

DECEMBER 30, 2013

Parashat Bo

Increasing Pressure

And he turned, and went out (Exodus 10:6)

ויפן ויצא (שמות י:ו)

After threatening Pharaoh with the upcoming plague of locusts, why did Moses suddenly turn and leave? Nahmanides (on 10:6) suggests that Moses wished to maximize the threat of the coming plague in order to coerce the Egyptians to capitulate. “Since they greatly feared the [plague of] hail, Moses thought that they would similarly now fear that they would die of starvation should they lose the rest of their harvest. So he abruptly left before they could answer him ‘yes’ or ‘no’ so that they would be upset about the matter.” Nahmanides notes that Moses’ tactic did indeed succeed, as Pharaoh’s servants immediately pleaded with him to allow the Jews to leave and save their country.

Moses recognized that increasing pressure on Pharaoh would enhance his chances of securing the Jews’ release. A group of Senators hope to use the same tactics to press Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

In mid-December, a group of bi-partisan Senators introduced a bill that would trigger harsh new sanctions against Iran should its government fail to reach a comprehensive agreement with world powers over its nuclear program, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. The Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013, authored by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL), aims to strengthen American diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability. The legislation meets the president’s request that no additional sanctions be imposed during the talks. New sanctions, provided for in the bill, would be suspended for up to a year to allow negotiations for a final agreement and could be suspended further if an acceptable final agreement with Iran is reached. The legislation codifies President Obama’s pledge that new sanctions will be forthcoming if a final agreement cannot be reached and that any deal must “make it impossible [for Iran] to develop a nuclear weapon.” Menendez [said](#) in a statement, “Current sanctions brought Iran to the negotiating table, and a credible threat of future sanctions will require Iran to cooperate and act in good faith at the negotiating table.” He added, “Prospective sanctions will influence Iran’s calculus and accelerate that process toward achieving a meaningful diplomatic resolution.” The Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act clearly outlines the acceptable parameters of a final deal and provides the Iranian government a clear choice: Give up its nuclear weapons pursuit or face more crippling economic sanctions. For more on the legislation and to contact your Senators, click [here](#).

Just as Moses recognized the importance of increasing the economic pressure on Egypt, the Senate recognizes that increasing pressure is the best strategy to get Iran to abandon its dangerous nuclear weapons program. ■

Quiet from Infiltration

Shall not a dog move his tongue (Exodus 11:7)

לא יחרץ כלב לשנו (שמות יא:ז)

Moses warned Pharaoh that during the plague of the firstborn, while a great cry would emanate from every single Egyptian home, “Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue...” (11:7). Rabbi Abraham ben Harnbam explains that Moses was referring to the watchdogs that normally guarded the Jews’ homes. Whereas on a regular night the dogs barked at infiltrators, on the evening of the plague, the Jews enjoyed total safety and security from outside infiltration, obviating the necessity for even a single dog to make any noise during the night.

The dogs' silence on the night of the plague of the firstborn symbolized the quiet the Jews enjoyed. With the completion of a security fence on its southern border, Israel now enjoys a similar level of security from infiltrations.

With the growing presence of dangerous militant groups in the Sinai region, Israel has [constructed a 140 mile security fence](#) along its entire southern border with Egypt. The project began in August 2011, when terrorists infiltrated the Egypt-Israel border and carried out a brutal attack on Israeli civilians, killing 8 and wounding 30. In response, the IDF quickly worked to address the threat of terrorists breaching its southern border—bolstering its fence with motion sensors, cameras and heightened intelligence capabilities. Moreover, the Egyptian government has reinforced its commitment to curtail extremist mobilization in the Sinai—an initiative welcomed by Israel. The military has carried out numerous operations to ramp up its security by destroying smuggling tunnels and sealing off entry points for Hamas and its terrorist affiliates. “Israel and Egypt have a joint interest in the suppression of militant Islamists,” said Efraim Karsh, a professor at Israel’s Bar Ilan University. Jerusalem’s foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor expressed the importance of maintaining robust Israeli-Egypt security cooperation, in accordance with the 1979 treaty. “The relationship between Israel and Egypt is the cornerstone of stability and peacemaking in the region,” he said.

Just as the Israelites enjoyed peace from infiltration on the eve of the plague of the firstborn, with the completion of the security fence Israel can now enjoy a sense of security and quiet, free from infiltrations from the Sinai Desert. ■

Sharing the Blessings

And if the household be too little (Exodus 12:4)

ואם ימעט מבית (שמות יב:ד)

According to the Torah, every Jewish household was forbidden to waste any part of the Paschal Lamb that was designated to be slaughtered and consumed on the eve of Passover. For this reason, “And if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls” (12:4) and households united to fulfill the commandment together. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch in his commentary to the Torah (on 12:3-12:6) sees in this detail an element that just societies must emulate. “What is the cement, the medium that attaches one home to another, and which make society, the community emerge from the family in the Jewish state?... It is the consciousness of duty...to join house to house to form a national community.”

According to Hirsch, the Paschal Lamb reminds us of the importance of sharing our blessings with others. Recently, the United States and Israel took a significant step in their efforts to share their blessings with each other.

For decades, Israel has been an energy island entirely dependent on imported energy and completely divorced from regional energy grids. Recent natural gas findings off the Mediterranean coast have placed the Jewish state on a course towards energy security and energy independence—a promising goal that could make Israel a potential energy exporter in a region essential to the United States. The Israeli mission runs parallel in various respects to America’s heightened drive to reduce its foreign dependencies by ratcheting up domestic oil and gas production. Mutual interest in strengthening energy security and advancing the goal of energy independence has ushered in a new era of strategic collaboration between the two allies, embodied most recently by the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s approval of the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Enhancement Act (H.R. 3683). The new energy initiative, spearheaded by the committee’s Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ranking Member Henry Waxman (D-CA), seeks to improve U.S.-Israel energy cooperation. In addition to establishing an energy security dialogue group to connect the two governments, private stakeholders and energy experts, the bill promotes the development of advanced technologies, collaboration on numerous academic initiatives and joint R&D programs in the fields of renewable energy, natural gas and water technologies. For more on U.S.-Israel energy security cooperation, click [here](#).

On the night of Passover, households joined together to share with one-another, creating the foundation of a nation. Today, the joint efforts between Israel and the United States continue to strengthen an already rock-solid bond. ■

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