



Sermon Spark



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Sermon Spark: Vayikra Acknowledging and accepting the fact the leaders will disappoint us is the first step towards improving them.

Key Texts from Leviticus Chapter 4

4:1

נִפְשׁ כִּי-תַחַטָּא

An individual, if he sins

4:13

וְאִם כָּל-עֵדֻת יִשְׂרָאֵל, יִשְׁגּוּ

And if the congregation of Israel sins

4:22

אֲשֶׁר נָשִׂיא, יַחַטָּא,

And when the leader sins

These texts show a fascinating development: For individuals and for the community, sinning is described as a possibility. It may happen. However the language of the text can be seen to suggest that when it comes to leaders, their sinning is a certainty!

Supporting Text

Rashi on Leviticus 4:22

In case it is a chieftain who incurs guilt - (The Hebrew for this is: asher nasi yecheta). The word *asher* (in case) [sounds like] the language *ashrei* "fortunate". Fortunate is the generation whose chieftain offers atonement for his accidental transgressions. All the more so that he repents his willful transgressions.

Framing

Today, our expectations of leaders are generally as follows:

A - Be perfect

B- If A fails, then deny, deny, deny. Do not take accountability when things go bad.

The message from this text suggests that maybe we should flip these two.

Politicians and leaders make mistakes. How much more so in Israel, where the situation is so complicated and fraught with challenge at every turn. There is no way any human being could navigate all of the conflicting political, regional, religious, and economic forces without making a wrong move. We must allow for that. And at the same time we must also seek atonement and change.

Modern Application to Israel

Ovadia Yosef atones to Mubarak after declaring Palestinians should die

Shas spiritual seeks conciliation after asking God to deliver a plague on Abbas, the Palestinians and 'all the evil people' in the world.

By Yair Ettinger

Three weeks after making hostile statements about the Palestinians, Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef is sending out a conciliatory message and is returning to his old positions in support of the peace process.

Yosef expressed support for the direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and wished "longevity" to the Arab leaders who are partners in the process. "My position has been known and clear for decades, on the importance of achieving peace while preserving the security of the nation of Israel," the rabbi wrote in a letter to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"We wish for sustainable peace with all our neighbors and we are very thankful to the honorable president for his direct involvement in the peace process in our region, which undoubtedly contributes and strengthens this important process," the letter continued.

Yosef wrote the letter to Mubarak, which was then sent from the bureau of President Shimon Peres to Cairo, translated into Arabic.

Yosef addressed Mubarak as "our esteemed and dear friend."

Peres offered the rabbi assistance in the initiative in an effort to improve the atmosphere created by statements made by the rabbi during a sermon three weeks ago. "Let our enemies and those who hate us die," Yosef said then. "[PA President Abbas] and all these evil people should perish from this world. God should strike them with a plague, them and these Palestinians."

The statements were strongly condemned in Egypt and around the world. Sources in the rabbi's home told Haaretz that since the statements were made, the rabbi "was very sorry" and looked for a way of sending a conciliatory message to the Palestinians. "I support your efforts and praise all the leaders and the peoples – Egyptians, Jordanians and Palestinian who are partners and wish the success of this important process of achieving peace in our region, and preventing bloodshed. May God grant you longevity and may you succeed in your efforts for peace and may there be peace in our region," Yosef wrote.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/ovadia-yosef-atones-to-mubarak-after-declaring-palestinians-should-die-1.314243>