

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

Parashat Netzavim-Vayelech

Standing Together

You are standing this day (Deuteronomy 29:9)

אתם נצבים היום (דברים כט:ט)

Yalkut Meam Loez (Devarim vol. 4 p. 1139) relates this parable: “The story is told of a man on his death bed that called his sons together and asked them to bring him a bundle of wet straw. He gave the bundle to each son and asked him whether he could break it in two. Each son tried with all his strength, but could not rip the straw bundle apart. The old father took the bundle and told his sons, ‘Now you will see how I can break what you could not.’ The bewildered sons watched their father pull each strand of straw from the bundle, one at a time, and break it in two. He told his sons, ‘From this you must learn that as long as you stand together as a group, no one can hurt you. But if you will split apart through strife and dispute, you will be broken one by one.’ This is what Moses told the Children of Israel, writes Me’am Loez, “You are standing this day”, precisely because, “all of you...all the men of Israel,” stand together.

This summer, we learned yet again of the adversaries threatening to attack the state of Israel. Now, more than ever, Israel’s safety and security depends on us all working as one, together, to protect the Jewish state.

Last week, U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), the Committee’s Ranking Member, [traveled to Israel](#) “to show bipartisan support at a critical time,” Royce said in a statement. The trip reflected the broad, bipartisan support Congress gave Israel during Operation Protective Edge this summer. Over the month of July, Congress passed four separate bipartisan resolutions supporting Israel’s right to self-defense and condemning Hamas’ rocket attacks. In addition to these resolutions and numerous statements of support by individual members, Congress approved —and President Obama signed into law —\$225 million in funding for the Iron Dome missile defense system, which has saved countless Israeli lives by intercepting Hamas rockets. After the signing, White House spokesman Josh Earnest [noted that](#), “Continued bipartisan support for Iron Dome funding ensures Israel will retain vital defense against rockets and artillery in light of the enduring threats.” Across the political and religious divide —all of us have a stake in a strong, secure Israel. All of us have an important role to play, and we’re strongest when all of us stand together. When Americans from diverse political, religious and geographical backgrounds express their strong support for Israel’s right to self-defense and the need for American support for Israel, our elected ~~representatives-representatives~~ channel that support into words and deeds that ~~really do~~ save lives.

Moses recognized that the strength of the Jewish people lies in our unity— . When we stand and work together, we have the power to bring strength and security to the people of the Jewish ~~State~~state. ■

Stubbornness of the Heart

That he bless himself in his heart (Deuteronomy 29:18)

והתברך בלבבו (דברים כט:יח)

How, after hearing the warnings of terrible punishments from Moses, could a person consider himself immune from the promised punishments to the point that he would say, “I shall have peace, for I walk in the stubbornness of my heart...”? Ramban (on verse 18) suggests that the sinner Moses describes finds peace of heart specifically because he refuses to accept the conditions that Moses presents. “[He says to himself]: I will have peace because I do not accept

upon myself [Moses'] oath, 'for I will walk in the stubbornness of my heart' and do whatever I desire..." Moses warns the sinner that whether he accepts the warning or not, he would indeed be held accountable for his sins.

Like the sinner who ignores Moses' warning, Iran has refused to accept the warnings of the international community to curtail its dangerous nuclear weapons development program.

A recently released quarterly report by The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) on Iran's nuclear program revealed that Tehran has again ignored an agreed upon deadline to explain its past nuclear weapons efforts. ~~In the agreement~~ ~~To~~ extend negotiations with the international community past the November 2013 deadline, Iran committed to fully cooperate with the IAEA and respond comprehensively to the Agency's questions by August 25. Yet, the deadline passed last month with little progress. According to [Reuters](#), "Iran has failed to address concerns about suspected atomic bomb research," and in an August 28 letter to the IAEA, Iran dismissed the agency's concerns about PMDs as "mere allegations" that "do not merit consideration." Iranian officials have reportedly dismissed IAEA requests to interview those suspected of involvement in alleged experiments with detonators, high-explosive charges used in nuclear blasts, and studies on calculating nuclear explosive yields. Both the Obama Administration and Congress have made it clear that a final agreement must address possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program, especially in light of the mountain of evidence indicating that Iran has conducted significant activities related to nuclear weapons. Earlier this year, Wendy Sherman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs said that, "All the sanctions are [on] over 600 individuals and entities targeted for supporting Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile program, [and] will remain in effect until those concerns are addressed."

Iran ignores the will of the international community, preferring to "walk in the stubbornness of its heart" in its relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons. Sanctions cannot end until Iran has a change of heart. ■

Celebrating Israel's Security – 25 Elul

So the wall was finished (Nehemiah 6:15)

ותשלם החומה (נחמיה ו:ט)

The 25th of Elul often goes unnoticed in the Jewish calendar. Yet, it represents a significant date in the history of Jewish safety and security, as it marks the date of the completion of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem during the return to Zion. "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul." (Nehemiah 6:15) Describing the struggle to complete the project, Eliyahu Kitov writes (see Book of Our Heritage vol. 3 p 323), "Judea's surrounding enemies...conspired to attack Jerusalem and to prevent the rebuilding of the wall...But all their plans were undone, with God's help, and the wall was completed."

As we reach the end of a challenging year for the Jewish nation, we can also look back over the last year, and use the milestone of the 25th of Elul to celebrate significant achievements which have made Israel and the world more secure.

Over the past year, our involvement, efforts and work to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship has had a profound impact on the security of both Israel and the rest of the world. ~~Last summer, Israel found itself forced to carry out attacks in Syria to prevent the movement of significant caches of weapons. Due to strong pressure from the United States, Syria agreed to hand over its entire stockpile of chemical weapons, which were destroyed on a US Navy ship. Over the past year, This year alone, the United States American~~ provided \$3.1 billion in military aid to Israel, giving Israel tools it desperately needs to defend itself against the terrorist regimes of Hamas to the south, Hezbollah to the north, and now ISIS to the east. The U.S. granted ~~emergency~~ emergency assistance for the Iron Dome ~~batteries~~ which saved countless Israeli lives from the thousands of rockets fired at Israel over the summer. America offered staunch support for Israel in the international arena, where Israel often finds itself facing false allegations and unwarranted condemnations. Our work has also helped to ensure that America keeps strong pressure on Iran, which quietly continues its work on a nuclear weapon, and presents the greatest existential threat to Israel and to world security.

On the 25th of Elul, the ancient community of Jerusalem celebrated a milestone which brought badly needed security. Today, we cannot say that we've completed the job. But we can and must celebrate our important work which has

| helped secure the Jewish ~~State~~state, as we recommit ourselves to continuing these critical efforts in the year to come.

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