

B"H



***Authentic Kabbalah - Sephardic Studies
Benei Noah Studies -- Anti-Missionary/Anti-Cult Materials***

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A Letter To My Haredi Neighbor

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What I am about to relate you actually happened. Indeed, it happened only moments ago.

It is a nice spring afternoon in Chicago. I have just returned from teaching in the yeshiva. My 3 year old has been waiting all day to go outside with me so that we could have a water gun fight. After we both got a little soaked in the backyard, we decided to join my wife who was sitting in the front of the house along with two of our neighbors and their children.

One of the neighbor's boys saw our water guns and asked to join in the play. His mother adamantly refused saying how she and her husband, a fine young kollel man, strongly object to guns and refuse to let their children play with them. There is enough violence in the world, the neighbor said.

Being politically correct, I politely disagreed with her decision and in a single statement shared my view that we Jews have to learn how to defend ourselves for our own protection.

As I walked away, I realized there were many more words going through my head. I said to myself, I should have shared these views with my neighbor, but I realized that it was not the right time or place. So, I came inside to write this piece. This then is my letter to my Haredi neighbor.

My dear neighbor, you are absolutely right, there is a tremendous amount of violence in our world today. However, do you realize that a good portion of that violence is directed against innocent women like you and against beautiful young children like yours, for the

only reason that you are Jews. Fine Jewish men like your husband become targets of violence simply because of their being a Jew.

Haredim like to put their faith in G-d. Well, so do all religious Jews, whether we are National Zionist or black-hat Haredi. The difference between us is that the black-hat Haredi did not learn from the lessons of the W.W. II Nazi death camps. In wartime Europe all the prayers, faith, and religious observance of the Haredim did not help them or save them.

The ones who survived the camps were the ones who fought to survive. While many of the fighters fought with their prayers, they also fought with their guns! I am sure G-d heard their prayers, that is why the Holy One, blessed them with guns, in order to defend themselves. Unfortunately, this is not a lesson that Haredi ears are willing to hear today.

Today, living in the comforts of Galut (exile), in America, Europe and elsewhere, the Holocaust is ancient history, an event best forgotten, and not remembered. Now, true, if the world has indeed changed for the better, then I too would follow this direction. Yet, with Jews being murdered in Israel almost every day, amongst them Haredim, with international anti-Semitism on the rise, with reports of attacks against Synagogues and individual Jews happening throughout the western world, the time has not yet come to forget the Holocaust.

No, my dear neighbor, as holy and pious as you are, the time has not yet come to put down the gun. On the contrary, we are commanded to teach Torah diligently to our children (Deut. 6:7). One of the commandments of the Torah is to survive and know how to survive. Indeed, there is an entire chapter in the Shulkhan Arukh (Orah Hayim 329) dedicated to the laws of how and when to fight a threatening enemy. I often wonder how many in the yeshivas today skip over that chapter and ignore its teachings.

More and more Jewish people living outside of Israel are being attacked. Here in our own Chicago neighborhood, our neighbors have been shot at and our Synagogues firebombed. Jews have been murdered in the streets of New York, Toronto, and Los Angeles. Their only crime was that they were Jews. I personally know of two occasions when my own students, boys at a local Haredi yeshiva, were mugged on the street, one right in front of the yeshiva itself. The muggers had no weapons other than intimidation. They robbed the boys of more than their money; they robbed them of their pride. The muggers got away with more than money, they got away with knowing that Jews are easy targets who will not fight back to defend themselves.

My dear neighbor, we live in a violent world. Our Torah and our G-d have taken this into account. We have Divinely ordained laws to live by, laws that demand we defend ourselves and know how to defend ourselves. I cannot deny the Torah's teaching. I cannot deny the danger that surrounds all of us Jews on a daily basis. I cannot deny that we all need to provide for our own self-defense.

While it is a right, true and good thing to rely on the police and authorities to protect us, nonetheless, police officers are only human. They cannot be wherever they are needed when they are needed. If only this was the case, we would have no crime. Yet, we do have crime, Jews are very often the victims and there is nothing the police can do other than pick up the pieces after the fact. A lot of good this does to the victim.

My dear neighbor, in my opinion the Torah teaches us not to be victims. We are instead to be victors! In this light, I have trained in the Martial Arts for over 30 years. I may not be as good a fighter as I was in my younger years, but I know I am capable of not only defending my family, I can also defend yours.

You do not have to worry about becoming a victim as long as you are my neighbor. For although you will not fight to defend yourself, I will fight to defend you. Although you will not pick up a gun to protect your family, I will.

I am not afraid of doing the right thing. I am not afraid of violence. I am not afraid to defend you. In addition, my dear neighbor, I know, if the situation were reversed, there would be nothing that you could do to defend me or my family. You would have to act with violence to do that, and you are totally unprepared and incapable of acting in that manner.

While I do not own a gun (handguns are mostly illegal here in Chicago), nonetheless, I have trained to marksman status and know of numerous ways how to disarm a perpetrator. In the event of any anti-Semitism striking our homes, I will run to defend mine and yours. In case you ask me why I am so willing to possibly die for you, the answer is simple: I am a Jew, a Torah faithful Jew. I live by G-d's Torah, and if I need to, I will die for it as well.

My dear neighbor, next time you wish to so boldly proclaim your opposition to guns, remember this, it will be someone like me, with a gun, who will be defending someone like you, without one.

I will raise my son to know these things, so that he too after me, may be a Jewish hero and patriot, as well as being a faithful observer of all the Torah's mitzvot. My son, I pray G-d, will learn Torah and learn Martial Arts. My son I pray will learn to defend the Torah against its enemies and defend fellow Jews against our enemies. There is only one thing that I do not understand. Why, my dear neighbor, are you not educating your children in this same vein?