

NOVEMBER 12, 2012

Parashat Toldot

Deceitful Words

Because he did eat of his venison (Genesis 25:28)

כי ציד בפיו (בראשית כה:כח)

According to the Torah, Isaac loved his eldest son Esau “because *tzayid* (trapping) was in his mouth” (25:28). In context, the verse relates that Esau hunted and shared the game he caught with Isaac, forging a culinary bond between father and son. Yet, the Sages refused to accept that Isaac could be co-opted by food. Rather, they explain the phrase to mean that Isaac loved his son because Esau “trapped [his father] with his mouth.” Rashi (on 25:28) explains that Esau would “trap and deceive his father with his mouth, and ask him, ‘Father, how does one tithe salt and straw?’ leading his father to [erroneously] believe that he was meticulous about fulfilling the commandments.”

Esau’s words gave Isaac a false impression of his true feelings. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas’ word are similarly misleading as he first suggested to Israelis that he is a true partner for peace, but later promised Arabs that he would never compromise for the sake of peace.

In a recent interview, Abbas “made a rare if symbolic concession to Israel, saying he had no permanent claim on the town from which he left as a child during the War of Independence in 1948,” [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. “Palestine now for me is ‘67 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This is now and forever...This is Palestine for me. I am (a) refugee, but I am living in Ramallah. I believe that (the) West Bank and Gaza is Palestine and the other parts (are) Israel.” Israeli leaders immediately praised Abbas for his declaration. Israeli President Shimon Peres [said](#) that, “(Abbas’s) courageous words prove that Israel has a real partner for peace. These are significant words...We must all treat them with the utmost respect.” Sadly, Abbas immediately contradicted his own statement. After strong condemnation from a wide range of Arab groups accusing him of treason, Abbas declared that neither he nor any Palestinian would ever relinquish their “sacred rights” to return to all of Israel. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) on his Facebook page that, “I watched President Abbas’ interview over the weekend. I have heard that he has already managed to go back on his remarks. This only proves the importance of direct negotiations without pre-conditions. Only in direct negotiations will it be possible to clarify what the true positions are.” For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

Esau used his words to “trap” his father and mislead him to believe what wasn’t true. PA President Abbas recently used the same tactic by telling Israelis one thing and then telling the Arab world something else entirely. ■

Close to Danger

We have done to you nothing but good (Genesis 26:29)

עשינו עמך רק טוב (בראשית כו:כט)

In his petition to establish a treaty with Isaac, Abimelech mentioned “we have done to you nothing but good...” (26:29). What “good” did the people of Gerar do for Isaac? The Ba’alei Hatsofot (see Maayan Hashavua vol. 1 p. 362) offers a parable: “A lion once had a bone stuck in its throat, and could not find an animal willing to dislodge it. He called to a chicken to help. The chicken said, ‘if you will pay me, I will help you,’ to which the lion agreed. The chicken reached his neck deep into the lion’s mouth and dislodged the bone, after which he said to the lion, ‘give me my payment.’ The lion replied, ‘Is it not enough that you placed your head in my mouth and emerged without harm?’”

Similarly, Abimelech believed that the people of Gerar were good to Isaac because they let Isaac leave their country unharmed.

The parable that Ba'alei Hatosfot tells reveals a truth about the risk of being near danger. Israeli defense officials must keep this lesson in mind as the Syrian civil war threatens to spill over the border.

Continued violence in the Syrian civil war, which has engulfed the country since last year and left more than 30,000 Syrians dead, threatened to spread into Israel. [Haaretz](#) recently reported that firefighters on the Golan Heights were called to contain a fire on the Israeli side of the Syrian border, apparently caused by tracers of ammunition fired on the other side of the frontier a few hours earlier that came within a few dozen meters of an Israeli army base. This came days after three Syrian tanks entered the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria, in violation of the 1974 disengagement agreement between the two countries. The incursion, according to [The Times of Israel](#), prompted the IDF to raise its alert level in the Northern Command area. In response, the United Nations condemned Syria for fighting so close to the border with Israel, which it [said](#), “has the potential to escalate tensions between Israel and Syria and jeopardizes the ceasefire between the two countries and the stability of the region.” Jeffrey Feltman, the U.N.’s top political official said that the “risk is growing that this crisis could explode outward into an already volatile region.” For more on Syria, click [here](#).

Like a chicken sticking its head into a lion’s mouth, Israel endures the consequences of its dangerous neighborhood. Let us all pray for the safety of the Jewish state, and do all we can to protect her. ■

Deep-Rooted Hatred

And Esau hated Jacob (Genesis 27:41)

וישטם עשו את יעקב (בראשית כז:מא)

After Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob, Esau secretly planned his revenge and “said in his heart: Let the days of mourning for my father be at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob” (27:41). In the very next verse, Rebecca learned of Esau’s plans. How did she know what Esau secretly planned in his heart? Ibn Ezra (on 27:41) explains that it seems logical to conclude that Esau “revealed his secret to one of his confidants.” His hatred for Jacob was so great that he could not keep it a secret and therefore Rebecca was able to take the necessary steps to protect Jacob.

Like Esau, who could not contain his hatred and therefore must have revealed his plans to kill his brother, Iran’s leaders are explicitly threatening Israel’s annihilation—while accelerating their pursuit of nuclear weapons capability.

Iran recently confirmed for the first time that it had finished installing centrifuges for enriching uranium at its underground nuclear facility in Fordo, [Haaretz](#) reported. The head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, Fereydoun Abbasi, told Iran’s Fars news agency that “Iran is completing its nuclear activities regardless of the negative Western media speculations and reports.” These reports quoted Western diplomats saying that Tehran would soon finish installing the last of the centrifuges planned for the Fordo facility. “Our response to such reports is working harder,” Abbasi added. The Fordo site is extremely important to the Iranian nuclear program; the centrifuges are located deep underground, at an estimated depth of 260 feet. This would make it very hard to destroy them with an aerial attack. Iran, whose leaders have repeatedly [declared](#) their open hatred for Israel, presses forward with its program to develop an illicit nuclear weapon. The international community must continue to ratchet up the sanctions and act with greater vigor to compel the Islamic Republic to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons. For more on Iran, click [here](#).

Because Esau could not contain his hatred for his brother, Rebecca was able to protect Jacob. Iran’s inability to contain its hatred for Israel must also prompt the international community to similarly take the steps necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring the tools to destroy the Jewish state. ■

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