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The Blogs
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Featured Post

A neighbor on the ground: Renee Good's death by design

Tragedy was the predictable outcome of a system built to prioritize intimidation over judgment, speed over restraint, and obedience over accountability

This week in Israel was a reminder of how quickly a society can slide from tension into tragedy. Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Israelis poured into the streets to protest military conscription for the Haredim. The demonstrations turned unruly, then violent, and ended with a 14-year-old boy dead after a bus drove into a crowd of protestors. An investigation is underway. Facts are still emerging. The country is once again forced to confront how combustible politics become when crowds, power, and fear collide.

And in Gaza, amid all of this, efforts are continuing to locate the remains of the final fallen hostage, Ron Gveli. For his family, the wait itself has become a form of suspended grief – a reminder that behind every geopolitical headline is a life, and a loss, that does not resolve on a timetable or conform to anyone else's need to move on.

Which brings me to Minneapolis. Not as a comparison, and certainly not as a moral equivalence, but as a warning drawn from a different democracy under strain.

Because while this week's American horror is not Israeli or Jewish in nature, the underlying pattern is painfully familiar. Rushed judgments. Weaponized narratives. Power deployed before facts. A state too eager to justify itself rather than restrain itself. Different uniforms. Different streets. The same dangerous rhythm.

The woman fatally shot by an ICE agent was Renee Nicole Good. She was 37 years old. A mother. A United States citizen. Her own mother, Donna Ganger, described her as one of the kindest people she had ever known. Extremely compassionate. Someone who had taken care of people all her life. Loving,

forgiving, affectionate. An amazing human being. These are not sentimental embellishments offered to soften a headline. They are facts about a life that now has to be explained away.

Before the investigation began, before witnesses were interviewed, before the basic facts had even finished forming, Renee Good's death had already been tried, sentenced, and explained away live and online in real time. Welcome to America's most efficient justice system: trial by social media.

Here, speed is mistaken for clarity. Outrage substitutes for evidence. Anyone who pauses to ask what actually happened is accused of bad faith. Algorithms reward certainty and outrage, not caution, and outrage travels faster than truth. Once a narrative hardens, facts are treated as an inconvenience at best and as treason at worst.

What followed was grotesquely familiar. Political leaders rushed not to express humility or restraint, but to control the story. Renee Good was recontextualized. Her killing was pre-rationalized. Responsibility dissolved into a fog of law-and-order boilerplate. This is not governing. It is gaslighting the dead.

It is also true that none of this unfolded in a vacuum. The immigration system ICE now enforces was left profoundly broken, incoherent, and politically paralyzed long before the current administration weaponized it. Years of drift, denial, and abdication created a vacuum that invited decisive action dressed up as competence. Cleaning up a mess, however, does not excuse how the cleanup is done. Inherited chaos is precisely when restraint matters most, because speed without judgment turns governance into force, and force into tragedy.

And this is the part we have to say plainly, even if it makes people uncomfortable. What happened in Minneapolis was not a tragic anomaly. It was the predictable outcome of a system built to prioritize intimidation over judgment, speed over restraint, and obedience over accountability. When an organization adopts Gestapo-like tactics, operates with insufficient training, deploys agents into civilian spaces as shock troops rather than peacekeepers, and cultivates a culture that treats communities as hostile territory, tragedy stops being accidental. It becomes inevitable. Not because any individual woke up intending to kill a neighbor, but because the system rewards speed, force, and compliance, and punishes hesitation, judgment, and restraint.

The subtext is unmistakable. Some deaths count less. Some lives are provisional. Some victims deserve suspicion more than sympathy. That is not

moral clarity. It is moral rot. And when institutions rot this way, excuses start to align. Justifications repeat. Force finds its rhythm.

Familiar music
That sound is older than this week, older than Minneapolis, and it has been set to music before.

In 1970, four students were shot dead at Kent State University for demonstrating peacefully against the Vietnam War. Officials cited confusion, danger, disorder. They always do. What shattered the country was not only the deaths. It was the realization that the state had turned its weapons inward and expected applause for doing so.

Neil Young didn't write a protest song so much as an autopsy. "Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'. We're finally on our own." Strip away the year and the names and what remains is the moment when authority stops listening and starts advancing, armored and impatient, convinced it no longer owes the public an explanation.

"This summer I hear the drummin'." That drumbeat is no longer metaphor. It is the sound of escalation becoming policy. Protest becomes disorder. Disorder becomes threat. Threat becomes justification. And justification arrives faster than any investigation ever could.

Young's most devastating line was never political. It was personal. "What if you knew her and found her dead on the ground?" That question is not rhetorical. It is the line that separates abstraction from consequence, ideology from blood on the pavement.

Minneapolis answered it in real time. As officials urged calm, a witness cut through the noise with a sentence no spin doctor could sanitize: "How can I relax? You just killed my neighbor." That neighbor had a name. Renee Nicole Good.

Kent State was not a mistake. Minneapolis is not a mystery. They are moments when systems reveal themselves, when authority outruns restraint and expects the public to accept the outcome as order.

What makes this moment especially dangerous is not just rhetoric. It is structure. We are watching the normalization of poorly trained, lightly supervised, ideologically primed enforcement units operating in civilian

spaces under the pretense of protection. Call them task forces. Call them contractors. Call them federal partners. History has a simpler word. Militia.

When force is unleashed without transparency, local legitimacy, or accountability, the outcome is not safety; it is escalation, fear, and eventually, blood. This is not a failure of foresight. It is a design flaw.

So what do we do? If the answer is shrugging, we already know where this goes. If the answer is picking sides faster, we make it worse. The way out is harder and unfashionable. Slow the narrative. Justice takes time. Demand accountability, not slogans. Insist on rules, restraint, and responsibility before force is deployed, not after.

We know this story because we have lived it, as citizens, as neighbors, as societies that understand how quickly fear can be mistaken for strength. When power asks for calm before it accounts for what it has done, something essential has already broken. Democracies do not fail when people argue. They fail when people are told to relax while someone else's body is still on the ground.

The obligation is not to look away or move on. It is to insist, again and again, that no system gets to advance until the neighbors are counted.

"How can you run when you know?"

About the Author: Brad Goverman is the editor/creator of the weekly Substack The Jew News Review, which provides a summary of news relevant to the broader Jewish community along with his sometimes smarmy commentary. He is also a Zayde for 4 beautiful grandchildren and one grand dog and belongs to Temple Sinai in Sharon.