

APRIL 9, 2018

Parashat Shmini

Rapid Redemption

Eat it hurriedly (Exodus 12:11)

ואכלתם אותו בחפזון (שמות יב:יא)

Next week, Israel will celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut—Israel Independence Day. One of the highlights of this year's celebration is a series of programs featuring Israeli innovation and the country's accomplishments in the area of technology. Israel's Science and Technology Minister Ofir Akunis will host an event honoring Israel's [Nobel Prize laureates](#). In recent years, six Israelis have won the Nobel Prize for chemistry and two have won the Nobel Prize in economics. Akunis said that he expects dozens of ministers from around the world to accept the invitation to meet Nobel Prize laureates and tour the country. "Many of them want to understand the miracle of Israel as a science powerhouse," he said.

Israel is known as the innovation nation, and with very good reason. Despite being approximately the size of New Jersey and with limited natural resources, Israel has the third most companies listed on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange trailing only the much larger United States and China.

In accomplishing a lot in a small short period of time, Israel is following the path first set out by our biblical ancestors. One of the underlying themes that we find in the story of redemption that we just celebrated over this past week of Passover is the rapid pace that things unfolded. It is most pronounced in the context of the *matzah*. The bread did not have time to rise and the Israelites could not delay. The 18 minute timeframe that Jewish law requires for the baking of *matzah* is reminiscent of the ancient quickness with which we hurried out of Egypt. A second example of the rapid movement in the redemption is the law related to the paschal sacrifice. The verse says: "Your loins girded, with shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand— eat it hurriedly—it is a Pesach for God" (Exodus 12:11). If the Jewish people were instructed to act hurriedly then the speed and haste that characterized the Exodus was not incidental or spontaneous. It was rather carefully planned and crafted to be part of the Exodus story. Why was speed integral to the Exodus from Egypt?

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of the Mandatory Palestine, suggested that when things move at a gradual pace, it represents the natural course of events. When things develop naturally they generally take time. For example, national emancipation is a slow and gradual process. However, *rapid speed* represents the unique quality of the Israelite people and their inherent potential that was just waiting to emerge once the shackles of slavery were lifted from them. The young Jewish nation that had emerged in Egypt was now ready to be catapulted into a new realm and achieve majestic success.

The astounding accomplishments that have been attained in modern day Israel, and the speed in which they have occurred, can be viewed in light of the ancient story of the Israelite redemption from slavery. We Jews yearned for the day that we could live freely in a Jewish homeland and develop our true nature and distinct character. The remarkable achievements in Israel represent the long awaited opportunity of the Jewish people to realize our talents and aspirations. From the perspective of the United States these achievements in the area of science, technology, and business have also brought significant benefit to our shores. [Israeli companies](#) and technology have increasingly looked to opportunities in the United States, investing more than \$150 billion between 2010 and 2015. Israel is among the top 20 suppliers of direct investments into the United States. Today, over 30 U.S. states have signed bilateral agreements with Israel in order to foster closer ties in the fields of business, technology, agriculture, homeland security and energy. As we usher in this significant anniversary of the Jewish homeland we join with the pro Israel community everywhere congratulating Israel on her remarkable successes and triumphs. We hope and pray that our two great nations continue to collaborate together and strengthen one another. We are confident that this unique friendship will continue to be a boon to both countries benefiting not only the US and Israel but all people across the globe. ■

A Gift to Israel on Her 70th

A Land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8)

ארץ זבת חלב ודבש (שמות ג:ח)

This year's celebration of Israel's 70th Independence Day has added significance with the planned official [opening](#) of the United States Embassy in Israel's capital of Jerusalem. Since President Trump's announcement in December that the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital and plans to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, his administration has been looking at options for fast-tracking the relocation. President Trump's decision to place the US embassy in Jerusalem, is an unmistakable affirmation of the U.S. government's long-standing support and deep friendship with the Jewish state.

During this auspicious time of year, we as a community should take special note of this historic time in Israel's history. Without a doubt, the theme of the land of Israel is one of the major motifs that weaves its way throughout the Five Books of Moses. We begin the story of our people with Abraham and Sarah and the promise of the land of Israel as the Jewish homeland for our people. The conclusion of the Torah describes the Israelites standing at the border of Israel, ready to enter the Promised Land. There is a memorable phrase regarding Israel that repeats itself a number of times throughout scripture. When Moses stands at the burning bush, God asks him to lead the people from Egypt and bring them to *a land flowing with milk and honey*. What is the meaning of this phrase? Nachmanides (Exodus 3:8) understands the verse quite literally. He emphasizes the significance of the word *flowing*. The word *flowing* indicates that there is greater fertility in the land of Israel. Fruit trees will produce fruit filled with nectar and livestock will overflow with milk due to fertile pastures they will eat from. However the phrase, *flowing with milk and honey*, can be interpreted symbolically as a place where goodness, joy, and happiness will be available and accessible to all. Israel will be a place that offers a life of tranquility, serenity, and justice for all who make Israel their home. This ancient vision continues to inspire the leadership and the people of Israel today. We are blessed to have a Jewish homeland, home to over six million Jews, that strives to shape and develop a society that provides its citizens safety, well being, and happiness. It is these shared values of democracy that stand at the center of the U.S. - Israel alliance.

The Jewish people have maintained a constant presence in Jerusalem, our holiest city, for more than 3,000 years. Israel declared the city its capital following its re-establishment in 1948. When the United States ultimately relocates its embassy to Jerusalem, it will treat Israel as it does every other country with which it has diplomatic relations.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations [Nikki Haley](#) told the crowd at the AIPAC annual policy conference in Washington this past March that she hopes to attend the opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem in May. "Jerusalem was, is, and will always be the capital of Israel." Haley then added, "this was not created by the location of an embassy. America did not make Jerusalem Israel's capital. What President Trump did, to his great credit, was recognize a reality that American presidents had denied for too long." After Congress initially declared that "the United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem," in The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, we in the pro Israel community are happily looking forward to seeing this long awaited commitment by the U.S. government come to fruition. This historic gesture on the part of the U.S. government will certainly bring an added dimension to our sense of joy and happiness as we unite with our brothers and sisters in Israel to celebrate the Jewish homeland's 70th birthday! ■

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