

AUGUST 16, 2010

## Parashat Ki Tetzei

### The Benefits of Friendship

**An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter... (Deuteronomy 23:4)      (דברים כג:ד) לא יבא עמוני ומואבי**

Why were Ammonite and Moabite men forbidden from becoming members of the Jewish community? The Torah explains that this rule was based upon the failure of the two nations to assist the Jewish people in the desert: “Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way” (23:5). Why did this seemingly minor slight result in such a drastic response? Ramban (on 23:5) explains that God expected the nations of Ammon and Moab to give food in response to the kindness of Abraham, “who had saved their fathers and mothers from the sword and captivity.” Yet, instead of exhibiting gratitude to Abraham’s descendents, these two nations treated the Israelites with contempt. Therefore, by excluding Ammon and Moab, the Torah highlights the repercussions of failing to support allies.

In contrast to the behavior of Ammon and Moab, the United States and Israel share a strong and mutually beneficial friendship, exemplified by the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

The United States and Israel recently marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the historic Free Trade Agreement. Although only 20-pages-long, the accord has become the lynchpin of an expanding economic relationship. The agreement, the first of its kind between the United States and any country, largely eliminated tariffs and quotas on trade and goods. Since its signing in 1985, the accord has resulted in an increase of trade of more than \$45 billion between the two countries. While trade between the two allies was minimal at the time of the FTA’s signing, with Israel actually receiving more in U.S. aid than it exported to the United States, more than \$35 billion in goods and services were traded between the United States and Israel in 2009, far outpacing the \$3 billion in U.S. aid which Israel received that year. In addition, the FTA has opened Israeli markets to American businesses, making Israel the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East. For more information on the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement, click [here](#).

The nations of Ammon and Moab demonstrated how the failure to reciprocate a friend’s kindness can have damaging repercussions. Conversely, the continuing constructive relationship which America and Israel enjoy provides ongoing benefits that advance the aims of both countries. ■

### The Price of Failure

**You shall not be slack to pay it (Deuteronomy 23:22)      (דברים כג:כב) לא תאחר לשלמו**

The Torah describes the requirement for the Jewish people to fulfill vows to donate to the Temple in a timely manner, including a strong admonition not to delay the implementation of one’s verbal commitments. S’forno (on 23:22) connects this obligation with the subsequent phrase, “for the Lord your God will surely require it of you.” Accordingly, S’forno states that should one fail to keep his or her financial commitments in full, God will exact payment “from another place,” taking the amount that the donor had originally promised, and that, in this case, “even with your payment in this manner, there will be upon you the punishment of delay.”

In explaining the necessity of promptly paying pledges to the Temple, the Torah highlights the need to take timely measures on important issues. Nowadays, the implementation of sanctions on Iran's energy sector requires this very type of swift action.

Despite ongoing governmental efforts and increased compliance from the business community in advance of the implementation of recently imposed economic sanctions, Iran has begun using extra equipment installed earlier this year to enrich uranium more efficiently. According to the Institute for Science and International Security, Iran is now using a second set of centrifuge machines at its Natanz pilot plant. The plant now needs less low-enriched uranium than before to produce the same amount of 20 percent enriched uranium, a significant technological achievement which expedites the Islamic Republic's quest to reach nuclear weapons capability. To bring Iran into compliance with new sanctions imposed by the United Nations, the United States, Canada, the European Union and others, the international community must follow a careful timetable of implementation to ensure that these sanctions achieve their maximum impact. For more on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

In ignoring the will of the international community, Iran makes the case for immediate and full implementation of new sanctions. Like the failure to pay pledges in our *parashah*, the failure to implement these sanctions could come at a frightening cost. ■

## Remembering by Speaking

**Remember what God...did to Miriam (Deuteronomy 24: 9)      (זכור את אשר עשה ה' למרים (דברים כד:ט))**

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According to Ramban, the directive to “remember what God...did to Miriam” is actually a commandment to refrain from *lashon hara*. While this instruction seems straightforward, making Miriam's punishment an example for the rest of us, the Midrash (Sifra Bechukotai, 1-3) explains that remembering Miriam's ordeal is not enough. Rather, we must articulate what happened to her, for if we do not: “I might have thought [that this verse only applies to memory] in your heart. When [the verse] states, ‘Take heed in the plague of leprosy that you observe diligently,’ (24:8) we see that guarding of the heart is already mentioned. How then do I fulfill [the commandment to] ‘remember’? That you should repeat [the words] with your mouth.”

The commandment to remember and recite Miriam's ordeal underscores the importance of articulating critical ideas. In modern times, this message carries special significance in our ongoing support of the Jewish state, which not only requires our passive emotional and mental support, but also the action of our words and deeds.

In politics, important policy decisions are often impacted by relationships. Our elected officials are expected to be experts on such a wide range of issues that they must depend on others, namely their staffs and constituents, to keep them informed on all of the matters that fall under their purview. For the Jewish community, it is imperative that we become those people that our Representatives depend on for current information about Israel. As a people who have faced persecution throughout the ages, we do not have the luxury of waiting and hoping that members of Congress will appreciate the U.S.-Israel relationship on their own. Rather, we must reach out and teach them about the strong bond between the U.S. and Israel—and in order to do so we must develop relationships with our Representatives and their staffers. It is our responsibility to work for this cause in our own lives, but it is vital that we pass on our knowledge to those people who can help us make a difference, apply change, and stand firmly behind the U.S.-Israel relationship. For more on how you can make a difference, visit [www.aipac.org/TakeAction](http://www.aipac.org/TakeAction).

While all of us understand the importance of a secure state of Israel, all too often we fail to transform those feelings into the concrete action. Like the commandment to remember Miriam's ordeal, we must transform our intentions into words and actions—developing meaningful relationships with our elected officials and their staffs. In this way, we can have a powerful impact on the present and future of the U.S.-Israel relationship. ■