

DECEMBER 7, 2009

## Parashat Vayeshev

### True Colors

**Velo yachlu dabro leshalom – “and they could not speak peaceably about him” (Genesis 37:4)**

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Witnessing the favoritism that Jacob displayed for Joseph, the other brothers grew increasingly angry at Joseph’s ostentatious flaunting and his indifference to their feelings. After Joseph began relating his dreams of glory and domination to his brothers, they not only hated Joseph, but they also “could not speak peacefully to him.” Surprisingly, Rashi (on verse 4) derives a positive lesson from this description of the brothers’ animosity. “From their negative [attribute] we learn their praise; that they could not act duplicitously towards him [Joseph].” Although the brothers’ hatred led them to act in a tragic and destructive manner, they nevertheless remained honest and forthcoming about their feelings towards Joseph.

The honest nature of Joseph’s brothers prevented them from concealing their animosity and foreshadowed their destructive behavior. Today, despite Iran’s clearly deceptive actions, the Islamic Republic is also unable to conceal its hostility as it pursues its own destructive behavior.

Recently, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that Iran would begin enriching uranium at a higher level than ever before, the Associated Press reported. “The Iranian nation will produce 20% enriched uranium and anything it needs (itself),” Ahmadinejad said. His remarks followed an announcement that Iran will build ten more uranium enrichment sites around the country. Two days before that announcement, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) censured Iran for covertly building an enrichment plant on a Revolutionary Guard base near the city of Qom. Iran has refused to comply with a demand by the IAEA to cease work on the Qom enrichment plant.

The announcement drew immediate condemnation from the White House, which hoped Iran’s defiant tone would help persuade Russia and China that imposing harsh sanctions was justified. Both countries, historically opposed to sanctions, voted in favor of an IAEA resolution demanding that Iran stop work on the enrichment plant in Qom. By refusing to accept that resolution, one senior administration official said, “Ahmadinejad may be doing more to assemble a sanctions coalition than we could do in months of work.” For more on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

Jacob’s failure to see the danger of his sons’ hatred for Joseph brought him years of misery and heartbreak. Now that Iran has revealed its true colors to the world, the international community must not make the same mistake, lest they receive the same results. ■

### No Time to Lose

**Hayeled einenu va’ani ana ani ba – “The child is not; and as for me, where shall I go?” (Genesis 37:30)**

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After Joseph’s brothers sold him to a band of merchants heading towards Egypt we read that Reuben returned to the pit and discovered that, “behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes.” Where was Reuben? Why was he returning only now? The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah Chapter 84) explains that after the brothers threw Joseph into the pit, Reuben withdrew and hid in the mountains, “so that he would be able to descend during the nighttime, withdraw Joseph from the pit [and return him home].” Yet, Reuben sadly learned that he waited too long and should have

protected Joseph from the beginning. When Reuben returned he discovered that Joseph was already gone, leaving nothing left to do but cover up the crime.

By the time that Reuben was ready to implement his plan to save Joseph it was already too late. We must understand the lesson of Reuben's example, appreciate the urgency of the moment and act now to ensure overwhelming bipartisan support for the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act.

The House of Representatives is likely to vote on the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanction Act (H.R. 2194) before departing for their December break. The legislation contains sanctions curtailing Iran's ability to import and produce refined petroleum, measures which could be implemented if Iran rejects U.S. overtures and continues to enrich uranium in defiance of five United Nations Security Council resolutions. It is vital that the bill pass with overwhelming bipartisan support in order to demonstrate that the United States is serious about stopping Iran's enrichment of uranium.

With time being of the essence, each of us can make an impact. Every one of us should contact our member of Congress and urge him or her to support this bill. If we do so, the resulting broad bipartisan support will send the powerful message that the United States will not accept Iran's continued uranium enrichment. For more on the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act and how to contact Congress, click [here](#).

Reuben thought he waited for the right moment to act, not realizing that by waiting he lost the opportunity to save his brother. Consequently, Reuben lived the rest of his life knowing that his inaction caused irreparable damage to his family. If we act now to support sanctions on Iran, we can save the world from making the same mistake. ■

## One Side of the Story

### **Shvi almanah beit avich – “Remain a widow in your father's house” (Genesis 38:11)**

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Tamar married Judah's eldest son Er, who immediately suffered a tragic, sudden death. Er's brother Onan then married Tamar and suffered the same fate. The Torah records that the two brothers died due to their own sins, stating that they were “evil in the eyes of God,” (38:7 and 38:10). Tamar then sought to marry Er and Onan's brother. Yet, instead of allowing his third son, Shelah, to marry Tamar and carry on his sons' names, Judah instructed Tamar to return home and wait for him to call for her, “for he said: ‘Lest he also die, like his brothers’” (38:11). The Talmud (Yevamot 64b) explains that Judah mistakenly assumed that Tamar was responsible for the deaths of Er and Onan. Judah was unable to see the full situation, so he blamed Tamar for his sons' deaths. Yet, it was Judah's one-sided perspective – blaming Tamar and closing his eyes to his sons' actions – that led to even greater trouble later on.

Judah's one-sided perspective caused him to misjudge Tamar's true nature. In modern times, the government of Sweden has also chosen to take a one-sided perspective which reflects a bias in its view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sweden, which is currently serving as President of the European Union, has taken steps that betray a one-sided attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC), the Swedish Bar Association and the International Bar Association recently awarded the Stockholm Human Rights Award to Judge Richard Goldstone, the author of the notoriously biased Goldstone Report. In addition, Sweden released a draft resolution recommending the division of Jerusalem and the recognition of East Jerusalem as the capitol of Palestine, the Israeli newspaper Yediot Achronot reported. An Israeli official said that, “the Swedes are just indulging in polemics. This formula only talks about the Palestinian capital, without any call to recognize west Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.”

Like Judah, who could not see his own sons' shortcoming and instead blamed Tamar for their deaths, the government of Sweden seems unable to see both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Until Sweden can take a more balanced approach, its solutions will suffer the same fate as those of Judah and only serve to obfuscate the situation. ■

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