



Sermon Tidbits

MARCH 30, 2015

Passover – First Days

In Every Generation

In every generation (Passover Hagadah)

שבכל דור ודור (הגדה של פסח)

“Imagine walking barefoot for tens of miles across the unforgiving desert. Imagine leaving behind everything you know, everything you own, everything you understand, all in an effort to reach the Promised Land after thousands of years in exile. This is the story of the Exodus. This is also the story of my family.” So writes Avia Gridi, currently studying at the University of Florida. Avia’s grandparents left Yemen to Israel as part of the great migration of Jews of Arab lands forced to flee after the establishment of the state of Israel. Together with thousands of other Yemenite Jews, they built a new life and transmitted not only traditions from their Yemenite community, but the need to ensure that Israel remains a safe haven for Jews from around the globe.

More than any other holiday, Passover—and especially the Seder experience—represents the connection and transmission from one generation to another. Many of our most cherished memories revolve around Seder experiences with our grandparents, and for those of us who are blessed to have them, with our grandchildren. The Hagadah highlights this connection between generations. In the Maggid section we declare: “This is what has stood by our fathers and us! For not just one alone has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation (*shebechol dor v’dor*) they rise against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand!” Each generation must recognize the dangers that threaten the Jewish nation, and warn the next generation about those threats. We also mention this intergenerational bond in a positive sense as well. At the conclusion of Maggid we declare that, “In every generation (*bechol dor v’dor*) a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is said: ‘You shall tell your child on that day, it is because of this that the Lord did for me when I left Egypt.’” While we teach our descendants about the dangers, we also teach them about the miracles as well, and the need to continue to work to protect and fortify the blessings we enjoy today.

This is the message Avia Gridi’s parents and grandparents powerfully conveyed to her, and the spiritual education that encouraged her to advocate on behalf of Israel on campus, as the President of Gators for Israel at the University of Florida. She writes, “When I engage my fellow students on behalf of Israel, I am honored to share the story of my family’s path to freedom...I imagine my grandmother closing her eyes and breathing in the fresh air of freedom; I imagine the pride my father felt as an IDF officer; I imagine the joy my children, G-d willing, will feel upon their first trip home – to Israel.” *Bechol dor v’dor* – in every generation. ■

Taking the Time

For in haste did you go forth (Deuteronomy 12:3)

כי בהפזון יצאת (דברים יב:ג)

Everything in life today needs to be “instant.” Today, life seems to take place in constant “fast-forward.” We’re always in a hurry, rushing from one thing to the next. We won’t even wait the several seconds it takes for the website to load. Did you know that 40 percent of people abandon a website if it takes more than three seconds to load? That’s the way we want our technology—and our lives—right now. Like the sites we surf, we want instant gratification; instant success in business, relationships and life. But, as we all know, instant gratification is often fleeting, and the best things in life take time, determination and patience.

At face value, the Exodus from Egypt also took place very, very quickly. One of the reasons that we eat matzah for the duration of Passover is because they had no time to bake. “The people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.” (Exodus 12:34) A later verse seems to confirm this notion. “You shall eat no leavened bread with [the Paschal offering]; seven days shalt you eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of affliction; for in haste did you come forth out of the land of Egypt;” (Deuteronomy 12:3) Everything seems to have been rushed. There was no time to bake normal bread; they left Egypt in haste.

Except they did not leave Egypt hastily and they did not leave in the middle of the night in a rush. Who then, was in a rush? Rashi, in his commentary on the Torah, explains that when the verse refers to “haste,” “it is not [the Israelites’] haste, but that of Egypt, as it is written, ‘And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste’ (Exodus 12:33) The Egyptians were in a great hurry to send the Israelites out of the country and rid themselves of what they considered to be a grave threat to their future. The Israelites, on the other hand, had no intention of slinking out of Egypt in the middle of the night. They waited until morning, and only then left Egypt in the light of day, visible to all.

Like the ancient Egyptians, modern-day Iran is, understandably, in a rush. The Islamic Republic not only insists that all sanctions be lifted immediately; it wants an agreement, when signed, to be implemented “with haste.” On the other hand, Congress wants the United States not to buckle in to the pressure to act quickly. Rather, it wants the U.S. to take its time in order to properly assess the reduction of sanctions proposed in any agreement with Iran. For this reason, U.S. Senators Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), and Tim Kaine (D-Va.) introduced a bipartisan legislation requiring congressional review of any comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran. Among the provisions of the legislation, [The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015](#) would prevent the president from suspending congressional sanctions for 60 days. During that period, Congress would have the opportunity to hold hearings and approve, disapprove or take no action on the agreement. On April 14th, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will vote on this crucial piece of legislation. We must urge our Senators to support this bill and ensure that Congress retains the right to review and comment on any final agreement with Iran.

John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, once said, “Good things take time, as they should. We shouldn’t expect good things to happen overnight.” While Iran hopes to push the U.S. to move “with haste,” we must follow the Israelites’ lead, and bring any agreement with Iran out into the light of day, where it can be properly evaluated by Congress. ■

Helping Those in Need

Whoever is in need (Passover Hagadah)

כל דצריך (הגדה של פסח)

If you had to, could you find Vanuatu on a map? Did you even know there was a county called Vanuatu? It’s actually a country made up of a chain of tiny islands about a thousand miles east of northern Australia. And if you knew all of that, you probably didn’t hear that Typhoon Pam—a category five storm battered the tiny country earlier this month, leaving 17 people dead and 65,000 people homeless. With all the snow across the United States this month, typhoons in the South Pacific didn’t make the local news. But Israel got word of the catastrophe, and Israel sent people and supplies to help. According to the [Times of Israel](#), “A team sent by The Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid (IsraAID) arrived in the country...to provide humanitarian assistance to grief-stricken locals.”

The Passover Seder opens with the ethic of helping the needy. Even before we sit down to eat, we call out to those in need, offering them a place at our table. “Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover.” When we hear about stories like these, they give us a sense of pride not only in the good works of the Jewish State, but in the knowledge that the work we do to strengthen Israel also brings aid to those in need, anywhere around the world—even in countries most of us have never heard of. ■

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