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Tsiyon News

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Return to Joy

Exodus 35

Return to Joy



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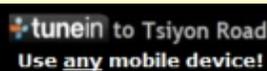
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From Eliyahu

There is a special joy that comes over people who have been to the edge and back. When I was a teenager I had an incident like that. I was showing off, as teenagers sometimes do, having climbed up a vertical rock face. My problem was that I got stuck about 10 feet from the top. It was a sheer drop of at least a hundred feet, with jagged rocks at the bottom. There was no going up or down, and the little branch growing out of a crack in the rock that I was clinging to was starting to pull loose. I realized I probably was going to die. The person I was trying to impress, my older brother, was down below. Now, I was reduced to yelling to him for urgent help. He looked around in the rubble for something that might be useful, and found an old rusty cable. In a desperate attempt to save my life he climbed to the top of the cliff above me by an easier route around another way. He twisted a loop in the end of the cable and dangled it over the edge

down behind me. In an impossible move I could never duplicate again I managed to jump and put my foot in the cable as I clawed my way up the side of the cliff. He pulled as I clawed and in seconds I was over the edge and on the top of the cliff. My brother and I were gripped with relief and joy as we hugged each other and rolled around on the grass, laughing like fools. I was filled with joy, just being alive.

As I had done that day at the cliff, at Sinai Israel had made a horrible and stupid mistake that had brought them to the edge of oblivion. Just as my brother stood in the gap for me, Moses had stood in the gap for them. As I was saved from my own stupid behavior by my brother, and by YHWH that day, so was Israel saved at Sinai. In the Midrash this week we find YHWH bringing joy to those humbled Israelites - the incomparable joy of a second chance.

Blessings and Shalom!

Eliyahu ben David

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PS - Many of us have a vital interest in the relationship of the USA and the state of Israel. The recent article below from the *Jerusalem Post* gives a sobering Israeli perspective.

Candidly Speaking: Obama-Netanyahu rift is unbridgeable

Reprint from: The Jerusalem Post

03/09/2014 21:39

In an unprecedented breach of diplomatic etiquette, President Obama once again sandbagged Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.



Netanyahu and Obama shake hands at start of Oval Office meeting, March 3, 2013 Photo: REUTERS

In an unprecedented breach of diplomatic etiquette, President Obama once again sandbagged Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. In a carefully orchestrated interview with Jeff Goldberg, a columnist for Bloomberg, released a few hours before the prime minister's arrival in the US, Obama reverted to his May 2011 role as an Israel basher and engaged in personal savaging and humiliation of Netanyahu.

This despite Netanyahu's intimation that Israel intended to adopt the Kerry framework, albeit with reservations.

Obama accused Netanyahu of leading his country toward disaster, condemned the "more aggressive settlement construction" and rhetorically asked, "Do you resign yourself to what amounts to a permanent occupation of the West Bank?" He effusively praised Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas – who had rejected prime minister Ehud Olmert's offer for 97 percent of territories over the Green Line and refused to even conduct negotiations unless Israel released mass murderers whom he currently fetes as heroes. Obama made no reference to Palestinian intransigence and total unwillingness to compromise.

Obama's most ominous remark was a veiled threat that unless Israel made further concessions, the US would be limited in its ability to protect Israel from "international fallout" at the United Nations and other international bodies.

Some allege that Obama was playing a "good cop, bad cop" routine with Secretary of State John Kerry, who despite his earlier role conveying similar intimidating threats against Israel was now reverting to a pro-Israel posture. The more likely explanation is that in the absence of another election, Obama no longer feels obliged to be nice to Israel and is unconstrained in promoting his biased outlook.

To Netanyahu's credit, he retained his cool and avoided directly confronting Obama's offensive remarks. He said that "Israel has been doing its part, and I regret to say that the Palestinians haven't." He added, "The tango in the Middle East needs at least three. For years, there have been two – Israel and the US. Now it needs to be seen if the Palestinians are also present." Reiterating his desire to achieve a peace settlement, he nevertheless emphasized that he would

resist any pressures that could compromise Israel's security needs.

In the midst of this, the Ukraine crisis exploded and Obama's impotent response again highlighted the dramatic retreat of the US from the world stage.

Obama's incompetence and failed diplomacy led to the debacle in Syria which, combined with his misguided support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, paved the path for Russia to resume its role as a central player in the Middle East. Obama's courting and appeasement of extremist adversaries like Iran and his alienation of friends, and hollow threats, have convinced traditional allies that the United States has become a paper tiger and can no longer be relied upon.

Many regard Obama as even more ineffective than president Jimmy Carter.

However, when faced with another insoluble maelstrom in the Ukraine and humiliation at the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin and requiring congressional support, Obama must have realized that it would be somewhat bizarre to launch a new confrontation with a democratic ally.

At the joint press meeting with Netanyahu, Obama gushed that "we do not have a closer friend or ally than Israel and a bond between our two countries and our two peoples is unbreakable." In a 360-degree reversal, he commended Netanyahu's efforts and praised him for having "conducted these negotiations with the level of seriousness and commitments that reflects his leadership."

Netanyahu responded indirectly to Obama's earlier outburst stressing that "the best way to guarantee peace is to be strong and that's what the people of Israel expect me to do – to stand strong against criticism, against pressure, stand strong to secure the future of the one and only Jewish state." He emphasized that "what we want is peace – not a piece of paper... a real peace... based on mutual recognition... a peace that we can defend."

He urged Obama to cooperate with Israel to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons. He concluded with formal praise of President Obama and especially John Kerry for their tireless efforts to promote peace.

After the meeting, according to news agency AJP, a senior administration official described the talks as "not as contentious as on previous encounters" and said that the president told Netanyahu that he would "push Palestinians" to match any Israeli concessions.

And so we witnessed an extraordinary reversal. At the subsequent AIPAC conference, Kerry was effusive in his praise of Israel and Netanyahu. He called on Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and stressed that Israel could not compromise its security.

In his AIPAC address, Netanyahu made scant reference to the president. He restated the danger of a nuclear Iran, reiterated the need for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and refused to compromise on security issues. The bulk of his speech was devoted to passionately conveying his desire to reach a settlement with the Palestinians, stressing the great economic, political and social benefits that peace would bring to Israel and the region. The speech reflected the centrist position that he had adopted and thrust the onus on the Palestinians. It was an extraordinary display of good diplomacy, for which Netanyahu deserves full credit.

Yet we should be under no illusions. Despite the ultimate ritual exchange of diplomatic pleasantries, the negative chemistry and ideological differences between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu seem unbridgeable.

Obama's calculated savage outburst against Netanyahu prior to his arrival stands in stark contrast to the soft and engaging language he consistently employs toward leaders of rogue states like Iran. Despite the chaos and bloodshed engulfing the Middle East and other parts of the world, Obama remains obsessed with beating up Israel. His latest outburst reinforced the concerns of most of the Israeli public that he lacks any real understanding of the situation and confirmed their estimate of him as the most hostile US president Israel had ever encountered.

Israel will go through the ritual of approving the Kerry framework agreement with major reservations. If the Palestinians do likewise, negotiations will continue, although nobody will be holding their breath in expectation of a positive outcome in the short-term.

The best achievement would be an agreement to concentrate on interim solutions until such time as the Palestinian people and their leaders are genuinely willing to engage in peaceful coexistence.

But for the next two years while Obama is in office, there must be a concerted effort to retain American public and congressional support in order to deter the current administration from implementing Obama's threat to stop protecting Israel at the United Nations and other anti-Israeli dominated international forums.

In addition, we must not become complacent about the special military assistance and cooperation we receive which was even strengthened by the Obama administration and remains crucial for the IDF to retain a qualitative advantage against its adversaries.

To this end Israel must seek to minimize public disputations with the administration and strengthen our standing amongst the American public. AIPAC must endeavor to retain the support of a bi-partisan Congress.

We must also continue to demonstrate our willingness to reach a reasonable accommodation with the Palestinians if their leaders come to their senses – a highly unlikely eventuality.

As we witness the consistent US abandonment of its major allies culminating with the ongoing Ukraine crisis, it is now evident that under Obama, it is unlikely that the US will resort to military power to defend its friends. In this climate, most Israelis would endorse Netanyahu's determination not to compromise on security or be willing to subcontract areas controlled by the IDF to any third parties, including NATO.

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