



Sermon Tidbits

JANUARY 26, 2015

Parashat Beshalach

Prepared for the Future

And the children of Israel went up armed (Exodus 13:18)

והמשיים עלו בני ישראל (שמות יג:יח)

This past summer, citizens across Southern Israel found themselves under a constant barrage of Hamas rockets and mortars. Israeli efforts to eradicate the source of rocket fire seriously depleted the IDF's stockpile of required munitions. Fortunately, with the aid of the United States, Israel was prepared for just this kind of scenario. On July 20th, Israel contacted the Pentagon with a request to access one of the two stockpiles under the control of the United States European Command, known as the War Reserves Stock Allies Israel. According to the [International Business Times](#), "the request was approved by Congress and the Department of Defense acted on it three days later. 'The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to U.S. national interests to assist Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defense capability,' [Pentagon press secretary Rear Admiral John] Kirby said."

This isn't the first time that Israel took precautions to have arms ready should they be necessary in the future. The Children of Israel took a similar precautionary step during the Exodus from Egypt. The verse notes that, "the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt." (13:18) Why did they arm themselves when they enjoyed divine protection? Rashi explains that because their travel route took them through the desert where they could not acquire needed munitions, they took precautions to be ready for any possible contingency. Rashi (on verse 18) writes that the text provides information here so that we "should not wonder regarding the war with Amalek and the Wars of Sihon, Og and Midian: 'From where did they have weapons?'" The Israelites never anticipated needing the weapons they took from Egypt so soon after their redemption. Fortunately, when Amalek engaged in a vicious, unprovoked attack, the nation had the necessary weapons to defend and defeat a dangerous adversary.

Giving Israel access to a vast reserve of U.S.-supplied ammunitions exemplifies the long-standing U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation. This cooperation allows the two allies to face common threats, including terrorism and weapons proliferation. The existence of this emergency stockpile sends the message that America will always ensure that Israel has the supplies it needs to protect and defend its citizenry, no matter how great the challenge. ■

Biblical Courage

And the Children of Israel went... (Exodus 14:22)

ויבאו בני ישראל (שמות יד:כב)

"What thoughts helped you jump down into that tunnel? Why did you do it?" That is the question reporters asked IDF Lt. Eitan Fund, who last week was [awarded the Distinguished Medal of Service](#) for heroic activity during the Gaza War this past summer. Fund, armed with only a pistol and without his protective armor, rushed into a terrorist tunnel following the kidnapping of Lt. Hadar Goldin. Continuing down the tunnel for about 300 meters, he arrived at a junction, where Fund could clearly see the trail of blood from Goldin's wounds. He turned to Lt. Shaked, who was right behind him and [told him](#), "Wait here for five minutes. If I don't come back, I'm probably dead." What was he thinking? What prompted him to enter the tunnel? Fund [answered](#) immediately: "I have a kidnapped soldier? I'm going to get him. That's it." While Fund was unable to save Goldin, he was able to recover enough debris for the IDF to establish that Goldin had been killed in action, saving his family and country untold anguish.

Where does that kind of courage come from? Perhaps Fund found inspiration in the biblical figure of Nachshon, son of Aminadav, who took a similar courageous plunge into the unknown. According to the simple understanding of the biblical text, a divine wind split the Sea of Reeds offering the Nation of Israel an avenue of escape from the oncoming Egyptian army. Once this happened, “And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground.” (14:22) According to the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda in the Talmud, (Sotah 37a) the Sea of Reeds did not split on its own. Rather, he explains that as the waves raged before the people standing at the water’s edge, “This one said, ‘I am not entering first’ while the other [also] said, ‘I am not entering first.’ Nachshon son of Aminadav jumped down, and entered the water first.” According to Rabbi Yehdua, Nachshon continued ever deeper into the water. Only when the water reached his neck did the sea split.

Like Nachshon, whose faith and courage led the way for the Jewish people, Israel’s young men and women selflessly jump into the fray to protect and defend the Jewish state. ■

And the Women

Miriam the prophetess (Exodus 15:20)

מרים הנביאה (שמות טו:כ)

Immediately following the Song at the Sea, we are taught, “Then Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron’s sister took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out with her in dance with timbrels. (15:20) Miriam is one of only four women in the Bible given the title “prophetess.” The others being Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (II Kings 22:14) and Noadiah (Neh. 6:14). What do these women have in common? All of them played a critical role as leader of the Jewish people. For instance, Deborah is said not only to be a prophetess, the Bible also notes that she “led Israel at the time.” It is Huldah that the priest Hilkiyah asks to authenticate as divine a scroll found under the reign of King Josiah. While few in numbers, these women, along with others such as Esther and Ruth, led the people of Israel with distinction.

The modern State of Israel has continued the tradition of placing great authority and responsibility in women. In 1969, Golda Meir became the Prime Minister of Israel and only the third female head of government in modern history. On January 15, 2015 [Miriam Naor](#) was sworn in as the President of the Israeli Supreme Court, the second woman to hold that position. Dalia Itzik served as Speaker of the Knesset from 2006-09. Tzipi Livni, former Justice Minister, is co-leading the “Zionist Camp” list in the upcoming Knesset elections and women play leading roles in many of the other parties. In fact, according to a [Geocartography](#) poll, over 75% of Israelis support equal representation of men and women in the Knesset and over 55% would not vote for a party that did not have women on its Knesset list.

In our own county, we take great pride in the Jewish women occupying positions of leadership and authority in the House and Senate, Justices Ginsburg and Kagan on Supreme Court, and Janet Yellen, the current Chairwoman of the Federal Reserve. As Jews, we take similar pride in the fact that the Jewish State, continuing the historical tradition of the Jewish nation from Miriam’s era, places its faith and trust in the capable hands of the female leaders of Israel. ■

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