

**Should Rabbis Speak about Politics: Rosh Hashana Day 1 5776
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Some believe that a rabbi should never speak about politics; it is not the job of a rabbi. If you believe that let me introduce you to a Jewish fellow named Hagi, who served as a *Navi* (prophet). Many think that the job of a prophet is to foretell the future by looking into a crystal ball, but is it? The Torah actually tells us. When Moses was reluctant to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh because he did not speak well God says to Moses “And Aaron your brother will be your *Nivehecha* (your spokesman, your prophet). The job of a prophet is to speak the word of God.

Hagi was serving spokesman in the year 520 B.C.E. Sixty six years earlier the Babylonians had destroyed the first temple and exiled the Jews to Babylon. In 538 Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Only a small group returned and when they did a people called the Samaritans asked if they could help in the rebuilding. Who were the Samaritans? A couple of hundred years earlier when the Assyrians exiled the 10 Northern tribes of Israel (who are at times referred to as Samaria because the portion of Israel they lived in was Samaria) they resettled other conquered peoples to Samaria who become known as Samaritans. These Samaritans picked up some Jewish practices while living in

Samaria while retaining their own native religious practices. The Jewish did not consider them to be Jewish and refused to allow them to participate in the rebuilding of the temple. In retaliation, the Samaritans sent a letter to Persia claiming that if the Jews were allowed to rebuild their temple they would then revolt against Persia and as a result the Persians halted the construction of the temple.

Yet, eighteen years later a new emperor, Darius arose in Persia and Hagi shares a fascinating message with the Jews. “Is it proper that you sit in your paneled homes while this house (God’s house) is in ruins?” What he is really saying is that there is a new Emperor, go and lobby him for permission to finish rebuilding the temple! In other words, there is a religious obligation to rebuild the temple and in order to fulfil it you must become politically active. And indeed Darrius did grant permission!

We today have a similar obligation and that is to ensure the survival of the State of Israel, which a prerequisite to the building of the third temple and the messianic era. I am in essence going to pose to you the same question that Hagi posed. Are we going to sit around here comfortably as the Jewish state is threatened again from Persia in the form of the modern state of Iran? It is clear that the Iran deal will be put into effect. I made no secret of my opposition to it and I realize there are some here who support it. Let me say to those who support it that I hope you are right and I am wrong and this is a good deal, the world will be better off for it.

That being said we are left with a deal that does not contain the 24/7 inspections the President insisted upon initially (inspections will be approved 24 days advance). In fact, we recently learned Iran will be allowed to Self-inspect the Parchin nuclear facility where it is believe Iran has experimented with high-explosive detonators for nuclear arms. Additionally, Iran will receive \$100 billion sanctions relief and certainly use this money to increase funding to Hezbollah. Furthermore sanctions will be lifted as soon as the agreement commences, rather than gradually as Iran demonstrates adherence And it that is not disturbing enough, Iran will be released from ballistic missile sanctions and an arms embargo imposed by the U.N., which will allow it too arm further its terror proxies, as it dominates the region as a nuclear threshold state. All of this this deal also makes regime change more unlikely because of the immediate financial relief it bestows on Iran while paving its way towards becoming a nuclear power within 10-15 years (which initially the President aid could not be allowed to happen) with international approval.

But what can we do, the deal will be put into effect and our members of congress support the deal! First let me say that I am profoundly disappointed that in them and I have conveyed my disappointment. But I did it an extremely polite manner because we cannot burn our bridges. Our members of congress have a long record of supporting Israel and we are going to want them to do all that they can to ensure that the deal is enforced.

The deal contains “snapback” sanctions but they only apply to “major” violations. One does not need to be a prophet to envision a scenario in which the world power label all Iranian violations “minor” for the sake of avoiding confrontation. We saw this pattern begin during the negotiations. Alan Dershowitz, who had been supporter of the President points out that at least three times during the negotiations the administration crossed its own red lines to accommodate Iran. We have to accept that this pattern of accommodation will continue during the enforcement phase and the can will yet again be kicked down the road.

If this happens we are going to want our members of congress to yell “stop” I promised my constituents that Irian would be held accountable, Mr. President this is not working we need to take a new approach! We should note that in the end many who supported the deal acknowledged that it is a highly flawed deal such as senator, Chris Coons. Why did they support the deal? It has been suggested that by bringing the deal to the U.N. before congress, the Congress lost its ability to negotiate a better deal because the other countries had already dropped their sanctions. Without this leverage some members of congress simple feel that this is the best we can do I might as well take it and try to enforce it. However, let’s remember that if U.S. were to opt out alone due to Iranian violations and other countries refused to reinstate them, the US could unilaterally do so and that is a powerful card to play. US sanctions have proven their global impact to dissuade foreign companies from investing in Iran when faced with the threat of

losing access to the US economy (largest and most important of financial systems). If Iran did try to break out to a bomb it would to consider that a military strike could at least do least do serious damage to a program working on for decades which has cost billions.

I am going to conclude by sharing a point I heard Rabbi Mitchel Wohlberg make. He explained that he can understand why Joseph's brothers threw him in the pit; he was young obnoxious young man. But what Rabbi Wohlberg can't understand is there reaction as Joseph languished in the pit and undoubtedly cried out for help. What did the brothers do? They sat down to eat bread! As their brother cried out they partied! As our brothers and sisters in Israel cry out for help we dare not turn a death ear and carry on business as usual. Regardless of how we feel about the deal we all have a religious obligation to remind our members of congress that we will hold them to their word and demand that they do everything in their power to ensure that this agreement is rigorously enforced.

Am Yisrael Chai (The Nation of Israel lives)