

DECEMBER 23, 2013

Parashat Va'era

A Prophet of Truth

Aaron your brother shall be your prophet (Exodus 7:1)

ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך (שמות ז:א)

When Moses complained that he was unable to speak to Pharaoh on behalf of the people due to the fact that he was, “of uncircumcised lips” (6:30), he is told not to worry, and that “Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.” What was Aaron’s role, and why was he called a prophet? Rashi quotes the translation of Onkelos, who explains that Aaron was to be Moses’ *turgamon*—meaning spokesman or interpreter. Why then was Aaron’s called a prophet? Rashi explains that, like a prophet, his role was to be “a person who announces and makes heard words of rebuke.”

Just as Aaron, who translated and interpreted Moses’ words also offered words of rebuke, recently a U.N. translator unintentionally followed Aaron’s example, making her innocent words of rebuke heard around the world.

During a recent United Nation’s General Assembly (UNGA), a U.N. interpreter, unaware that her microphone was on, reacted to the UNGA’s adoption of nine resolutions condemning Israel. Under the mistaken impression that she was speaking only to a [colleague](#), the interpreter said to the U.N. delegates as well as a live webcast audience worldwide: “I think when you have like a total of ten resolutions on Israel and Palestine, there’s gotta be something, c’est un peu trop, non? [It’s a bit much, no?] I mean I know. There’s other really bad [stuff] happening, but no one says anything about the other stuff.” At a cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu played the interpreter’s off-the-cuff remarks and [noted](#), “Sometimes the veil of hypocrisy over the incessant attacks against us is ripped off, and this interpreter did that.” According to [Hillel Neuer](#) of U.N. Watch, by the end of its annual legislative session, the UNGA will have adopted a total of 22 resolutions condemning Israel—and only four on the rest of the world combined. The hypocrisy, selectivity, and politicization are staggering. For more on Israel and the U.N., click [here](#).

Just as Aaron served as Moses’ spokesman, translator, and prophet, bringing Moses’ words of rebuke to the people of Egypt, an anonymous U.N. translator’s comments rebuked the U.N. for its blatant anti-Israel bias. ■

Ignoring the Facts

When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying... (Exodus 7:9)

כי ידבר אליכם פרעה לאמר (שמות ז:ט)

Before Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, they are given a sign to demonstrate their authenticity. Yet, when teaching them how to transform a staff into a serpent, God tells them that “When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, ‘Show a wonder...’” (verse 7:9). Rabbi Moses Alshich wonders why the text implied that Pharaoh would both “speak” and “say” his request for a sign. He explains that Pharaoh wasn’t in fact looking for proof of God’s existence, and did not care whether Moses’ mission was authentic or not. Rather, “he was only seeking an excuse to ‘say’ his attacks against you, should you not perform a wondrous act.”

Uninterested in the truth, Pharaoh sought to create a subtext in order to speak out against Moses. Today, the Hamas regime in Gaza is similarly uninterested in truth, promulgating lies blaming Israel for recent flooding in Gaza.

The recent storms across the Middle East have caused floods all across the region. For weeks, Gaza has been [reeling](#) from sewage seeping from its water treatment plant, due to the fact that the Hamas regime refuses to pay the Palestinian Authority for the fuel necessary to run the plant. In the aftermath of the storm, Israel came to the aid of Gazans in need, and [took significant steps](#) to alleviate Palestinian suffering. Israel transferred cooking oil, fuel, and emergency supplies to Gaza, and also lent four water pumps belonging to Israel's water company to alleviate flooding in Rafah, Sheikh Reduan and Khan Younis. Yet, despite these efforts, rather than offering words of thanks for Israel's efforts, Hamas instead blamed Israel for the flooding. According to [The Times of Israel](#), "Hamas's Disaster Response Committee chairman Yasser Shanti told journalists on Friday that Israel opened dams just east of the Gaza Strip, causing a flood in the area of Moghraqa near the town of Deir El-Balah. A variation on that claim was made by Civil Defense spokesman Muhammad Al-Maidana, who told the Palestinian daily Al-Quds that Israel had opened sewage canals east of the Gaza Strip, "exacerbating the crisis and raising the water level, causing homes to be submerged." Regardless of facts, these claims are Hamas' efforts to malign the Jewish state.

Like Pharaoh, who looked not for the truth but for ammunition to attack and accuse Moses and Aaron, Hamas, rather than thanking Israel for help, fabricated lies to blame it for the suffering of its citizens. ■

The Danger of Relief

And Pharaoh saw that there was respite (Exodus 8:11)

וַיִּרְא פַרְעֹה כִּי הִיטָה הַרוּחָה (שְׁמוֹת ת:יא)

After enduring the plagues of blood and frogs, the Pharaoh seemed ready to relent and even told Moses to "entreat the Lord, that He take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go" (verse 8:4). Yet, when Moses did just that and removed the frogs, "Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart" (verse 8:11). The Midrash notes that Pharaoh's response to the relief was not surprising. "This is the way of the wicked: When they are in anguish they cry out, but the moment they find relief they resume their evil ways" (Shemot Rabbah 10:6).

Pharaoh's reaction to relief from the plague of the frogs reminds us of how dangerous relieving Iran's economic sanctions. With the relief they are currently enjoying, they will resume their drive to produce nuclear weapons.

In November, Iran and the P5+1 signed an interim agreement in Geneva that would temporarily cap parts of Tehran's nuclear program in return for some relief from some economic sanctions. According to [The Washington Times](#), a survey following the agreement showed a trend of increasing opposition to the deal. The results found that out of 900 likely voters, 93 percent of Republicans and 81 percent of Democrats want the U.S. to prohibit Iran from enriching uranium for any purpose. Additionally, 95 percent of Republicans and 78 percent of Democrats believe that Iran will break the interim deal during negotiations on a long-term agreement to prevent Iran from processing uranium or plutonium to the strength needed to build a nuclear bomb. In order to avoid a military conflict and peacefully resolve the Iranian nuclear challenge, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL) [introduced](#) the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 to increase U.S. leverage as the nation's diplomats continue to work toward a permanent deal. The bill provides the president the time he has requested to negotiate an agreement, outlines clear parameters for a final accord and includes sanctions that would be implemented if Iran fails to seriously negotiate or agree to final deal. "Current sanctions brought Iran to the negotiating table and a credible threat of future sanctions will require Iran to cooperate and act in good faith at the negotiating table," Menendez said. If Iran walks away, it knows that it will not receive desperately needed sanctions relief. This legislation is critical to strengthening American diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability. The Jewish community must speak up and call our Senators who have not yet cosponsored the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act and urge them to do so. As for the ones who have already added their names to the legislation, we must call and thank them. Click [here](#) to view the Cosponsors. For more on Iran, click [here](#).

When Pharaoh found relief from the plagues, he immediately retracted his commitment to free the Jews and returned to business as usual. As Iran enjoys relief from the biting economic sanctions, there is great concern that it will follow suit, and continue its dangerous pursuit of nuclear weapons. ■

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