

# READ IT: Rav Aharon Feldman Shlit" a Responds To Massive Controversy Surrounding Pro-Israel March

November 20, 2023 3:00 pm



In response to the controversy surrounding last week's March for Israel in Washington, DC, Ner Yisroel Rosh Yeshiva Rav Aharon Feldman shlit" a has released the following letter:

*To All Concerned:*

*Manv have asked me to clarifv whv. on the mornina of the November 14 Washinaton Rally for* 

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*On or about November 3rd, Agudath Israel was contacted by a representative of the Federations and other national Jewish organizations which sponsored this event asking Agudah to distribute flyers announcing the rally.*

*The staff of Agudath Israel convened a telephone conference of a quorum of Moetzes Gedoley Hatorah to seek their approval. Historically, the Moetzes has never supported an event sponsored by secular groups since, among other considerations, they could not control what would transpire at these events. In this case, however, they were assured by the representative, that everything would meet the sensitivities of the Chareidi community.*

*Based on this assurance the Moetzes approved sending out flyers to the Agudah mailing list announcing the event and its importance.*

*The Rabbonim on the conference, including the undersigned, all assumed that they would be informed of the details of the rally's program to be able to veto anything not in accordance with the sensitivities of the Chareidi community, as had been promised.*

*During the ten days until the rally, they were not informed of the program, except to be told that several leading Congressmen and a few mothers of the hostages would be on the program. Based on this, I advised questioners to attend the rally. The details of the program were not released until the night before the rally; I found out at 9AM on its morning. I do not know whether the last-minute release of the program was due to time constraints, or whether it was in order to make it impossible for the Rabbinic leaders to retract their support.*

### **Why I Withdrew My Support**

*I originally supported the rally because I felt it was necessary to influence Congress to continue sending arms to Israel and to stop Congress from forcing a cease-fire. Since Israel was under a constant barrage of missiles (there have been over 10,000 already sent), it is pikuach nefesh to fight the Chamas and to stop these attacks. Even though joining with secular groups is forbidden*

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*However, on the morning of the rally I saw that the program had two elements which pikuach nefesh does not override.*

**Element One:**

*A Christian pastor was set to address the crowd. He is the head of an evangelic Christian denomination which believes that Jews need to be supported so that they eventually convert to Christianity. Even though this pastor has shown enormous support for Israel in the past and even though he has 10 million supporters, nevertheless our community cannot have such a person as its spokesman.*

*Therefore, no matter how much I appreciated the pastor's efforts on behalf of Jews, I could not support having him speak at the rally. First: I could not know what he planned to say. Second: even if his speech would be harmless, having a Christian leader speak to a Jewish audience is a step towards interfaith acceptance. Many people, especially young people, in the audience, could well conclude: "He says all the right things. What's wrong, after all, with being a Christian?" Pikuach nefesh is not an excuse for honoring a foreign religion.*

**Element Two:**

*It became clear from the program that the rally was going to be a celebration of secular Zionism. Secular Zionism is a rejection of the Jewish faith. It supplants God and Torah as the basis of the Jewish people, for which it substitutes a common land and language. There can be no greater evidence of this than the anthem Hatikva which states that the hope of Jews for two millenia has been "to be a free nation in our land"—not a nation of God and Torah. This anthem was scheduled to begin the program.*

*The dominant presence of the President and Ambassador of the State of Israel and the speeches they would perform delivering supporting a secular State, meant that the thousands present would be inspired to honor an ideology which is the antithesis of Judaism. Pikuach nefesh does not override supporting the rejection of Judaism.*

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*In addition, it became clear that the rally would have no prayers (except in the form of songs by a singer); and it would have (this, from an advertisement) a massive chant by the attendees of "Never Again!"— implying that the physical might of the army—not Hashem—will protect the Jewish people.*

*I felt that Torah Jews should not be exposed to all of this secularism. I was extremely pained to have to say that we should not participate in the rally and not be able to influence Congress to help protect my brothers: civilians, soldiers and hostages. But, on the other hand, I could not contribute to undermining, even in the slightest way, the beliefs of Torah Jews. There would have to be another way to help the Jews of Israel.*

*Therefore, with a heavy heart I retracted my support of the rally.*

*I realized that 9 AM the morning of the rally was too late to do anything significant, but I had to go on record as opposing the event; otherwise, I would go on record as having supported a pastor spokesman and a heretical ideology.*

*Those who went to the rally based on my original position will be undoubtedly rewarded for their noble intentions, for they hearkened to the call of Rabbonim. For the same reason, I hope and pray that any negative messages which they absorbed at the rally will have no permanent effect upon them or their children. They are not responsible because the promise to be sensitive to the Chareidi community was not kept.*

*I hope have clarified the matter and will be happy to address any further questions.*

*With deep respect,*

*Aharon Feldman*

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NER

ROSH HAYESHIVA  
ISRAEL RABBINICAL COLLEGE

B,H,  
November 20, 2023  
7 Kislev 5784

To All Concerned:

Many have asked me to clarify why, on the morning of the November 14 Washington Rally for Israel, I withdrew my support for the rally when I had previously supported it.

#### **Background**

On or about November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Agudath Israel was contacted by a representative of the Federations and other national Jewish organizations which sponsored this event asking Agudah to distribute flyers announcing the rally.

The staff of Agudath Israel convened a telephone conference of a quorum of Moetzes Geloey Hatorah to seek their approval. Historically, the Moetzes has never supported an event sponsored by secular groups since, among other considerations, they could not control what would transpire at these events. In this case, however, they were assured by the representative, that everything would meet the sensitivities of the Chareidi community. Based on this assurance the Moetzes approved sending out flyers to the Agudah mailing list announcing the event and its importance.

The Rabbonim on the conference, including the undersigned, all assumed that they would be informed of the details of the rally's program to be able to veto anything not in accordance with the sensitivities of the Chareidi community, as had been promised. During the ten days until the rally, they were not informed of the program, except to be told that several leading Congressmen and a few mothers of the hostages would be on the program. Based on this, I advised questioners to attend the rally.

The details of the program were not released until the night before the rally; I found out at 9AM on its morning. I do not know whether the last-minute release of the program was due to time constraints, or whether it was in order to make it impossible for the Rabbinic leaders to retract their support.

#### **Why I Withdrew My Support**

I originally supported the rally because I felt it was necessary to influence Congress to continue sending arms to Israel and to stop Congress from forcing a cease-fire. Since Israel was under a constant barrage of missiles (there have been over 10,000 already sent), it is *pikuach nefesh* to fight the Chamas and to stop these attacks. Even though joining with secular groups is forbidden even for a mitzvah, *pikuach nefesh* overrides this.

However, on the morning of the rally I saw that the program had two elements which *pikuach nefesh* does not override.

#### **Element One:**

A Christian pastor was set to address the crowd. He is the head of an evangelic Christian denomination which believes that Jews need to be supported so that they eventually convert to Christianity. Even though

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this pastor has shown enormous support for Israel in the past and even though he has 10 million supporters, nevertheless our community cannot have such a person as its spokesman.

Therefore, no matter how much I appreciated the pastor's efforts on behalf of Jews, I could not support having him speak at the rally. First: I could not know what he planned to say. Second: even if his speech would be harmless, having a Christian leader speak to a Jewish audience is a step towards interfaith acceptance. Many people, especially young people, in the audience, could well conclude: "He says all the right things. What's wrong, after all, with being a Christian?" *Pikuach nefesh* is not an excuse for honoring a foreign religion.

#### Element Two:



It became clear from the program that the rally was going to be a celebration of secular Zionism. Secular Zionism is a rejection of the Jewish faith. It supplants God and Torah as the basis of the Jewish people, for which it substitutes a common land and language.

There can be no greater evidence of this than the anthem *Hatikva* which states that the hope of Jews for two millenia has been "to be a free nation in our land"—not a nation of God and Torah. This anthem was scheduled to begin the program.

The dominant presence of the President and Ambassador of the State of Israel and the speeches they would perform delivering supporting a secular State, meant that the thousands present would be inspired to honor an ideology which is the antithesis of Judaism. *Pikuach nefesh* does not override supporting the rejection of Judaism.

Torah Jews recognize the need for a government in Israel, and, of course, will do nothing to dismantle it or to expose it to danger. But they cannot recognize its ideology as legitimately Jewish.

In addition, it became clear that the rally would have no prayers (except in the form of songs by a singer); and it would have (this, from an advertisement) a massive chant by the attendees of "Never Again!"—implying that the physical might of the army—not Hashem—will protect the Jewish people.

I felt that Torah Jews should not be exposed to all of this secularism. I was extremely pained to have to say that we should not participate in the rally and not be able to influence Congress to help protect my brothers: civilians, soldiers and hostages. But, on the other hand, I could not contribute to undermining, even in the slightest way, the beliefs of Torah Jews. There would have to be another way to help the Jews of Israel. Therefore, with a heavy heart I retracted my support of the rally.

I realized that 9 AM the morning of the rally was too late to do anything significant, but I had to go on record as opposing the event; otherwise, I would go on record as having supported a pastor spokesman and a heretical ideology.

Those who went to the rally based on my original position will be undoubtedly rewarded for their noble intentions, for they hearkened to the call of Rabbonim. For the same reason, I hope and pray that any negative messages which they absorbed at the rally will have no permanent effect upon them or their children. They are not responsible because the promise to be sensitive to the Chareidi community was not kept.

I hope have clarified the matter and will be happy to address any further questions.

With deep respect,

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