

JUNE 7, 2010

Parashat Korach

The Morning Has Come

Boker v'yoda Hashem et asher lo – “In the morning the Lord will show who are His” (Numbers 16:5)

Korach, having accused Moses and Aaron of selfishly using their power at the nation's expense, assembled a group to rise up against their leadership. Instead of resolving the conflict immediately, Moses waited until the following morning to respond. Why did Moses wait? Rashi explains that to prevent the rebels' severe punishment, Moses “intended to give them time [so they would contemplate their actions]; Perhaps they would [realize their destructive behavior and] repent.”

Moses waited until the morning in the hope that Korach would relent without the need for punitive measures. Similarly today, the international community has given Iran ample time to relent and abandon its uranium enrichment. Now, further sanctions are necessary to convince Tehran to give up its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In 2002, an exile group of Iranians exposed Iran's nearly twenty-year secret nuclear weapons program. Over the course of the past seven years, the United States has led the international effort to halt Tehran's uranium enrichment program and other activities that could lead to a nuclear weapon. During this period the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council passed five resolutions calling on Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program. Iran's rejection of U.S. and international engagement efforts, combined with its defiance of earlier Security Council resolutions, is a clear sign to the world that it will not abandon its nuclear pursuits without strong coercion from the international community, and leaves the world no choice but to impose biting new sanctions on Tehran.

As such, the co-chairs of the Congressional conference committee on new Iran sanctions, Senate Banking Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA), have set a timetable for final passage of additional sanctions on the Islamic Republic. The co-chairs, have stated that they intend to pass tough, comprehensive Iran sanctions legislation in June to reinforce the Obama Administration's efforts to obtain approval of a new U.N. Security Council resolution prior to the June 16 European Foreign Ministers meeting, which could lead to a European Union action on Iran. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

While Moses delayed his confrontation with Korach in the hopes that Korach would realize the error of his ways, when the morning came, Moses had no choice but to act. The morning has come for Iran, and the world must impose biting sanctions that represent the best hope for peacefully ending Iran's nuclear weapons program. ■

Rising to the Occasion

V'yakam Moshe vayeilech... – “And Moses rose and went...” (Numbers 16:25)

Rashi states that when Moses received the instruction to separate himself from Korach and his followers, he ignored the command and instead “rose up” to speak with Dathan and Abiram, hoping that they would show contrition and save themselves from punishment. What does the Torah mean when it states that Moses rose up? Ohr Hachayyim suggests that Moses did not literally move, but rather that he symbolically extended himself to those who threatened his leadership. By “lowering himself to those who had assailed him,” Moses followed the course he felt held the best

hope for resolving the conflict.

In modern times, Israel has been following Moses' example by extending itself to the Palestinians—taking bold steps to boost the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Over the course of the past year, the Israeli government has taken a series of steps to ease Palestinian movement in the West Bank and facilitate humanitarian assistance there. Since September 2009, Israel has removed more than 210 roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank and recently announced that it will soon bolster these measures by removing an additional 60 roadblocks and allowing greater access on several key Palestinian roads. In addition, Israel is working closely with the United States and the Palestinian Authority to enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of security forces in the West Bank. Improved security and greater access has led to a doubling in foreign investment in West Bank infrastructure, creating jobs and improving living conditions. Moreover, the West Bank's gross domestic product grew last year by more than nine percent and the stock market's Al-Quds Index increased by nearly 12 percent. For more on Israeli measures to boost the West Bank economy, click [here](#).

By extending himself to Dathan and Abiram, Moses worked to resolve their conflict and avert unneeded suffering. Today, Israel's efforts to mimic this strategy are providing a vital boost to the Palestinians of the West Bank. ■

Aaron's Shield

V'ya'amod bein hameitim u'vein hachayim – “And he stood between the dead and the living” (Numbers 17:13)

Watching the angel of death rain a terrible plague upon the people, Moses sent Aaron into action—instructing him to offer incense which would halt the affliction. The striking imagery highlights the apparent significance of Aaron's location. Why did it matter where Aaron stood? Rashi (on 17:17; quoting Midrash Tanchuma) suggests that Aaron literally placed himself as a barrier to prevent the plague from spreading: Aaron “grabbed the angel and [literally] held him against his will.” According to S'forno, the plague did not kill at once, but rather it weakened and sickened the people, gradually killing them. Therefore, Aaron stood his ground not only to prevent further spread of the plague, but to “defend the sick that they not perish.”

By acting as a shield against the approaching plague, Aaron demonstrated his leadership and saved many lives in the process. Conversely, the recently concluded Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference served as a shield for nuclear proliferators in the Middle East and could ultimately put millions of people at risk.

The faulty final document coming out of the United Nations' recently completed month-long NPT Review Conference failed to address the key nuclear proliferation threat facing the Middle East and the world: Iran. In fact, the document does not include any mention of Iranian or Syrian violations of their treaty obligations, but instead singles out Israel and calls on the United Nations to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. While Israel has supported such a zone once it has reached a durable comprehensive peace with all its neighbors, calling for such a conference now to be held under such auspices hardly seems viable. Iran continues to threaten to destroy Israel, most Middle Eastern countries are still in an official state of war with the Jewish state and the Palestinians remain deeply divided over making peace with Israel. A conference held under such conditions would only serve as another international forum to ostracize Israel.

The United States commendably “deplored” the singling out of Israel and expressed serious reservations about the 2012 conference, but nevertheless chose not to break the consensus in approving the final document. Now, the United States must ensure that any international conference on the creation of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction be held only if appropriate preconditions exist. For more on the NPT Review Conference, click [here](#).

The United States must learn from Aaron's actions and act as a shield—however, rather than protecting the Israelites from the spread of the plague, the U.S. must act as a shield by ensuring that any international conference seeking the creation of a Middle East zone free of weapons mass destruction be held only once the necessary precondition of true regional peace has been met. ■

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