

Healing our injured world, one broken leg at a time



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There are those, that I cannot countenance, who exclude supporting people outside the community
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LAST FRIDAY afternoon my youngest daughter broke her leg. I was passionate about her before this but had never really stopped to appreciate her life. Nor had I considered what she might be thinking or feeling other than for fleeting moments.

Now, with the pain and itchiness that she and I faced for the first time in our lives, thoughts of ingenious scratching implements and scissors to liberate my daughter from her plaster cast dominated my mind. I wanted to free my daughter.

Thoughts of liberating others were in my head before Friday, in fact, since the first live bullets from the rifles of dictator's soldiers volleyed into the bodies of their brothers and sisters: protestors.

It is at times like these that my radar focuses on the morally repugnant, feels sympathy with the victims and desires to protect and liberate them as if they were my own. The psychoanalysts amongst you might have a field day, as I have a sneaky suspicion that this all stems from me internalising the story heard every year from childhood and recalled in every worship service, of our own people and holding freedom as a sacred gift.

At least on one occasion I did not even have to replace the word 'Egypt.' If I celebrate the freedom of my ancient Israelite ancestors from Egypt as a cornerstone to my existence, why would I not shout loud when I see others still shackled? But then I

find myself counter to my liberal values and certainly uttering currently non-PC thoughts when it comes to the desire to intervene and to bring freedom to the lives of the fettered.

When intervening in Iraq, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and again in Iraq in the last 15 years, our media focused on those who opposed the war. The Stop the War Coalition made headlines on numerous occasions and quite rightly so, with 750,000 to two million people joining the pre-Iraq invasion demonstrations.

It was noisy and widespread. My definition of the latter being a handful of protestors occasionally setting-up shop at Northwood tube station (not noted for its radicalism) so to me that is widespread!

Yet who wrote at length about those who cheered and approved of intervention? Were they not there or did they not shout loudly enough?

It seems that, as I write, William Hague also has the same feelings as me, a desire to act to save lives, this time in Libya with a bungled attempt to speak with opposition leaders. Or was it to save British interests other than morals?

It truly is a difficult one. I could cite countless Jewish texts that would urge one to intercede to help the oppressed. And yet I could also give countless others that support an opposing view, of restraint without full knowledge of the situation and poten-

tial outcomes. Additionally, there are those – that I cannot countenance – who would particularise to exclude support of the oppressed outside of the Jewish community.

It is nigh on impossible for the vast majority of us to be activists to the extent that we might seriously enrol ourselves for affirmative action to back up our cause.

The reality is that our actions do not affect on the global level. I must watch the narrative of Libya unfold, write letters, sign petitions and pray.

Yet there are actions to be made close to home to support the oppressed and fearful: a *mifgasb* – encounter – between survivors of the Shoah and survivors of civil war and tribal hatred in Africa reveals why. And a project to help integration of mothers by learning English; a school visit to confront and confound racism and xenophobia; a mentoring system for fatherless Somali boys.

Plainly there are times to personally intervene and to abstain. I trust in the efficacy of doctors putting my daughter's leg in a cast. No matter my desire to intervene to give short-term relief, I know it would cause long-term damage.

Globally we can certainly make our voice heard. Even if we might not affect immediate change in the course of a conflict we might affect future strategic planning.

Yet when we know there are those who live in fear on our doorsteps, will we honour the narrative of our ancestors?