

Israel Connection

AN AIPAC HOLIDAY PUBLICATION FOR SYNAGOGUES

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 2 HANNUKAH 5768

Hannukah: Let There Be Light

THE TALMUD (Shabbat 21b) tells us that the students of the great rabbis Hillel and Shammai disagreed about how to light the *menorah*.

Shammai's students held that on the first night of Hannukah, we should light all eight candles and remove one each subsequent night. Hillel's students believed exactly the opposite—we should light one candle on the first night and add one each subsequent night.

As we all know, our practice today is in accordance with the teaching of Hillel. It's hard to imagine the eighth night of the Festival of Lights without *menorot* full of candles in our homes. Aside from aesthetics, the reason given in the Talmud for Hillel's position is that "we go up in holiness, not down."

In other words, because lighting our *hannukiyot* is a sacred act, we should increase the light of the candles, not

decrease it. When we are engaged in a holy activity, we should always look for ways to do more, rather than less.

world without Israel. Meanwhile, Hizballah and Hamas threaten Israel from the north and south. As patriotic Americans, we know that supporting Israel is good not merely because it makes Israel stronger and safer, but because it makes America stronger and safer. As Jews, we know that supporting our brothers and sisters in Israel is holy activity—a sacred obligation.

And as concerned citizens, we understand that we need to do more to ensure the strength and safety of both great democracies and their continued special bond. With the stakes so high, we simply cannot afford to do less.

One of the best ways to ensure the future strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship is to meet directly with America's leaders to ensure the passage of critical legislation. Meeting with our



representatives and senators here or in Washington, D.C. is helpful to them and critical to ensuring that we convey our opinions clearly.

When we resolve to do more of the holy work of supporting Israel, we come nearer to the day when darkness will be dispelled. Working together, we can increase the light in our world.

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New Agreement Shows Strength of U.S.-Israel Alliance



FOR DECADES, the United States and Israel have shared a deep strategic and military relationship aimed at confronting the common threats to both nations. During the Cold War, the United States and Israel formed a bulwark against the spread of Communism. Today, in the post-9/11 world, the two allies are working closely to defeat terrorism.

Earlier this year, the two nations reaffirmed their longstanding alliance by signing a new security agreement, which will provide Israel \$30 billion in military assistance over the next decade to allow it to meet new and growing strategic threats.

Indeed, Israel faces greater threats today than it did a decade ago.

Iran—whose leadership calls for Israel's destruction—is closer than ever to developing nuclear weapons. Hamas and Hizballah continue to reject Israel's very existence and pose an ongoing threat to the Jewish state.

To ensure that Israel receives the aid promised in the agreement, Congress must approve the allocation every year.

We must therefore constantly educate members of Congress about the critical need for U.S. aid to Israel in order to help Israel preserve its qualitative military edge in an increasingly challenging environment.

Iran Update: Looming Questions, Important Answers

Q: HOW DOES IRAN POSE A DANGER TO THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL?

A: The State Department has repeatedly designated Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terror, noting its support for Hamas, Hizballah and Islamic Jihad. Tehran also has supported the insurgency in Iraq, supplied arms to the Taliban and hosted al-Qaeda terrorists. Iran continues its illicit pursuit of nuclear weapons, which poses a direct threat to the very existence of the State of Israel and the stability of the Middle East.

Q: WHAT IS AMERICA DOING TO STOP IRAN'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PURSUIT?



A: Over the years and recently, Congress has supported sanctions legislation which strengthens U.S. tools to cut off funds to Iran's nuclear program. In addition, states throughout the country are initiating campaigns to divest from companies investing in Iran's petroleum and natural gas sector. The United States is also working with other countries in the United Nations Security Council to impose further economic sanctions against Iran.

Q: ARE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS HAVING AN IMPACT ON IRAN?

A: The prices of basic foods such as beef, poultry, fruits and bread have increased by 25 percent and housing costs have risen 30 percent in recent months, resulting in rising public discontent and antigovernment protests. As a result, Iran is projected to spend more money on subsidies for food, housing and gas than what it makes in oil and gas revenue. International oil firms also are reconsidering investments in Iran. These events indicate that economic sanctions are having an impact.

TO READ MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN WORK WITH CONGRESS TO STOP IRAN, VISIT: WWW.AIPAC.ORG.

Hannukah: A Message of Faith and Action

By Rabbi Daniel Gordis



MY DAUGHTER, currently serving in the IDF, was not with us in synagogue this past Rosh HaShannah. Instead, she was in a bunker, deep below the ground, doing work which simply had to be done, because like the IDF, Israel's enemies never rest.

But as a religious woman, she desperately wanted to hear the *shofar*. Mid-afternoon, when the work load suddenly lightened a bit, a fellow soldier told her that he'd "spot" her, that she could leave her post for a few minutes. Quickly, she exited the bunker, left the base, and walked to a nearby yeshiva.

It was late in the afternoon, long after services had concluded. Into the yeshiva she walked, in her grungy uniform, not at all dressed for the holiday. A dozen or so young men, clad in their black pants and white shirts, were singing, celebrating the New Year. At the sight of a dirty, uniform-clad woman soldier, all grew quiet. My daughter explained that she hadn't heard the *shofar*. One of the young men called out the *tekiyot*, and another blew the *shofar* for her, all one hundred calls. She thanked them, and went back to her base.

What struck me more than anything else about Talia's story was that everyone had done what they could, what they needed to. She'd fulfilled *her* obligation to stay in the army over the holiday. Another soldier did the right thing by giving her a few minutes off. The yeshiva students were living as they'd been taught. And when they saw her, they helped her fulfill her obligation to hear the sounds that they'd heard hours earlier.

The brief incident, I thought, was both the perfect match of the military and the spiritual, and a poignant reminder that the survival of the Jewish people depends on each of us playing our unique role.

Those two points are also the key to understanding Hannukah. First, the military and the spiritual. The earliest

accounts of Hannukah's origins (Maccabees I and II) tell of a hard-won military victory. When Sukkot had fallen a few months earlier, the Maccabees were too busy fighting to celebrate the festival. Having now prevailed, they declared an eight-day celebration, akin to the festival they'd missed. In this view, Hannukah is a military celebration *par excellence*. Indeed, the military cause was so paramount that the war trumped even the requirement to observe Sukkot. The Jews survived, this understanding of the festival suggests, because they fought for their survival.

But things are not that simple, suggests the Talmud. Yes, the Maccabees had fought, but even more importantly, there was also the miracle of the oil that should have lasted only one day, but sufficed for eight. Why does this matter? Not all of Jewish survival is in our hands, the Talmud suggests; at times, our continuity is dependent not on our actions, but on our faith.



Hannukah suggests that we shall need both, that Judaism without faith is too hollow to merit survival, but that Judaism based on faith alone will never outlast our enemies. But Hannukah also suggests that Jewish survival depends on each generation, each community and each person doing their share.

Maoz Tzur, the famous thirteenth century Hannukah song, is more than a list of enemies the Jews have defeated. For as we sing of our triumph over the

What must we do so that our children, and *their* grandchildren, still light Hannukah candles, and still live with the blessing of a sovereign State of Israel?

Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks, *Maoz Tzur* essentially asks: “We know what each of those generations did in order for us to be here. But what about us? If Israel’s survival depended on *us* and on *our* level of commitment, would Israel have a chance? What must *we* do so that our children, and *their* grandchildren, still light Hannukah candles, and still live with the blessing of a sovereign State of Israel?”

I imagine my daughter this Hannukah. What if she can’t get out of a bunker? What if she can’t be with friends or family for the holiday? Will she at least have the benefit of knowing that across the globe, wherever they are and whoever they might be, other Jews are doing what they can? Will I be able to reassure her that American Jews, with unprecedented access to the corridors of American government, on Capitol Hill and across the nation, are working closely with elected officials to help Israel confront the dangers posed by Iran, Hizballah and Hamas? Will I be able to tell her that our friends in LA, Chicago and throughout America are spending their days to do whatever they can to secure American support for a strong Israel?

Each of us knows what Israel is up against. The only question is whether we will hear that clarion call, and with Hannukah’s message ringing in our ears, respond as only we are privileged to be able to.

Rabbi Daniel Gordis is the author of several books about Israeli society. He lives with his wife and children in Jerusalem, and is currently completing a new book about the challenges to Israel’s survival. (www.danielgordis.org)

Israel: An Asset to America and the World



DISASTER RELIEF

American firefighters have traveled to Israel twice in two years to learn new techniques from Israeli first responders about managing a disaster scene and exchanging information with other agencies to ensure the effectiveness of emergency medical reaction to a crisis.



HOMELAND SECURITY

The U.S. and Israel recently signed a landmark agreement laying the groundwork for enhanced cooperation in the field of homeland security. The agreement includes provisions for U.S.-Israel cooperation on airline security, explosives detection, responding to terrorist and criminal activities and training.



VITAL STRATEGIC ALLY

Israel serves as an American ally in the Middle East and enables the U.S. to pre-position vital military equipment that can be used by both nations in a time of crisis.



MEDICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Israel has developed numerous innovations to advance medicine, including a new laser technology aimed at making glaucoma surgery faster and more effective for the three million Americans who suffer from the condition that is the second leading cause of blindness in the United States.



SAVING AMERICAN LIVES

Roughly 800 U.S. soldiers have been saved by the Israeli-developed armor plating on tanks that explodes outward, diffusing the impact of incoming fire, and an Israeli-developed “emergency bandage” has enabled medics to dress a wound while simultaneously stemming bleeding.



MAKING DESERTS BLOOM

Israeli accomplishments in the use of drip irrigation and a host of agricultural innovations have helped turn arid soil from Arizona to Africa into fields for food.



SOLAR ENERGY EXPERTISE

An Israeli scientist has invented a new specialized cell which produces electricity from the sun's rays, making conventional solar energy dramatically cheaper to produce.



ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Israel has more hi-tech start ups per capita than anywhere else in the world. Recently, an Israeli company developed a voice activated computer mouse that will allow those with physical limitations to use a computer even if they can’t type or operate a mouse conventionally.

TO READ MORE ABOUT WHAT ISRAEL GIVES TO AMERICA AND THE WORLD, VISIT WWW.AIPAC.ORG OR WWW.ISRAEL21C.ORG

The AIPAC Annual Policy Conference

June 2-4, 2008 • Washington, D.C.

Three of the most important days affecting Israel's future



Face to Face

BY SENATORS EVAN BAYH (D-IN) AND JON KYL (R-AZ)



We all live in an information age of 24-hour cable news networks, instant messaging and cell phones, making breaking news from around the world readily accessible.

Despite the constant flow of data and the sheer volume of constituent letters and emails, among the most meaningful and therefore most useful information we receive comes from face-to-face meetings with our constituents. Nothing replaces the insight we gain from engaging in conversation with men and women who care so passionately about issues that they take the time to meet with us in our home state offices or in our nation's capital.

Year after year, the delegates who participate in AIPAC's Policy Conference are among the most informed, articulate and deeply committed folks we have the privilege to meet. These citizen activists help us and our congressional staffs deepen our appreciation of the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship by providing information about how pending legislation strengthens America and Israel. What they share with us is substantiated, accurate and easily absorbed. Over the years, both of us have been able to build meaningful relationships with the men and women of AIPAC. These are not merely people in a meeting, but friends around the table; and there is nothing as powerful as the strong bonds that are built when you sit together face to face to tackle the challenges of our time.

To meet with your members of Congress and their staffs face to face, make plans to join us in Washington, D.C. for AIPAC's Annual Policy Conference, June 2-4, 2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER, VISIT: WWW.AIPAC.ORG.

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