

# THE READERS SPEAK

## Lotty Stark

Editor:

I was so touched to read Andrea Jacobs' story on Lotty Stark and see the beautiful pictures ("A Denver tale," April 24).

I met Lotty about 30 years ago when her daughter Michele became my neighbor. I listened to Lotty's stories of her youth and how she ultimately arrived in Denver. Lotty loved her husband Walter so much; she always talked about him.

Lotty is beautiful inside and out and it grieves me to know that the last days of her life were so isolated. I knew her dementia was getting worse every time I saw her in the care faculty but she always could relate to something we talked about.

Lotty, you will always be remembered for your stories and beauty.

**KRISTA BOSCOE**  
Denver

Editor's note: We regret to report that Ms. Stark has since died.

## Ted Ruskin

Editor:

Ted Ruskin was a good friend and a wonderful soul (obituary and editorial, April 17). I first [met] him many decades ago affectionately as "Tombstone Ted." His sense of humor was the key that opened so many hearts, mine very much included. Having just tonight learned of his passing was quite the shock to say the least.

As far as I am concerned, my dear friend was murdered by an invisible foe and not only am I deeply sad, but angry that this even could have taken place! Ted should still be alive!

Ted and I had so many great conversations. Of course, he did a lot for the community, but as a human and a good friend for many, he was unique, to say the least! I will miss you, Ted.

**J. BARRY WINTER**  
via [www.ijn.com](http://www.ijn.com)

## Elizabeth Warren

Editor:

I was outraged to read your editorial last week, "Memo to Elizabeth Warren" (April 24), and the words you chose to describe her: "failed Democratic presidential candidate";

"(Warren) would have the nerve to say..."; "who does Warren think are breaking their backs right now"; "giant drug companies whom Warren disparaged"; "Warren has finally had some rational thoughts..."

Is this the same Elizabeth Warren who was recognized as a fearless consumer advocate who has made her life's work the fight for middle class families, and was re-elected to the US Senate for a second term on Nov. 6, 2018?

Is this the same Elizabeth Warren who pledged to work to end lobbying as we know it and make other sweeping changes to eliminate the influence of money in our federal government through the most comprehensive anti-corruption legislation since Watergate?

Is this the same Elizabeth Warren who used her platform to hold some of the nation's largest corporations and most powerful government agencies accountable for fraud, waste and abuse? In the wake of the fake accounts scandal at Wells Fargo, her relentless public pressure led to the resignation of two Wells Fargo CEOs.

Is this the same Elizabeth Warren who proposed and established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, for which she served as the first Special Advisor under President Barack Obama?

Who else failed as a Democratic presidential candidate? I think that it takes great courage to enter the race and prepare to be president.

As for disparaging the drug industry, what do you say about the exorbitant prices that are charged for medicines such as insulin and asthma inhalers? Yes, they are currently "breaking their backs" to develop a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19. What do you think the people of this country will have to pay for this?

Elizabeth Warren was determined to get "Medicare for All" (I would have preferred Medicare for all who want it). I think that our current pandemic proves how desperately our country needs to have all persons insured.

Lastly, I will give you the benefit of the doubt that you may not have known about the death of her oldest brother, this week, caused by COVID-19. If you did know and still chose to print this editorial, you

should be ashamed of yourselves.

**JUDITH G. LAZAR**  
Denver

## Elizabeth Warren

Editor:

The recent attacks on Elizabeth Warren for her attacks on drug companies during her campaign, made me very uncomfortable. I think they are unwarranted.

Drug companies do not spend fortunes to find effective drugs out of the goodness of their hearts. That is their business. They make sure the return on this investment is the highest in the world. It is the philanthropic heads of other types of companies that donate fortunes, that seem more altruistic. Our drug companies do donate drugs to Third World countries and give a few Americans a break on price, and that is admirable.

It is noteworthy, however, that the president, and candidates from both parties, now campaign vigorously on bringing down drug prices as an important component of all campaigns.

This virus has certainly exposed the inequities in the lives of minorities, in a tragic way, in spite of all the bragging about how their lives have been improved. May that finally be addressed!

**EVELYN MENDELSBERG**  
Denver

## This time, equality

Editor:

Thankfully, the catastrophic ethical failures of the medical profession culminating in the Holocaust have given way to the manner in which physicians and healthcare workers are approaching decision making during the COVID 19 crisis.

No longer are the disabled intentionally targeted for killing to lessen the burden on the rest of society. In fact, advocates for the disabled sit at the table, helping to give justice to the system whenever life-saving care needs to be rationed or prioritized.

Our society values the sanctity of the lives of individuals and we understand the physician advocating for his or her patient. Physicians attempt to treat everyone equally nowadays, but face challenges in situations where there are shortages

of space, equipment, medications and personnel.

In such situations, we must turn to medical ethicists, who adhere to four basic principles: personal autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence (first, "do no harm") and justice. "When looking at policies," the first thing you have to commit to is that you won't discriminate," says Arthur Caplan, author of *When Medicine Went Mad*, now professor of bioethics at NYU Langone School of Medicine.

Caregivers think seriously about resources available, but do not resort easily to "rationing," "racializing," or discriminating against those with disabilities, be they physical or intellectual. In decision making, we would hope that everyone agrees that race, religion and wealth should not matter when it comes to providing proper care.

These, however, were not the principles of the Nazi regime, which promoted eugenics, the Aryan master race, and the welfare of the state over the lives of those they devalued. Physicians caring for patients at the bedside today are not donning white coats to make life and death decisions at the head of train tracks or at the entrance to the emergency rooms.

Triage, which may have to be performed in the face of a disaster, is usually not the role of the treating physician. That job should go to an independent group of clinicians who are "blind to the patient's race or religious background and whether they're disabled, homeless or a major hospital donor. The people making the triage decisions should not even have access to that information," says Dr. Matthew Wynia, director of the CU Center for Bioethics and Humanities, who is an advisor to the Colorado Governor's expert emergency epidemic response committee, a team of providers helping finalize guidelines for patient care should medication, critical care equipment and ICU beds be in short supply.

In catastrophic circumstances, doctors should try to save as many lives as possible. But equally important is to protect the country's social fabric and preserve confidence in institutions, which can erode when people feel as if the lives of certain citizens are valued more than oth-

ers.

"We need to be able to look back and say we made those decisions in a way that maintains the trust of the community, that maintains social cohesion, and allows us to heal," Dr. Wynia says.

Factors clinically or ethically irrelevant to the triage process (e.g. race, ethnicity, ability to pay, disability status, national origin, primary language, immigration status, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, HIV status, religion, "VIP" status, or criminal history) should not be used to make Crisis Standards of Care triage decisions.

As Mark Levine, chair of the Lessons Learned group of the Holocaust Genocide contemporary bioethics program in Colorado, elaborated in addressing how the medical profession approached the Holocaust in contrast to the present response to the COVID crisis: "Both were social responses based in fear of perceived existential threat. The response to COVID-19 must be reasoned, inclusive across society and collaborative. The Nazi approach was obviously quite different; exclusionary and based on emotion and irrational ideology."

The mistakes and shortcomings of medicine during the Holocaust should inform our decision-making in medical ethics during today's pandemic. May we merit pursuing a principle of Jewish law in science and humanity, that of *pikuach nefesh*, "saving a life." The preservation of human life overrides virtually any other rule.

Today's pandemic is a crisis of a virulent virus, but not a Holocaust of man's own making. We do have choice in how to respond individually, as a community, as a country, and as a global society. We are not being dictated to by an authoritarian tyrant bent on genocide, but we must not make the mistake again of perverting science to promote an ideology.

**WILLIAM SILVERS, MD**  
**JERRY KOPELMAN, MD**  
**JERRY LAZARUS, MD**  
**TODD SILER, PHD**  
**ED GOLDSON, MD**  
**HELEN MORRIS, MD**  
**MARK LEVINE, MD**

*Lessons Learned of the Holocaust Genocide Contemporary Bioethics Program at CU Center for Bioethics and Humanities.*

# TORAH WITH RABBI SACKS

## Acharei Mot-Kedoshim: The ethic of holiness

**K**edoshim contains the two great love commands of the Torah. The first is, "Love your neighbour as yourself. I am the L-rd" (Lev. 19:18). Rabbi Akiva called this "the great principle of the Torah." The second is no less challenging: "The stranger living among you must be treated as your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were strangers in Egypt. I am the L-rd your G-d" (Lev. 19:34).

These are extraordinary commands. Many civilisations contain variants of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you," or in the negative form attributed to Hillel (sometimes called the Silver Rule), "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary; go and learn."<sup>1</sup>

But these are rules of reciprocity, not love. We observe them because bad things will happen to us if we don't. They are the basic ground-rules of life in a group.

Love is something altogether different and more demanding. That makes these two commandments a revolution in the moral life.

Judaism was the first civilisation to put love at the heart of morality. As Harry Redner puts it in *Ethical Life*, "Morality is the ethic of love. The initial and most basic principle of morality is clearly stated in the Torah: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He adds: "The biblical love of one's neighbour' is a very special form of love, a unique development of the Judaic religion and unlike any to be encountered outside it."<sup>2</sup>

Much has been written about these commands. Who exactly is meant by "your neighbour"? Who by "the stranger"? And what is it to love someone else as oneself?

I want to ask a different question. *Why is it specifically here, in Kedoshim, in a chapter dedicated to the concept of holiness, that the command appears?*

Nowhere else in all Tanach are we commanded to love our neighbour. And only in one other place (Deut. 10:19) are we commanded to love the stranger. (The Sages famously said that the Torah commands us 36 times to love the stranger, but that is not quite accurate. Thirty-four of those commands

have to do with not oppressing or afflicting the stranger and making sure that he or she has the same legal rights as the native born. These are commands of justice rather than love).

And why does the command to love your neighbour as yourself appear in a chapter containing such laws as, "Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material?"

These are *chukim*, decrees, usually thought of as commands that have no reason, at any rate none that we can understand.

What have they to do with the self-evidently moral commands of the love of neighbour and stranger? Is the chapter simply an assemblage of disconnected commands, or is there a single unifying strand to it?



**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

The answer goes deep. Almost every ethical system ever devised has sought to reduce the moral life to a single principle or perspective. Some connect it to reason, others to emotion, yet others to consequences: do whatever creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Judaism is different. It is more complex and subtle. It contains not one perspective but three. There is the prophetic understanding of morality, the priestly perspective and the wisdom point of view.

### The Prophetic Voice

**P**rophetic morality looks at the quality of relationships within a society, between us and G-d and between us and our fellow humans. Here are some of the key texts that define this morality.

G-d says about Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the L-rd by doing what is right [*tzedakah*] and just [*mishpat*]."<sup>3</sup>

G-d tells Hosea, "I will betroth you to Me in righteousness [*tzedek*] and justice [*mishpat*], in kindness

[*chesed*] and compassion [*rachamim*]."<sup>4</sup>

He tells Jeremiah, "I am the L-rd, who exercises kindness [*chesed*], justice [*mishpat*] and righteousness [*tzedakah*] on earth, for in these I delight, declares the L-rd."<sup>5</sup>

Those are the key prophetic words: righteousness, justice, kindness and compassion — not love.

When the Prophets talk about love, it is about G-d's love for Israel and the love we should show for G-d.

With only three exceptions, they do not speak about love in a moral context, that is, vis-à-vis our relationships with one another.

The exceptions are Amos' remark, "Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts" (Amos 5:15); Micah's famous statement, "Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your G-d" (Mic. 6:8) and Zechariah's "Therefore love truth and peace" (Zech. 8:19). Note that all three are about loving abstractions — good, mercy and truth. They are not about

**SACKS**

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