



Sermon Tidbits

SEPTEMBER 24, 2012

Parashat Ha'azinu - Sukkot

A Strengthening Bond

Jacob, the lot of his inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9)

יעקב חבל נחלתו (דברים לב:ט)

Jacob is described as the “*chevel*” of God’s inheritance, a term that is commonly translated to mean “lot.” However, this word *chevel* literally means “rope.” Why would Moses refer to Jacob, i.e. the nation of Israel, as a “rope” of inheritance? Maharam of Kobrin (see *Mayanah Shel Torah* vol. V p. 156) explains that a rope is woven of many strands. So, even if the rope comprises several weak strands, the stronger strands compensate for the weaker ones, and the weak strands actually strengthen the rope. “The same is true of Israel—when they are woven together; even the weakest among them brings benefit to themselves and to the whole.”

Like the many strands of a rope whose weave strengthens the hold, America and Israel work together to strengthen each other. Recently, Israeli soldiers have been helping American soldiers who are suffering from war wounds.

The emotional wounds suffered in battle can be as debilitating as the physical ones. In the United States, American veterans often feel a sense of isolation when they return home, as less than one percent of the population serves in the military. Judy Schaffer of New Jersey founded Heroes to Heroes, a program that brings teams of wounded U.S. soldiers to Israel. According to [Israel21c](#), Heroes to Heroes educates, motivates and stimulates discussion and bonding between American disabled veterans and Israeli peers, as a springboard for emotional and spiritual healing. The results have been impressive. Many of the veterans reported feeling a sense of peace, identification with their Israeli partners who all have served in the IDF, and a connection to the spirituality of Israel’s holy sites. Even halfway through their trip, participants and their coaches were already describing tangible changes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote about the group on his Facebook page “This for me is a very moving moment because you are the greatest freedom fighters. You share the same experiences, defend the same values and face the same threats.” For more on how Israel and the U.S. work together, click [here](#).

Like the various strands of a rope that strengthen one another, the bonds shared by the U.S. and Israel help to bring healing to America’s wounded warriors who suffer deep emotional scars from protecting our freedom. ■

Breaking Ties

I will hide my face from them (Deuteronomy 32:20)

אסתירה פני מהם (דברים לב:כ)

Moses warned that the nation would one day rebel against God and the strictures of Judaism. According to the Torah, God promised that, “I will hide my face from them, and I will see what their end will be; for they are a very inverted generation, children in whom is no faithfulness” (32:20). Da’at Zekeinim (on 32:20) explains that the nation will be inverted because “they [will] consider the goodness that [God] does on their behalf to be evil,” and therefore rebel against God’s commandments. In essence, Moses described a time when the nation’s underlying values contradict those of the Torah and that therefore God would leave the nation to fend for itself.

If the Israelites were to abandon Judaism's values and principles, God would withdraw from them. Today, members of the international community see the wisdom of this approach as they are increasingly withdrawing from states that flaunt international law.

The Canadian government recently announced that it has closed its embassy in Tehran and ordered Iranian diplomats to leave Canada, formally severing diplomatic ties and accusing the Islamic Republic of sponsoring terrorism, [The Los Angeles Times](#) reported. "Canada views the government of Iran as the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world today," Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said in a statement. The decision to sever relations was based on a multitude of concerns, including Iran's support for the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad, which is engaged in a bloody crackdown on opponents, and Tehran's routine threats to harm Israel, Baird noted. Iranian diplomats in Canada were declared *personae non gratae* and given five days to leave the country. According to [JTA](#), Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu applauded the decision. "The determination which Canada demonstrates is extremely important so that the Iranians understand that they cannot continue in their race to achieve nuclear weapons," Netanyahu said. "This practical step must serve as an example to the international community [as regards to] moral standards and international responsibility." For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

God promised to withdraw from supporting the Jewish nation should the people abandon and reject God's principles and values. Today, as the international community confronts an Iranian regime dedicated to building nuclear weapons, democratic countries like Canada are breaking ties with the radical Islamic Republic. ■

International Concern – Sukkot First Days

Thirteen young bullocks (Numbers 29:13)

פְּרִים בְּנֵי בָקָר שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר (בַּמִּדְבָּר כֹּט:ב)

In ancient times, during the seven days of Sukkot the Jewish people were commanded to offer 70 bulls as "additional offerings." Eliyahu Kitov explains (see the Book of Our Heritage, Vol. 1 p. 184) that these sacrifices corresponded to the 70 original nations of the world who descended from the sons of Noah. "Israel brought these sacrifices as atonement for the nations of the world and in prayer for their well-being, as well as for universal peace and harmony between them." Yet, according to the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 21), instead of appreciating this care and concern, the nations responded with scorn. "Israel says [to God]: Behold, we offer seventy [sacrifices] on their behalf, and they should have loved us...instead, in the place of my love they hate me" (Psalms 109).

Like the ancient Jews in the Temple era, whose offerings on the nations' behalf were met with scorn and hatred, Israel's ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of life of the Palestinians' are similarly met with derision.

Israel works to enhance the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and continues to facilitate the [transfer of goods](#) to the Gaza Strip. In early September, 1,531 trucks delivered almost 43 thousand tons of goods and diesel fuel necessary to operate Gaza's sole power plant. According to [Haaretz](#), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu additionally decided to transfer NIS 250 million to the Palestinian Authority (PA), in light of protests in the West Bank and the difficult economic situation there, to enable the PA to pay salaries of government staff who have not received full salaries since June. The payments represent tax money Israel collects for the Palestinians to be paid in advance, and the money in question is 50 percent of the total amount Israel collects from Palestinians at checkpoints each month for the PA under an agreement between the sides. The prime minister said that Israel is taking several steps to help the Palestinians overcome the economic crisis and that it was "in our joint interest" that they do. Still, despite these efforts, terrorist groups in Gaza fired rockets at civilian towns and cities in Israel's southern region, the PA proceeded with its efforts to gain non-member status at the United Nations without engaging in meaningful negotiations with Israel, and some Palestinian activists called for mass demonstrations in the West Bank to demand an end to the Oslo Accords and other agreements signed between the PLO/PA and Israel. For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

The Midrash explains that the Jewish nation's efforts on behalf of other nations were met with hatred. That trend continues, as Israel's efforts aimed to better the lives of Palestinians are similarly met with disdain and hostility. ■