

NOVEMBER 10, 2014

Parashat Chayei Sarah

A Relationship of Trust

The elder of his house (Genesis 24:2)

זקן ביתו (בראשית כד:ב)

Genesis describes Eliezer, Abraham's servant, as "the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had." (verse 2) Jessie Rubenstein, commenting on the relationship between Abraham and Eliezer writes that, "Eliezer's desire to comply with the oath he made to his master demonstrates the love he had for him. This is further evidence of the character of Abraham as well. How many employers trust their employees enough to pick up their dry cleaning, never mind pick out their child's spouse?...While the relationship between Abraham and Eliezer is one of employer to employee, the care and trust they have for one another is nothing short of extraordinary."

The trust between Abraham and Eliezer serves as a model to emulate those relationships in our lives. Today, the United States and Israel demonstrate that trust through the joint work accomplished by the two nations.

On the ground the United States and Israel continue to work hand-in-hand on numerous projects that improve the safety and security of both societies, yet on the political level some recent reports emphasize tensions between the United States and Israel. Each year, various branches and levels of both countries' militaries hold numerous joint training exercises in the United States and Israel where they learn from one another, improve how they work together and train for combat situations in diverse geographical locations. The close partnership between the United States and Israel has yielded leading military technologies such as the Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system that is currently deployed in Israel, as well as the Iron Dome system that protects both Israeli civilians and American troops stationed around the world. Moreover, the U.S. and Israel recently inaugurated a joint project for a critical American weapons system. According to [Reuters](#), at a ceremony in Israel unveiling the new wings factory for Lockheed Martin Corp's F-35 jet fighter, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon described his country's participation in the project as evidence that bilateral ties were bulletproof. "The special relationship between the United States and Israel is stronger than any disagreement...and there is no dispute on the gratitude that the people of Israel owe the United States for supporting our strength and security," said Yaalon.

Like the relationship of trust between Abraham and Eliezer, the United States and Israel have forged a partnership of action that has brought greater safety and security to both nations. ■

Masters of Deception

And Laban ran to the man (Genesis 24:29)

וירץ לבן אל האיש (בראשית כד:כט)

The Sages, making a play on Laban's title (*Lavan Ha'arami*), refer to him instead as *Lavan Haramai* (Laban the Liar). Rabbi Yaakov Helevi Horowitz, in his work *Shenei Luchot Habrit* (Shelah, Torah Shebichtav Chayei Sarah), writes that Laban acted with duplicity from the first moment he met Eliezer. "Laban was a man of lies, for when he saw the ring and the earrings he desired money and adorned himself in falsehood, for when he heard the words of Rebecca, he knew that Eliezer had come to arrange a marriage. Therefore, he ran to speak with him in secret [saying that] if [Eliezer] wished to give him a certain amount of money as a bribe, then he would agree to the arrangement..."

Just as Laban acted with deviousness from the moment he met Eliezer, Iran has similarly acted with duplicity, insisting its nuclear ambitions were peaceful while quietly and covertly conducting military research.

As pressure mounts for the P5+1 countries to reach an agreement with Iran before the November 24th deadline, “the head of the United Nations nuclear inspection organization declared...that Iran had stopped answering the agency’s questions about suspected past efforts to design the components of a bomb,” the [New York Times](#) reported. Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that while Iran’s president promised to provide information about possible military dimensions to its nuclear program over a year ago, Iran has stonewalled, refusing to address questions about a dozen “areas of concern” related to its nuclear program. According to the [Wall Street Journal](#), Iran has refused access to their leading Iranian nuclear scientists who are believed to have been involved in nuclear-weapons research. Additionally, Iran has refused IAEA access to Iranian research and military sites including the Parchin military base south of Tehran where the IAEA and the U.S. believe atomic-weapons development occurred.

As the most recent round of negotiations move to Vienna later this month, the United States must ensure that a comprehensive agreement requires Tehran to fully explain its past weaponization efforts. Furthermore, Iran must provide access to the scientists and research and development sites that were the basis for intelligence reports that Iran had a weaponization program. Absent these conditions, and concrete measures to credibly verify that Iran is not clandestinely pursuing a nuclear weapon, the U.S. must warn Iran that it will once again suffer the sting of heavy economic sanctions.

The Sages accurately labeled Laban as a liar, chronicling a laundry list of duplicitous behavior. Until it comes clear about its nuclear weapons research, Iran’s actions warrant the Islamic regime a similar label. ■

Dangerous Incitement

And he ungirded the camels (Genesis 24:32)

ויפתח הגמלים (בראשית כד:לב)

Upon entering the home of Bethuel for his visit, Eliezer “ungirded” the camels after the long journey. Rashi (verse 32) explains that Eliezer in fact loosened the muzzles from the camels, “for he closed their mouths that they not graze during their journey in the fields of others.” R’ Yissachar Dov Rokeach explained that although Abraham had been divinely promised the rights to the land, Eliezer muzzled the animals because he did not want them to graze on land that he had not paid for, “in order not to incite the enmity of his neighbors.”

Eliezer took pains to muzzle his camels during his journey to avoid inciting the enmity of the local population. Recently, the Palestinian Authority has been doing the opposite, inciting the population to violence against Israel.

Following the assassination attempt against the life of a Temple Mount activist in Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister [called to restore calm](#) in the city, and pledged to maintain the status quo for Jews, Muslims and Christians on the Temple Mount. While Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas originally [praised the effort](#) and also called for “easing tensions,” he then, almost immediately, sent a letter of condolence to the family of the accused Palestinian shooter, writing that he “received with anger and condemnation the news of the heinous crime committed by the gangs of killing and terrorism in the Israeli occupation army,” and declared Hejazi, who was shot dead by police hours after the assassination attempt, a “martyr.” In response, Netanyahu [accused Abbas](#) of inciting his population to violence, stating that, “I am acting in every way to calm the atmosphere around the Temple Mount, but Abbas is adding fuel to the fire.” After a terrorist plowed his car into a group of Jerusalem residents last Wednesday—the second such attack in less than a month—Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman [blamed Abbas's incitement](#) for the attack, which killed a Border Police officer and injured eight others.

While Eliezer took great pains to avoid inciting others against him, Palestinian President Abbas seems to be doing the opposite, sending a clear message, encouraging and inciting the Palestinian population to violence. ■

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