

MAY 23, 2016

## Parashat Behar

### A Dishonest, Misleading Campaign

**And you shall not wrong, one man his fellow... (Leviticus 25:17) (ולא תונו איש את עמיתו (ויקרא כה:יז))**

Commenting on the prohibition against wronging one's fellow man, Rashi (verse 17) explains that this verse prohibits a behavior called *ona'at devarim*—"Wronging verbally." This can be as simple as using speech to harm or insult, misleading others or intentionally giving bad advice. Rambam expanded this prohibition to include using one's words to mislead, cheat, distort or misrepresent one's efforts in bad faith. In his commentary on the Mishnah (Keilim 12:7) Rambam writes, "Cheating and tricks and forms of fraud and forgery and distortion with the nations are prohibited, as the Sages said that one is not permitted to deceive others..." Often, people who engage in destructive behavior and speech justify their deeds and words by claiming righteous motives. Rashi explains that this is why the verse concludes with the phrase, "and you shall fear your God," (verse 17) For God is the only one who knows all of our thoughts and intentions.

We find precisely this type of verbal deception in growing numbers of European countries who support the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanction) movement. While they claim to be acting out of the righteous interests of human rights, they instead use their claims of righteousness to single out, ostracize and delegitimize the Jewish state. According to the [Jerusalem Post](#), "...as the Jerusalem-based watchdog NGO Monitor has documented, European governments have pumped tens of millions of euros into NGOs that support various forms of BDS..." These efforts are making serious inroads. Speaking in Israel at a roundtable discussion titled "Islam and BDS in Europe: a Strategic Threat?" Former Chief Rabbi of England Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said that unlike previous anti-Semitic attempts to target Israel, the global BDS campaign has partially succeeded in its goal. Today, the BDS movement has made it "almost impossible" for Jews living in Europe to openly support Israel, Sacks argued. "Jews have been faced with a choice: live in Europe and criticize Israel or be silent, or leave Europe, reports the [Times of Israel](#)." Disguised as a righteous movement, BDS blames Israel—and only Israel—for the absence of peace. Ultimately, by eroding confidence in Israel's legitimacy, BDS attempts to weaken and ultimately destroy Israel.

Supporters of Israel in the United States have moved to curtail the BDS movement spreading across Europe. As trade talks take place between the United States and the European Union (EU), strong bipartisan majorities in Congress have set a clear standard through legislation: EU activity to boycott Israel risks forfeiting the benefits of free trade with America. Moreover, in state capitals across America, representatives are passing laws formally condemning BDS, requiring state pension funds to divest from companies that promote BDS, and preventing state governments from buying goods or services from them.

Now, members of Congress have moved to protect those state governments and ensure their right to divest from companies and entities participating or supporting BDS activities. [Tablet Magazine](#) reported that lawmakers in both chambers of Congress have introduced "bipartisan legislation boosting efforts at the state and local levels to combat economic warfare against Israel." The bipartisan bills—sponsored by Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) in the Senate, and Juan Vargas (D-CA) and Bob Dold (R-IL) in the House—called the "Combating BDS Act of 2016," protects state and local governments' right to disassociate pensions and contracts from entities that boycott, divest from or sanction Israel.

We must do our part by encouraging our representatives in the House and Senate to co-sponsor this important legislation, and send the message that the United States will use the power of its economic engine and give to prevent governments and entities from using a harmful, misleading campaign of *ona'at devarim* against the state of Israel. ■

## Sustaining a Brother

**Then you shall support him (Lev. 25:35)**

**והחזקת בו (ויקרא כה:לה)**

“Any big ticket military technology purchased from the U.S. comes with rules. Big stacks of strict guidelines outline exactly what allies can do to the hardware and the systems that run it. Generally, it comes down to: nothing. No modifications, no additions, no deletions. You can’t even make repairs without written consent from the Pentagon.” So writes [Wired Magazine](#) about America’s refusal to permit any modifications to American military technology. The Pentagon strictly applies this rule, especially to the new F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter, which Lockheed Martin will begin delivering to customers later this year. No adjustments, changes, or tinkering, except for one country: Israel. “Israel will be the first ally to receive the aircraft when its deliveries begin in December, and it will for the foreseeable future be the only country allowed to install customized software and weapons.” Why does the United States give Israel special accommodations with regard to its most sensitive technology? An answer can be found in Parashat Behar.

Parashat Behar outlines a number of situations in which “your brother” finds himself in a precarious position and requires outside assistance. If his means fail him we are told that, “you shall support him [whether] a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you.” (Leviticus 25:35) In simplest terms, we are commanded to offer financial assistance, a loan to help him through a difficult time. Yet, noting the language which requires us to “support him,” Rashi writes, “Do not allow him to fall down and collapse altogether, in which case it would be difficult to pick him up again. Rather, “support him” while his hand is still faltering. To what can this be compared? To a load on a donkey-while it is still on the donkey, one person can grasp it and hold it in place. Once it falls to the ground, however, [even] five people cannot pick it up.” Rambam writes, “There are eight levels in charity, each level surpassing the other. The highest level beyond which there is none, is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others [for alms]. Concerning this (Leviticus 25:35) states: ‘You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you.’ You should support him before he falls and becomes needy.” (Laws of Gifts to the Poor 10:7) One of the greatest acts of *chessed* is to not to pick up someone who has fallen, rather to prevent a person from falling in the first place.

This ethic of maintaining a brother and offering assistance that ensures that he will not falter underlies America’s longstanding military support for Israel. The United States gives only Israel the right to alter advanced aircraft, and in return Israeli modifications [find their way into](#) American equipment. Israel also has unique requirements—as it finds itself in a state of perpetual conflict, Israel does not have the luxury of shipping planes back to the United States for modifications. According to Wired, “When you might go to war at any moment, the argument goes, you can’t have your best hardware go out of service for weeks at a time for checkouts that can take just a few days on your own turf.”

Most importantly, the United States offers Israel unique benefits because of the brotherhood between the nations and America’s commitment to ensure that Israel never falters in its ongoing battle against adversaries bent on its destruction. America’s commitment to Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge stems from the realization that not only must the U.S. sustain a brother, but that it is easier, less expensive, and more effective to give Israel the tools it needs to prevent it from ever “falling” in the first place. That brotherhood is the result of decades of hard work by the dedicated bipartisan members of the pro-Israel community. Our continued calls for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship has not only provided Israel the critical U.S. support that will send the most advanced fighter jets in the world first to Israel, before any other country. Our voice also builds the relationship that gives Israel the ability to make the changes it needs to make those planes the most effective tools they can be to protect the people of the Jewish state. ■