

JANUARY 23, 2017

Parashat Va'era

Backing Words with Action

I appeared to Abraham... (Exodus 6:3)

וַיֵּרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם... (שמות ו:ג)

Late last month, a terrorist opened fire at a night club in Istanbul, Turkey, killing 39 civilians, including an Israeli citizen, and injuring 69 others. Governments and elected officials from around the world, including [U.S. President Barack Obama](#), quickly denounced this terrible act of terror. Among the world leaders condemning the senseless New Year's Eve murders was Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, [who issued a statement](#) in which he offered condolences to the people of Turkey, "reiterated his rejection of all kinds of terror activities and called for more regional and international action against terrorism." Yet, when a little over a week later a Palestinian truck driver plowed into a group of IDF soldiers on a Jerusalem street, Abbas said nothing. David Keyes, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [noted that](#), "Last year President Abbas praised a terrorist who tried to run over an Israeli." Keyes was referring to Abbas's praise last March for a Palestinian woman who tried to run over a soldier in Gush Etzion. He continued, "That sent a clear message. His silence this year is telling." Abbas' call to combat terror means nothing.

After Moses complained bitterly that he had failed in his mission to free the Israelites from captivity, God responded in an unusual manner. "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name YHWH I did not make known to them." (6:2) What difference does the name that we use to refer to God make? What do the different names imply? Commentators explain that the different names of God refer to divine attributes. The divine name *elohim* refers to the divine attribute of justice, while the four-letter tetragrammaton (*Yud-Hay-Vav-Hay*) refers to the divine attribute of mercy. Rashi, following this line of thinking, offers a different explanation for the divine names. Commenting on the fact that God says that the name was not "made known" to the people, Rashi explains that this means that, "I was not recognized by them with my attribute of keeping my word, by dint of which my name is called YHWH, [which means that I am] faithful to verify my words, for I made promises to them, but I did not fulfill [them while they were alive]." In other words, while the forefathers had been promised that their descendants would be delivered from bondage, they themselves did not see the fulfillment of those promises. Now, Moses is told, the original commitments would be fulfilled and the Children of Israel would finally be free. Moses was at a point that words could no longer suffice, but that it was time for action.

On September 9, 1993, then PLO Chairman Arafat sent a letter to Prime Minister Rabin, in which he stated unequivocally that the PLO, "recognized the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, committed itself to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, renounced the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and assumed responsibility over all PLO elements to ensure their compliance, prevent violations, and discipline violators." Since that time, while the Palestinians have claimed a commitment to peace and have renounced terrorism in all forms, their actions have painted a very different picture, as Palestinian Authority officials including President Abbas have engaged in a widespread and ongoing campaign to encourage and incite Palestinians to violence.

Earlier this month, a bipartisan group of over seventy U.S. Senators introduced Senate Resolution 6 in which they "object to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 and to all efforts that undermine direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians." In the resolution, the Senators also [note that](#), "the Palestinian Authority must engage in broad, meaningful and systemic reforms in order to ultimately prepare its institutions and people for

statehood and peaceful coexistence with Israel.” In his recent testimony during a Senate confirmation hearing last week, Rex Tillerson, President Donald Trump’s nominee for Secretary of State, [stated that](#) “Israel is, has always been and remains our most important ally in the region.” Tillerson also “questioned whether Israel could feasibly negotiate with a Palestinian Authority that refuses to recognize its right to exist as a Jewish state, and charged that, while the PA has renounced violence, ‘it’s one thing to renounce it and another thing to take serious actions to prevent it.’” After decades of empty pronouncements, the time has come for the PA to stand behind its verbal commitment to peace, and once and for all halt its campaign of incitement to violence against Israelis. We can no longer rely on their words. The time has come for the Palestinians to take action. ■

The Power of Partnership

These are Aaron and Moses (Exodus 6:26)

הוא אהרן ומשה (שמות ו:כו)

Three weeks ago, bulldozers began clearing a huge 175-acre plot of land in the Beit Shean Valley along the Jordan and Bezeq Rivers between Israel and Jordan. [According to the Jerusalem Post](#), in an area that was once a huge minefield, the countries are now building an international industrial and business free-trade zone that will provide critically needed jobs for Jordanians and give Israel access to Arab markets, among many other benefits. The zone, a direct result of the 1998 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, will represent a clear, tangible benefit of the stable peace between Israel and Jordan. It will also serve as a testament to the power of partnership, demonstrating how nations can work together for mutual benefit.

Moses and Aaron represented a perfect example of exactly this type of partnership when they led the Israelites to freedom. In the span of two verses, the Torah mentions Moses and Aaron twice—each time in a different order. In verse 26 we read, “These are Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said: ‘Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts.’” In the very next verse we read that, “These are they that spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring out the Children of Israel from Egypt. These are Moses and Aaron.” (6:27) Which are they: Aaron and Moses or Moses and Aaron? Why are they mentioned in two consecutive verses in different order? Rashi (on verse 26) explains simply that, “There are places where Aaron is mentioned before Moses, and [other] places where Moses is mentioned before Aaron. [This is] in order to teach us that they were equal to each-other.” Netziv suggests that while Pharaoh knew Moses and recognized that he was greater than his brothers, the Children of Israel knew and trusted Aaron. [According to Rabbi Michael Rosensweig](#), “Though [Moses and Aaron are] cast in different roles, the Torah projects the contribution of both as crucial...The range and diversity of their combined leadership as a powerful force in this context contributed to their ability to represent the total interests of *Klal Yisrael* in an inimitable way.”

Like Moses and Aaron, whose partnership proved critical to the success of the birth of the Jewish nations, Israel and the United States have for many years partnered to benefit both nations in myriad ways. From cybersecurity and information sharing to weapons development, military cooperation and counterterrorism, Israel and the U.S. work together to protect and enhance the lives of both Americans and Israelis. Recently, the two countries expanded their partnership to include the critical area of water security and technology.

Last month, President Obama signed into law the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, which includes three provisions that will reorient—in collaboration with Israel—the federal government’s approach to water technologies. These three provisions will fundamentally restructure the federal desalination grant program in a manner incentivizing cooperation with Israel, requiring the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a coordinated strategic plan with certain allies, specifically Israel, for the development of new water technologies; and authorize the Army Corps of Engineers to engage in tech transfer and research and development with Israel and other allies for the purpose of the development of water resources. In addition, Congress recently authorized the Secretary of Defense to cooperate with Israel and other countries in the area of water resources management. The combination of American resources with Israeli water technology and experience will enhance Israel’s water technology sector while providing critical water security to Americans in an increasingly arid era. It also represents another example of the power that partnership can play to bring benefit to both Israel and the U.S.. ■