



Sermon Tidbits

FEBRUARY 18, 2013

Parashat Tetzaveh–Zachor/Purim

Results of Hatred (Parashat Zachor)

Remember that which Amalek did to you (Deut. 25:17) זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק (דברים כה:יז)

Amalek no longer exists yet we are commanded to remember the Nation of Amalek. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (see Talelei Orot Vol. V p. 89) explains that this *mitzvah* is “to instruct and teach a person to what degree a human being can, in his wickedness, deny even facts that he can see with his own eyes.” Even after witnessing the miraculous salvation of the Jewish nation at the Sea of Reed, Amalek denied the Jews’ unique status and ruthlessly attacked. Instead of examining the facts, the Nation of Amalek was motivated by hatred and waged war with the Jews.

As we remember Amalek we also remember the extreme hatred that led to their ruthless attack on the Jews. This remains chillingly relevant as Iran spews vicious and hateful vitriol while at the same time working toward a nuclear weapons capability.

As the world’s leading state sponsor of terror, Iran, through its proxy armies of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, actively supports terrorists that have carried out attacks on American troops and Israeli civilians, as well as the brutal dictatorship in Syria. Moreover, as Iran races toward a nuclear weapons capability, its leaders have unleashed a furious storm of anti-Semitic, genocidal rhetoric threatening Israel’s eradication. The Iranian regime [denies](#) that millions of Jews were slaughtered during the Holocaust, and spews vicious and hateful vitriol against Israel. Last August, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [said](#) that, “Anyone who loves freedom and justice must strive for the annihilation of the Zionist regime in order to pave the way for world justice and freedom.” Iran firmly rejects Israel’s right to exist; Ahmadinejad has [said](#) that, “The very existence of the Zionist regime is an insult to humankind and an affront to all world nations. Confronting Zionists will also pave the way for saving the whole humankind from exploitation, depravity and misery.” Iran’s hateful words spark grave concerns as it frantically works to develop nuclear weapons capability. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Ahmadinejad’s threatening statements highlight the hatred that the Iranian regime feels toward the Jewish state and reminds us of Amalek’s hatred for the Jewish Nation that motivated their brutal attack. ■

A Critical Gathering (Purim)

Go gather together all the Jews (Esther 4:16) לך כנוס את כל היהודים (אסתר ד:טז)

In the story of Purim, Mordecai insisted that Esther take action to save the Jewish nation. When she finally acquiesced, she demanded that the people fast for three days on her behalf. Esther told Mordecai, “Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast” (4:16). Why did she insist that they gather together? S’fat Emet (Purim 5652) explains that the salvation of the nation depended on their ability to gather together in unity. This is why we read the Megillah in the communal setting of the synagogue, “to hint to us that the essential salvation was [due to] the gathering of the Children of Israel, which brought them [together in] unity.”

The success of the Jewish people has always depended on our ability to gather together. In just a few weeks, pro-Israel supporters will come together in Washington to voice their support for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

As civil war rages in Syria, with Egypt in flux, Hamas remaining committed to destroying Israel and Iran marching toward a nuclear weapon, the Middle East has never been a more unstable neighborhood. We cannot just sit here and bear witness to the threats facing Israel. In just a few weeks, we have a unique opportunity to make a real difference. The AIPAC Policy Conference is the pro-Israel community's preeminent annual gathering. More than 10,000 community and student activists from all 50 states travel to Washington and fan out across Capitol Hill to lobby their members of Congress in support of the Jewish state. In addition to the important advocacy work and the great opportunity to learn about the key issues that Israel faces, the conference brings a sense of unity and purpose to the thousands who participate each year. It is truly invigorating to attend a gala in which advocates, legislators and government officials gather together in unity to support a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. That feeling inspires each and every conference participant to continue the critical work necessary throughout the year. This historic lobbying effort ensures that no matter what happens in the Middle East, our friends and family in Israel will remain safe and secure as America and the Jewish state stand side by side. This year, with so many new members of Congress just elected to office, they need to hear our voices. They need to be reminded of the salient issues shaping both America and Israel's futures. They need to see us in Washington, D.C. For more information on the conference or to register, visit www.aipac.org/PC.

Esther recognized that salvation depended on Jewish unity. Today, that same unity is essential for us to ensure that the relationship between the U.S. and Israel continues as a force for freedom, democracy and a secure Jewish state. ■

Esther the Legislator (Purim)

And Queen Esther wrote (Esther 9:29)

וְלִכְתֹּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה (אֶסְתֵּר ט:כט)

Esther has always represented a model for female Jewish leadership. Yet, perhaps Esther's greatest achievement occurred not during the Purim story, but after it as a legislator. The Talmud explains that we read the Megillah on Purim specifically because of Esther, who wrote to the sages demanding that they "Write me for the generations" (see Talmud Megillah 7a). Esther demanded that the sages not only incorporate her book into the biblical canon, but that they also legislate its reading on a yearly basis. In fact, in the text of the Megillah, the first letter of the word ותכתוב in 9:29 appears larger than the other letters. The Midrash (Hachefetz) teaches "that she herself wrote [the Megillah] with her own hand, and sent it to the entire Diaspora."

Esther's achievements as a legislator after the nation's salvation serve as an inspiration to Jewish women today, who now serve in record numbers as legislators in Israel's newly installed 19th Knesset.

Unlike any other country in the region, Israel provides full rights to women and encourages participation in all aspects of social and political life. Whereas in other countries women are treated as second-class citizens, in Israel, women are at the forefront of many aspects of the government. Israel has always had at least one woman on its Supreme Court, and is the only country in the Middle East to elect a woman, Golda Meir, to the position of prime minister. With the recent installment of the 19th Knesset, a [record number of women](#) now serve in Israel's legislative body. Women now comprise over 23 percent of the Knesset. Just as women were elected in record numbers to the United States Congress, as American voters sent a record 98 women to Congress, the number of Knesset seats occupied by women in Israel rose from 22 in the last Knesset to 26 in the current one. According to the [Forward](#), in addition to party leaders Tzipi Livni (Hatnua) and Shelli Yachimovitch (Labor), newly elected women include, scholars, social activists, attorneys, city council members, human rights chairs and many more. Regardless of religion or ethnicity, all women in Israel enjoy equal rights, protections under the law and opportunities to succeed and contribute to society. For more on women in Israel, click [here](#).

From the founding of the Jewish state, women have long held and continue to hold important leadership positions in government. Like Esther, they will also play a critical legislative role, shaping the future of Israel. ■

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