

MORASHAH
THE RABBINIC FELLOWSHIP OF THE UTJ
 811 Palisade Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666
www.utj.org 201.801.0707

Rabbi Gerald Sussman

Parashat HaShavuah Series

Parashat Korach

A few days ago I was surprised to get an e-mail from one of my Muslim colleagues in our local clergy group. It was calling on members of the community to rally in front of our congressman's office to protest the Israeli action that led to the deaths of nine so-called peace activists. I wrote back to him that if he were really for peace, he should include placards asking Hamas to release Gilad Shalit and to agree to abide by past agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. If that were done, there would be little reason for Israel to continue the blockade

There is much distortion and outright falsehood heard from every corner. It is not only from the usual suspects. Last week in discussing the situation with one of our congregants, he said to me, "What can I do? Even my own children ask me about how Israel could treat the Palestinians so cruelly!"

I think most of you would be surprised to know that the Hamas government in Gaza is illegal. It's quite simple. In the Oslo accords, Israel agreed to surrender control of the major Arab population centers to a Palestinian Authority in return for the Palestinians agreeing to recognize the State of Israel and to solve future disputes by non-violent means. By backing out of their end of the deal, the Palestinians of Gaza, through their elected representatives, have breached the agreement. This means that Israel has every legal right to depose Hamas, re-occupy Gaza, and put it under direct Israeli military rule. That Israel has not in fact done so is only because it would be too costly both militarily and diplomatically.

This also brings up the situation of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier captured from within the Israeli border, who has been held incommunicado for four years. Hamas has not even allowed him to be visited by members of the International Red Cross. Gilad Shalit's parents approached the organizers of the so-called peace convoy and requested that they deliver a package to Shalit or at least convey information about his condition. They were refused. So here we have the situation: Gaza is governed by a regime that has publicly broken the agreement by which its self government was granted, and that same government has kidnapped an Israeli soldier from within Israel and has refused to release him for four years, in addition to trying to smuggle in advanced weapons that would endanger Israel, and all Israel has done in response is impose a blockade. Israeli policies are not cruel – quite the opposite. Israeli leaders should get the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their restraint.

Rabbi Sussman is rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Staten Island, NY.

The Union for Traditional Judaism is a trans-denominational organization dedicated to bringing the message of open-minded Halakhic Judaism to the widest possible audience.

All *Divrei Torah* can be found at <http://www.utj.org/Torah/HaShavuah>

Reading the papers and listening to the media, one hears a lot about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It sounds truly shocking – except that there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Between the supplies Israel allows in and the large quantities of goods smuggled in from Egypt, living standards in Gaza are better than in many other communities in the Middle East. There are few instances where any nation in history has been so clement and gracious to sworn enemies. Could you imagine the European powers making sure their enemies had enough food, fuel and medical supplies during either of the two world wars?

Talking about the "thing which is not" (Gulliver's Travels), let me bring up another one that is commonly believed, even by supporters of Israel. Arab spokesmen sometimes make the point that the creation of Israel was the result of world sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust, which was something that happened in Europe, and the Arabs had nothing to do with it. They ask, "Why should we suffer for the sins of Europe? If the Jews must have a state, why should it be at our expense?" The truth is that the Palestinians had a great deal to do with the Holocaust. They pressured the British to close the gates to Palestine at the very time when Jews were most in need of refuge. The British, in response to Arab pressure, issued the White Paper of 1939, trapping Europe's Jews, leaving them to be murdered. Who knows how many would have lived had it not been for the Arabs of Palestine?

Much of the world believes that there would be peace if only Israel would make this or that concession. They ask Israel to put its very existence in danger in order to fulfill their fantasies of world peace. The truth is that if Israel committed suicide and God forbid ceased to exist, the conflict between the West and Militant Islam would continue. The Iranians tellingly refer to Israel as the Little Satan and the United States as the Great Satan. Even if the "Little Satan" would disappear, the war against the Great Satan would continue unabated.

One wonders why the world chooses to believe the empty charges of the enemies of Israel rather than look at the plain truth. This parasha can perhaps give us some insight. This week we read about the rebellion of Korach and his followers against the authority of Moses and Aaron. They set themselves up as what we would today call human rights activists, opposed to the autocratic rule of Moses and Aaron. They said that they were for the equality of all. In reality, their pro-democracy rhetoric was merely a means for them to gain support. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Britain, recently stated that the new anti-Semitism is centered on Israel and comes from the NGOs (non-governmental organizations). The NGO's, like Korach, need to foment a sense of grievance. They then can put themselves in the forefront of the grievances they have helped foment in order to gain prestige and influence on the world stage. Israel and the Middle East situation provide a very good vehicle by which they can advance their ambitions.

We all know what happens at the end of the story. The earth opens up and Korach and his followers are swallowed up and disappear. I know that some of us in our hurt

The Union for Traditional Judaism is a trans-denominational organization dedicated to bringing the message of open-minded Halakhic Judaism to the widest possible audience.

All *Divrei Torah* can be found at <http://www.utj.org/Torah/HaShavuah>

and frustration would like to see the same happen to those who defame Israel. I am, however, reminded of the Aggadic statement that says that R' Yehoshuah ben Levi found the very spot in the desert where Korach was swallowed up. He put his ear to the ground and heard Korach and his followers endlessly repeating Moses is right and his Torah is true. So may all of those who defame us by their constant distortions and lies come to realize the legitimacy and the humanity of Israel and its people.

Shabbat Shalom!

The Union for Traditional Judaism is a trans-denominational organization dedicated to bringing the message of open-minded Halakhic Judaism to the widest possible audience.

All *Divrei Torah* can be found at <http://www.utj.org/Torah/HaShavuah>