

DECEMBER 6, 2010

Parashat Vayigash

Broken Silence

Then Joseph could not refrain himself (Genesis 45:1)

ולא יכל יוסף להתאפק (בראשית מה:א)

What prompted Joseph to reveal his true identity to his brothers? According to a simple reading of the text, Joseph was overcome by Judah's willingness to sacrifice himself for Benjamin's sake (see 44:33). Yet, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah Chapter 93) sees Joseph's actions as an urgent attempt to save the world: "Said Judah to Naphtali, 'Go see how many markets there are in Egypt'. He jumped out, returned and told him, 'Twelve.' Said Judah to his brothers, 'I will destroy three and you destroy one each and we shall not leave [alive] a single person.' His brothers told him, 'Judah, Egypt is not like Shechem—for if you destroy Egypt, you destroy the entire world.' At that moment, Joseph could not refrain himself [from revealing his identity], as he saw that they agreed to destroy the world."

Joseph revealed himself because he realized that his brothers' actions could bring devastating consequences to the world. Recently, the international community discovered that Arab nations long ago reached the same conclusion about Iran. Like Joseph, they too could not remain silent in the face of a growing threat.

Newly leaked U.S. diplomatic cables detail the serious concern that Arab leaders are feeling about Iran, [The New York Times](#) reports. According to the documents, Egyptian assistant to the minister of defense, Maj. Gen. Mohammed al-Assar, and Yemenese President Ali Abdullah Saleh spoke to their American contacts about Tehran's growing influence throughout the Middle East. "Egypt views Iran as a threat to the region," al-Assar said. Saleh added that Tehran "wants to restore the Persian Empire." Fears about Iran's nuclear program were also disclosed. "That program must be stopped," said King Hamad of Bahrain. "The danger of letting it go on is greater than the danger of stopping it." The cables—among hundreds of thousands that were leaked—highlight the region's desire for increased U.S. pressure to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear weapons. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/iran.

Joseph disclosed his identity when he realized the grave danger that his continued silence presented to the world. The recently leaked cables demonstrate that Arab leaders have long been following Joseph's example, encouraging the United States to help prevent the threat of a radical Islamic regime armed with nuclear weapons. ■

Israel's Wisdom Benefiting America

And it was good in the eyes of Pharaoh (Genesis 45:16)

וייטב בעיני פרעה (בראשית מה:טז)

Why were the Egyptians happy to learn that Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt? According to Netziv, the people of Egypt saw great potential for their country: "It seems that they [the Egyptians] concluded that without a doubt the [brothers] were similar in wisdom, either a little or a lot, to Joseph, and that they would bring success to their country with wisdom, just as Joseph had" (see Ha'amek Davar on 45:16). Thus, the Egyptians looked forward to welcoming Joseph's brothers—anticipating further growth and benefits from the contributions that his brothers could bring.

Like the ancient Egyptians, whose support for Joseph's family brought tangible benefits to their country, the United States reaps great benefits from its relationship with Israel—gaining from Israel's wisdom, skill and technological advances, especially in the area of homeland security.

Israel works with the U.S. government and private entities to develop technologies and equipment aimed at thwarting terrorism and safeguarding citizens of both nations. One example of this collaboration is the U.S.-Israeli agreement to increase aviation security cooperation, whereby the two allies will conduct drills reviewing procedures in case of attacks and share codes that send immediate alerts if passengers try to commit acts of terror. Another example is Israel welcoming American observers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Guard to participate in Israeli homeland security drills. Furthermore, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection has been operating Israeli-designed unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles along the U.S. border with Mexico as part of the Arizona Border Coordination Initiative. Finally, Verint, an American company with extensive operations in Israel, has developed a security system that is being used to protect New York area airports. For more on U.S.-Israel defense and homeland security cooperation, click [here](#).

Forced to defend itself against constant terrorist threats, the Jewish state has become a leader in designing homeland security strategies and technologies. Israel is happy to share its wisdom in these areas with the United States, helping to better protect the American people. Much like the Egyptians who saw the benefits of the arrival of Joseph's brothers, Americans today feel secure in their strategic partnership with Israel. ■

End the Incitement

See that you do not fall out by the way (Genesis 45:24)

אל תרגזו בדרך (בראשית מז:כד)

What is the nature of the ambiguous message that Joseph conveyed to his brothers as they prepared to return to Canaan? Radak (on 45:24) explains Joseph's parting words as a call for cooperation: "Do not argue with each other about my sale saying [to each other], 'You caused the sale of our brother.'" Therefore, through his message Joseph encouraged his brothers to abstain from their accusations—instead of blaming each other for their own negative behavior—which would only lead to conflict.

Because Joseph knew that continually blaming each other would only drive his brothers apart, he cautioned them to refrain from inciting one another. The world must continue to demand that the Palestinian Authority (PA) follow a similar course by abandoning its incitement and systematic efforts to delegitimize Israel.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley recently condemned claims by a senior Palestinian official that the Temple Mount holds no significance for Jews, [Ha'aretz](#) reports. Al-Mutawakil Taha, the PA's deputy minister of information, had said that the wall was part of an Islamic *waqf*, or religious endowment, and that only "Islamic tolerance" allowed Jews to pray there. "We strongly condemn these comments and fully reject them as factually incorrect, insensitive and highly provocative," said Crowley. "We have repeatedly raised with the Palestinian Authority leadership the need to consistently combat all forms of de-legitimization of Israel including denying historic Jewish connections to the land."

The chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), also decried Taha's claim. "To deny the Jewish connection to the Western Wall is to be deliberately provocative and inciteful..." While the PA subsequently removed the report from its website, it has never renounced the claims in the report. Speaking to the Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "I say to Abu Mazen: Condemn this phenomenon. Turn to your people and tell them: 'There is a Jewish people here. They have been living here for close to 4,000 years. We recognize this people. We recognize their historic connection to this land and this city.'"

Joseph understood that in order for his family members to truly reconcile, they could not engage in an endless cycle of blaming each other for their misdeeds. Today, the U.S. has conveyed this same message to the Palestinian leadership—asking it to end its incitement against Israel and move towards reconciliation with the Jewish state. ■

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