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BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES {Op-Ed}

August 26, 2011

NO MORE 'SHA STILL'

Kenneth Lasson

AT THE BEGINNING OF AND DURING the Holocaust, a considerable number of American Jews suppressed their alarm-good citizens purposefully holding their peace rather than speaking out for a more vigorous and effective Allied response to the annihilation of European brethren. "Sha Still" was the order of the day from the entrenched Jewish establishment.

A similar mentality appears to dictate the approach we take to today. Many American Jews tacitly support the Obama administration's policies, both expressed and unstated, even if those policies have a direct and negative impact on both Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Instead of exercising virtual silence, or behind-closed-doors lobbying, the time has come to speak out, vociferously, on issues that should unite us.

We should loudly question, for example, why President Obama continues to blame Israel for what he perceives to be its recalcitrance in peace negotiations, while he has virtually ignored the Palestinians' utter failure to offer anything in return except threats and terror attacks. Nor have our largely self-appointed Jewish leaders framed a formal response to his decision to "engage" with the Muslim Brotherhood, founders of Hamas.

As Isi Leibler recently wrote in the *Jerusalem Post*, we should strongly reiterate that "since Obama's election, Israel has made all the concessions and the Palestinians have ceded nothing, refused to negotiate, and treat us as supplicants. It is surely high time for the U.S. to stop rewarding the Palestinians for their intransigence and cease treating them as our moral equals." On a matter of less cosmic significance, when the president refuses even to acknowledge the Israeli prime minister's formal public request to show clemency toward Jonathan J. Pollard, we should demand to know why he shows such disdain for diplomatic protocol, if not common courtesy.

We should be outraged when the president passes the buck to the Bureau of Prisons, which callously refused to allow Pollard to attend his father's funeral, or unconscionably to provide basic postoperative medical care after emergency surgery. The BOP is an executive agency under Mr. Obama's control.

The president cannot be blamed, of course, for a do-nothing Congress that postures ineptly in the face of a spiraling national debt. But we should speak out against both congressmen and senators disproportionately influenced by self interest groups like the Tea Party, and that in recent months have utterly failed to respond to the greater common sense of constituents.

After the default dead line was avoided at the last minute, lawmakers on both sides rushed home to district offices-for summer recess. Why do we not demand that they answer questions about their support for the Dirty Debt Deal? Perhaps less pressing now, but more important in the long run, should be a clarion call for a clear and effective energy policy.

Making the world a better place requires noise from the people.

Kenneth Lasson, a law professor at the University of Baltimore, is a regular contributor.

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