

NOVEMBER 25, 2013

Parashat Miketz & Shabbat Hanukkah

Reciprocity

Let Pharaoh do this (Genesis 41:34)

יעשה פרעה (בראשית מא:לד)

When advising the Pharaoh on how to prepare for the coming famine, Joseph advised the Egyptian king to save a fifth of the nation's agricultural production for the seven lean years, telling him "Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land" (41:34). Why did Joseph add the phrase, "Let Pharaoh do this" which seems superfluous? The Midrash explains that Joseph advised the king that "Initially, he should designate from his own [produce], and only then should he appoint overseers. Why? Because who could see the Pharaoh give a fifth of his [crop] and refuse to give as well?" When the people saw their king giving, they would reciprocate and give as well.

Joseph recognized that if the Pharaoh contributed from his own stores, the people would reciprocate in kind. While the world powers recently agreed on an interim agreement with Iran as a first step towards eliminating Iran's nuclear weapons program, we must ensure that for every American concession, Iran also reciprocates in kind.

Recently, the United States as part of the P5+1—the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany—reached a first step agreement with Iran over its nuclear program, [Reuters](#) reported. Over the course of this first step agreement, Iran will be subject to significantly more international inspections, roll back its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium and not be allowed to expand its current stockpile of 5 percent enriched uranium. Iran is at the negotiating table as a result of the economic pressure sanctions have caused. In fact, sanctions have cost the Iranians \$120 billion in two years—effectively quadrupling the cost of their nuclear pursuit. However, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle expressed reservations about the proposed contours of the agreement, suggesting that we did not proportionately reduce Iran's nuclear program for the relief it is receiving. For example, Iran still has the ability to enrich uranium and the deal stipulates that the final agreement will allow Tehran to continue enriching uranium. Congress will have a vital role to play in shaping the final agreement. In a statement following the announcement of the deal, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) said "I expect that the forthcoming sanctions legislation to be considered by the Senate will provide for a six month window to reach a final agreement before imposing new sanctions on Iran, but will at the same time be immediately available should the talks falter or Iran fail to implement or breach the interim agreement." For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Joseph recognized that people of Egypt would reciprocate Pharaoh's contribution with a similar contribution of their own. America must demand the same reciprocity from Iran. ■

Feeding the World

The food of the field (Genesis 41:48)

אכל שדה העיר (בראשית מא:מה)

Joseph instructed the Egyptians to gather sufficient produce to sustain the country during the seven years of famine. Yet, according to Rashi (on 41:48), Joseph taught them a critical lesson in food storage as well. Noting that the text refers to the produce as "the food of the field," Rashi explains that Joseph understood "each type of earth preserves its fruits, and [instructed that] they put inside the produce some of the earth of its place [of growth] which preserved the

produce from rotting.” Rashi (on 41:55) notes that “the grain that [the individual Egyptians] had stored rotted,” while Joseph’s produce remained fresh, allowing him to save the nation from starvation.

Joseph used a storage technique to feed millions who would otherwise have starved. Today, the state of Israel is sharing its techniques with farmers in India who are dramatically increasing their agricultural production.

On his recent tour of India, Israel’s Minister of Economy and Trade Naftali Bennett visited an agricultural training farm where Israelis train Indian farmers how to best use Israeli agricultural technology, making more cucumbers grow per a square meter,” [The Times of Israel](#) reported. Bennett notes in a [video](#) chronicling the visit that while Indian farmers normally produce a kilogram of cucumbers per square meter of land, by utilizing Israeli technology they could produce up to ten kilograms of cucumbers on a square meter of land, a ten-fold increase in productivity. In a talk this month at the Caesaria Forum, an annual conference on economic and social issues, Bennett pulled a cucumber from his pocket to demonstrate the power of economics to promote Israel’s message around the world. “After brandishing his cucumber, Bennett asked his audience to ‘imagine what would happen if there weren’t 10 Israeli agriculture companies in India, but 800, and in China and Africa too. There’s a change in the narrative.’ ... Israel, Bennett concluded, ‘is a pilgrimage site for [countries seeking] innovation.’” For more in Israel around the world, click [here](#).

Like Joseph, whose technical expertise proved invaluable in staving off starvation, Israel is sharing its technical know-how with farmers around the world, providing critical agricultural resources to developing countries. ■

Hanukkah, the Holiday of Thanksgiving

To praise and give thanks (Hanerot Halalu prayer)

כדי להודות ולהלל (הנרות הללו)

This year, Hanukkah and Thanksgiving coincide—something that hasn’t happened since 1888. While these two holidays may not overlap very often, in many ways they are similar celebrations. Thanksgiving, of course, was established to give thanks and Hanukkah is also about gratitude. Traditionally on each night of Hanukkah, after we light the candles we recite a short prayer called Hanerot Halalu (These Lights), a prayer that outlines the purpose of the lighting. In the prayer, we note that we take care not to benefit from the lights (but only to gaze at them), because we kindled them, “To give thanks and praise to Your great name on Your wonders, miracles and salvation.” In other words, Jews light the Hanukkah lights as a thank you for the great miracles and salvation we experienced so long ago.

While Americans are celebrating Thanksgiving, Israelis are celebrating Hanukkah. As these two holidays overlap, we are reminded of the values of freedom and democracy that citizens of the U.S. share with the people of Israel.

On Thanksgiving, as we put our latkes next to the turkey, we are reminded that it is not just the two foods that go well together. Since President Truman recognized the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, the U.S.-Israel relationship has been grounded in common values. These shared values are manifested today in the strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Close strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel further U.S. interests, promote regional peace and enhance the security of both nations. The United States and Israel work together to defeat common threats ranging from terrorism, the spread of radical Islamist ideology and nuclear and missile proliferation to narcotics, counterfeiting and cyberwarfare. The two nations are also working together like never before in the arenas of energy security and clean technology. The American and Israeli governments, as well as private business ventures in both countries, are partnering to promote new energy solutions and ensure our long-term energy security. Israel represents a nation that stands side-by-side with America, protecting essential values. At his remarks at the White House Hanukkah celebration last year, President Obama said, “Even in the face of great danger, the message of Hanukkah endures. And it continues to inspire those all over the world who stand for freedom and opportunity.”

As the American Jewish community celebrates freedom both on Thanksgiving and Hanukkah, we can also celebrate the special U.S.-Israel relationship—two nations that stand tall for democracy and freedom all over the world. ■