KORACH: How Do You Measure Victory in the Middle East?

The conflict between Israel and Iran is not over yet. We are currently in a ceasefire after an overwhelming Israeli victory in the “Twelve-Day War,” a conflict in which Israel succeeded, at the highest possible level, in achieving its objectives: destroying Iran’s nuclear program and neutralizing its ballistic missiles.

Israel also demonstrated the incredible capability of its air force, which, within just a few hours, gained total control of Tehran’s skies. The Jewish Air Force proved to be unmatched by any other air force in the region. Israel also used its missile and drone defense systems with considerable effectiveness. It showed the incredible logistical and emotional preparedness and discipline of the Jewish State regarding its shelters—better than any other country in the world—and its citizens’ training to mobilize immediately upon hearing sirens and alarms. This readiness has saved thousands of lives that could have been victims of Iranian missiles.

It has been an incredible victory for Israel, and Iran knows it. The world knows it, too. There are still post-war negotiations between the U.S. and Iran to ensure that Iran does not continue its nuclear programs or missile production.

What else needs to happen now?

Suppose we visualize the most optimistic scenario of this story, which is still unfolding. In that case, some suggest an expansion of the Abraham Accords, potentially including countries such as Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and even Syria and Lebanon.

This week, giant billboards appeared in Tel Aviv showing Trump, Netanyahu, and Arab leaders promoting normalization

with Israel under the slogan of the “Abraham Alliance” (see image above).

But until these messianic images crystallize, we must be realistic. First and foremost, we must recognize all variants of enemies: perhaps peace agreements can be signed with moderate Muslim states, such as Bahrain or the Emirates, but it is extremely dangerous to make agreements with Islamic or Islamized states. Because a state or an Islamic organization—such as Iran, the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, or Al Qaeda—will not abandon their objective of destroying Israel. In any hypothetical “peace agreement,” they will use the strategy of taqiya, the religiously permitted lie in Islam, for political and military purposes. That is, to sign a peace agreement today with the hidden intention of attacking tomorrow.

If we forget this, then we have not learned the lessons of October 7.

Israel handed over Gaza to Hamas, free of Jewish presence. During those 20 years of supposed “peace,” Israel helped as much as it could to rebuild and benefit the inhabitants of Gaza. It yielded and looked the other way (hajalá) in the face of provocations from Gazans. Meanwhile, Hamas, instead of building their state with unlimited resources at their disposal, armed itself to the teeth, dug tunnels, and meticulously planned the massacre of 2023. We cannot allow ourselves to fall into the same trap again.

How can we avoid repeating this terror?

From the perspective of Judaism—and also of Israel’s modern situation—there is a fundamental teaching: the least Jewish word in the dictionary is “akhshav,” (□□□□□) “now,” as in the phrase “Peace Now” or “Hostages Now.” That mentality of resolving an immediate problem and leaving the consequences for our grandchildren is not part of the Jewish vision. Our

patriarch Yaacob acquired the birthright from his brother Esav, a future blessing, which Esav sacrificed for a bowl of lentils NOW. That scene is not just a historical account; it is a warning. The Jew knows very well that there is nothing worse than sacrificing the future for immediate benefit. Even more so when those benefits come from political actors of very dubious reputation.

In any peace agreement that is signed, especially with its immediate neighbors, Israel cannot repeat the mistake of negotiating “land for peace.” The land conquered since October 7 in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza is not only a strategic guarantee, a security zone, a demilitarized strip CONTROLLED BY ISRAEL that keeps our enemies away from our borders and makes them less dangerous.

The land conquered by Israel is mainly the best insurance policy to prevent future hostilities. It is the most significant punishment for the perpetrators of the October 7 attack and their allies, which may deter them from committing the same mistake again.

Anwar Sadat cynically boasted that he gave Begin what he wanted most: a signed paper, and in exchange, he obtained what he wanted most: the land of Sinai. The documents signed today could be violated tomorrow, especially when governments change in the Arab signatory countries or even in the governments of those countries guaranteeing such agreements. But land does not change. It does not move. It remains there. It functions as a security buffer, essential for the defense of Israeli territory.

If there is going to be a peace settlement, let it be “paper for paper.” And let the land, conquered with the blood of our young soldiers, remain untouched. As it was in the days of Yehoshua Bin Nun, land obtained is consecrated land; it is not negotiable.

IN THE MIDDLE EAST, VICTORY IS MEASURED BY THE LAND GAINED IN BATTLE. AND DEFEAT BY THE LAND LOST.

We owe it to our grandchildren and to the brave soldiers of Israel who gave their lives to conquer it.

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Every place that the sole of your foot will step upon [=that you conquer] will be yours; from the desert [of the Negev in the south] and to Lebanon, from the Euphrates River to the western sea [the Mediterranean], will be your territory.

Debarim 11:24