

**“When You are Wrong You are Wrong:  
Why Jimmy Carter Should Stop Interfering in the Middle East”  
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I arrived in this congregation five years ago, almost to the parasha. It was Parashat Vayehi and I spoke of Philippe Petit who, in 1974, a week before his 26th birthday, strung a cable between the not yet completed twin towers of the World Trade Center. For the better part of an hour he walked back and forth between the towers, across the 140-foot gap, while tens of thousands watched.

I spoke of Philippe Petit because he walked a fine line between two gaping towers. This was actually a metaphor for the tight rope we, as American Jews, must walk. We must walk between our love for this great country, America, and the love we have for the State of Israel. We also walk another tight rope, but not between two great towers. We must walk between two great powers.

When I concluded that sermon, many people wondered how long I would be here. It sounded to many as though I was destined to move to Israel. As you can see, we are still here, although I am torn between the two worlds. In the intervening years, Missy and I have achieved a great sense of satisfaction as we have had the honor of bringing literally hundreds of people, both young and old, to Israel.

Today, my comments are not about being torn, they are about being concerned. I am concerned about a visit to the Middle East by past President of the United States, Jimmy Carter. I am concerned because he made another visit to Syria to meet with President Bashar al-Assad, and Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal. It was an under-publicized visit, reminiscent of his visit this past April, yet it remains notable nonetheless.

In April of 2008, former President Jimmy Carter traveled to Syria as a self-appointed special envoy to the Middle East. During this visit, he met with both Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal. When he returned from that trip, he was harshly rebuked by the Bush administration. They were clearly criticizing him for engaging in diplomacy with this group. Both the government of the United States and the government of our closest ally, Israel, consider this a terrorist organization. When a past president of the United States is photographed with the head of a terrorist organization, he gives legitimacy to that person and what they represent.

In my opinion, Jimmy Carter sold us out and he continues to sell us out. Israel and America have long since been brothers. We share the same dreams, we share the same values and we share the same interests. As Senator Arlen Specter explained to the Senate this past week, “It is my expectation that the United States will maintain a close, strong relationship with Israel. This relationship is based on U.S. national interests and our close cultural and historic ties with Israel and, in particular, our mutual security interests.”

This week we read the story of the growing divide between Joseph and his brothers. I can't help but think Jimmy Carter is trying to drive a wedge between us. The story we read about this morning is a story with deep-seeded and very complex family dynamics. It is a story about a father, a son and his brothers. Joseph has become the outcast and has separated himself from his brothers and from his parents. He had no idea he was doing it. Joseph was just a 17-year-old boy, absorbed in his own dreams, so proud of himself. He was amazed by his subconscious imagination, of his own grandeur and maybe, just maybe, looking for a little recognition. So, he tells his brothers and his parents his ideas but they are not received the way he imagined. In his haste to share his dreams, he had no idea how those words, those ideas, would be accepted. I don't think it was thought out or purposeful with respect to the damage that ensued. I don't think Joseph was trying to push his brothers down. I don't think he was trying to further alienate himself from his siblings, I don't think Joseph was trying to push himself up by pushing others down. He was just not thinking. He was inconsiderate because he never considered how what he said would be heard. But his father did. Jacob had learned some really important life lessons and he hears Joseph loud and clear.

And *Vayig'ar bo aviv* – “and his father rebuke him” (Genesis 37:10) Jacob says, “What were you doing and what were you thinking. Pay attention to what is going on around you. Open your eyes and look at the faces of your brothers. You don't get it, do you? You are creating irreparable damage. You are driving a wedge between yourself and them, a wedge that may never be removed.”

“Look,” Hizkuni says, *Yodeah haya shehayu hadavarim atidim l'gah aleihem, aval kidei l'hashkeet hakinah shebinaihem ga'ar bo*. “I know you will achieve great things, but stop getting them so angry. They already think ill of you and you don't need to give them more ammunition. You don't need the headache.”

We all find ourselves in destructive family patterns. Jacob knows from whence he speaks and so do we. We all find ourselves in destructive life-cycles, but this could stop if only we could see it happening. The problem is we can't, so we need another person to redirect us. We need a parent or a friend to guide us. Rabbi Rozenwasser taught a very important and powerful message this week at *tisch*. In fact, it is so significant, that when Jacob says, “Go find your brothers,” Joseph has truly lost sight of where his brothers are, not just physically but emotionally. So, when Joseph comes across a stranger, a nameless man, who gives him some direction, this nameless man served as a bearing and offered a corrective course. Again, Joseph just didn't get it and the problem is that, once he gets there, he makes things worse because his narcissism is too deep. So, Joseph is sold into slavery, a compromise from what the brothers really wanted to do to him. That too, happens to all of us. We can get all of the help we need, yet we are still able to confuse things further.

At this point, Jacob says to Joseph, “I don't care what you think the reality is. I don't care what you think the truth is and I don't care who you think you are. You have no business inciting your brothers. Nothing good will come of this because they're already negative about you.”

I say the same to Jimmy Carter, “I don't care what you think the truth is. You have no business inciting the Arab world any further. Syria hates Israel already. They have shown time and time

again their desire to bring harm to their smaller neighbor. Repeatedly, Syria has generated a war by proxy by using Hezbollah as their front.” So I say loud and clear, when a past President of the United States is photographed with a head of a terrorist organization, he gives legitimacy to that person and what they represent.

What we need is a strategic thoughtful planned policy for that region of the world, not a past president who is trying to convince the world that something is patently wrong. I say, “Mr. Carter, you have no business meddling in the Middle East because you have already shown how little you understand the region both in your writings and in your previous visits.”

I call on both the current and incoming administrations to sit this past President down and rein him in. If the state department can demand that in order for Hillary Clinton to assume the position of Secretary of State, her husband’s speaking engagements must be cleared through the administration, then I call on the soon-to-be Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to sit down with this past President and politely show him the door, making it very clear to him and to the rest of the world that he does not speak for the United States of America.

Jimmy Carter’s latest visit, once again, has him face to face with terrorists, funders of terrorism, and terrorist sympathizers. This can’t be good for anyone, least of all Gilad Shalit, the young Israeli soldier still held captive. So, if there is anyone out there today, within the sound of my voice that could get a message to Jimmy Carter – ask him to stop showing his pathological anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. He should leave foreign policy to those who are charged with that complicated task. If he really wants a sustainable, comprehensive peace in the Middle East, then **he** ought not to be the focus.

Israel is working hard to develop an approach for living side by side with a hostile Palestinian population. It is difficult, nuanced work that is challenged daily by right-wing Israelis and terrorists. These terrorists are used by Arab Heads of State to further de-stabilize Israel and the region for their own gain. When the Israel government moves to evict settlers from a disputed property, we watch in horror as Jewish police forcibly remove Jewish residents from a building they believe they legally purchased and we say to the world, “We believe in the rule of law.” It has been a difficult few weeks and we don’t need this past President further complicating the situation.

This week my family and I will take another trip to Israel. We go to celebrate our daughter’s coming of age as a bat mitzvah. We go to see our brothers and our nieces and nephews and we go to breathe the air – and we go to pray. Ten days just to reconnect.