

DECEMBER 31, 2012

Parashat Shemot

An Illegitimate Campaign

Who are coming into Egypt (Exodus 1:1)

הבאים מצרימה (שמות א:א)

Why does the Torah refer to the Children of Israel “who are coming” into Egypt in the present tense, instead of the referring to them in past tense, as descendants “who came” into Egypt? Chizkuni explains that by using the present tense, the Torah subtly conveys how the Egyptians denied Jewish history and delegitimized their presence in the land of Egypt. “Due to [the Egyptians’] belligerence after the death of Joseph, they would relate to [the Jews] each day as if they had arrived at that time, and had never seen them before.” In order to justify their campaign of persecution, the Egyptians denied decades of Jewish history in their country, considering the Jews strangers who did not belong in their land.

By denying Jewish history, the Egyptians delegitimized the Jewish people’s existence. Similarly today, the Palestinian Authority has initiated a campaign to delegitimize Israel throughout the international community.

According to the [Associated Press](#), with their newly upgraded status at the United Nations, “the Palestinians are talking of filing war crimes charges against Israel, staging mass demonstrations in the West Bank, encouraging the international community to impose sanctions, and ending the security cooperation that has helped preserve quiet in recent years.” These moves represent efforts to isolate, demonize and delegitimize the Jewish state. Instead of sitting down to negotiate an end to the conflict with Israel, a number of Palestinian officials sought ways to attack Israel. “2013 will see a new Palestinian political track. There will be new rules in our relationship with Israel and the world,” said Hussam Zumlot, an official in President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah movement. Palestinian officials have said that, “they will move to join the International Criminal Court, where they hope to pursue war crimes charges against Israel...” However these efforts will not lead to peace, which will only be achieved through direct bilateral negotiations. For more on the impact of the Palestinian statehood bid, click [here](#).

Instead of recognizing the Jewish state and returning to the negotiating table, the Palestinian Authority insists on following the example of the ancient Egyptians by taking steps to undermine Israel. ■

Renewing our Efforts

If it be a son, then you shall kill him (Exodus 1:16)

אם בן הוא והמיתן אתו (שמות א:טז)

As we begin the book of Exodus, we revisit a story of the murder of the Jewish people at the hands of the Egyptians—a regime that committed heinous acts of genocide throwing Jewish newborn children into the Nile. While we are familiar with the story of the Exodus, every reading reminds us that the message itself is timeless and remains chillingly relevant. The traditional Passover *Haggadah* states, “In every generation [the enemies of Israel] rise up against us to destroy us.” Each new reading of the story of the subjugation of the Jewish people in Egypt serves as a call to reenergize our efforts to combat the dangers that arise in every era.

Every year, the reading of Exodus renews our resolve to combat efforts that aim to destroy the Jewish people. Today,

this story resonates strongly as we work to prevent Iran, the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, from achieving a nuclear weapons capability.

The longer the dispute over Iran's nuclear weapons program continues the more dangerous it becomes. The latest International Atomic Energy Agency [report](#) shows significant Iranian progress towards a nuclear weapons capability, indicating that Iran could produce enough 20 percent enriched uranium for a nuclear explosive device in as little as four months. For this reason, members of Congress recently took a critical step in preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon by adopting a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act to ratchet up pressure on Iran by expanding sanctions on the Iranian energy, shipping and shipbuilding sectors, and closing a loophole that has allowed Tehran to circumvent financial sanctions by taking payment for oil and gas in gold. In addition, 74 Senators recently signed a [letter](#) to President Obama urging further pressure on Iran until Tehran takes decisive steps to curtail its nuclear program. The Senators also asked the president to reiterate his readiness to use all elements of national power should Iranian intransigence continue. Just as Congress reinvigorated itself and took action to further pressure Iran, we too must renew our resolve to continue to work to prevent Iran from achieving its goal of nuclear weapons capability, which would not only endanger Israel's very existence but seriously threaten the United States' interests around the world. We must contact our elected officials and [thank them](#) for signing the letter to the president, and for their work tightening the economic pressure on Tehran. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Our return to the story of the atrocities in Egypt reminds us that we must continue to fight regimes that threaten the Jewish people. This generation must focus our energies on the menacing threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. ■

Ready to Help

And Moses grew up (Exodus 2:11)

ויגדל משה (שמות ב:יא)

As Moses attempted to intervene and protect a fellow Jew from the blows of an Egyptian the Torah states, "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses grew up..." The Alshich (on 2:11) explains that the Sages note the word *vayehi* (and it came to pass) connotes a period of anguish and difficulty. The Torah emphasizes the difficulties the Jewish people endured in order to highlight Moses' sense of responsibility towards those in need. This teaches us, "That it is unworthy for a person in Israel who rises to greatness when all of Israel is in pain to say, 'all is well for me.' Rather, he must be together with them in their time of need."

Like Moses, who took action to alleviate the suffering of others during their time of need, a group of Israeli youth recently visited the United States to support the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Weeks after Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc on the New York Metropolitan region in late October, many areas continued (and indeed still continue) to require outside assistance. Recognizing this need, a small group of Israeli teenagers from the towns of Hashmonaim and Beit Shemesh traveled from Israel to New York to help with the cleanup effort, [Israel21c](#) reported. The teenagers called the trip *Masa Hashemesh* or Sunshine Journey as they helped local residents in the cleanup efforts, volunteered in a soup kitchen in a Brooklyn church, and spoke with numerous different groups in the region. They spread both positive feelings and showed the devotion that the people of Israel have for helping others. Stuart Katz of Hashmonaim who coordinated the trip said that the mission's purpose was, "to show that we help all people—regardless of faith or religion—representing Israel." Katz said, "Homeowners were very appreciative—they couldn't believe that the journey was put together so quickly and were astonished that kid citizens of Israel (who they feel are under attack so much) feel a need to come and help."

Moses demonstrated that leadership stems from taking action to help others during their times of need. This group of Israeli teens followed in Moses' footsteps by taking initiative and doing all that they could to help Americans during a time of difficulty. ■

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