

Evil's Innocent Accomplices (Matot-Masai)

*"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." –
Edmund Burke*

Some time ago, I was drafted by the Israeli Police to assist in an international manhunt. It was not something I had ever expected, and the circumstances surrounding the case were both distressing and personally unsettling. A close confidant expressed concern that I might be getting pulled too deeply into a web that had little to do with me, and that the emotional and ethical costs might be too high.

Yet, not long afterward, that same person encouraged me to stay involved. He reminded me of the famous quote by Edmund Burke: *"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."*

That line stayed with me. I later came across a powerful expansion of the same idea in Ayn Rand's *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*:

"The spread of evil is the symptom of a vacuum. Whenever evil wins, it is only by default: by the moral failure of those who evade the fact that there can be no compromise on basic principles."

In other words, evil does not need to be stronger, more organized, or more persuasive to succeed. It simply needs enough people, people who know better, to stay quiet. To look away. To rationalize or disengage.

Jewish tradition is not silent on this matter either. Rabbi Ovadia Sforno makes a striking comment on a much quieter and more domestic issue: the silence of a husband when his wife makes a vow, as described in Numbers 30:15.

"If her husband shall be silent about her from day to day, he will have let stand all her vows; or all the prohibitions that are upon her, he will have let them stand, for he was silent about her on the day of his hearing."

Sforno writes:

"Silence by the one who can protest is like agreement, for the one who is silent is as if he agreed with the act."

This verse is not about crime or violence, but about household dynamics and religious commitments. And yet, Sforno sees something deeper. When someone has the ability and responsibility to object, their silence is not neutral. It becomes complicity.

Silence may be golden, but not always. There are moments in life, whether personal, communal, or even global, when silence becomes a kind of crime. The one who stays silent is not without blame, and the one who suffers is not forgotten.

May we always have the wisdom to know when to speak, when to stand up, and when to refuse to be the innocent accomplices of evil.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To my wonderful employer of the last eight years, Parts Authority. Thank you!

And to my new gig with Nexus Automotive International. You can see the announcement here: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7351151229068111872/>