

APRIL 22, 2008

Shvi'i Shel Pesach

Freedom

Hotzi'achah HaShem Elokechah Mimitzrayim "HaShem your God freed you from Egypt" (Deuteronomy 16:1)

Over and over, we are told that HaShem freed the Israelites from Egypt. In fact, one of the most well-known statements in the entire Torah is *vayomer HaShem el Moshe bo el Paroh v'amartah eilav Koa mar HaShem shalach et ami!* Of course, that's only the first half of what God actually tells Moshe to say. The full citation of Exodus 7:26 includes the ending *v'ya'avduni*. We commonly understand freedom to be the right to do whatever we want – to have total self-determination. The lesson of Pesach, however, is that freedom comes with responsibilities. As Pirkei Avot (6:2) teaches us, "There is no free man like the one immersed in Torah study."

As we grow from childhood to adulthood, we all learn that the additional self-determination that comes with growing up comes with added responsibilities: bills, jobs and families to name but a few. While some of these restrictions are burdensome (who likes to pay bills?), others make our freedom worth having.

In our national life, we know that liberty could not exist without the sacrifices of those who win it and protect it.

As we celebrate Pesach and prepare for Israel's 60th Yom Ha'atzma'ut, it is important to reflect on the role that the United States has played in Israel's history. From being the first country to recognize the new Jewish state to the proposed foreign aid budget for next year which includes \$2.55 billion in military aid to Israel, the U.S. has been a constant friend. What's more, the recent passage of H. Res. 951 (which, by a vote of 404-1, condemned ongoing Palestinian rocket fire on southern Israeli towns and reasserted Israel's right to defend herself) demonstrated anew that the U.S. supports Israel even when other countries will not.

While U.S. support for Israel is clearly in America's national interests, the support the U.S. provides for our faithful ally is neither accidental nor inevitable. We have to work hard to see that it continues. ■

See You at 61

L'ma'an tizkor et yom tzait'chah "That you remember the day you went forth" (Deuteronomy 16:3)

Several times in the Torah, we are commanded to remember the exodus from Egypt. *Yitzi'at Mitzrayim* is to be remembered eternally as a pivotal event in the life of the Jewish people. Chizkuni teaches us that we say *parashat tzitzit* in the morning and in the night "because it is incumbent upon us to remember (*l'hazkir*) the Exodus from Egypt both day and night." Still, it is not enough that we remember. It is not enough that we read the passages of the Torah. We must constantly remember and re-enact our becoming a nation.

As we approach the celebration of Israel's 60th birthday, a similar situation confronts us. We cannot focus solely on the celebratory aspect of the anniversary. If we are, indeed, happy that Israel has reached 60, we have to be prepared to work to see that she reaches 61.

Of all the threats that Israel face, none is more serious or immediate than the specter of a nuclear Iran. The U.N. Security Council has passed three resolutions demanding that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment activity. The resolutions, passed under Chapter VII of the U.N. charter, are the highest form of international law. If Iran masters the ability to operate the 6,000 centrifuges—in addition to the 3,000 it currently has running—it could produce enough highly enriched uranium for one to three nuclear weapons within one year. At the same time, Iran is testing advanced P-2 centrifuges, which are capable of enriching uranium at two to five times the speed of older models. C.I.A. Director Michael Hayden recently said he believes that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program, emphasizing that the Iranians would not pay the price of sanctions and isolation “if they did not have at a minimum... the desire to keep the option to develop a nuclear weapon.”

This Yom Ha'atzma'ut, our celebration must be mixed with resolve. ■

The Big Show

L'ma'an tizkor et yom tzait'chah “So that you will remember the day you went forth” (Deuteronomy 16:3)

Davar acher. Every day of the year we are commanded to remember the Exodus from Egypt. On *Pesach*, we are obligated to re-enact the exodus and to see ourselves as being part of that critical event. As the Mishnah (P'sachim 10:5) tells us and the Haggadah reminds us, *b'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et atzmo k'ilu hu yatzah mi Mitzrayim*. This phrase best encapsulates what the *seder* is all about. Rambam, however, has a different *girsah*. Instead of using the verb *lir'ot* (to see), he uses the verb, *l'harot* (to show). In using the *hifil*, Rambam sends a strong message. It is not enough to passively see – we must actively show.

Rambam understood that “seeing” can be a passive action. “Seeing” ourselves as though we, too, came out of Egypt requires relatively little effort. “Showing” that we came out of Egypt requires learning, action, and the more passive “seeing.” This is true of many things in our daily lives – a child may learn to tie her shoes or catch a baseball by just watching, but she'll be more successful if she is instructed. A new employee may figure out the office phone system by watching others, but will be more efficient if trained.

The same is true of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Just because we know that the alliance between the U.S. and Israel is in the best interests of both countries – and just because the evidence for this fact should be overwhelmingly obvious – does not mean that we can sit back and allow our elected officials to see it for themselves. We cannot wait for Members of Congress to slap their foreheads and say, “Oh! Now I get it!” We must show them. And there is no better place to show our elected officials the value of the U.S.-Israel relationship than at AIPAC's annual Policy Conference in Washington, DC. This year's Policy Conference will take place June 2-4 and promises to bring together more than 6,000 pro-Israel activists for three days of interaction with policymakers, academics, and top experts on all aspects of the U.S.-Israel alliance. The third day of the Conference will allow attendees to put their knowledge of the issues to work as they travel to Capitol Hill to lobby their Members of Congress – *l'harot otam*.

As *Pesach* draws to a close, let us not celebrate our people's liberation while remaining blind to the challenges and threats facing our brothers and sisters in Israel. Rather, let us vow to see these challenges and threats – and to show them to the elected officials who can do something about it. ■