

JULY 23, 2012

Parashat Devarim

Like the Bees

As bees do (Deuteronomy 1:44)

כאשר תעשינה הדברים (דברים א:מד)

According to the Torah, Moses told the Israelites that the Emorites chased the Jewish people “as bees do” (1:44). While Ibn Ezra sees the allusion to the bees as a reference to their tendency to swarm to protect their hive, Rabbi Yosef Zev Soloveitchik explains that Moses compared the Emorites to the bees in order to demonstrate the degree of hatred that motivates those who attack the Jewish people. In his commentary (see Talelei Orot vol. 5 p53) he writes, “Due to their great enmity, they are willing to fight against [the Jews], even as they know that they themselves will be killed, just like the bees which die immediately after stinging their prey.”

During Moses’ time, the children of Israel faced adversaries who were so consumed by hatred that they were willing to take their own lives to kill the Jews. Sadly today, the same level of hatred continues to haunt the Jewish people.

Several Israeli tourists were tragically murdered as a bus carrying Israeli vacationers was attacked outside the airport in Burgas, Bulgaria. An eyewitness and fellow passenger [said](#) that, “We were just getting on the bus when suddenly someone came near the bus’s front door and exploded...there were wounded people also on the ground. I could see a burned hole in the side of the bus.” Officials in Israel said that five Israelis had been killed, along with the Bulgarian bus driver and dozens more were injured. The explosion came only a few days after a suspected operative of Hizballah was arrested in Cyprus on suspicion of plotting to kill Israeli tourists there. The attack also came on the 18th anniversary of the bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association community center in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 and injured hundreds and remains the deadliest bombing in Argentina’s history. Former head of Israel’s Counterterrorism Bureau Brig.-Gen. (res.) Nitzan Nuriel told [The Jerusalem Post](#) this suicide bombing could be a sign of Hizballah’s frustration with its failure to, until now, successfully attack Israelis; the recent attack attempts in India, Georgia, Thailand, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Cyprus and Greece had all been stopped. “Using a suicide bomber is in order to make sure that the attack will take place since the bomber will be able to make the necessary decisions.”

Moses used the imagery of bees to illustrate the willingness of some to sacrifice their own lives to kill Jews. Recent events remind us that Moses’ description remains troublingly relevant. ■

Continued Support

You have lacked nothing (Deuteronomy 2:7)

לא חסרת דבר (דברים ב:ז)

As the nation survived its 40 year sojourn through the desert, Moses relayed to the Jewish people, “these 40 years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing” (2:7). According to the Midrash (Midrash Tehillim 23:3), Moses pointed out that their situation was anything but standard, specifically because God did not decrease support as time passed. “Said Rabbi Yehudah...in normal situations when a person receives a guest, on the first day he slaughters a[n expensive] calf on his behalf; the second day a sheep, the third a chicken, the fourth [he feeds his guest] legumes, [and from] the fifth day [onward] he continues to reduce [what he gives to his guest]. The last day is

not comparable to the first day. Perhaps this was also true [regarding the Jews in the desert]? For this reason the verse teaches us, ‘these 40 years...you have lacked nothing.’ The first day was like the last.”

Just as a steady level of support allowed the Jews to not only survive, but thrive during their years in the desert, stable American aid to Israel will continue to help the Jewish state address ongoing security threats.

In 2007, then-President George W. Bush signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Israel that pledged \$30 billion in U.S. security assistance to Israel over a ten year period, beginning in 2009. The first four years of that agreement have already been implemented. For fiscal year 2013, President Obama has asked Congress to appropriate \$3.1 billion in aid to Israel called for in the fifth year of the MOU. The 10 year agreement embodies America’s commitment to maintain Israel’s qualitative military edge, which Congress has [defined](#) as Israel’s “ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors.” At this time of tremendous uncertainty in the Middle East, it is particularly important that the United States live up to its commitment to Israel’s security. We must remind our members of Congress to stand by America’s commitments to Israel and fully support the vital security assistance requested by President Obama and pledged in the 10 year U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding. For more on assistance to Israel, click [here](#).

Like the children of Israel, who benefited from steady support throughout their travels, continued American support for Israel’s security ensures safety in the Jewish state. ■

A Dire Warning (Haftarah Shabbat Chazon)

Your country is desolate (Isaiah 1:7)

ארצכם שממה (ישעיהו א:ז)

Before *Tisha B’Av*, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, we read the *haftarah* from the first chapter of Isaiah. The prophet warns the nation to change their ways and act righteously towards one another or else a life of calamity and destruction awaited them. Frighteningly, he warned, “Your country [will be] desolate; your cities [will be] burned with fire; your land, strangers [will] devour it in your presence” (1:7). Metzudat David explains that Isaiah warned that because the destruction would come from a distant and foreign land, “they will overturn everything and destroy everything and make complete desolation, for they will never dwell in [the land].”

Isaiah’s deterrent words especially resonate with us as Iran works feverishly to achieve a nuclear weapons capability that would give it the means to bring true destruction and desolation to the state of Israel.

Despite countless efforts to coerce the Islamic Republic to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons, Iran’s covert nuclear program progresses. [The Daily Telegraph](#) reported, British intelligence chief Sir John Sawers said that Iran is now “two years away” from becoming a “nuclear weapons state...The Iranians are determinedly going down a path to master all aspects of nuclear weapons; all the technologies they need,” Sawers said. “It’s equally clear that Israel and the United States would face huge dangers if Iran were to become a nuclear weapon state.” Meanwhile, Iran’s military continues to improve the accuracy and killing power of its long- and short-range ballistic missiles, including a weapon designed to target vessels, according to a Pentagon report to Congress, [Bloomberg](#) reported. This report signed by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated, “Iran has boosted the lethality and effectiveness of existing systems by improving accuracy and developing new submunition payloads” that extend the destructive power over a wider area than a solid warhead. For more on the threat from Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Despite Isaiah’s warning the people failed to heed his words, and the Jewish nation suffered historic consequences. Israel and the United States cannot make this same mistake; the world must listen to intelligence officials’ frightening warnings to prevent a destructive vision like Isaiah’s from becoming a reality. ■

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