



Sermon Tidbits

MARCH 10, 2014

Parashat Tzav, Shabbat Zachor & Purim

Constant Vigilance

Command Aaron (Leviticus 6:2)

צו את אהרן (ויקרא ו:ב)

Rashi (on 6:2) explains that Aaron was commanded so that he would act with alacrity. Why does Moses command Aaron to act with alacrity specifically with regard to the burnt offering? S'forno (on 6:2) explains that "alacrity is necessary in areas [subject to] laziness." The burnt offering was subject to laziness because while it was offered during the day, it burned on the altar throughout the night, "and there was reason to be concerned that out of natural human lethargy might lead to slumber and ruin the sacrifice."

Aaron's commandment to act with alacrity reminds us that periods of inactivity can present a unique danger and thus require vigilance. As talks with Iran proceed the United States must continue to vigilantly enforce the economic sanctions against Iran.

While the Joint Plan of Action, the interim agreement between Iran and the P5+1 granted Iran roughly \$7 billion in sanctions relief in exchange for an effective freeze over much of their nuclear work, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew insisted that the United States "will continue to enforce 'the most sweeping, the most powerful and the most innovative' financial penalties in history," [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. At the recent AIPAC policy conference in Washington, Lew noted that under terms of the agreement, Iran will lose \$30 billion in oil revenues and has a 30 percent inflation rate, and the vast majority of economic sanctions remain in place. Moreover, he vowed to vigilantly enforce sanctions still in effect, insisting that "officials have been traveling around the world and putting their expertise and unremitting effort to bear to keep Iran isolated. Even though I have said this before, it bears repeating: Iran is not open for business," Lew [said](#). "Anyone who violates our sanctions will face severe penalties. Our vigilance has not, cannot, and will not falter." While we must laud Lew's efforts to enforce the sanctions, we must continue to remind the Obama Administration that just as economic pressure brought Iran to the table, increased pressure will coerce the Islamic regime to comply with international demands to abandon its nuclear program. We must continue to aggressively pursue additional means of pressuring Iran to comply with the demands of the international community. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Just as Aaron was commanded to attend to the burnt offering with special vigilance during the lull of the night, we must take care to ensure that we maintain our sense of vigilance regarding Iran. ■

Fighting Amalek by Protecting the Weak (Shabbat Zachor)

All that were enfeebled in your rear (Deuteronomy 25:18)

כל הנחשלים אחריך (דברים כו:יח)

Moses recalled that Amalek, "smote the hindmost of you, all that were enfeebled in your rear when you were faint and weary" (25:18). Yedidya Klein explains that the enmity in the Torah for Amalek and the commandment to destroy the memory of Amalek stems from Amalek's disregard and disdain for the stranger and the weak. Amalek "lacked any [positive] attitude towards the weak or the stranger." Amalek thought nothing of attacking the weakest, most defenseless stragglers without any provocation. Therein lays the root of Amalek's evil nature that must be repelled.

While Israel's adversaries follow in the ways of Amalek, attacking the defenseless and the weak, Israel offers assistance to those who cannot help themselves.

In his talk to the fourteen thousand AIPAC delegates that descended on Washington earlier this month, Israeli Prime Minister [drew a line](#) between “decency and depravity, compassion and cruelty. On the one side stands Israel, animated by the values we cherish, values that move us to treat sick Palestinians, thousands of them, from Gaza. They come to our hospitals. We treat them despite the fact that terrorists from Gaza hurl thousands of rockets at our cities. It's those same values that inspires Israeli medics and rescuers to rush to the victims of natural disasters across the world, to Haiti, to Turkey, to Japan, the Philippines, to many other stricken lands... On the other side of that moral divide, steeped in blood and savagery, stand the forces of terror—Iran, Assad, Hezbollah, al- Qaida and many others... the only thing that Iran sends abroad are rockets, terrorists and missiles to murder, maim and menace the innocent.” Netanyahu quoted Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah, who said that Iran and Hezbollah love death and Israel loves life, which is why Nasrallah felt that “Iran and Hezbollah will win and Israel will lose.” Netanyahu agreed. “He's right about the first point. They do glorify death, and we do sanctify life. But he's dead wrong on the second point. It's precisely because we love life that Israel shall win.” While terrorists fire rockets and mortars, Israel responds with humanitarian aid, ensuring that the population of Gaza has food, fuel and access to medicine. While Syria bombs, murders and maims its citizens, Israel has set up a hospital to nurse innocent Syrian civilians back to health.

Shabbat Zachor reminds us that we must reject and repel the hateful, murderous values that Amalek espoused by assisting the weak, healing the sick, and bringing life and hope to those who cannot fend for themselves. ■

Acts of Unity (Purim)

Sending portions one to another... (Esther 9:22)

ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו (אסתר ט:כב)

When the Jews achieved a great victory of their adversaries, Mordecai and Esther decreed Purim as a day of feasting and gladness. They added two additional *mitzvot*: “sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor” (9:22). Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov (Book of Our Heritage, Vol. 2 p. 94) explains that these acts “recall the brotherly love which Mordecai and Esther awoke among all Jews... We are bidden in every generation to strengthen our inner unity so that our enemies might not achieve dominion over us.”

Mordecai and Esther added two additional *mitzvot* to highlight the power of unity, and the importance of creating strong bonds. Today, the strong relationship between the U.S. and Israel is proof of what unity can accomplish.

With no other country in the region—and few in the entire world—does the United States share the same high level of strategic cooperation. American-Israeli cooperation begins with frequent high-level strategic dialogues among senior political and military leaders and extends to combined military planning and exercises, intelligence-sharing and technological development. This collaboration has played a critical role in stemming radicalism in the region and boosting Israel's role as an indispensable player in the war against Islamist extremism. The expanding network of American and Israeli military and intelligence coordination has provided a powerful deterrent to those in the Middle East who seek to harm either country. In addition, the United States provides funding to jointly develop missile defense programs like the Iron Dome, Arrow and David's Sling projects, which help Israel defend itself against rocket and missile threats originating from Iran, Hamas and other regional actors. At the same time, Israel has developed dramatic new technologies that have played a key role in saving U.S. lives during military conflicts, including laser targeting systems, reactive armor tiles and emergency bandages. Finally, U.S. policymakers, law-enforcement officers and first responders have sought to harness Israel's hard-earned technical expertise in the counterterrorism and homeland security arenas, including aviation security, border and port security, and even mall security.

On Purim our actions work to bring our community closer. As the U.S. and Israel work together, their collaboration works to make both countries stronger, safer and closer. ■

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