

AUGUST 20, 2012

Parashat Shoftim

The Product of Hate

And if a man shall hate his fellow man (Deuteronomy 19:11) (וכי יהיה איש שונא לרעהו (דברים יט:יא))

According to the Torah, the cities of refuge only provided sanctuary to someone who killed unintentionally, not to a murderer. Moses distinguished between the two types of killers by describing the murderer: “If a man shall hate his fellow man and lay in wait for him, and rise up against him and kill him” (19:11). Rashi notes the progression from hatred to murder found in the text and comments, “Through hating him he comes to lie in wait for him. Hence [our rabbis] said that one who commits a minor infraction will ultimately violate a major one. Because he violated ‘you shall not hate [your brother in your heart]’ (Leviticus 19:17), he will eventually come to commit murder.”

Rashi’s interpretation recognizes that extreme hatred can lead to murder. As Iran’s leadership spews hateful rhetoric against Israel and the Jewish people, we must take this concept seriously.

For several years Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has expressed a desire for the destruction of the Jewish state. Over the past few weeks the frequency and intensity of these statements has increased by leaders in Iran and its regional proxies. Just before Quds Day, an annual anti-Zionist event, Ahmadinejad [said](#), “All those who love freedom and justice must strive for the annihilation of the Zionist regime to make the world more just and free.” Ahmadinejad continued, “They [the Zionists] are the decision-makers, to the point where presidential candidates of a superpower of 300 million people have to go kiss the feet of the Zionists in order to ensure their victory in the elections.” Also this month, while addressing crowds at a rally in Tehran, Ahmadinejad said, “A new Middle East will definitely be formed. With the grace of God and help of the nations, in the new Middle East there will be no trace of the Americans and Zionists.” Although this is not the first time the world has heard words like these from Ahmadinejad, they should be taken more seriously as the Iranian regime continues toward its nuclear capability. As Lebanese Hizballah Member of Parliament Walid Sakariya recently [said](#), “This nuclear weapon is meant to create a balance of terror with Israel, to finish off the Zionist enterprise.” For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Just as Moses recognized that hateful feelings had the potential to ultimately prove deadly, ignoring the vitriol articulated by Iran’s leadership could have tragic and devastating consequences for the state of Israel. ■

Keeping Commitments

If you shall go out to war (Deuteronomy 20:1)

כי תצא למלחמה (דברים כ:א)

Chapter 20 opens with language that shifts between the singular (“a horse and chariot”) and the plural (“a horde greater [in number] than you”) in the span of a single verse. Was Moses describing a struggle against a single enemy or instead against a large number of adversaries? According to Kli Yakkar (on 20:1), Moses was describing the most precarious situation of all: when Israel’s enemies unite against her: “And I say that when there is peace among the adversaries [of Israel] then war is most dangerous, for all of them are dedicated, as a single mouth, against [the nation of Israel]. But when their hearts are divided and they are not in a unified group, then the danger is not so great.”

Moses' description of the danger that could have occurred if the Israelites' adversaries united against them gives us reason to pause as we consider the recent warming of the relationship between Hamas, the U.S.-designated terrorist group with the self-proclaimed goal of the destruction of Israel, and Egypt.

In 1979, Egypt became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Since then, Cairo has largely adhered to its main treaty commitments: full diplomatic relations, keeping the Sinai as a demilitarized buffer zone, permitting the presence in the Sinai of the U.S.-led Multinational Force and Observers, and maintaining freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal even for Israeli warships. Egypt's peace with Israel contributes to regional stability. However, recent developments in Cairo like the breakdown of communication between Egypt and Israel have raised concerns in Jerusalem. "Since [Egyptian President Mohammad] Morsi's government doesn't communicate with Israel, little can be known of Egypt's plans," the [Times of Israel](#) reported. Even more disconcerting is the fact that Egypt's newly-instated Defense Minister Abdul Fatah Khalil al-Sisi has not opened communication channels with Israel since assuming his post. Yet, he spoke with Hamas's Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, who congratulated al-Sisi on his new appointment and also reportedly pledged that Hamas would continue to maintain security and cooperation ties between Gaza and Egypt. This development only increases concern over the future direction of the new Egyptian regime. While Morsi has pledged to "preserve international accords and obligations," he has also called the 1979 Egyptian Israeli peace treaty "unfair." For more on how the U.S. can encourage peace, click [here](#).

Kli Yakkar noted that when Israel's adversaries unite, they present a grave threat to the nation's security. With this in mind, the United States must insist that Egypt maintain the peace treaty with Israel and not partner with the radical forces aligned against the Jewish state. ■

Protecting the World

You shall not destroy the trees (Deuteronomy 20:19)

לא תשחית את עצה (דברים כ:יט)

"You shall not destroy the trees" (20:19) has been commonly interpreted into a broad prohibition against wasteful destruction. Rabbi Jeffrey W. Goldwasser notes that the Torah prohibits waste in order to instill in us a sense of responsibility for our dominion over the world. He [writes](#), "We are in a position of power over the world of God's creation, so we must use that power to care for and protect the world. Our obligation to care for resources is not primarily because it will benefit us. It is because the world is not ours to use in whatever way we wish. The world of creation has its own value and integrity apart from its usefulness to us. The world God created owes us nothing; we owe God and the world everything."

Jewish tradition strongly emphasizes our obligation to steward and protect the world which we were given. An Israeli team continues this tradition as it works to win a prestigious environmental technology competition.

Every other year the United States Department of Energy invites teams from around the world to participate in the Solar Decathlon, a contest that challenges collegiate teams to design, build, and operate solar-powered houses that are cost-effective, energy-efficient, and attractive. For the first time, an Israeli team qualified for the competition with a design inspired by the typical Iron Age Israelite "four-room house," examples of which have been excavated at various archaeological sites, the [Times of Israel](#) reported. "The house will be equipped with the latest in Israeli-designed environmental technology, using as many resources and features in the house as possible to produce the power needed to keep the lights on and the appliances running. For example, the house will be equipped with an array of photovoltaic (PV) panels, producing electricity from sunshine. But there will be other applications of PV technology, e.g., the use of high-transparency PV glass units for curtain walls and skylights, developed by Israeli startup Pythagoras Solar." For more on Israeli innovations, click [here](#).

Students and academics from Israel are developing new ways to adhere to the text's prohibition against unnecessary waste by harnessing cutting edge technology to build homes that produce more energy than they consume. ■

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