

DECEMBER 2, 2013

## Parashat Vayigash

### Ignored Commitments

**For you are like the Pharaoh (Genesis 44:18)**

**כי כמודך כפרעה (בראשית מד:יח)**

According to the Midrash, rather than speaking submissively to Joseph and pleading for the release of the imprisoned Benjamin, Judah accused Joseph of duplicity and deceit stating, “you are like the Pharaoh” (44:18). Rashi (on 44:18) explains that Judah told Joseph, “Just as the Pharaoh decrees and does not fulfill [his word], you too issue decrees [against Benjamin] and will not fulfill them.” Chizkuni explains that Egyptian custom prohibited allowing slaves to enter the ruling class. Yet, when it served the Pharaoh’s interests, he ignored Egyptian law and installed Joseph as his viceroy. Similarly, Judah insisted that Joseph would also ignore his own decrees when the need arose.

Judah recognized that the Egyptians adhered to their own laws only when doing so served their interests. As the world focuses on the recent interim agreement with Iran, it must recognize Iran’s similar indifference to the rule of law.

As a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has long officially repudiated the possession of nuclear weapons. In addition, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini has reportedly issued a *fatwa* declaring the development, production or possession of nuclear weapons immoral and against Islamic law. Yet, even as Iran publicly denies that it has a nuclear weapons program it has flouted the will of the international community and numerous United Nations resolutions by continuing to pursue these weapons of mass destruction. While the international community recently signed an interim agreement with Iran, many remain skeptical of the Islamic Republic. In fact, some former American hostages were [openly critical](#) of the agreement and members of Congress began taking steps to ensure that Iran adhered to the interim agreement. According to the [Associated Press](#), “Two key senators already are at work on legislation to reinstate the full force of sanctions and impose new ones if Iran doesn’t make good on its pledge to roll back its nuclear program. ‘The American people need an insurance policy to prevent a rerun of North Korea,’ said Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., who is crafting a bill alongside Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J. Critics of the accord reached in Geneva believe it could allow Iran to trick international monitors while it assembles an atomic weapons arsenal.” For more on Iran, visit [www.aipac.org/Iran](http://www.aipac.org/Iran).

Judah recognized that the Egyptians were willing to ignore their own laws when doing so served their interests. Iran’s similar behavior in the past must spur the United States to take firm measures to ensure that Iran does not again abandon its commitments to international community. ■

### The Medicine before the Sickness

**The Lord has placed me as a master (Genesis 45:9)**

**שמני אלקים לאדון (בראשית מה:ט)**

After revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph offered them words of consolation, insisting that divine intervention—not his brothers—had sent him to Egypt. According to Rabbi Meir Wolk (see Ma’ayan Hashavua vol 1 p. 620), the Zohar writes that had Joseph not preceded his family’s descent to Egypt, they would never have been able to extricate themselves two centuries later from the grip of servitude to the Egyptian. Thus, writes Rabbi Wolk, by engineering Joseph’s journey to Egypt, God “preceded the medicine to the sickness.” Before the calamity of slavery befell the Jewish nation, the wheels of salvation had long before been set in motion.

Just as the “medicine” of salvation was put in place long before the Jews’ enslavement in Egypt, Israel and the United States are working together to develop the “medicine” to counter the possibility of devastating missile attacks.

While the world focuses on Iran’s illicit nuclear weapons program, Iran continues its work on missile systems capable of delivering payloads over great distances. Iran’s FARS News Agency recently [quoted](#) Brigadier General Hossein Salami, Lieutenant Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) who announced Iran’s ownership of “indigenous ballistic missile technology” that can deliver payloads at distances of hundreds of kilometers. With this and other missile threats in mind, Israel and the United States have been working together to develop missile defense systems capable of neutralizing mid and long-range ballistic missile attacks. In November, Israel’s Defense Ministry and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) “held a successful test of the David’s Sling air defense system...in which a ballistic missile was shot down and destroyed,” [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. The system, developed by Israel’s Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and U.S.-based Raytheon, complements the already operational Iron Dome missile defense system, which addresses short-range threats by intercepting intermediate-range projectiles like “the large arsenal of Hezbollah rockets in Lebanon and those of President Bashar Assad’s government in Syria.” Israel has also deployed the Iron Dome system against short-range rockets from the Gaza Strip and the Arrow system for longer-range threats from Iran. The next generation of the Arrow, Arrow 3, is set to be deployed in 2016. Arrow 3 is designed to strike missiles when they are outside the earth’s atmosphere, before they are on their downward path toward their target. For more on the U.S. and Israel’s military partnership, click [here](#).

Joseph’s descent to Egypt provided the “medicine” long before slavery occurred. Today, Israel works with the U.S. to put the “medicine” of missile defense in place before dangerous rocket attacks against either nation occurs. ■

## Sharing the Blessing of Water

**Jacob blessed the Pharaoh (Genesis 47:10)**

**ויברך יעקב את פרעה (בראשית מז:י)**

---

According to Rashi (47:10), during their meeting Jacob blessed Pharaoh with water that brought produce and prosperity to the entire nation. Rashi explains, “[He blessed him] that the Nile should rise to his feet. This is because Egypt does not drink rainwater, but instead the Nile rises and waters the fields. From the time of Jacob’s blessing, the Pharaoh would come and stand over the Nile which would rise towards him and water [the fields of] the land.”

Jacob’s blessing brought the benefits of water to the people of Egypt. In modern times, Jacob’s descendants are working with companies in Massachusetts to bring the miracle of Israeli water technology to the world.

While Israel has been developing water technology out of necessity to meet the ever-increasing water demands in the parched Middle East, it lacks the economic infrastructure necessary to develop, market and produce the technology on a global scale. For this reason, [The Boston Globe](#) recently reported, Israeli companies are investing, relocating, and seeking partnerships in Massachusetts to further advance their technologies and build a U.S. platform from which to launch their global ambitions. For their part, Massachusetts state officials and entrepreneurs hope that collaboration with Israel will bring the state another world-class technology sector, which can play a major role in the \$600 billion a year water industry. Massachusetts hopes to import varied water-related technologies developed in Israel, including advanced wastewater treatment, drip irrigation, water-testing technology and desalination. According to the Globe, “State and water sector leaders have...[built] the foundations of a new industry group, the New England Water Innovation Network, which will connect firms with laboratories and facilities...that can be used to test, prove, and commercialize new products...If this nascent partnership can combine Israel’s innate understanding of water issues with Massachusetts’ technological nimbleness and market savvy, it could dominate the global industry.” For more on Israeli innovations, click [here](#).

Jacob’s blessing of water brought plenty and prosperity to the people of Egypt. Today, Massachusetts’ investment and ingenuity is helping grow the American economy by bringing Israeli innovations in water technology to the world. ■

---

Sermon tidbits are intended for your use without attribution. Please feel free to use some or all of the material. Although it is not necessary, it is appreciated if copies of sermons or articles that use the ideas presented here are sent to [synagogue@aipac.org](mailto:synagogue@aipac.org).