



The Upcoming Middle East Peace Plan

BY RABBI FRED GUTTMAN

Last fall, I attended a meeting with a dozen other rabbis with Jason Greenblatt. Greenblatt is President Trump's top negotiator concerning the Middle East. Together with Jared Kushner and Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, he is working on a peace plan. The plan is due to be released in February.

Greenblatt is a former Trump Organization lawyer who advises the president on Middle East policy. He is the son of Hungarian Holocaust survivors. He is a graduate of Yeshiva University where he studied English and from the New York University School of Law where he received his law degree.

Greenblatt is the father of six children. His family still lives in New Jersey. He gets on a plane every Monday morning and comes back on Friday. He took a tremendous pay cut in order to accept this present position. He is a very friendly and warm individual.

Very few details of the plan have been released and Greenblatt was quite closemouthed about it. Many have felt that the basis of the plan will be economic development and cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The plan according to Greenblatt is based upon three principles. These are that the plan must be fair, it must be realistic and it must be incremental. In our conversation with him, Greenblatt appealed to the American Jewish community.

He acknowledged that most American Jews dislike the President and many of his policies. He mentioned that in his view, most American Jews do not agree with the President's policy on immigration. He emphasized that his area of interest was quite focused, centering on Israel and the Palestinians.

Greenblatt implied that because of our inherent bias against the President, it will be hard for us as American Jews to fairly analyze the proposed plan. Therefore, he implored us to become people who could actually call "balls and strikes."

I think that there is a lot of merit in what he had to say. Frankly, I am not at all a fan of our current President. However, I am afraid that because of our bias against him, we will have a "knee jerk" reaction to the plan when it is released.

I would urge us all to analyze the plan carefully and to take a few days to do so. I would anticipate that there would be an immediate condemnation of the plan by the Palestinian leadership. In my view, I would be happy to sit back and let the condemnation come from the PA rather than from our leadership.

The bottom line is that we should proceed in a slow and deliberate way when the plan is released and hope that in some measure, it will move the peace process forward.