

BS”D

# **SUCKERPUNCHED!\***

How the Chareidi Community Walked Right Into the Trap Set For It, And How Well-Meaning People Enabled That To Happen

*Or*

How In Two Short Weeks We Went From A Few Kooks\*\* to “The Torah Disrespects Women --It Is Wrong To Have Separate Gym Hours” to ‘How Come There Aren’t Women Models In The Windows Of the New Kenyon Ramot ‘ to an MK Pulling His Bill To Have Chillul Shabbos – Free Electricity

\*1) A *suckerpunch* primarily involves a closed fist contacting the soft underbelly of a person (beneath the rib cage) at a high velocity, causing the ensuing force to press upward on the victim's diaphragm, leading to a sudden expulsion of air from the victim's mouth and lungs. *This opening blow leaves the victim open to various other attacks because of the defenseless nature of the victim.*

2) *A punch that takes someone by surprise, a punch coming from out of the blue.*

3) *When someone punches you and you didn't even know you were fighting.*

*(Urban Dictionary)*

\*\*A person regarded as strange, eccentric, foolish, or insane.

*(dictionary.com)*

**NOTE:**

This essay was written for members of BTYA. Its purpose is not to convince anyone that what I am writing is correct, nor is it meant to change anyone's mind. In fact, Chazal warn us

כשם שמצוה לאמר דבר הנשמע, כך מצוה שלא לאמר דבר שאינו נשמע (יבמות סה ע"ב)

and there is no greater dovor she'aino nishma than an opinion in the present raging controversy which differs from yours. Certainly it is a dovor she'aino nishma to those who are not truth-seekers, whose purpose is to sow controversy and fan the flames and make sure that Israeli society is anything *but* united\*

\*See Caroline Glick's 'Is Israeli Society Unraveling?' in the Jerusalem Post, posted this week, and Moshe Feiglin's גריב בשבוע הבא על מה in Maariv online.

This essay is merely my answer to members of my shul who have asked me my opinion. This is the answer. This is my opinion. That is all it purports to be, nothing more. My opinion, written for the members of BTYA who have asked me for it.

I – The Methodology

II – Clarifying Points

III – Antidote

IV – Answers To 'But.....'

## **I – The Methodology**

When the media in Medinas Yisrael and its cohorts have a target, whether the target is targeted due to ideological reasons (left vs. right... peaceniks vs. settlers) or for religious ones (secular vs. dati... dati vs. chareidi), even if it is not necessarily an enemy per se, just some group that the media and its cohorts have decided to ‘go after’, maybe it’s a slow news season, maybe there is an election in two years and the present ruling party is decidedly Chareidi, the modus operandi in attacking that entity takes on a well – defined behavioral pattern:

A) Wait until some extraordinarily stupid, illegal, unethical, inappropriate, or crass behavior occurs on the part of someone perceived as being a member or members of the group which has been targeted. (e.g. An Arab's olive tree is reportedly cut down by a settler.)

B) Breathlessly report it as the top story of the day, day after day, for about a week, all out of proportion to what else is going on in the world (and without checking too carefully on the veracity of the story, and nary a word concerning the surrounding circumstances which brought it about\* ).

\*E.g. A woman well-known in leftist secular circles gets on a bus designated for ultra-chareidim [who desire to travel with *hafrada* between the sexes], one which travels from chareidi neighborhood to chareidi neighborhood, one set up at the behest of Egged which wants the ultra-chareidi business and does not want that the ultra-Chareidim set up their own private bus lines; this woman had to disregard the regular bus lines which were available to her and closer to her home in order to get onto the Mehadrin bus – leading one to suspect that perhaps there was more than a little bit of intentional provocation on that bus).

C) State again and again and again that this extraordinarily stupid, illegal, unethical, inappropriate or crass behavior is symptomatic of ALL members of the targeted group.

D) Explain, oh so earnestly, as a given, proven, sociological fact that even those members who might not actually partake in the extraordinarily stupid, illegal, unethical, inappropriate, or crass behavior, are nevertheless responsible for it, since they share the same essential values of the perpetrators (*suckerpunch!*).

E) Then, demand that anyone who is perceived by the media and its cohorts and perhaps the unknowing public at large as belonging to the targeted group [which has now been identified as essentially the same group as the perpetrators], publicly and loudly condemn what that person or persons have done. But *that* only has value to the media and its cohorts if the condemnation is done *as members of the targeted group* (which was indeed what was demanded) — there is no interest to have it be condemned by a plain ordinary human being or a plain ordinary Jew, because then the steps following would not be put into play. And besides, once that would be allowed, the condemning becomes superfluous and moot, since no one in their right minds—and I do mean *no one*, including, for example, Eidah HaChareidis—condones the behavior cited.

The victim now seems defenseless (see front cover about the *suckerpunch*): if he does not follow along, ‘Gotcha!’, you agree with what they are doing!! And if he publicly and loudly *does* condemn them *as a member of the targeted group*, he helps perpetrate the fiction that he and those like him are part of that group (the perpetrators), since whoever is NOT part of that group of malefactors is not asked to condemn them (and for obvious reasons — why should anyone not associated with the group have to condemn the deranged behavior of a few kooks? \*) ---thus, *suckerpunched!!!*

F) Now sit back and wait for ‘spokesmen’ of the targeted group to imply that indeed it is correct to categorize them as such (or else they would simply say-- this is not at all relevant to me, why are you coming to me, I feel about this the same way YOU do, why aren’t YOU signing petitions and condemning them? \*)

\*) And if at any point in time this does happen, which it is bound to, although it will already be weeks and months after the original demands which were specifically made on the targeted group, weeks and months after all sorts of implications have been drawn [as will be shown, and as have already occurred], then it is simply a case of trying to tidy up after the damage has already been done — locking the barn door after the horse is gone, or in this case, after you’ve stolen the horse.

And the ‘spokesmen’ say: *Well, you see, there are "good" members of the targeted group, and "bad" members (e.g. good chareidim and bad chareidim; to the Arabs we might say--good Jews (Tel Avivians) and bad Jews (settlers); for the British at the time of the Mandate we say—there are good educated sophisticated Jews (from Western Europe) and uncouth disheveled simple-minded ones (from Eastern Europe)...* And the actions were perpetrated by the "bad" members, but we, the ‘spokesmen’, represent the "good" members.

This foolishly accepts the idea that the aberrant behavior somehow stems from the core values of the entire group—*suckerpunched!*

G) Now, (see front cover: having expelled air from the mouth, the *suckerpunched* is now open to all sorts of other attacks) the media and their cohorts accuse the "good" members of some *other* behavior which they, the "good" members, do do. (What allows this lateral association to what was heretofore perfectly acceptable behavior is the unwitting acceptance of the narrative that this "group", with these “shared values”, is suspect of extreme, deviant behavior, beyond societal norms, and if it isn’t this act which is maybe ‘over-the-line’, nevertheless, now anything the group does which deviates from the majority's behavior, is suspect of being illegal, immoral, or unethical. To wit — well, maybe you don’t spit at little girls, but why do you insist

on Mehadrin buses? And why don't you go to the army? And why do your high school kids not study secular studies? And what is this Kollel thing all about? Why can't you listen to a woman sing? *HOW DARE YOU?!?!?!?!? suckerpunched!!*

THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR THE LAST FEW WEEKS ALL OVER MEDINAS ISRAEL.

And from there, of course, we move on to open season, usually in blogs:

“Why do you (the Chareidim) beat your children? Why do you not care about sexual abuse of children? Why do you maltreat women, terrorize children, and embezzle tzedaka money, live parasitic lives, and price-gouge through unnecessary hechsherim?? Have you stopped beating your wife yet? Have you stopped beating your husband yet?” A line is drawn connecting the original stupid, illegal, unethical, etc. behavior to beating children, and all sorts of abuse, sexual and otherwise, and then to all sorts of weird, deviant behavior.

H) Then, “spokesmen” for the victimized group fall all over themselves to give interviews, write their own blogs, fulminate and pontificate how they can prove – chapter and verse, amud and blatt --- what wonderful people we *really* are, and how we are *really* morally upright citizens, how we *really really* do respect women, and we even take baths also, etc. etc. This unwittingly digs the no – win hole they have stepped into, deeper and deeper ----- to wit, that the targeted group is cut off from larger society, a mutation, abnormal, and thus everything they do should be newly examined for underlying deviant behavior, and they bear the burden of proof that they are normal people. Which is precisely what is happening out there.

*SUCKERPUNCHED!*

*And as surely as Lucy will jerk away that football and Charlie Brown will once again fall on his back, the more we “explain”, the worse it gets... .... As my friend’s father used to say “I can’t understand it. I cut this rope twice and it’s still too short!!”*

## **II—Clarifying Points (in no particular order)**

- ‡ I called the protestors at the Orot school kooks. I do not mean to say they are unaware of what they are doing and should therefore be “understood”. Far from it. If the word ‘thugs’ works for you, ok—thugs. (I happen to suspect that the ones protesting there are hired people, who do this for a living. The real thugs are too cowardly to come out, and are anyway busy smashing windows overnight at Manny’s.)
- ‡ These fellows we see are the same fellows who meet with Ahmadinejad in Iran about Holocaust Denial and What To Do About The State Of Israel. I do not recall anyone asking me to condemn their meetings.
- ‡ Let us say that instead of spitting at the girl the fellow would have violated her. And I would have been asked to condemn his actions. Obviously, I would have thrown the person making the request out of my house. Well, when asked to condemn the kooks, the thugs, I did the equivalent—I said “Sorry, I am not playing the game.” And if I would have publicly condemned them, as I was asked to do, *davka* as a chareidi Rabbi, I would have fallen into the trap I just described, and would have been guilty of abetting all I’ve described.
- ‡ Do I have the essential values of the kooks and share their goals? Well, I am not sure what their values are, but to say that I share their goals is not an embarrassment. To say I share the goal of the Republican Party to elect a Republican President does not at all mean that I tacitly approve the tactic of stealing from the other party’s coffers. To say I share the goals of a greater Eretz Yisrael does not mean I tacitly approve of Rabin’s assassination. To say I share the goal of learning in Kollel does not mean I tacitly approve the tactic

of being fiscally irresponsible towards my family. Those who suggest otherwise, and they are out there (I read a lot), are guilty of sloppy thinking at best, and disingenuous slandering at worst.

- ‡ According to sociological studies, most people LIKE to live in homogeneous communities. True, *some* people (such as myself) like to live in heterogeneous ones. But maybe if I lived in Ramat Beit Shemesh Bet, and were an ultra-Chareidi, I would have a goal that it be homogeneous. That is my democratic right, and is an appropriate goal, until having such a goal becomes unlawful. That does not mean I tacitly approve of unlawful tactics being used. And so there is nothing wrong at all to have that goal. It is sad that this must be said, but apparently it must.
- ‡ Poor 8 year old Naama Margolese. If my child was spat at, I would wipe the spittle off, gently, wipe away her tears, give her a piece of her favorite chocolate, tell her there are bad men in the world, and in 10 minutes it is over. Waiting three months (what's that again? The huge outcry was orchestrated *three months after it happened?* Huh?) to create an overreaction, and having a huge escort to accompany the child to school, and having all sorts of people tracking through her house to visit her as if they're coming for *neechum aveilim*... If this poor kid gets traumatized, I'll tell you why!
- ‡ I really feel for the (frum) bloggers and columnists and weekly newsmagazines, and am *dahn* most of them (not all) *l'kaf zechus* --- they MUST write what everyone is writing about, they MUST fill up a paper, a column, a blog --- and so, they more easily fall into the trap and thus facilitate all I've described. You can't fill up an entire column, certainly not an article with "I have nothing to say, but I do wonder why you are even asking me for a comment. Do you also ask all Jews to condemn Bernard Madoff? How anti-semitic! Do you ask all Italians to condemn Mafia murder? That is racism at its worst!"



- ✦ The fact that Chareidi weekly newsmagazines headline about the “Tensions and Turmoil in the Streets of Beit Shemesh”, and how “A Sleepy City Boils Over” when anyone living there wonders what planet these people are inhabiting, speaks volumes about the sensationalism of the media. An otherwise intelligent Chareidi commentator actually wrote in his blog that *there is an existential threat to Chareidi Jewry in Israel today*”. That just about *defines* hysteria. He also calls for people to protest the violence in Beit Shemesh. I have basically decided that these people are inhabiting some sort of parallel universe where there is a Beit Shemesh which is filled with violence. I inhabit a Beit Shemesh where there is no violence, which is actually quite boring, and where there hasn’t been any violence except for by a few kooks a few months ago. Maybe this coming Chol HaMo’ed I’ll visit that other Beit Shemesh! Sounds exciting!
- ✦ I do believe that at its worst, there is another sad dynamic at work. The Chovohs HaLevavohs writes in Shaar Yichud Hamaaseh that one of the most common urges of men (or women) is that others should like them and approve of them. And he writes how a person should work at losing that urge, and attempt to be guided only by right and wrong (i.e. HaShem’s approval). It is quite possibly a sign of low self-esteem, of self-doubt, if I feel an urge to “explain” that I do not approve of deviant behavior. Perhaps, because I want to be liked, admired, approved of, I feel I *must* “explain” that I, my group, are the *good* chareidim. And I make the mistake of thinking that now I *am* approved of. (This explains a lot of Medinas Yisrael’s *national* stances, and a lot of our personal ones.) If we would be גאה in being chareidi, in total comfort with it, we would feel no thrill in explaining that Chareidim are normal people. ודו"ק כי עמוק הוא זה
- ✦ There is absolutely *no* imposition of Mehadrin standards onto the general public. As explained, the Mehadrin lines are Egged’s invention, to keep the ultra-Chareidi business, to prevent the opening of private bus lines. There are

always alternative lines! And 95% of the people traveling even on these lines understand that at the end of the day, it is public transportation, and there is nothing to do if someone insists on violating the Mehadrin understanding. And yes, there will always be the 5% who are “kana'im”. So deal with it as it should be dealt with, reflective of what it is—5% kana'im. (Throw *them* off the bus, I say.) (I will not even address the absurdity that chareidi Jews are guilty of *hadarat nashim*).

### III – The Solution

(First of all, lose the urge, the need, to be loved. Work on it. Learn Sha'ar Yichud Hamaaseh! As for chillul HaShem, see Part IV).

When asked to comment, the answer should be “You are only asking me what I think because you have, or want to promote, a premise about Chareidim. I reject the very premise, and thus I have nothing to say. I will treat your request for comment as any proud Jew would treat a request to comment about Bernard Madoff, as any proud Italian would treat a request to comment about a Mafia murder. The minute I respond to your request, I've bought into your narrative, and have allowed myself to be *suckerpunched!* Sorry, I am not playing the game! Come to live in RBSA or RBSB for 3 days, and you will see that you are under a terribly wrong misconception, due to sensationalist reporting. I will not perpetuate that by treating it as anything more than what it is — a few kooks, who, instead of visiting Iran to deny the Holocaust, and to plan the dissolution of the State of Israel, have found something else to do. And whoever does not realize this is fooling himself, and has a responsibility to clarify an obvious truth.”

I would add—“Please arrest any perpetrators committing a crime, make a 200-meter, 300, whatever it takes, “order-of-protection”, do whatever you, the police, know what and how to do to maintain the public order and civility (and they know how to do plenty when they want to).”

(As an example of what one should *not* do, very well-meaning people went to a ‘non-violence rally’ which turned out to be an anti-Torah rally led by the new Shinui party and funded by New Israel Fund.)

(By the way, when I was asked if they should go *davka* “as chareidim”; I said they should go *davka* **not** as Chareidim!)

#### IV – But....

- ✦ But what about the chillul HaShem? Can we just allow the masses to think the worst of us? Don’t we need *hasbara*? If you won’t explain, who will?

Sadly, this is a problem, a big one. But step one is to realize that it is not a problem we have created, and so the onus of a solution is not necessarily our responsibility (though it certainly behooves us to implement a solution were we to have one). Let me give a *moshol*: When a person is forced to go to secular court to pursue his monetary claims because the defendant refuses to go to a Bais Din -- all the horrible terrible things it says in Shulchan Aruch about going to secular court, including the great chillul HaShem caused, is still true. Why then does one usually receive permission from the Bais Din to pursue such a course of action in such a case? The answer is that then, the onus of the chillul HaShem caused is not on the person who is going to the courts, though it seemingly would seem that it should be. It is on the *real* cause of the chillul HaShem, on the person who refused to go to a Bais Din! Here, the onus is on the actions of the kooks (thugs) *and also, and perhaps*

*more so, on those who publicized it out of proportion to its significance, and made it into a Chareidi issue! Not on the victims of the suckerpunch!*

Now, certainly if there is something I can do to undermine and to uproot a chillul HaShem, I should do it. That is elementary. But when my opinion has very little chance of reaching the people who think the worst of us (thanks to the media and its cohorts); when it will appear in a venue which is read by like-minded people, making it basically ‘preaching to the choir’ (whoops, wrong religion!); when it will be drowned out in a sea of competing noise; when there is a cacophony of babble out there --- and most of all, when there is at least the very real risk of inviting the consequences of which I have spoken, it would be wise to heed the words of Chazal in *Berachos* 63A: “If you are living in a generation where the words of Torah ( i.e. words of truth) are not cherished, gather them in (as opposed to spreading them out)” ... and Rashi explains: “And do not allow the words of Torah (i.e. of truth) to be left out there, to be humiliated.” ודו"ק

If a Jew kills someone, and some non-Jews in North Carolina or Kentucky choose to believe that this act is representative of all Jews -- and the media is in a full-court press perpetuating that myth, and no less than the heads of Murder Inc. and the Mafia [Talk to the wives of some of those people lecturing religious Jewry, ודי להכימא ברמיזא] giving very impassioned speeches about the sordidness of Judaism — I submit to you that it is the height of foolishness to try to explain otherwise.

It is a bit of American naiveté to think “If we only explain to them the beauty of Torah...” Yeah, and if we only get out of Lebanon, if we only get out of Gaza, if we only give up all territories, then there will be peace. Been there, done that.

The minute I respond to a request to address the issue, so that the ‘public’ can hear what a “moderate chareidi Rabbi” holds, I’ve bought into your narrative, and have allowed myself to be *suckerpunched!* Sorry, I am not

playing.

In closing, we would all do well to emulate Howard Roark, hero of  
THE FOUNTAINHEAD:

*“Mr. Roark, we’re alone here. Why don’t you tell me what you think of me? In any words you wish. No one will hear us.”*

*“But I don’t think of you.”*

– Ellsworth Toohey and Howard Roark, *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand

**THE END**