

JANUARY 21, 2013

Parashat Beshalach

Prepared to Protect

And the children of Israel went up armed (Exodus 13:18)

והמשיים עלו בני ישראל (שמות יג:יח)

As the Children of Israel left Egypt and headed to the wilderness, Moses encouraged the people to arm themselves so they would be able to counter any attacks. Rashi explains that when one passes from place to place in inhabited areas, he can purchase what he needs as it arises. “But when he departs into the wilderness, he must prepare himself for everything which is needed” (Rashi on 13:18). Indeed, when the nation of Amalek suddenly attacked the exhausted Jewish nation after the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites possessed the essential armaments to defend themselves.

Recognizing the critical need for a nation to protect itself, Moses prepared the Israelites for any situation in which they would have to defend themselves from attack. Similarly, U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation represents the proper preparations to keep both countries safe.

Congress recently displayed its firm support for U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation by passing a \$633 billion defense bill that, among other things, boosted funds for U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs. [The 2013 National Defense Authorization Act](#) authorized \$267 million for joint missile defense programs, which includes the long-range Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 anti-missile systems, and David’s Sling, designed to intercept medium to long-range rockets and missiles and \$211 million for the Iron Dome short-range rocket defense system. Following passage by the House of Representatives and Senate, President Obama signed the bill into law in early January. Congress authorized \$168 million above the Administration’s fiscal year 2013 budget request for these programs. Leaders in this effort included Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA) and Representative Adam Smith (D-WA). U.S.-Israel cooperation in missile and rocket defense helps Israel protect itself against emerging threats and we must ensure that our elected officials continue to lead these efforts that strengthen that U.S.-Israel relationship. For more on the U.S.-Israel military partnership, click [here](#).

Moses insisted that the Israelites take the steps to protect themselves against potential threats. Today, the close partnership between the United States and Israel has yielded leading military technologies that help keep both countries prepared. ■

Destructive Hatred

And he made ready his chariots (Exodus 14:6)

ויאסר את רכבו (שמות יד:ו)

The Sages note (Bereishit Rabbah 55) that two powerful emotions can cause us to act without logic or reason. “[Excessive] love ruins the line [between appropriate and inappropriate behavior], and excessive hatred also ruins the line [between appropriate and inappropriate behavior].” Noting that, according to the text, Pharaoh himself prepared his own chariot to attack the fleeing Jewish nation, the Midrash wonders, “Did he not have servants? Rather, [from this we learn that hatred ruins the line.” Rabbi Berel Wein writes about Pharaoh that “No logic or facts [could] persuade him to abandon his irrational hatred and self-destructive behavior towards the Jews.” Even after suffering the devastation of the plagues, his hatred motivated him to chase after the Jews, bringing about his own tragic end.

The hatred that Pharaoh demonstrated with his actions ultimately brought ruin to his country. Hopefully, the horribly anti-Semitic statements made by Egypt's current leader won't lead to similarly tragic actions.

A video recently resurfaced of a speech that Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi gave at a rally in his hometown in 2010. The video showed him urging his listeners “to nurse our children and our grandchildren on hatred for them: for Zionists, for Jews,” [The New York Times](#) reported. In another video of a television interview he gave the same year, Morsi criticized Zionists in recognizably anti-Semitic terms, as “these bloodsuckers who attack the Palestinians, these warmongers, the descendants of apes and pigs.” According to [The Washington Post](#), the White House condemned Morsi’s “deeply offensive” comments. Since beginning his campaign for president, Morsi has promised to uphold Egypt’s treaty with Israel but the exposure this month of his virulent comments from early 2010 has revealed sharp anti-Semitic and anti-Western sentiments, questioning Morsi as a force for moderation and stability in the Middle East. A spokesman for Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi [responded](#) that the inflammatory comments he made about Jews before taking office had been taken out of context. The spokesman said that Morsi respected all monotheistic religions and religious freedom. The Obama administration said that the statement issued by the Egyptian presidency are welcomed but not enough to ease concerns about anti-Jewish and anti-Israel comments that the Islamist president made before he took office, the [Associated Press](#) reported. The State Department called it “an important first step” but said the U.S. continues to look for Egypt’s leadership to demonstrate a commitment to religious tolerance and Egypt’s peace treaty with Israel.

As Egypt struggles to assert a leading role in the Middle East, it should take a more prudent course than Pharaoh did. After all, hateful actions can lead to horrible outcomes. ■

Desert Education

And the Lord showed him a tree (Exodus 15:25)

וַיִּרְהוּ ה' עֵץ (שמות טו:כה)

After three days of traveling in the desert without water, the Children of Israel arrived at Marah where they found undrinkable, bitter water. According to the text, there God showed Moses a tree which when cast into the water, purified it and allowed the people to drink. Noting that the word *vayorehu* (and he showed him) is derived from the word *lehorot*—“to teach,” Nahmanides (on 15:25) comments, “It seems according to the simple meaning of the text that the tree naturally sweetened the water, this being its uniqueness, and [God] taught this to Moses.”

God taught Moses how to purify the water that the nation needed to survive in the desert. Israel, following this example, is sharing its skills and knowledge in the areas of water conservation with scientists across the globe.

Recently, 500 participants from over 60 countries traveled to Sde Boker, Israel in the Negev for the biannual International Conference on Drylands, Deserts and Desertification (DDD). A diverse group of experts, policy makers and land managers considered a range of theoretical and practical issues associated with combating desertification and living sustainably in the drylands. [Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) reported, “DDD conferences have earned global distinction as the only such interdisciplinary gatherings in the world... The delegates included some of the world’s top researchers, government officials, activists and members of international development aid agencies.” The conference hosted Italian researchers who, together with Israeli scientists, are carrying out a range of research initiatives such as an agricultural development project in Senegal to eradicate hunger by providing farmers with technological know-how. Sharon Megdal, the director of the Water Resources Research Center at the University of Arizona stated, “Israel is a fascinating place to be, to learn about what they’re doing in terms of water management and environmental issues and trans-boundary water issues. Israel is leading the way in water resources and management.”

Just as God taught Moses how to use natural resources to purify the undrinkable water at Marah, Israel is teaching experts from around the world new techniques to manage and replenish desperately need water resources. ■

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