

A Rabbinic Perspective *By Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom*

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In Every Generation



In a few days we will observe *Purim*. In a month, *Pesah*. I am always struck by the similarity of these two holidays. In each, there is a tyrant determined to eradicate the Jewish people. In each, there are heroic leaders, and the hand of God, that protects our ancestors and grants them relief from tyranny.

But there is a very different tone between the two. *Purim* is light-hearted, gleeful, mischievous even. *Pesah*, as the paradigm of all future Jewish liberations, is serious and weighty.

During the Passover *seder*, we say "God has come to our rescue time and again, for we have not had just one adversary. In each generation there are those determined to destroy us."

As I consider our adversaries at this juncture in history, I am struck by the deadly seriousness of many, and the laughable quality of others.

On January 14, there was a suicide bombing at the Erez checkpoint, the main crossing for residents of Gaza to enter Israel for work.

A young woman, a mother of two small children, came to the crossing. Metal detectors sounded a warning. But the woman presented herself as an invalid, claiming to have metal rods in her legs. She pulled up her gown and showed her bandages. She burst into tears, begging the border patrolmen to have mercy and let her through.

Compassion overwhelmed prudence. A group of people came to her aid. With that, she detonated the explosives, killing herself and four Israelis.

This tactic is not new. Palestinians have used ambulances to carry munitions, placed guns in schools and hospitals, begged for mercy for the weak and infirm, only to have them be agents of death. It is a sign of the humanity of our Israeli brothers and sisters that there is still a capacity for compassion for the enemy, even with a history of perfidious tactics. But it also makes it so difficult to enforce security without seeming to be lacking in compassion. Had the bomber been turned back, surely it would have been a story of Israeli inhumanity!

In a further twist, it now appears that the suicide bomber was coerced into her fate. According to the Israeli newspaper, *Yidiot Aharanot*, her husband had discovered that she was having an affair. She was given two choices — death at the hands of her family, in accordance with strict Islamic law, or as a suicide bomber. Some choice. Some morality!

On a more humorous note, some Arabs are taking a different tack to advance their war against Israel and the Jews. You may recall that the *Torah* records that when the Israelites left Egypt, they "borrowed from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold, and clothing." And concludes "Thus they stripped the Egyptians."

In her *Torah* commentary on AJWA Sisterhood *Shabbat*, **Charlotte Bernstein** reported on an article from *Hadassah Magazine* that "the Egyptian weekly *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi* published an interview with Nabil Hilmi, dean of University of Al-Zaqziq law school, who, together with a group of Egyptians living in Switzerland, is preparing an enormous lawsuit against the Jews, 'and against the Jews of Israel in particular,' for leaving with Egyptian wealth in the middle of the night."

Shia wryly commented that "If the lawsuit goes through, perhaps we could counter sue for 400 years of enslavement."

Being a Jew has always taken a great deal of courage and determination. It was true for Mordecai and Esther, and for Moses, Aaron and Miriam. And it is true for us. Anti-Israel sentiment, informed by ignorance of history and a lack of willingness to spend the time learning it, has infused our campuses at home. It has fueled Anti-Semitism abroad.

We need to be strong. To know the facts. To speak for Israel. To teach our children.

There are no easy answers. But there must be endurance and patience, knowing that our cause is just, as it was in the time of our ancestors whose liberation we recall and celebrate at this time of the year.

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