

DECEMBER 15, 2014

## Parashat Miketz

### Taking Action to Prevent a Nightmare

Let Pharaoh do this (Genesis 41:34)

יעשה פרעה (בראשית מא:לד)

According to Joseph's interpretation, Pharaoh's dreams portended seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Yet, if the dreams represented a static, unchangeable prediction of the future, why share the future with Pharaoh? Rabbi Shabtai Sabato (*Vatasa'eini Ruach*, Vol. I p. 342) writes that the dreams were not static visions of the future, but instead represented warning signs to prepare for the danger lurking ahead. Rabbi Sabato writes, "Joseph emphasizes [to Pharaoh]: God is sharing plans for the future with you, and leaves room for you to take action to protect yourself from the evil that approaches. But know this! If you don't take appropriate action and sit with your hands folded without action, the dream, as you saw it, will represent exactly what will occur in the future."

Joseph warned Pharaoh that he must take action to prevent the actualization of his calamitous dreams. As the prospect of a nuclear Iran threatens world peace, we must take action to prevent this nightmare from becoming reality.

The dangers of Iran achieving nuclear weapons capability have been well-known for years. A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a direct threat to American interests and an existential threat to Israel, America's strategic partner and ally. It would likely lead to nuclear proliferation in the entire region and across the globe, while fundamentally altering the strategic balance of the Middle East. For this reason, the international community banded together to bring Iran to the negotiating table. Sadly, rather than reaching a comprehensive agreement, Iran has historically utilized talks as an opportunity to secretly pursue its agenda. According to [Foreign Policy Magazine](#), the United States recently accused Iran "of going on an international shopping spree to acquire components for a heavy-water reactor that American officials have long feared could be used in the production of nuclear weapons-grade plutonium." The report also noted "overwhelming evidence that Tehran continues to transfer huge amounts of weapons to its proxies and allies, including Syria and Iraq." Just as harsh sanctions brought Iran to negotiate in the first place, only the force of additional action can coerce Iran to agree to completely dismantle its nuclear weapons program. The Obama administration should immediately toughen sanction enforcement, and Congress should quickly take up new bipartisan sanctions legislation.

Iran with a nuclear bomb is a global threat. Pharaoh heeded Joseph's warning and took the action that prevented calamity. The international community must now do the same. ■

### A New Status

And they cried before him Abrech (Genesis 41:43)

ויקראו לפניו אברך (בראשית מא:מג)

When Pharaoh appointed Joseph to his new position of leadership in Egypt, we read that in addition to receiving a new name, he was given a new title as well. "And they cried before him Abrech." (verse 43) What is the meaning of this term? While "ab" clearly refers to "father," (related to the Hebrew word "av") what does "rech" mean? Rashi explains that the term "rech" in ancient Aramaic means "king." Rabbi Yaakov Etzion notes that in Roman, the word "rex" means "king." (the antecedent to the modern-day English word "rich") Thus, according to Rashi, the term "abrech" refers to Joseph's new status and position—"abba l'malka"—"a leader for the king."

Just as Joseph was awarded a designation with his new status and position, Congress recently passed landmark legislation enshrining Israel as a new class of ally with the United States.

With a unanimous voice vote in the House of Representatives, Congress passed of the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act, a historic measure which will dramatically strengthen and expand the U.S.-Israel alliance as a way to confront new threats and challenges in the Middle East. According to the [Jerusalem Post](#), “With final passage of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act on Wednesday [December 3, 2014], Congress has created a new legal category of partnership specifically for the state of Israel. Declared a major strategic partner—a designation held by no other country—the law seeks to establish a new framework within the category that will enhance cooperation across industries, with a focus on defense technologies.” The bill lays the groundwork for a growing U.S.-Israel relationship and encompasses domains including defense, intelligence, homeland security, cyber security, energy, water, agriculture, and alternative fuel technologies.

Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and co-author of the original bill Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) applauded the passage of the new legislation, saying that “Our bill is as important strategically as it is symbolically. It shows the world how deeply America values its bilateral relationship with Israel, affording the democratic Jewish state the unique label of major strategic partner of the United States.” House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) also lauded the bill’s passage, noting that “Those who would stand opposed to Israel’s right to exist or its important historic role ought to see in today’s legislative action a reminder that the American people stands shoulder-to-shoulder with our ally Israel as it seeks the peace and security it deserves.”

Joseph’s new title of “*abrech*” affirmed the important role he now played in his new land. By granting Israel a new, status, the United States has similarly reaffirmed and intensified its strong, solid relationship with the Jewish state. ■

## Seeing the Miracle - Chanukah

**In those days, and in this time (Blessing on the Chanukah Candles) (ברכת הנרות) בימים ההם בזמן הזה**

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On a recent mission to Israel, one of the delegates was walking through the Israel Museum wearing his lanyard and badge. Suddenly, he sensed that the person next to him was looking at him. Glancing over he saw there was an elderly woman, easily in her 80’s. She tapped him on the arm, and with a heavy accent, said “Are you from AIPAC?” He said he was. He reported that in broken English she looked him in the eyes and said, “Please. Please tell them. Please tell them we are not bad. Be strong. You are so important. So important for Israel. Do not stop what you are doing. Please.” The man was blown away. He promised her we would work hard to be strong and that we would not stop.

On Chanukah, we light the Menorah in the window facing outward in order to publicize the miracle to the world. Rabbi Dani Segal writes that in order to see the lights of Chanukah, we must leave our own individual homes, our personal vantage point and see the lights from the public square, from the view of the outside world. “It seems that this is the goal of the Chanukah lights; they are not there for themselves, but to enlighten us in a different manner.”

In his poem “Miracles”, the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai writes, “From afar, everything seems like a miracle/ But from close even a miracle does not seem so/ Even one who passed through the Reed Sea at the Spitting of the Sea/ Saw only the sweating back/ Of the person walking before him...” On Chanukah, we must take the opportunity to see the miracles in our lives as others might see them. For they recognize that the work of those Americans who support a strong U.S.-Israel relationship has created something miraculous, and brought critical, life-saving support for the Jewish state. If they see a miracle, we must see it as well. ■

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