

APRIL 2, 2012

Passover

An Exception to the Rules

Because he excluded himself... (Passover Haggadah)

לפי שהוציא את עצמו... (הגדה של פסח)

In the text of the Haggadah, part of our response to the wicked son's question—"What is this service to you?"—includes the phrase: "Because he excluded himself from the *klal*, he has denied that which is fundamental." Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in *An Exalted Evening* (p. 48), translated the word *klal* as a reference to *klal Yisrael*, the community of Israel. Thus, the wicked son claims that the Exodus "no longer has any significance," denying an essential truth accepted by the rest of the community. Yet, the word *klal* also means "rule." According to this understanding, the wicked son is not excluding himself from the community, but from the rules of the *Seder*. Interestingly, the wicked son seems to recognize the value of the service, otherwise he wouldn't demonstrate his concern about the rules by asking questions, he simply believes they don't apply to him.

In affirming the value of rules by which he refuses to abide, the wicked son demonstrates his hypocrisy. Sadly, despite the good work that the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) does, it demonstrates a similar level of hypocrisy when its members hold Israel to a standard that they themselves ignore.

The UNHRC recently voted to appoint a panel charged with evaluating the effects of Israeli settlement construction on Palestinian human rights in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, [Haaretz](#) reported. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu harshly criticized the decision, saying that "This is a hypocritical council with an automatic majority against Israel. This council ought to be ashamed of itself... Until today, the council has made 91 decisions, 39 of which dealt with Israel, three with Syria and one with Iran. One only had to listen to the Syrian representative speak about human rights at the council... to understand how detached from reality it is." Indeed, the UNHRC currently includes such notorious abusers of human rights as China, Saudi Arabia and Cuba. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the council also approved four other resolutions against Israel, including one opposing its actions on the Golan Heights. The Obama administration, which criticized the decision and cast the council's only vote against the measure, said it was "deeply troubled" by the council's historic "bias against Israel." For more on Israel and the United Nations, click [here](#).

The wicked son hypocritically refuses to accept upon himself the statutes he considers binding on others. The Human Rights Council of the United Nations has taken a page right out of the wicked son's Haggadah, accusing Israel of human rights violations its own members openly flout. ■

Destroying the Innocent

Laban sought to uproot everything (Passover Haggadah)

לבן ביקש לעקור את הכל (הגדה ש פסח)

The Haggadah portrays Laban as a treacherous character who attempted to "uproot everything," yet it offers no supporting evidence. Numerous commentators (Rashi, Ra'avan and others on the Haggadah) explain that it was Laban's actions that prove that he sought a worse fate for the Jewish people than even Pharaoh. Following Jacob's flight with his wives and children from Laban's home, Laban chased after them and told Jacob that "it is in the power of my hand to do you hurt" (Genesis 31:29). In the end, it was only divine intervention that forced Laban to withdraw. Had he succeeded, he would have killed Jacob, his wives, children and the future of the entire Jewish people.

Laban's indifference to violence against innocent people was clearly displayed in his readiness to destroy Jacob's family. Iran's leadership now exhibits a similar callousness towards the suffering of the Syrian people.

In a public demonstration of solidarity, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad praised the Syrian government's handling of the year-old uprising against the regime, [Reuters](#) reported. The Iranian president added that Tehran would support its closest Arab ally in any way possible. "I am very happy that Syrian officials are managing the situation well ... I hope the situation in Syria improves day after day," the official IRNA news agency [quoted](#) Ahmadinejad as saying during talks with Assad's special envoy, Faisal Meqdad. In addition to moral support, Iran is providing a broad array of tangible assistance to Syrian President Bashar Assad to help him suppress anti-government protests, from high-tech surveillance technology to guns and ammunition, [Reuters](#) also reported. "Iran has provided security assistance to Damascus to help shore up Assad. Tehran has been aiding the Syrian regime with lethal assistance—including rifles, ammunition, and other military equipment—to help it put down the opposition," a U.S. official [said](#). According to [The New York Times](#), the United Nations estimates that over 9,000 people have been killed in the conflict. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran. For more on Syria, click [here](#).

Like Laban, who bragged about inflicting violence on innocent people, the Iranian regime's open support of the brutal suppression of the Syrian people speaks volumes about its willingness to harm civilians, and provides insight on just how far Iran might go to "uproot everything." ■

Tiny Miracles

[The plague of] boils... (Passover Haggadah)

שחיין... (הגדה ש פסח)

Each of the 10 plagues represented a miracle that conveyed to Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation the greatness of God. This is especially true of the plague of boils. The Torah states that following God's command, Moses took soot from a regular furnace, "threw it up heavenward; and it became boils and blisters, erupting on man and beast (Exodus 9:10). Rashi (on 9:8), counting the many miracles inherent in Moses' action, notes that this act was especially miraculous because "the dust spread throughout the entire Land of Egypt." Ibn Ezra (on 9:9) adds that Moses' action represents "a miraculous deed, that this small amount of soot would spread throughout Egypt and not afflict the Jewish nation."

Moses' dust spread the plague of boils and demonstrated the great power hidden even in the smallest matter. Perhaps this story has inspired Israeli researchers in their groundbreaking advancements in the field of nanotechnology.

Over the past several years, Israel, according to the [Times of Israel](#), has emerged as a world center of nanotechnology research, with a growing presence in manufacturing, medicine, security, food production, and many other industries. Israel's influence was recently on display as it hosted "NanoIsrael 2012: The Third International Nanotechnology Conference and Exhibition" in Tel Aviv late last month. The conference gathered dozens of Israeli and international companies along with over 40 start-ups. Each company presented projects and products that use nanotechnology to produce better solutions in electronics, photonics, biotechnology, medicine, materials, agriculture, and more. The 1,000 participants included world-renowned scientists from Israel and around the world. Many companies demonstrated market-ready products that emerged from their research. [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported that Israeli President Shimon Peres addressed the conference, saying: "Look at the great secrets that are hidden in small pieces of material but also [those] of chemistry, of connections, of relationships, of systems. And so I believe in the coming 10 years we will see a very, very different world."

Moses revealed the power of the microscopic world by using dust to deliver the plague of boils. Today, innovators in Israel use the hidden secrets of nanotechnology to create miraculous developments that will improve our lives and change the world. ■

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