

NOVEMBER 29, 2010

Parashat Miketz and Shabbat Hanukkah

Investing in the Future

And all the land came into Egypt (Genesis 41:57)

וכל הארץ באו מצרימה (בראשית מא:גז)

The Torah states that when the seven years of famine struck, “all the land” came to Egypt to procure food. Where exactly did people come from? The Talmud (Pesachim 119a) explains that they not only came from Egypt and Canaan, but that they came from every corner of the Earth (see commentary of Torah Temimah on 41:57). While Egypt provided for these hungry masses, it was not a sense of altruism that inspired Joseph to share Egypt’s largesse with the world. Rather, he realized that sharing Egypt’s bounty would provide critical funds for future growth. Ultimately, Joseph’s plan worked: the Talmudic passage also notes that after the famine, “all the world’s silver and gold” had made its way to Egypt as well.

Today, the United States is making a similar investment in its future by providing critical aid to countries in need. Despite difficult financial challenges in an era of budgetary caution, legislators recognize that robust foreign aid remains a solid investment in America’s future.

Foreign aid, at little more than one percent of the federal budget, is an essential, cost-effective tool for promoting American interests abroad and supporting our critical allies. This is especially true in the Middle East, where aid to Israel has long been a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and a cost-effective way of serving America’s national security interests in this critically important region. U.S. security assistance to Israel is the most tangible way that the United States helps Israel maintain its military superiority and counters the great disparity in defense spending between Israel and potential adversaries in the Middle East. For fiscal year 2011 President Obama’s has requested \$58.5 billion in international affairs spending, including \$3 billion in security assistance for Israel. This request reflects the third year of a security agreement reached by the United States and Israel in 2007. Subject to congressional approval, the plan pledges \$30 billion in security assistance to Israel over a 10-year period in order to meet the growing threats of a nuclear Iran, rocket attacks by Hamas and Hizballah and conventional threats from Syria. For more information on foreign aid, click [here](#).

Joseph realized that, especially in difficult economic times, sharing Egypt’s wealth with the world would benefit his country. America must continue to follow Joseph’s example and fully fund aid to Israel for the coming year. ■

The Basis of Bias

For that is an abomination unto the Egyptians (Genesis 43:32) כי תועבה הוא למצרים (בראשית מג:לב)

Describing how Joseph and his brothers sat to eat, the Torah vividly explains that the Egyptians ate separately from the Israelites because the Egyptians considered breaking bread together with Hebrews to be an “abomination.” What motivated this forced separation? Targum Onkelos (on 43:32) understood it to be rooted in a religious edict that emanated from the fact that “the cattle that Egypt worshipped, the Hebrews would eat.” Yet, Rashbam saw a more sinister motive: “It was disgusting and degrading for Egypt to eat with people from beyond the river (*ivrim*), for the [Hebrews] were denigrated in their eyes, and the people of Egypt were haughty” (Rashbam on 43:32). Rashbam,

believing that religious differences could never justify categorizing the act of eating together with another human being as an abomination, correctly understood that it was in fact prejudice that mandated the separate seating.

Like the anti-Hebrew sentiment of the ancient Egyptians, which was based on the prejudice of their culture, much of today's anti-Israel behavior is based in prejudging the actions of the Jewish state.

Speaking recently at the International Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism in Ottawa, Canada, United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Hannah Rosenthal [described the growing trend of anti-Israel activity around the world](#): "...What I hear from our 194 posts around the world, and from our close relationship with NGOs [non-governmental organizations] in the U.S. in other nations, opposition to a policy by the state of Israel morphs into anti-Semitism easily and often. We record huge increases in anti-Semitism whenever there is activity in the Middle East. This form of anti-Semitism is more difficult for many to identify—but if all Jews are held responsible for the decisions of the sovereign state of Israel, when governments call upon and intimidate their Jewish communities to condemn Israeli actions, when academics from Israel are boycotted—this is not objecting to a policy—this is anti-Semitism."

Egyptian hatred for the Israelites allowed the then-most technologically advanced nation in the world to enslave an entire people for centuries. Only six decades ago such animosity, placed under the guise of nationalism, justified the Holocaust. Quite simply, hiding anti-Semitism behind an anti-Israel banner does not change the fact that it is still just another ugly form of racism. ■

The Holiday of Self-Defense

We shall go out to meet them (Hasmoneans 34:44)

ויצאנו לקראתם (חשמונאים לד:מד)

Josephus (Book of Antiquities, chapter 6), describing a vicious Greek attack against the Jewish uprising—in which more than 1,000 men, women and children perished—writes that, "they avoided to defend themselves on that day, because they were not willing to break in upon the honor that they owed the Sabbath even in such distresses, for our law requires that we rest upon that day." Learning of their refusal to fight on the Sabbath, Mattathias decreed that should the enemy attack on the Sabbath day, "we shall go out to meet them and defend our lives, and we shall not perish like our brothers in the caves" (Book of the Hasmoneans 1 2:44). With his religious decree, Mattathias guaranteed Jewish survival and paved the path to the ultimate victory in the Hanukkah story.

While Mattathias' words gave the ancient Israelites the moral authority to defend themselves even on the Sabbath, the massacre that prompted Mattathias' proclamation highlights Israel's critical need for self-defense capabilities and the significance of American military assistance to the Jewish state.

In November, the United States announced that it will increase the amount of emergency military equipment that it stores in Israel by \$400 million over the next two years, bringing the value of U.S. equipment in Israel to \$1.2 billion by 2012. According to [Ha'aretz](#), "The equipment, which includes so-called smart bombs, will stand at Israel's disposal in an emergency." In addition, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reports that Israeli military sources announced that the Iron Dome missile defense system, designed to shoot down missiles directed at Israel's population centers, would be fully operational by 2015. "In the next two to five years, we will turn this vision into a reality," said Colonel Zvika Haimovitch of the Israeli Air Defense Corps. The Iron Dome project was completed after the Obama Administration sought \$205 million in funding to complete the project's development, which was approved with the passage of the United States-Israel Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act (H.R. 5327) this past May.

As we celebrate the victory of the Israelites over their oppressors this Hanukkah, we must remember that a commitment to self-defense has made Jewish survival possible from generation to generation. Today, with the assistance of an American government dedicated to Israel's defense, the Jewish state finds itself increasingly able to protect her population. ■