

JUNE 14, 2010

Parashat Chukat

Constructive Communication

V'dibartem el hasela – “And you shall speak to the rock” (Numbers 20:8)

A basic reading of the Torah suggests that God instructed Moses to speak to a rock in order to provide the Israelites with water in the desert. However, according to Sa'adia Gaon (on 20:8), the commandment was not for Moses to speak *el hasela*, to the rock, but rather *al hasela*, about the rock. Thus, God commanded Moses to stand at the rock and use it as a means of connecting to the people. Ultimately, Moses failed to see the benefit of using the rock as a means of communication and struck it instead, thereby sealing his fate in the desert.

Moses' downfall sprang from his inability to understand the power of communication. Conversely, a firm in Israel recently demonstrated that it understands how fundamentally important communication can be as it developed a new software that helps cities save water by listening to waterworks facilities.

In some cities, leaking and dripping pipes account for 50 percent of all water loss, amounting to a staggering annual cost of \$15 billion worldwide. To alleviate this waste, an Israeli information technology entrepreneur has developed TaKaDu, a market-ready software solution that will help cities identify leaks. According to the website Israel21c.org, the software will hone in on the leaks allowing cities to repair the damaged pipes. By applying smart math models and algorithms to the data collected by the cities waterworks facilities, the TaKaDu software can detect leaks and assist the facility in prioritizing its repairs. As TaKaDu CEO Amir Peleg explains, by examining several parameters of the water “We can tell them when, where and how big the leak is.”

While Moses' refusal to communicate with the rock ultimately prevented him from entering the Promised Land, with the TaKaDu software system, Israel is harnessing the power of communication to help plug leaks, prevent water loss and save billions of dollars. ■

Deception and Trickery

Vayishma haKena'ani – “And the Canaanite heard...” (Numbers 21:1)

According to the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 3a), the “Canaanites” who attacked the Jewish people in our *parashah* were actually Amalekites who had heard that the protective clouds of glory had dissipated and saw an opportunity to attack. Yet, if these attackers were from Amalek, why does the Torah describe them as Canaanites? Rashi (on 21:1) explains that the people of Amalek disguised themselves as Canaanites so that the Jewish people would ask God to protect them from the wrong nation. When the Israelites finally realized the true identity of their attackers, they changed their focused prayer and asked God to protect them in a more general sense.

The Amalekites used subterfuge in an attempt to misdirect the Israelites' focus and ultimately destroy the nation. Nowadays, Iran has used this same tactic to circumvent United Nations (U.N.) Security Council resolutions and expand its nuclear weapons program.

Using false end-user certificates for companies in Asia, Iran recently purchased sophisticated German equipment that has been prohibited because of its nuclear application. According to a report in *The Telegraph*, Iran used the Gulf port of Dubai to smuggle the banned electronic equipment for its illicit uranium enrichment program. As Iran continues to find ways to circumvent the restrictions of U.N. sanctions, the U.N. Security Council recently passed a resolution which imposes significant new sanctions on the Islamic Republic. The resolution—the world body’s sixth resolution demanding a halt to Iran’s illicit nuclear program—strengthens an arms embargo on Tehran, prohibiting nations from exporting to Iran battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles or missile systems. The resolution also imposes financial and travel sanctions on specific Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps individuals and companies involved in Iran’s nuclear and missile program. In addition, nations are authorized to inspect suspicious Iranian air and sea cargo for illicit items, interdict shipments in port and on the high seas, and confiscate any banned items found. Now, the United States must build on the Security Council’s actions and enact new sanctions while increasing enforcement of current sanctions. As President Obama said, “We will ensure that these sanctions are vigorously enforced, just as we continue to refine and enforce our own sanctions on Iran, alongside our friends and our allies.” For more information on the new U.N. sanctions resolution, click [here](#).

Just as the Amalekites’ efforts to disguise themselves were ultimately revealed, Iran’s attempts to circumvent United Nations sanctions have become evident. With the U.N. having now approved a sixth round of sanctions, let us all pray that the Islamic Republic will recognize the futility of its efforts and abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons. ■

Strength in Support

Ki ba Yisrael derech Ha’Atarim – “That Israel came by way of Atharim” (Numbers 21:1)

Nechama Leibowitz (Studies in Bamidbar, Hukat 4) notes that, according to the book of Joshua (2:9-11), the nations in Canaan trembled before the oncoming Israelite army. Why was the King of Arad not similarly afraid? The answer lies in the path that the Israelites had traveled—“the way of Atharim.” Ramban (on 21:1) explains that the word *atarim* is actually a reference to the path of the spies, from the Hebrew word *latur*, who the king had followed back to the Israelite camp. Leibowitz explains that the Jewish nation “had shown their lack of confidence and fear of the future by sending the spies. The Canaanites fortified themselves with the knowledge of Israel’s sense of weakness and inferiority. The lowering of the Israelites’ morale was followed automatically, by the rising morale of their enemies.”

The Israelites were attacked because the Canaanites saw their weakness and were emboldened to take offensive action. In modern times, international criticism of the state of Israel has emboldened its adversaries, making it more difficult for the Jewish state to take risks for peace. As such, we must encourage our members of Congress to speak out in support of Israel’s right to self-defense.

As Israel faces international criticism over its response to the Gaza flotilla seeking to break its blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza, it is vital for lawmakers to show their support for the Jewish state. Israel has legitimate self-defense reasons to inspect the cargo going into Gaza, where the U.S.-designated terrorist group has smuggled in thousands of munitions and rockets for use in attacks against Israeli civilians. Some members of Congress have already begun speaking out in support of Israel’s right to defend itself. Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) stated that the “U.S. must stand up for the right of Israel to defend herself against terrorism—which is what Israel did when she blocked the attempt by the Flotilla to forcefully breach the blockade that is preventing weapons and military materials from reaching Hamas.” Similarly, Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) said, “I fully support the Israeli people’s right to maintain secure borders on land and a legal blockade at sea so that terrorists in Gaza are denied the weapons they will use to kill and wound innocent Israelis.” To find out if your Congressional representatives have made statements in support of Israel’s right to self-defense, click [here](#). To urge your members of Congress to issue such statements, visit www.aipac.org/TakeAction.

Nechama Leibowitz reminds us that a decline in Israel’s morale is matched by a rise in the morale of those who threaten Israel’s interests. When America’s elected representatives stand firmly behind Israel and her right to self-defense, they strengthen the Jewish state and embolden it to take the risks necessary to achieve peace. ■

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