

NOVEMBER 19, 2012

## Parashat Vayitzei

### Financial Motivation

**And he hugged him and kissed him (Genesis 29:13)**

**ויחבק לו וינשק לו (בראשית כט:יג)**

When Laban learned that his nephew Jacob had suddenly arrived from Canaan for a visit, he uncharacteristically “ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house” (29:13). According to Rashi (on 29:13), he ran in the hope of financial gain. “He thought [that Jacob] was loaded with money, for [Eliezer] the slave of the household had come to the place with ten camels loaded [with treasure].” He hugged and kissed Jacob because “when [Laban] saw [Jacob] empty-handed, he said, ‘Perhaps he brought gold coins with him and they are in his pockets...and perhaps he brought jewels, and they are in his mouth.’”

Laban’s actions remind us of the power and influence that money can have on someone’s behavior. This is why the international community must continue to tighten the economic sanctions that are crippling Iran’s economy.

As tough sanctions continue to cripple Iran’s economy, Iranian manufacturers and builders face serious shortages of steel and other metals as a new European Union export ban adds to troubles for an economy already reeling from sanctions on its finances and oil exports, [Reuters](#) recently reported. Reliant on imports to make up a shortfall in its own steel production, Iran’s purchases of foreign steel are falling as buyers are being hit by E.U. and U.S. measures that hinder banks, insurers and others supporting trade with Tehran. Given steel’s central role in the economy, in the skeletons of new buildings or for constructing machinery, disruption to trade in the metal may cause far-reaching damage. According to [Business Week](#), Iran’s local airlines have increased their fares by up to 70 percent to compensate for losses spurred by the sanctions. Also, Iran’s Central Bank said the country’s annual inflation rate reached 24.9 percent in October, an increase from 24.0 percent in September, the [Associated Press](#) reported, representing the highest inflation rate Iran has experienced since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assumed office in 2005. These economic hardships are the direct result of the Western sanctions campaign spearheaded by the United States aimed at preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. For more on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

Laban’s love for money and riches motivated him to run and greet Jacob. Similarly, Iran’s concern for its own financial viability will hopefully compel the leaders of the Islamic Republic to comply with international demands and halt its nuclear weapons program. ■

### Brotherhood

**And Jacob said to his brothers (Genesis 31:46)**

**ויאמר יעקב לאחיו (בראשית לא:מו)**

To concretize the newly established covenant with Laban, Jacob wished to construct a small monument. So, “Jacob said to his brothers, ‘Gather stones’; and they took stones, and made a heap” (31:46). Rashi wonders who the brothers were, as Jacob had only one brother—Esau—who lived far away in Canaan. Rashi (on 31:46) explains that these “brothers” were in fact his sons. Why then does the verse refer to Jacob’s sons as brothers? Rashi explains that “they were brothers in that they came near to [assist] him [in time of] war or distress.” More than simply a familial bond, brotherhood represents a willingness to stand side by side during difficult times.

Jacob called his sons “brothers” to highlight the fact that he knew that he could count on them in times of distress. As the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas demonstrates, America stands in brotherhood with the state of Israel.

For more than a decade Hamas has consistently fired rockets at Israeli communities and civilian population centers. In the past year alone Israel had been hit by more than 780 rockets prior to the recent violence. More than 5,000,000 Israelis live within Hamas’ rocket range; many of these civilians have only a matter of seconds to find shelter after a rocket is launched. These attacks, and more than 100 suicide bombings and shooting attacks that have killed more than 500 civilians over the years, are part of an ongoing war that Hamas has waged against Israel in which it deliberately targets Israeli population centers. As the attacks from Gaza intensified this month, when more than 120 rockets hit Israel and [an IDF Jeep was struck by an anti-tank missile](#), Israel felt it had no choice and launched Operation Pillar of Defense.

The U.S. immediately stood behind Israel’s right to defend itself against rocket attacks. [In a phone call](#) to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on November 14th, President Barack Obama “reiterated the United States’ support for Israel’s right to self-defense in light of the barrage of rocket attacks being launched from Gaza against Israeli civilians.” The president has also [stated](#) that “There’s no country on earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders...We are fully supportive of Israel’s right to defend itself.” According to the White House, the leaders agreed that Hamas must stop attacking Israel in order to restore calm to the area.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner [added](#) that “there is no justification for the violence that Hamas and other terrorist organizations are employing against the people of Israel.” U.S. support for Israel was also expressed by United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice at a U.N. Security Council briefing on November 14th. At the meeting she [stated](#) that “Hamas claims to have the best interests of the Palestinian people at heart, yet it continues to engage in violence...attacking Israel does nothing to help Palestinians in Gaza nor move the Palestinian people any closer to achieving self-determination and independence.”

Behind the scenes, the United States engaged in efforts to persuade world leaders—particularly Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt—to pressure Hamas against continuing its attacks on Israel. President Obama specifically [called](#) Egyptian President Mahmoud Morsi to discuss ways to de-escalate the situation in Gaza as quickly as possible. Morsi responded to Obama’s words by making incendiary comments supporting Hamas’ attacks against Israel and recalling Egypt’s ambassador to Israel for consultations.

Congress also immediately and forcefully stated its support Israel. On the second day of Operation Pillar of Defense, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution ([S. Res 599](#)) introduced by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Mark Kirk (R-IL). This bipartisan resolution expressed “vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizing and strongly supporting its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against acts of terrorism.” The House of Representatives unanimously adopted an identical resolution ([H. Res. 813](#)). The bipartisan unanimous votes by the Senate and House sent a unified message of solidarity between the people of the U.S. and the people of Israel in their struggle against terrorist attacks on their citizens. To thank your representatives for supporting Israel’s right to self-defense, click [here](#).

For the latest news on the situation in Israel, visit AIPAC’s Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/aipac](http://www.facebook.com/aipac).

For the same reason that Jacob considered his sons to be “brothers,” Israel can look at the United States as a “brother” who has stood with the Jewish state in the face of rockets and missiles from Gaza. We should be proud that we live in a country that can differentiate victim from aggressor and stands by its strongest ally in the region. ■