



Sermon Tidbits

AUGUST 6, 2012

Parashat Eikev

The World's Blessing

You shall be blessed above all peoples (Deuteronomy 7:14)

ברוך תהיה מכל העמים (דברים ז:יד)

Based on the Midrashic notion that all the blessings of the world flow through the Land of Israel, many commentators explain the verse “You shall be blessed above all peoples” (7:14) to mean that should the Children of Israel follow the statutes of the Torah, they will enjoy the greatest blessings, more than all of the other nations. However, Kli Yakkar (on 7:14) interprets the verse differently, explaining that Moses promised that the nations of the world would themselves bless the Jewish nation. The ancient nations recognized that their blessing for peace in Israel would ultimately mean peace throughout the world. “All of the lands drink from the essence of the Land of Israel. For this reason, all of the nations would, by necessity bless Israel, for through Israel’s peace, they would also enjoy peace.”

Moses foretold that the other nations would bless the Jewish nation because they saw how Israel’s peace would bring them peace as well. Today, the U.S. recognizes that a strong Israel brings tangible, strategic benefits to America.

Even as the United States faces ongoing security threats such as terrorism, the spread of radical Islam, and missile proliferation, Israel remains America’s most reliable strategic partner in the Middle East. These two allies work to defeat common threats and support regional and global policy objectives. Close strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel further U.S. interests and enhance the security of both nations. Israel’s military strength and central geo-strategic location provide a strong deterrent against Iran and other radical forces that threaten America. Underscoring this idea, President Obama recently signed the [U.S-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012 \(S.2165\)](#) reaffirming America’s unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security providing Israel the means to defend itself by itself. In an article on [Ynet](#), an Israeli official said, “Israel can, with the United States’ help, maintain its deterrence advantage in the face of potential enemies’ aggression. By cooperating with Israel, the U.S. has obtained a reliable, democratic and technology-oriented partner in promoting its strategic interests.” For more on enhanced U.S.-Israel cooperation, click [here](#).

The ancient nations of the world blessed Israel because their peace depended on Israel’s continued tranquility. Today, America similarly realizes that by approving policies that improve Israel’s security, the U.S. also benefits from a more secure, stable Middle East. ■

Unique Produce

You shall not lack anything in it (Deuteronomy 8:9)

לא תחסר כל בה (דברים ח:ט)

When Moses described the unique nature of the Land of Israel, he added, “You shall not lack anything in it” (8:9). Yalkut Me’am Loez (Devarim Vol. 2 p. 443) explains that Moses described the Land of Israel’s unique ability to nurture varied and diverse types of produce which are not normally associated with its natural climate. “It is the normal manner of most lands that its climate grows unique vegetation not found in other climates. Yet, the Land of Israel does not ‘lack’ anything—for even peppers and spices which grow in distant lands grow in the Land of Israel.”

In ancient times, Moses promised that the fertile and diverse climates of the Land would yield a wide and varied range of produce. Israeli Researchers have recently taken this a step further by discovering innovative methods to produce an animal species that is not native to the region.

Due to overfishing, the bluefin tuna, most often used in sushi rolls, is endangered and faces the risk of extinction. According to NoCamels.com, an Israeli research team, in collaboration with other teams across Europe, believes it can ensure the species' survival through domesticated breeding in the Mediterranean. Dr. Hannah Rosenfeld, director of Israel's National Center for Mariculture (NCM), a research center of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), has succeeded with her team in breeding the bluefin tuna in cages in the Mediterranean Sea, and hopes to set up an international land-based institution in Israel for domesticated captive breeding of the Atlantic bluefin tuna. Rosenfeld said in an interview, "If this goal is achieved, we will not be dependent any more on wild fish and we will be able to set in motion the recovery of the global population of this endangered species that is at risk of extinction." For more on Israeli advancement and innovations, click [here](#).

One of the Land of Israel's unique aspects is the diverse crops that normally grow in distant regions, but Israeli advancements are expanding this idea by finding ways to produce an endangered animal species, not native to Israel's part of the world. ■

Cutting the Flow

And shut up the heaven (Deuteronomy 11:17)

ועצר את השמים (דברים יא:יז)

Traditionally, we recite chapter 11, verses 13-21 in the Shema prayer. In this section, Moses sternly warns the nation to steer clear of idolatry in order to avoid suffering the terrible punishment of exile. The text states that before exiling a sinful Jewish nation, God would first "stop the heavens, that there should be no rain" (11:17), preventing the people from producing the food they need to survive. This Midrash (Sifrei Devarim 43) explains that the punishment would be doubly crushing. "[This means that] the clouds would be full, and ready [to produce rain], but they would not expel a single drop." If the nation sinned, while the rainclouds would gather in the skies, they would simply pass the parched fields without issuing a single drop of water.

The Midrash's description of overflowing clouds full with rain but unwilling to release even a drop onto the crops evokes the imagery of modern Iranian tankers full with oil unable to freely offload their goods.

Recently, Congress passed the [Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 \(H.R. 1905\)](#). When coupled with existing sanctions legislation, it represents the strongest set of sanctions to isolate any country in the world during peacetime. Negotiators from the Senate and House of Representatives agreed on a compromised version of this legislation that will continue to increase economic pressure on the Islamic regime to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability. This piece of legislation subjects virtually all of Iran's energy, financial and transportation sectors to U.S. sanctions. Companies conducting business in these industries would face a choice between continuing to do business with Iran and losing access to the United States. The bill expands the sanctions against those who are aiding the human rights abuses in Syria. Sanctions are mandated on anyone providing Iran goods, services or technology that would contribute materially to the ability of Tehran to acquire or develop chemical, biological or nuclear weapons as well as destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons. U.S. persons are prohibited from virtually all transactions related to Iran with certain exceptions, notably for food, medicine and informational materials. For more on H.R. 1905, click [here](#).

Like the clouds brimming with water which did not produce rain, due to new legislation, Iran is brimming with oil that will not flow until it conforms to international demands and abandons its pursuit of nuclear weapons. ■

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