

JANUARY 14, 2013

Parashat Bo

Feeling the Effects

Do you not know that Egypt is lost? (Exodus 10:7)

הטרם תדע כי אבדה מצרים (שמות י:ז)

After Moses warned Pharaoh that the plague of locusts would consume any produce that survived the plague of hail, including “every tree which grows...in the field,” the king’s servants begged him to release the Israelites: “How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God; do you not know that Egypt is lost?” (10:7). Rabbi Gil Nativ explains that while Pharaoh’s servants had no love for the Jewish people, “due to political-realist forces they recognize that they cannot continue to enslave the nation for over time.” They asked Pharaoh to release the Jews simply because doing so made the most sense for Egypt’s long-term wellbeing.

The plagues put such great economic pressure on Egypt that the Egyptians themselves begged Pharaoh to free the Jews. Using this same strategy of leveraging economic pressure to affect policy change, the United States and our allies have increased sanctions on Iran to convince the country to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

As *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported, “Western sanctions against Iran, combined with years of economic mismanagement by the country’s government, have hammered Iran’s currency and its economy. The economy was predicted to contract by nearly 1% in 2012...after registering annual growth above 6% for much of the past decade.” Now, even members of Iran’s government can no longer deny the effect of the sanctions on Iran’s economy. *The New York Times* reported that “Iran’s oil minister acknowledged for the first time...that petroleum exports and sales had fallen by at least 40 percent over the past year, contradicting his previous denials and providing an unusual public admission that the cumulative impact of Western economic sanctions has grown more severe.” Yet, while Iran is feeling the bite of the sanctions it has not yet taken steps to curtail its nuclear program or submit to international inspections of suspected nuclear weapons development sites. As part of efforts to change this policy, President Obama signed into law tough new [sanctions legislation](#) earlier this month, which the United States must fully enforce if the sanctions are to have the desired impact. For more on Iran visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Had Egypt acquiesced to Moses it could have avoided the economic sting of the plagues. Iran must also submit to the will of the international community if it hopes to avoid further damage to its ailing economy. ■

The Dangers of Instability

Go away from me (Exodus 10:28)

לך מעלי (שמות י:כח)

When Pharaoh finally allowed the Jews to leave for three days of worship, Moses insisted that they would only go with all of their livestock as well. Pharaoh lashed out as Moses, telling him: “Get away from me. Take heed to yourself, see my face no more, for on the day you see my face you shall die” (10:28). Yonatan ben Uziel (on 10:28) explains that Pharaoh had become unstable, warning Moses that the next time he showed his face, “My anger will rise up against you, and I will give you into the hands of those people who wish to kill you.” Moses’ appearing before the king would send the king into such a rage that he could not guarantee Moses protection from those Egyptians bent on killing the leader of the Jewish nation.

Just as Pharaoh's instability threatened to spill over and harm those around him, as the Assad regime unravels in Syria the growing regional instability has become a serious threat to Israel's security.

Israel has made contingency plans for what the upheaval in Syria could bring, particularly to the frontier on the Golan Heights, [The Washington Post](#) reported. While calm has returned to the area following the firing of shells and bullets into Israel last November, Israeli officials say they have two main concerns should Syrian President Bashar Assad be overthrown: that Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons could fall into the hands of Islamist militants, such as Hizballah, and that a breakdown of security in Syria, particularly near the Golan frontier, could lead to militant attacks against Israeli targets across the cease-fire line. For these reasons Israel announced that it was constructing a border fence along the length of its armistice line with Syria in the Golan Heights and that it was coordinating its intelligence with the United States in light of the deteriorating security situation in Syria, [The New York Times](#) reported. In remarks at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the Syrian Army had moved away from the frontier and that jihadist forces had moved in. "Therefore, we will defend this border against both infiltration and terrorism," [Netanyahu said](#), adding, "I also submit to the cabinet the fact that the Syrian regime is very unstable, that the question of chemical weapons here worries us." For more on Syria, click [here](#).

Recognizing the lesson of Pharaoh's instability, Israel is being proactive to protect the lives of its citizens as Assad's control over his country crumbles and threatens the safety and security of the Jewish state. ■

A Mutually Beneficial Partnership

Then he and his neighbor shall take... (Exodus 12:4)

ולקח הוא ושכנו (שמות יב:ד)

The Torah states that each Israelite household was commanded to slaughter a lamb on the first night of Passover to be consumed during the Seder. Yet, the text also relates that "if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next to his house" (12:4) join together. Rashi (on 12:4) explains that if a household was too small its members wouldn't be able to consume the entire lamb, thus violating the prohibition against leaving any part of the lamb unconsumed after the night of the Seder (see 12:10 and Maimonides, Laws of the Paschal Lamb 10:11). To solve this problem, the Torah instructs households to join together, creating mutually beneficial partnerships.

The households that joined together to fulfill the commandments on the night of Passover demonstrated the same type of partnership that the United States and Israel display when they work together on critical projects that promote mutually beneficial interests. Nowhere is the clearer than in the field of U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation.

The partnership between the United States and Israel has yielded leading military technologies such as the Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system that is currently deployed in Israel. Jointly developed by the two allies, the Arrow is among the world's most sophisticated missile shields, as it is the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and supersonic speeds. Israel and the U. S. are also collaborating on the development of a quick reaction defense system, known as David's Sling, to address the threats posed by short- and medium-range missiles and rockets. Recently, Congress reached agreement on a \$633 billion defense bill that would, among other things, boost funds for U.S.-Israeli cooperative missile defense programs, the [Associated Press](#) reported. The conference report for the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act authorizes \$267 million for joint missile defense programs, which includes the Arrow-2, Arrow-3 and David's Sling, an increase from last year's authorized amount that represents an additional \$168 million in funding over the president's budget request. The report also authorizes \$211 million for the Iron Dome short-range rocket defense system. After approval by both houses of Congress, President Obama signed the bill into law January 2.

American and Israeli teams working together have developed cutting edge missile defense systems that protect Israeli civilians and U.S. troops stationed abroad. Like the families who shared their Seder lamb together, the partnership between America and Israel continues to bring great benefits to both parties. ■