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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday, November 19, 2021 ~ Parsha: VaYishlach

The Ends Do Not Justify the Means

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

It's been over two weeks since the recent elections. I don't want to offer any commentary or observations on those elections, but I would like to draw your attention to one particular candidate who ran for office, Bridgette Ann Kelly.

As you recall, Bridgette Ann Kelly was at the center of the Bridgegate scandal in 2016. She was convicted on a variety of corruption related charges, had her reputation sullied by this ugly and sordid affair, lost her job, her home, and then had her conviction overturned by the Supreme Court in 2019. She claimed vindication, and tried to resurrect her political career by running for Bergen County Clerk. Surprisingly, she got 45.9 percent of the vote.

My issue with her candidacy was that it was obvious that Ms. Kelly has failed to understand the severity of the crimes that she was convicted of originally. And though the Supreme Court overturned her convictions, their ruling was based on legal technicalities, but the very ruling that overturned her convictions actually confirmed her misdeeds! Their ruling actually confirmed her corruption. Her corruption was simply a crime on the federal level.

I quote to you from the actual decision

“As Kelly’s own lawyer acknowledged, this case involves an “abuse of power.” For no reason other than political payback, Baroni and Kelly used deception to reduce Fort Lee’s access lanes to the George Washington Bridge—and thereby jeopardized the safety of the town’s residents. But not every corrupt act by state or local officials is a federal

crime. Because the scheme here did not aim to obtain money or property, Baroni and Kelly could not have violated the federal-program fraud or wire fraud laws.

We therefore reverse the judgment of the Court of Appeals and remand the case for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.” (*Supreme Court of the United States (May 7, 2020)*). ["KELLY v. UNITED STATES ET AL. CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT No. 18-1059](#)

In other words, they confirmed what she did was wrong, corrupt, and inconsistent with the high office she held. They simply did not believe it was a *federal* crime. It was hardly an exoneration

I think you all get the idea. Now we may laugh at this, but this is no laughing matter. Because the ends do not justify the means. Not in a democracy. Not in a nation or community governed by the rule of law. And certainly not according to the Torah.

We see this truth in the life of Jacob. His lying and cheating, not terribly dissimilar to this case, are what leads to his trouble with his brother. And just as he supplants his older brother in the family hierarchy, Laban deals with him in a similar fashion, replacing Jacob’s beloved Rachel with his older daughter Leah on the night of their wedding. And just so we don’t miss the bitter irony, the Bible uses the same Hebrew word to describe Jacob’s anger at Laban for tricking him as Esau used to his father when Jacob tricked him.

And it didn’t have to be this way. As the poet Walter Scott wrote 200 years ago wrote: “O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!”

Or, as we pray 3 times a day in the *Amidah*, “God keep my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking lies”

Lying, cheating, and stealing may be bring us short term benefits, but will not achieve worthy long-term goals. They instead cause hardship and misery and simply do not reflect the capacity for goodness and morality that all of us are capable of. Jacob,

(and so many others) learned that the hard way. Let us learn from their mistakes, and their suffering.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Arthur Weiner