

JANUARY 15, 2017

Parashat Bo

The Future of Their Children and Grandchildren

That you will tell in the ears of your son (Exodus 10:2)

למען תספר באזני בנך (שמות י:ב)

Late last month, friends and family members of fallen soldier Oron Shaul, whose remains continued to be held by Hamas, gathered at Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the Gaza Strip to commemorate his birthday. During the ceremony terrorists fired three mortars at the kibbutz in a cruel effort to disturb the proceedings. The IDF [later announced that Islamic Jihad](#), a terror group funded by Iran, most likely fired the projectiles (two of which were shot down by the Iron Dome system). In response to the rocket fire, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman [pointed to Iran's growing influence in the Gaza Strip](#), and called on the citizens of Gaza to take actions to prevent their leaders from allowing Iran and Hamas to take Gaza in a direction that would damage not only their future, but the future for their children. "I suggest you think about your children, their future, and start pressing Hamas leaders to change direction. Right now, you're on a flight to nowhere. If you change the direction, believe me, you will build, first and foremost, a good future for your children. The heads of the regime in Tehran are not interested in the depressing reality in Gaza nor in the future of the children there. They care about their extremist ideology and hurting Israel as much as possible," Lieberman said.

Thinking about the future represents a major theme of *Parashat Bo*. We find numerous references to the future, and that of the children of the Jewish people throughout this parashah. In the commandment to relay the coming plague of locusts Moses is instructed to punish the Pharaoh and Egypt, "So that you will tell in the ears of your son and of your son's son, what I have wrought upon Egypt..." (10:2) Towards the end of the parashah after the plague of the firstborn Moses relates that in the future, "And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt'...And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.'" (13:8, 14) Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, commenting on these three verses [explains that](#), "Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children." While Rabbi Sacks focuses his remarks on the critical nature of education for our children, his comments also take note of the important fact that a nation can only truly begin to live when it focuses not only on the present, but on the future. Until this point as slaves suffering in bondage in Egypt, the Israelites could only focus on their immediate needs, in the present. Who can think about the future when she's worried about survival today? Moses, on the other hand, demands that they consider not only the near future—their children—but the distant future as well.

For too long, Palestinian leaders, both of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and in the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, have followed Pharaoh's model, insulating themselves from suffering while remaining indifferent to the burden that their hatred against Israel heaps on their own children. Sadly, rather than seeing their children as keys to a better future, the Palestinian leadership instead explicitly educates their children to martyr themselves in terrorist acts. [According to The Jerusalem Post](#), IMPACT-SE, the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education issued a report last year on the Palestinian Authority textbooks for grades 11 and 12 which stated that, "The new textbooks showed deterioration in messages of tolerance and peace compared to previous editions. They teach pupils to become expendable martyrs and reject negotiations, while demonizing and denying the existence of the state of Israel."

Golda Meir famously remarked (see “*A Land of Our Own: An Oral Autobiography*” p. 242) that, “Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.” Her wise insight remains as true today as it was when she said it fifty years ago. The Palestinian people both in Gaza and in the West Bank, should finally reject the self-defeating rhetoric of hate promoted by their leaders, and begin to act in the best interest of their children and grandchildren. Only then can peace truly become reality in the Middle East. ■

Standing Tall through Support and Friendship

Every man of his neighbor (Exodus 11:2)

איש מרעהו (שמות יא:ב)

When he relates the different commandments that the Israelites must fulfill on the fateful eve of Passover in Egypt, including the consumption of the paschal lamb, Moses is told to give the nation an additional instruction. Before the people finally leave Egypt they must ask the Egyptians for gifts. “Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.” (11:2) Commentators wonder about the nature of this request. The nation was slated to travel to Sinai to receive the Torah. Why would they need Egyptian finery? Dr. Michael Kanovsky [explains](#) that asking the Egyptians for aid represented a crucial step along the Israelites’ path to freedom.

We read in Leviticus (26:13) that, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you go upright.” Walking upright implies a sense of pride and self-worth. In other words, physical freedom would not have been enough had the people continued to think of themselves as slaves. In order for the Israelites to become a great nation, they needed to leave Egypt walking “upright” as proud people with a sense of importance and self-worth. Dr. Kanovsky notes that, “The commandment to request items from the Egyptians was in order to upright the stance of the Children of Israel. No longer were the Egyptians the masters and the Israelites the slaves. Rather, the people of Israel were now peers [with the Egyptians as they were instructed to ask] ‘man from his neighbor, and woman from her neighbor.’ ...Now the Israelite would be required to walk with a head held high to the house and ask—or even demand—the most expensive items in the house.” Kanovsky makes an important insight about asking for assistance. Asking for help requires a sense of self-worth, and an understanding that both asking for, and receiving assistance represents an understanding of worth and value.

This sense of respect is also the feeling that underlies America’s [security assistance to Israel](#). America’s aid to Israel—focused on Israel’s security and defense needs—stems from a deep respect and understanding of the not only the great security challenges Israel faces, but the appreciation that the funds devoted to Israel’s security represent a wise, solid investment in America’s interests. Over the years, Israel has demonstrated time and time again the wisdom of this investment, serving as an island of democracy and stability in a very turbulent, dangerous neighborhood.

As part of the ten year Memorandum of Understanding signed by President Obama, the United States has committed to provide significant defense aid for Israel over the coming decade. Still, Congress must allocate the funds to live up to this commitment, and we, as supporters of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, must never allow ourselves to take that support for granted. We must consistently remind our elected officials how U.S. support for Israel, as a powerful act of friendship, also serves American interests, deterring regional conflict by making clear to potential foes that they cannot defeat the Jewish state with such strong American support.

On Nov. 14, the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R.2810) passed the House with a vote of 356-70, which authorizes a total of \$705.8 million for U.S.-Israel missile defense, a \$558 million increase over the president’s budget request and \$105 million over last year’s adopted funding level. As Congress works to finalize FY18 appropriations, we must urge our representatives to support the full \$3.1 billion in U.S. security assistance to Israel and \$705.8 million for cooperative missile defense programs with the Jewish state in FY18. With America’s continued support, Israel will be able to stand “upright,” together with the United States, for many years to come. ■

Sermon tidbits are intended for your use without attribution. Please feel free to use some or all of the material. Although it is not necessary, it is appreciated if copies of sermons or articles that use the ideas presented here are sent to synagogue@aipac.org.