

APRIL 7, 2014

Achrei Mot – Shabbat Hagadol - Pesach

Failure to Protest – Achrei Mot

After the death of the two sons of Aaron (Leviticus 16:1)

אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אַהֲרֹן (ויקרא טז:א)

The Midrash (Sifra Shemini 1) explains that Nadab and Abihu died suddenly due to their insolence and failure to respect Moses and Aaron. According to the Midrash, walking on the road behind Moses and Aaron, Nadab said to Abihu: “When will these two old men die, so that you and I can lead the nation?” Said the Holy One: “Let us see who buries whom.” Yet, Nachal Kedumim (see Ma’aynah shel Torah vol. 3 p. 94) wonders why Abihu was punished if Nadab was the one who spoke negatively? “We learn from this that one who hears matter of wickedness and remains silent and does not protest – he is worthy of punishment.” We cannot remain silent when we hear evil and allow it to pass without protest.

The Midrash derives from the story of Nadab and Abihu that we cannot allow acts of wickedness to pass without protest. Thankfully, the United States spoke out about yet another display of anti-Israel bias at the United Nations.

Last week, the United Nations Human Rights Council ended its 25th session by voting almost unanimously, 46-1 in favor, on four resolutions condemning Israeli treatment of Palestinians. It also condemned Israeli human rights abuses against Syrian citizens of Israel who live in the Golan Heights, voting 33 to 1, with 13 abstentions, the [Jerusalem Post](#) reported. According to the [Times of Israel](#), the fifth resolution only received “limited support” as it was sponsored by the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad and demanded that Israel return the “Syrian Golan.” One of the resolutions, “Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan,” is part of the UNHRC’s permanent Agenda item 7 on Israel.

Commenting on the votes, Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu noted ironically that “The UN Human Rights Council condemned Israel five times, this at a time when the slaughter in Syria is continuing, innocent people are being hanged in the Middle East and human rights are being eroded.” Only the United States defended Israel against the multiple attacks from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). In each case, America cast the only vote against the resolution. “We are deeply troubled once again to be presented with a slate of one-sided resolutions that undermine efforts to make progress in... negotiations,” said Paula Schriefer, head of the U.S. delegation to the UNHRC. She added that the United States is “deeply troubled by the council’s standalone agenda item directed against Israel.”

Abihu’s punishment teaches us that we must protest when others speak out inappropriately. The US showed strong moral leadership when it spoke out against the hypocritical and unfair singling-out of Israel at the United Nations. ■

Elijah – Prophet of Peace – Shabbat Hagadol

I will send you Elijah the prophet (Malachi 3:23)

אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת אֱלִיָּה הַנְּבִיא (מלאכי ג:כג)

The Haftarah we read on Shabbat Hagadol (“Great Shabbat”) proclaims the coming of the “great and awesome day” (Malachi 3:23) which will be heralded by the arrival of Elijah the Prophet. Elijah also appears during the Passover Seder, as we pour a fifth cup – the Cup of Elijah, from which we do not partake. What is Elijah’s future role that

makes him such an important aspect of the Passover celebration? The prophet explains that, “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers...” (3:24) Rashi, quoting the Mishnah (Eduyot 8:7) explains that according to the Sages, Elijah will come “to make peace in the world.”

On Passover, we hope, pray and yearn for the arrival of Elijah, who will make peace in the world. The State of Israel has always made this desire for peace a primary motivator, driving the Jewish State to make significant sacrifices for the sake of peace.

Time and again the Jewish state has demonstrated its willingness to make tough sacrifices for peace. Israel withdrew its forces and uprooted Jewish settlers in the Sinai Peninsula to achieve peace with Egypt. Israel has also left its positions in the Gaza Strip, parts of the West Bank and South Lebanon to reach peace with its neighbors. During the recent round of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority Israel took concrete steps to encourage the Palestinians to resume negotiations, including facilitating the transfer of goods and fuel to Gaza (while rocket and mortar fire continued to rain on Israel’s southern region), increasing work permits to improve Palestinian life, as well as providing water and electricity to the residents of the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, Israel made painful concessions to encourage the talks which included the release of 76 convicted Palestinian terrorists, some of whom had murdered innocent Israeli civilians. Israel has always recognized that peace with its neighbors brings prosperity and tranquility not only to its citizens, but to the entire Middle East.

As we pour the Cup of Elijah in the hopes that the prophet will bring the blessing of peace to the world, we must also recommit ourselves to supporting the Jewish State in its ongoing quest for true peace with its neighbors. ■

Leaving an Opening - Pesach

That you see my face no more (Exodus 10:28)

אל תוסף ראות פני (שמות י: כח)

Enraged at the devastating plagues, Pharaoh tells Moses, “Leave me, watch yourself that you see my face no more; for in the day you see my face you shall die.” (Exodus 10:28) Yet, Pharaoh did in fact see Moses when he begged him to leave the country following the plague of the firstborn. How could he violate his word? Ohr Hachayim (on Exodus 12:31) explains that Pharaoh left himself some “wiggle room”. “[Pharaoh specifically called to Moses and Aaron at night] because this wasn’t an element of [his previous decree], for he only said ‘in the day’ and not at night.” Despite the fact that Pharaoh seemed to preclude the possibility of any future negotiations, when it became necessary to speak to Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh found a loophole to in order resume the conversation and facilitate the Exodus.

Pharaoh returned to Moses after appearing to definitively end negotiations. While recent Palestinian actions seem to have cut off negotiations, they need to recognize that the only way to end the conflict is through direct talks.

Israel has long sought a negotiated settlement with the Palestinian people. Yet, rather than acknowledge Israel’s status as a Jewish State and enter into serious, tough negotiations, the Palestinian Authority, in defiance of the United States and Israel, “formally submitted applications to join 15 international conventions and treaties despite opposition from the United States and Israel,” the [New York Times](#) reported. Hours after Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riad Malki submitted applications for 15 international treaties and conventions to representatives of the United Nations, Switzerland and Holland, Palestinian UN diplomat Riyad Mansour [said that](#) the PA strengthened “Palestine’s” standing as a state and its legal arsenal against Israel’s “occupation” of its land by applying to join international treaties. The United States promptly rejected the PA’s unilateral move. According to the [Times of Israel](#), “US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power told a House panel...that the US opposes all unilateral actions that the Palestinians take to statehood. She says there are no shortcuts to statehood, and that any unilateral actions could be ‘tremendously destructive’ to the peace process.”

Just as Pharaoh realized the futility of cutting off talks, the Palestinians need to recognize that the only way to achieve peace is not by taking unilateral actions, but by doing the hard work of negotiating a true and lasting peace. ■

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