

SEPTEMBER 16, 2012

Parashat Vayelech-Shabbat Shuvah

Communal Devotion

And Moses went (Deuteronomy 31:1)

וילך משה (דברים לא:א)

If you knew that we were living your very last day, how would you spend your final hours? Yalkut Meam Loez (Devarim vol. 4, p 1226) notes on Moses' 120th birthday that he dedicated his final day to the needs of his community, visiting each of the tribes and offering words of encouragement. "This is the way of the righteous, who set aside their own pain and engage in the needs of the community. This is also how Moses acted; he left aside the anguish over his own [impending] death, and worried about the needs of Israel..." Even on his very last day of life, Moses dedicated himself to the needs of the Israelites, devoting himself entirely to the nation.

Moses devoted himself unflinching to the needs of the Jewish people. During these incredibly dangerous times for Israel, we can follow Moses' example and dedicate our energy to the safety and security of the Jewish state.

Over the past year, we watched the dangers confronting Israel rapidly unfold. Rockets continue to attack Israel in the south, threatening comments are increasingly being made against the Jewish state and a few weeks ago, for the first time since 1948 an Egyptian tank actually crossed into Israel. Along with that Syria's chemical weapons could end up in the hands of Hizballah and Iran is closer than ever to developing a nuclear weapons capability. Yet, it is important to remember there is something we can do to help keep Israel safe. We can help by ensuring that our leaders in Washington speak out clearly and unequivocally that the aggressions shown toward our ally Israel must immediately cease. At this dangerous time, the number one strategic answer to the threats facing Israel is for America to express—in every way it can—its unwavering, unshakable commitment to Israel. We must ensure that Congress and the administration continue to pledge its diplomatic support and stand by its full commitment to Israel's security assistance for fiscal year 2012, which is vital for Israel to be able to defend herself. For more on how to get involved in the process, click [here](#).

On his final day of life, Moses' demonstrated a sense of devotion to the well-being of the Jewish nation. We must follow Moses' lead and do our utmost to ensure the security of the Jewish state during the coming year. ■

To 120!

I am one hundred twenty years old (Deuteronomy 31:2)

בן מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי (דברים לא:ב)

While Moses told the nation that upon reaching the age of 120 he was no longer "able to go out or come in," Rashi explains that Moses was not suffering from physical frailty. While we might think that his vitality had become weakened, that was not the case. According to the Torah, on the last day of his life, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (34:7). Rashi explains that Moses told the nation that he was no longer permitted to lead because God had transferred the mantle of leadership to Joshua. Even at the ripe old age of 120, Moses remained in peak physical condition.

Moses retained his physical vitality even as he reached the advanced age of 120. Researchers in Israel made a discovery which will hopefully allow us to follow in Moses' footsteps and live long and healthy lives as well.

Recently, findings by scientists at Bar Ilan University in Israel appeared in *Nature*. These researchers found that a long-suspected anti-aging protein called sirtuin can make male mice live about 16 percent longer than average, representing a significant advance in a field that has thus far only extended the life span of yeast, nematodes and fruit flies, the website Nocamels.org reported. While mammals, including humans, have seven types of sirtuins called SIRT1 to SIRT7, these Israeli researchers focused on SIRT6. The scientists were able to demonstrate that male mice bred to have elevated levels of SIRT6 lived on average sixteen percent longer than normal mice. While the initial findings left researchers with numerous questions to address, some suggested that this finding "brings the field of anti-aging research to a new level of maturity." For more on Israeli medical innovations, click [here](#).

This new year, as we extend to our friends and family blessings of health and wish them to live like Moses, to be 120, we can also take pride in the fact that Israeli researchers are working to make this blessing a reality. ■

It's Not Too Late (Shabbat Shuvah)

Return, O Israel (Hosea 14:2)

שובה ישראל... (הושע יד:ב)

The Talmud (Brachot 10a) relates a chilling conversation between the prophet Isaiah and the King Hezekiah as the king lay sick in bed. The prophet told the king that he would die for failing to engage in the mitzvah of procreation, bringing children to the world. When the king expressed remorse for his sin and asked for the prophet's daughter to wed to rectify his sin Isaiah told him, "The decree [of death] has already been decreed." Hezekiah refused to accept the prophet's decree, declaring that, "I received [the tradition passed down] from my grandfather [King David]: Even if a sharp sword is hanging over one's neck, a person should never hold himself back from [asking for] forgiveness." Hezekiah was indeed correct. God accepted his repentance and he recovered from his illness. According to the Talmud, it's never too late for *Teshuvah*. No matter how grave the situation may be, we always have the ability to repent and change our ways.

Despite the advancements that Iran has made, the United States must continue to lead international efforts to impose and enforce crippling economic sanctions to remind Iran that it's not too late: the Iranian regime can still change its ways and abandon its nuclear program.

It has become increasingly clear that the biting economic sanctions placed on the Iranian regime are having an unprecedented impact. In the latest high-level confession that Western economic sanctions are taking their toll on the Iranian economy, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad admitted that Iran is having problems selling its oil, [Agence France Presse](#) reported. "There are some problems in selling oil and we are trying to manage it," Ahmadinejad said on state television. His admission capped a recent change in tone from Iran's top leaders, who for months had denied the sanctions were having an effect. The International Energy Agency in its most recent report said Iran was exporting one million barrels per day; less than half the amount Tehran said it had been exporting at the beginning of the year. Additionally, a senior Iranian official charged that the Iranian central bank's failure to provide U.S. dollars to traders to import essential goods has driven down the value of the country's currency against the dollar, [Reuters](#) reported. The rial recently fell to a record low, reaching 25,650 rials per dollar, about half of its value a year ago. The United States must continue to aggressively enforce the crippling sanctions placed on the Iranian regime, to convince it to change course and accede to the demands of the international community. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

The possibility of atonement reminds us that the gates of repentance always remain open. As the Iranian regime grapples with crippling economic sanctions, it must remember that it's not too late to abandon its dangerous pursuit of nuclear weapons. ■

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