

MAY 8, 2017

Parashat Emor

The Horrific Education of Hatred

Say to the Priests (Leviticus 21:1)

אמור אל הכהנים (ויקרא כא:א)

During his moving address last week at the official Memorial Day ceremony on Mount Herzl for victims of terrorism in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu [challenged the Palestinians](#) to halt their support for families of terrorists who murder civilians. “How can you speak about peace with Israel and at the same time pay murderers who spill the blood of innocent Israelis?” Referring to Hallel Yaffa Ariel, a 13-year-old Israeli girl murdered in her sleep last year by a 17-year-old Palestinian in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, Netanyahu noted that the Palestinians consider terrorists who murder civilians, “Heroes in their own societies. What kind of hero is a youth who takes a knife, breaks into the room of an innocent and pure girl and stabs her in her sleep?” The answer, sadly, is clear to Israeli officials who must now contend with the “lone wolf” attacks perpetrated primarily by Palestinian youth that have become [all too common over the past two years](#).

From the first verse in *Parashat Emor*, we learn that as adults, we are responsible not only to teach our children the proper path as they grow and develop, but that we must also prevent them from violating important precepts as well. Rashi, in his commentary on the first verse in the parashah (21:1), notes the dual language in which Moses is commanded to, “Speak to the priests the sons of Aaron, and say to them...” Why must he both “speak” to them and also “say” to them? Rashi explains that this language represents an injunction, “To warn the adults about [the actions of] the minors.” In other words, the priests must not only adhere to the relevant laws; they must raise their children to follow those same laws, even in their youth. Dr. Michael Hellinger of Bar Ilan University [notes](#) that this phrase appears not just with respect to the priestly laws. Rather, we find similar language about the importance of the education of our children in rabbinic statements regarding the laws of kashrut and Shabbat as well. Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk, in his *Meshech Chochmah* commentary (on Genesis 18:19), writes that the commandment to properly educate our children stems from our forefather Abraham. Before sending the angels to destroy the corrupt city of Sodom, God informed Abraham about the plan explaining that, “For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.” This verse, *Meshech Chochmah* writes, represents the biblical source for the commandment to educate our children and raise them to become people of righteousness and justice.

Last week President Trump [welcomed Palestinian President Mahmoud](#) Abbas to the White House. As the President expressed optimism that he could bring Israel and the Palestinians together in a peace agreement, he also publicly pressed Abbas to reduce the incitement to violence against Israelis. “There can be no lasting peace unless Palestinian leaders speak with a unified voice against incitement to violence and hate,” Mr. Trump said. “There’s such hatred. But hopefully there won’t be such hatred for very long.” For his part, Abbas insisted that Palestinians were not preaching hatred. “I affirm to you that we are raising our youth, our children, our grandchildren on a culture of peace,” he said.

If only this was true. We yearn for a peace partner that does not teach its students to be martyrs while it demonizes and denies the existence of Israel. We long for a peace partner that rebuffs public calls for “popular resistance” and “days of rage” against Israel. We hope for a Palestinian leader who rejects the common PA practice of naming public buildings, sporting events and children’s summer camps after terrorists who killed or maimed Israelis. We aspire to a generation of Palestinian parents that raises its children to “keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.”

When rather than giving lip service to peace, the Palestinian leadership takes the real, concrete steps critical to raising a generation of Palestinian children in peace and coexistence, it will then receive the passionate support of an American public and find a willing partner in a state of Israel ready to make the necessary sacrifices to establish that peace together. ■

Dangerous Extremism

And the son of an Israelite woman...went out (Leviticus 24:10) (ויצא בן אשה ישראלית (ויקר כד:י))

At face value, the news of Hamas' new document sounds positive. According to the [New York Times](#), "the militant group built around violent resistance to Israel sought...to present a more moderate public face...This new document of principles for the group calls for closer ties to Egypt, waters down the anti-Semitic language from its charter, and accepts at least a provisional Palestinian state—though it still does not formally recognize Israel." Yet, upon closer review, the document is simply more of the same fanatic extremism. While Hamas does not officially call for Israel's destruction in the new document, it never repudiates its original charter which did. More importantly, Hamas remains focused on its longstanding goal of driving the Jewish people out of Israel—which it insists is not anti-Semitic. "Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish, but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine," the new document states. Couched in language of seeming moderation, the document in fact represents the same dangerous extremism that has threatened Israel for decades.

Parashat Emor concludes with the tragic tale of the blasphemer, who, for reasons that are unclear in the text, publicly curses God. We read that this individual "went out" (*vayetzei*) among the people and cursed God in public. What motivated this anonymous person to commit what was considered an extreme and terrible act? From where did he "go out?" According to one opinion in the Midrash, the story of the blasphemer is connected to the immediately preceding section in the Torah that describes the showbreads. "From where did he go out?...Said Rabbi Berechya: [He objected to] the preceding section [where it is taught that they changed the showbreads in the Temple weekly]. "A flesh-and-blood king normally insists on warm, fresh bread daily. Should we serve the Almighty cool, nine-day-old bread?!" (*Vayikra Rabbah* 32:3) At first glance, his objection seems appropriate, even laudable, as he seems to be motivated by a desire to perform the service in the Temple in a more careful, meticulous manner. How then does this same person publicly curse God? Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann explains that the blasphemer was a person prone to extremism. He writes, "While the blasphemer ostensibly found himself caught up in a righteous fit of indignation over God's honor, his extreme criticism and condemnation of the laws taught to them by [Moses] belied the corruption that lay beneath the veneer of his offense....The story of the blasphemer teaches us that, when taken to extremes, over-righteousness can lead to the gravest of sins."

It is this very extremism that drives Hamas to justify the most heinous acts known to man in the name of fanatic religiosity, including the murder of innocent civilians to achieve its radical goals. Responding to Hamas' new document, Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan [dismissed it as a charade](#) designed with the sole aim of gaining international legitimacy. "In practice, Hamas continues all the time to advance terror attacks and wildly incites for the murder of Israelis. It continues to refuse to recognize the right of Israel to exist," Erdan said. Hamas also continues to build tunnels for the sole purpose of attacking or kidnapping Israeli civilians, and has replenished its arsenal of rockets and projectiles pointed at Israel as it calls for "armed struggle" against the Jewish State.

While the media considers this a kinder, gentler, more "moderate" Hamas, nothing could be further from the truth. Hamas remains a radical terrorist organization committed to violence and murder. That's not moderate, no matter what language you couch it in. Instead, it's the very definition of extremism that threatens not only Israel, but the United States as well. ■

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