

DECEMBER 10, 2012

Parashat Miketz

Encouraging Action

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out (Genesis 41:33)

ועתה ירא פרעה (בראשית מא:לג)

While Joseph was just a lowly slave when he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and predicted seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, he offered unsolicited advice to the King of Egypt for how to properly prepare for the coming calamity. Rabbi Abraham the son of Rambam (see *Mayanah Shel Torah* vol. 1 p. 573) explains that Joseph had the temerity to offer the unsolicited advice simply because he could not contain himself. "Due to his great compassion for the nation...he could not contain his emotions and hold back the advice that could save the nation." Joseph spoke out because he recognized that Egypt stood at a critical crossroads.

Like Joseph, who encouraged ancient Egypt to take immediate action to prepare for the coming famine, a group of Senators recently encouraged modern-day Egypt to act quickly to prevent Hamas from rearming itself with weapons.

In the recent ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt between Israel and Hamas, Israel sought guarantees from Egypt that it would do more to prevent Hamas from rearming. Despite this Hamas has explicitly [declared](#) its intention to rearm with Iran's help. After Hamas seized power from its Palestinian rival Fatah in 2007, Egypt and Israel maintained a blockade of the Gaza Strip to prevent Hamas from importing rockets and advanced weapons that would be used against Israeli civilians. In an encouraging step, Egyptian forces recently seized a truck carrying Grad-type Katyusha rockets as well as high-grade weapons en route to the northern Sinai, [Haaretz](#) reported. Grad rockets have been repeatedly fired by terrorists in Gaza at Israeli towns in the western Negev, an issue over which Israel launched the eight-day Operation Pillar of Defense. In order to encourage Egyptian President Morsi to take a more active role in preventing Hamas from rearming, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators sent a letter to Morsi urging him to crack down on arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip, [JTA](#) reported. "In order for the cease-fire to hold, it is imperative that your government bolster its efforts to halt all weapons smuggling taking place via both overland and underground routes," said the letter, which was initiated by Sens. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA). For more on Egypt, click [here](#).

Joseph encouraged the leader of ancient Egypt to act immediately in order to have a critical impact and save many lives. Similarly today, U.S. Senators recognize that Egypt has the power to ensure the safety of both Israelis and Palestinians by preventing Hamas from acquiring weapons that have brought destruction throughout the region. ■

Working Hard in Times of Plenty

A man discreet and wise (Genesis 41:33)

איש חכם ונבוך (בראשית מא:לג)

After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph advised the king to seek out a "discreet and wise man" who would guide the country through the troubled years of famine. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian once asked why Joseph felt that Egypt would need such a wise person to handle the job since the coming famine had already been identified. Rabbi Lopian explained that in times of plenty, it's difficult to envision famine and destitution and save for a "rainy day." For this reason, only a wise individual would be able to take the necessary steps to plan for the famine.

Joseph's message to Pharaoh reminds us that we cannot assume that strong American support for Israel will always endure. Therefore, we must continue our efforts to ensure a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

The United States and Israel have shared a special bond since the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. Now 65 years later, American support for the state of Israel is solid—in the White House as well as in both houses of Congress. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), Defense Secretary Leon Panetta recently said the relationship between the United States and Israel is “stronger than any time in history.” Moreover, Congress has been a bedrock of support for the U.S.-Israel relationship by supporting aid, helping stop Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, supporting Israel's right to defend itself and reinforcing American policy that peace will only be achieved through direct negotiations. Yet, this strength can also lead to complacency. After all, it's natural to wonder why, if support for Israel is so strong, we really need to exert so much time and energy lobbying on behalf of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. But your efforts are critical; American support for Israel is robust precisely because of the critical efforts being made each and every day. Thanks to the hard work of pro-Israel activists, over the past 15 years Congress has passed more than a dozen bills and resolutions imposing tough sanctions on Iran. Activists have lobbied to secure hundreds of millions of dollars each year for key defense programs, such as the Arrow missile defense system and Iron Dome rocket defense system. Pro-Israel supporters nationwide are constantly working to protect and strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship. For more on what pro-Israel activists have accomplished, click [here](#).

Just as Joseph recommended to Pharaoh, times of plenty represent the ideal moment to act from strength to ensure that when challenges arise, as they inevitably do, the U.S.-Israel relationship will remain rock solid. ■

Dangerous Deception

And the goblet was found (Genesis 44:12)

וימצא הגביע (בראשית מז:יב)

Before sending his brothers home from Egypt, Joseph secretly instructed his assistant to place his goblet in Benjamin's sack. Later, when the authorities stopped the brothers at the border accusing them of the theft and conveniently found the “stolen” goblet in Benjamin's pouch, Joseph sent Benjamin to prison for the crime. Many commentaries wonder why Joseph acted in such a seemingly sinister manner. Ohr Hachayim (on 44:1) suggests that Joseph acted deceptively in order to test his brothers' devotion to Benjamin and learn whether they would be willing to sacrifice themselves for their younger brother's sake. When Judah offered to indenture himself in order to free Benjamin, Joseph recognized that his brothers truly had repented and he reconciled with them.

While Joseph had good intentions, his actions make us realize how powerful and dangerous deception can be. Hamas on the other hand deceives the world maliciously with the intention to demonize and delegitimize Israel.

In a recent article in [The Washington Post](#), Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren wrote that “[Hamas'] purpose is to portray Israel's unparalleled efforts to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza as indiscriminate firing at women and children, to pervert Israel's rightful acts of self-defense into war crimes. Its goals are to isolate Israel internationally, to tie its hands from striking back at those trying to kill our citizens and to delegitimize the Jewish state. Hamas knows that it cannot destroy us militarily but believes that it might do so through the media.” Hamas deliberately instigates situations to create the very pictures that will put Israel on the defensive around the world. “If Hamas cannot win the war, it wants to win the story of the war,” Oren wrote. Israel cannot combat this media bias without its American supporters. When pictures appear in the media that equate an Israeli act of self-defense with attacks aimed specifically at civilians, we must speak up. We must never let the delegitimization of Israel go unchallenged. The most effective way to fight delegitimization efforts is to educate our elected officials and encourage them to stand up for Israel. For more on how you can take action, click [here](#).

Although Joseph did deceive Benjamin, his motive of reconciliation was pure. As Hamas' leaders deceive the media, their deadly motive is to eliminate Israel's right to self-defense. ■

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