

AUGUST 23, 2010

## Parashat Ki Tavo

### Actions and Intentions

**An Aramean tried to destroy my father (Deuteronomy 26:5)**

**אַרְמִי אֵבֵד אָבִי (דְּבָרִים כו:ה)**

What is the meaning of the phrase recited during the offering of the first fruits in the Temple? Who is the Aramean, and who is the father he sought to destroy? Rashi (on 26:5) follows the Midrashic interpretation found in the Passover Hagadah which identifies the Aramean as Laban, who attempted to destroy Jacob when he clandestinely took flight from Laban's home. However, the Torah records no such attempt by Laban to kill Jacob. Why then do we declare that Laban tried to destroy him? Rashi answers that "Because he intended [to harm Jacob] God considered it as if he actually perpetrated [the act]." While the Torah states that God ultimately prevented Laban from carrying out his hateful plan, we vilify him for his intentions nonetheless.

With the phrase "an Aramean tried to destroy my father," the Torah underscores the importance of intentions. Today, intentions remain a critical issue, especially in regard to the relationship between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Hizballah.

Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, recently wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressing fear "that the Lebanese Armed Forces is collaborating with Hizballah and that Hizballah is, as a result, an indirect recipient of [U.S.] aid." The concerns stem from an incident in early August when a Lebanese soldier shot and killed an Israeli officer who was supervising, in consultation with United Nations forces in Lebanon, routine operations on the Israeli side of the border. This unprovoked attack is another clear violation by the Lebanese government of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1701, which ended the hostilities of the 2006 war and required the disarmament of Hizballah. Lebanese military sources have openly admitted that they coordinate with Hizballah on patrols in southern Lebanon.

While Laban's intention to harm Jacob was known, the intentions of the Lebanese government are vague. To clarify their position, the LAF must cease any cooperation with Hizballah's forces and begin enforcing Resolution 1701. ■

### The Power of Declarations

**I have done like all that You commanded me (Deuteronomy 26:14)** **עָשִׂיתִי כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי (דְּבָרִים כו:יד)**

Jewish law makes very specific demands on the Jewish farmer: she must separate *terumah* for the priest, tithes for the Levi, still more tithes for the poor, leave gleanings, etc. In addition, every three years she must also recite the *viduy ma'aser*, a declaration that she properly followed the precepts and separated the appropriate measures from her produce. Why does the Torah make this additional demand? The Sefer HaChinuch (Commandment 607) explains that articulation goes a long way towards compliance, "Since the matter of tithes and *terumah* is a great thing...in order that we should not sin about them...we should also attest about ourselves, with our mouth...All this in order that we should be most careful in this matter." Therefore, the farmer declares her compliance to these laws not only to impress upon herself their significance, but also to ensure that she fully complies with them.

Like the farmer reciting the *viduy ma'aser*, the United States has recently articulated the critical steps it is taking to enhance the enforcement of economic sanctions against Iran.

The Treasury Department recently released new regulations that could ban foreign banks or companies from accessing the U.S. financial system if they conduct business with entities or people subject to U.S. or United Nations' sanctions on Iran, *The New York Times* reported. The guidelines prohibit or impose strict conditions on the use of American bank accounts by any institution that engages in activities associated with Iran's nuclear and missile program—including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The policy change would force foreign businesses to choose between conducting financial transactions with the U.S. banking system and maintaining operations in Iran.

Since the passage of new American sanctions in June, major financial companies and banks have broken their ties with Iranian firms for fear that they will not be able to access the U.S. banking system. The “Big Four” audit firms, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers, have all terminated their affiliations with Iranian firms, and the new regulations are likely to force out most of the remaining players, leaving Iran with the prospect of a collapse of its financial system, and certainly without the ability to attract foreign investment. For more information on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

The United States has strongly declared its intention to fully enforce recently passed sanctions against companies doing business with Iran. Like the farmer reciting the *viduy ma'aser*, these pronouncements have had the powerful effect of encouraging compliance, strengthening the sanctions that remain the best hope of convincing Iran to end its nuclear weapons program. ■

## Share and Share Alike

**And you shall lend unto many nations (Deuteronomy 28:12)**

**והלויית גויים רבים (דברים כח:יב)**

While listing the blessings for following the commandments, the Torah states that “The Lord will open unto you His good treasure,” bringing agricultural bounty and wealth. The verse states that Israel will “lend to many nations,” but not borrow from them. Ohr Hachayyim (on 28:12) notes that this is a deviation from the way in which international business is usually conducted. In normal situations, “the way of the world is that among the great and wealthy nations one borrows from another, and then the second borrows from the first.” Yet, according to the Torah, we can look forward to an era of miraculous blessing when Israel will not need to borrow from her allies.

While Israel has not entered into such a miraculous era, Ohr Hachayyim's comment about relationships between nations is a powerful description of the healthy partnership between allies. Today, the United States and Israel exemplify this type of relationship—borrowing knowledge, experience and innovation from one another.

Recently, officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) signed an agreement to collaborate on research to meet the world's food and fiber needs, and to address other high-priority agricultural issues. Under the five-year agreement, scientists with ARS and MOARD will conduct cooperative research focusing on key bilateral and global agricultural development issues such as climate change, international food security, alternative energy production, precision agriculture, sustainable natural resources management, capacity building and rural development. In addition, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and Israel Space Agency Director General Zvi Kaplan signed a joint statement of intent to expand the agencies' cooperation in civil space activities. The agencies agreed to identify new joint activities related to Earth and space science, life sciences, space exploration and other areas of mutual interest in order to expand scientific exchanges and inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.

Israel's incredible journey from a fledgling state to a first-rate industrial nation has made it an invaluable partner to the United States. By sharing its science, technology and innovation, Israel not only brings tangible benefits to itself, but to the United States as well. ■