



# Sermon Tidbits

SEPTEMBER 10, 2012

## Parashat Netzavim

### Mutual Responsibility

**You are standing today... (Deuteronomy 29:9)**

**אתם נצבים היום (דברים כט:ט)**

According to the Zohar (Section 2, 32:2), when Moses spoke to the nation standing together “*hayom*” (that day), Moses was referring to Rosh Hashanah, the day that the Jewish people are judged for their actions from the previous year. According to Ohr Hachayyim (on 29:9), Moses emphasized the fact that “all of you” (29:9) stand together—leaders, tribes, elders, every person in Israel—to remind us that “all of Israel are responsible for one-another.” On Rosh Hashanah, every member is evaluated on whether they acted on behalf of the Jewish nation.

As we stand together on Rosh Hashanah, we are reminded of the mutual responsibility we share for one-another. It is also a time to commit ourselves to act on behalf of Israel in what will be a critical year for the Jewish state.

As the Jewish people usher in a new year, the state of Israel faces greater uncertainty and danger than in recent memory. Volatility in Egypt and especially in the Sinai, which has been a breeding ground for terrorist groups, has called into question the stability of a border that had been peaceful for three decades. Radical Islamist groups in the Gaza Strip continue to fire mortars and rockets on Israel’s southern region. The civil war in Syria has further destabilized the entire Middle East, raising the frightening specter of chemical and biological weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups, prompting many Israelis to procure their government-provided gas masks. Hizballah, to Israel’s north, continues to amass medium and long-range missiles, and Iran’s unabated nuclear program presents a tangible threat to Israel’s very existence. As 2012 is an election year, candidates for elected office are actively seeking help from citizens willing to put in their time and energy to push them across the finish line into office. The time that we invest now, working for a candidate we truly support and believe in, can also be the roots of a critical relationship in the future. As Israel faces unprecedented challenges from all sides, we all must do our part to protect the state of Israel. For more on how to get involved, click [here](#).

On Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish nation stood as one with a mutual responsibility. Today, as Israel faces unparalleled threats from all sides our individual efforts can come together on behalf of the state of Israel. ■

### Keeping Commitments

**And not with you only... (Deuteronomy 29:13)**

**ולא אתכם לבדכם (דברים כט:יג)**

According to the Torah, as Moses described the eternal covenant established with the Jewish nation, he explained that this agreement would be binding “with he who stands here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with he who is not here with us this day” (29:14). Rashi explains that this verse refers to “the future generations,” who would also be bound by the covenant. S’forno (on 29:14), adds a critical element: “And for this reason [Moses] was required to warn them that the gift of the Land was conditional on the fulfillment of the agreement.” Future generations would be required to adhere to the terms of the agreement in order to enjoy the benefits that were promised.

Moses warned the nation that the gift of the Promised Land depended upon their commitment to adhere to the

agreements established by their predecessors. As Egypt's previously established peace agreement with Israel has allowed for decades of benefits, the newly elected government must adhere as well.

Recent developments indicate that the newly elected Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's government will maintain its peace agreements with Israel. For example, Egypt announced the appointment of a new envoy to Israel. According to [The Telegraph](#), Morsi asserted his commitment to uphold Egypt's treaty promising that a military campaign he started to root out Islamist militants in the Sinai Peninsula dividing the two countries would be conducted in compliance with the Israel-Egypt peace treaty of 1979. "Egypt is practicing its very normal role on its soil and does not threaten anyone and there should not be any kind of international or regional concerns at all from the presence of Egyptian security forces," Morsi told the Reuters news agency. [The Washington Post](#) reported that the United States is nearing an agreement with Egypt's new government to eliminate a significant portion of the \$3.2 billion owed by the economically struggling nation. These discussions are the first major negotiation between the Obama administration and Egypt's new elected leaders. These negotiations also represent a critical opportunity to press Egypt's leaders to continue to bolster security along the Israeli-Egyptian and Egyptian-Gazan borders as part of Cairo's maintenance of its international obligations, including the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. For more on Egypt, click [here](#).

Just as future generations of Jews were obliged to follow the agreement established with Moses in the desert, Egypt must similarly adhere to the peace agreements with Israel signed by the previous ruling regime. ■

## Dangerous Defiance

**For, I will follow the visions of my heart (Deuteronomy 29:17)      (כי בשרירות לבי אלך (דברים כט:יז)**

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As Moses reviewed the covenant established with the Children of Israel, he explores the idea of a sinner who violates a core principle of Jewish law: idol worship. After hearing the terrible punishments outlined in the Torah for such behavior, what would bring a person to sin in this matter? Moses explains that such an individual "blesses himself in his heart saying: 'I shall have peace, for I walk *b'shrirut libi*'" (29:17). Rashi interprets this unusual phrase to mean the sinner acts "that which my heart sees." Lekach Tov adds that the word *shrirut* is related to the Aramaic word *sharei*, meaning "permitted." In essence, the sinner's heart tells him that what is actually forbidden and harmful is indeed permitted. Once his heart has given him permission to act, he sees no reason to heed God's warnings.

Like the sinner who follows his heart's permission and ignores warnings of danger, the Iranian regime seems determined to ignore the warnings of the international community and press forward with its nuclear research.

Tehran has doubled its capacity to produce higher-enriched uranium at an underground facility seen as impervious to attack, and continues to block international inspectors from another suspect site, according to the United Nations nuclear watchdog, [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported. In addition, according to [The Jerusalem Post](#), a new report to be circulated to member states of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to say that Iran installed 350 new centrifuges in its underground Fordow facility since May. Iran is enriching uranium to a fissile concentration of 20 percent—easily upgraded to the 90 percent needed for bombs—at Fordow, buried deep inside a mountain near the city of Qom. [Agence France Presse](#) reported, despite widespread international condemnation and biting economic sanctions, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's envoy to the IAEA insisted that Iran's enrichment activities "will never stop" and they are justified in carrying out their work. "We will not give up our inalienable right to enrichment," Soltanieh stated. In light of Iran's defiance, America must make clear its determination to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. It must bring life to President Barack Obama's [policy](#) of containment "to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon" by accelerating draconian economic sanctions to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program. For more on Iran, click [here](#).

Moses described the defiant sinner whose permissive heart leads him to sin. Iran has demonstrated defiance, insisting on its right to pursue its dangerous, illegal nuclear program. ■

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