned to murdering them.** Thence, I reiterate more firmly that I'm fond of that faith in God which is built upon reason, intellect and conscience. Alas, as it's said in the stories of Aesop the Ethiopian, when the Greek mythological figure Prometheus created humankind by the order of the god of gods Zeus, he mixed the soil not with water but with tears.

An old British navy officer boarded a passenger ship and asked for the captain. "The captain is Michael," they said, "the son of Jonathan, the hero." The officer met with the captain and told him, "I'm an old friend of your father. How is he doing these days?" The captain answered, "My father drowned awhile back along with his ship." The officer exclaimed in shock, "My dear son! You saw your father drown, and yet, you followed the same path and became a captain yourself?" The captain asked, "How did *your* father die?" The officer said, "My father died one night, sleeping in his bed, from a heart attack." Then the captain said with a glimmer in the eye, "And yet you still sleep in the bed?" Ironically, despite having suffered for thousands of years the bitter pains and agonies of religious and sectarian hatred, the world continues to remain religious; and evidently, the more religious are those who wish to make it to heaven by oppressing the others!

Necessity is the mother of invention, albeit only if the ground is there for the growth. Let's do what we can to provide at the least the grounds to bring about the awareness and a better understanding of the realities, and to provide for everybody's necessities. The honorable people aim to help the others, and they do so devoid of all pretensions, because they know that if the lights are on at the neighbor's house, their own path too will be lit bright; but if the neighbor's house is on fire, theirs too shall be aflame.

We were on the mountaintops of Franklin Canyon, where friends frequent for hiking. Through a well-equipped binocular, which I had borrowed from a friend, I looked around me in astonishment. What I saw was an entirely new world, with new birds and new planes, what I couldn't have seen without the hunters' binocular in my hands. I felt somewhat sorry for I couldn't see the realities all around me without such a sophisticated contraption. Lucky are those who can see the realities of their environment without the metaphorical binoculars, and who rise to remedy the shortcomings of the society and resolve the needs of the poor.

I'd like to remind whoever claims to be promoting the religion in our time that our community and our religion were at peace and undivided, because **back in Iran, our religion was not made into a means to make a living, and as it was mentioned before, even the rabbis earned their living from a commercial business.** Far too many sad incidents so far allow us to dare and say that when religion and politics are contaminated with financial interests, sedition ensues. For a proof of the matter, take a quick look around at the world!

Societies make **progress** not only as a result of their merits and natural talents, but also **based on the correct choices that they make.** As **Victor Hugo** said, and I paraphrase, "**An intelligent minds' hell is better than the ignorant mind's heaven.**" Let us listen carefully to the adherents of religion and find out what exactly they are saying; and we'll likely see that not every round object is the proverbial walnut, and not just everybody wearing a hat is a teacher! The late **Chacham Yedidia Shofet** used to sign his name as "**Public Servant, Yedidia.**" Was this due to any salary that he might have received? Was there *any* salary involved? Never! The secret of Chacham Yedidia's loving fame was in his intellectualism and open-mindedness, realistic vision, avoiding the internal affairs of the families, and preserving the spiritual soul of the religion. Although, given the changing times and places, the society today should provide the

best facilities for the qualified rabbis and cantors, but not for whom has made religion a means to a misguided end. To support our wise rabbis is to support the survival of the society.

Let us prevent our children from being played like toys in the hands of some speculators and in the name of religious promulgation. If we don't see the truth of the day and the need to adapt ourselves to our time, it doesn't mean that there are no truths, nor the need to adapt. It's said that **a claim is best proven when it's taken place**. Those who can see things clearly believe that divisions among and within all societies and nations are caused by exploiting religion as a means to power, and by employing it to earn a living through interfering in the privacy of family lives, indoctrinating people with pointless "Dos and Don'ts", even controlling how they may eat things or dress themselves. To examine with fairness this claim of the bright minds, we may already notice millions of people around the world, tens of thousands in our own community, who have become a burden to the governments and the people **by wittingly generated poverty**; and in the meantime, a naïve group continues to say, "There would be no religion without them!"

We better appreciate whom can see the realities without the metaphorical binoculars, those who can understand things left unsaid. For instance, I point out **two of the global leaders of such visionaries, Mr. Bill Gates and Mr. Warren Buffett**, who have so far donated together **more than 70 billion dollars** of their wealth to philanthropic causes. In particular, they've set aside a portion of this sum to realize specifically the extraordinary and valuable idea of vaccinating people in the poorest developing countries, and to raise and maintain the hygienic standards of these peoples. And their donations continue to grow. **The world should be thankful to these two men and bow before their love of humanity**. Their religion has been but their love of humankind and humanity. They are among the honorable men who devoid of a need for exhibitionism have stepped forward to provide for the health of the others and to save their honor. Their love is the kind of love that belongs to whom is bound by his or her own reasonable commands, the kind of love that has arrived to us from the ancient times and continues to spread around the world. My father, may he rest in peace, used to ask my teachers, "Teach my son about love, and only love;" because,

**The day a heart is brushed with a loving look,  
But only that day counts as Life, and nothing more.**

**Want to become a master of your time? Then learn things  
But only in the school of reason, and nowhere else.**

*Norman "Nourollah" Gabay,*

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To receive copies of this and other essays and writings by Norman Gabay in English and Persian, including his book entitled *An Invitation to Reason*, and *The Glossary of the Kashani Jewish Dialect*, please visit the following website: [BabaNouri.com](http://BabaNouri.com).

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