

APRIL 2, 2018

Shabbat - End of Passover

Nachshon's Remarkable Step

And the water split (Exodus 14:21)

יִבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם (שְׁמוֹת יִד: כא)

The state of Israel recently announced the winners of this year's Israel Prize, generally regarded as the State's highest cultural honor. It is presented annually on Israel's Independence Day in a state ceremony in Jerusalem in the presence of the President, the Prime Minister, and other honored leaders of Israel. Amongst the many remarkable personalities that have been chosen as honorees this year, the most well-known is [Natan Sharansky](#). Sharansky is the outgoing Jewish Agency chairman, a former government minister and life-long rights and political activist. He is being awarded for his human rights activism and promotion of *aliyah*. Beyond his job description, he is a person who exemplifies the [story of Israel](#). Before his *aliyah*, "Anatoly" Sharansky sat as a prisoner of Zion in a Soviet jail for almost a decade and is a symbol of all who dream of freedom.

The final days of Passover symbolize the last phase in the redemption from Egypt. We read the portion in the Torah that describes the epic event that brought about true freedom to the Israelite people—the splitting of the Red Sea. The Jewish people, panicked, are standing at the edge of the sea with the Egyptian army quickly advancing toward them. Suddenly, the Midrash tells us, Nachshon, from the tribe of Judah, steps into the sea and walks up to his waist, his chest, his face...and the Red Sea splits! The Gaon of Vilna (18th century Europe) offers a beautiful insight about this event. In describing the experience of Nachshon the Torah says, "and the waters formed a wall" (Exodus 14:22). The Hebrew word for wall, *choma*, is spelled peculiarly—without a *vav*. Thus the word could also be read as "*chaima*," meaning "anger." The Torah is homiletically reflecting each Jew's disappointment, and sense of anger, for not having the courage to fulfill their own potential. The growth opportunity had been lost to the masses and only one individual had the courage and confidence to forge ahead and bring about the remarkable salvation at the Red Sea.

Natan Sharansky is an example of a modern day heroic figure who fought for good and never wavered in his determination to live in freedom and fulfill his dream to make new life in the Jewish homeland. He is an inspiring example, not only for Jews, but for all people who value the nobility of moral living and justice.

In 2004 Natan Sharansky got a call from the White House. He was asked if he was available to meet with the President. Less than 24 hours later, Mr. Sharansky found himself in the Oval Office in an hour long conversation with [President Bush](#) about his book *The Case for Democracy; The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror*. This wonderful anecdote reflects a poignant example of a unique bond that exists between our nations, a relationship that can be traced back to the very establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. Natan Sharansky in many ways is the embodiment of why the U.S. and Israel share a unique bond with one another. Beyond the practical partnerships in areas such as economy or security, at the heart of the U.S. and Israel alliance is a sense of [mutual values](#) that are shared. The United States and Israel share a common commitment to democracy and freedom; the rule of law, freedom of religion and speech, and human rights. These are all core values shared between these two great countries. The story of Natan Sharansky resonates deeply with us because of the kind of values that have defined his character and his devotion to a lifetime of promoting and teaching others.

Each of us in our own efforts to aid and support the Jewish homeland have the opportunity to strengthen our ties with our congressmen, senators, and government leaders so that we can continue to build on this foundation of friendship. In this way, each of us can play a part in pursuing a path that will lead toward laying a foundation for peace in the region and to overcoming tyranny and terror in all sectors so that every citizen of the world can live in freedom. ■

Splitting Every Ocean

Nation's heard, they trembled (Exodus 15:14)

שמעו עמים ירגזון (שמות טו:יד)

Just before its Easter recess, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives approved, by a large majority, a [\\$706 million](#) allocation for missile defense in the 2018 U.S. budget to the state of Israel. The allocation, which is \$105 million more than last year, will be divided into Israeli research and development programs and procurement of the Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems. The added level of support for military programs is key to helping Israel defend its citizens against rocket and missiles and advancing America's own missile defense capabilities.

The text of the Haggadah, that we joyfully recited this past week, describes a *multitude* of miracles that occurred at the splitting of the sea, the event we celebrate on the final days of Passover. In the words of the Haggadah; "*Of the events of the sea, it says, 'Israel saw the great hand of God....'*" But what other miracles took place beyond the actual splitting of the sea? One Midrash claims that when the Red Sea split, every sea, river and lake also split at that very moment and then returned to its natural course of nature in the same way that the Red Sea did. The *Maharal*, Rabbi Yehuda Loew of Prague, suggests that with the miraculous splitting of the sea God suspended the entire system of natural law. In this way the miracle of the sea was the most remarkable in that it affected the entire physical realm of creation (*Gevurot Hashem*, chapter 42). Another message embedded in this teaching is the idea that this miraculous episode left its mark on every corner of the globe. The splitting of the sea had a ripple effect, literally and figuratively, and spread an inspirational and uplifting message to many nations. It is worth noting that within the relatively short nineteen verses that make up the Song of the Sea *three* of the verses highlight the unique effect that the Splitting of Sea had on the surrounding nations: "*Nations heard and trembled...Fear and dread fell upon them*" (Exodus 15:14). Apparently, the wondrous events that took place in Egypt and their crescendo at the Red Sea, were intended be to transformative events not only for the Israelites but for all the nations of the world. The lessons of good overcoming evil and that justice and good will ultimately prevail is a message intended to be heard by all people.

We in the Jewish community need to express our sincere gratitude to the U.S. government for the continued support of the state of Israel. AIPAC [applauded](#) Congress for including key provisions to help Israel address critical security challenges in the Fiscal year 2018 Omnibus Appropriations bill, which provides \$3.1 billion in overall security assistance to Israel, in addition to the \$706 million for missile defense. In adopting this legislation the leadership of many members of Congress, both Republican and Democratic, had hands in the many different parts of the bill. Israel's Minister of Defense Avigdor Liberman [published](#) a statement thanking the U.S., saying, "This is the highest aid budget ever. We will use the money for mass production of Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow 3 interceptors, and for future development of the multi-layer defense system against future threats." We in the pro-Israel community must articulate to our leadership in government our sincere sense of gratitude for these gracious and significant gestures of support on behalf of Israel. These initiatives provide key financial aid for the Jewish homeland and highlight the U.S. government's steadfast fellowship and celebrated friendship with the state of Israel. ■

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