

Israel Connection

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The Importance of Actions



THE HOLIDAY OF PURIM IS CELEBRATED DURING THE HEBREW MONTH of Adar. This time of the year is considered among the most happy, and the Talmud states, “When Adar comes, joy is increased” (Talmud, Taanit 29a).

This joy commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people from physical destruction, the triumph of Esther and Mordechai over the wicked Haman and the new beginning of a period that saw the reconstruction of the holy Temple in Jerusalem.

The nature of the celebration of Purim is not centered just on one miraculous event. Rather, it is a series of actions and preparations over time, culminating in an epoch in which “the Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor” (Megilat Esther 8:16). The true miracle of Purim did not occur at one singular point, but was created over time through the work of many individuals committed to their principles despite the seemingly overwhelming obstacles that they faced together.

As we celebrate the Purim holiday in our own time, we too should marvel at the wondrous moment in which we live. As supporters of the special U.S. – Israel relationship, we should take pride in knowing that the recently convened 113th Congress is the most pro-Israel in American history. This didn’t happen by accident or through a miracle, but through the diligence and dedication of pro-Israel activists throughout the country, who, like Esther and Mordechai, build relationships with their leaders and with the men and women vying for public office.

The story of Purim is so enduring that our Sages have taught that in messianic times, “when all the other festivals will be abolished, Purim will remain” (Midrash Mishle 9:2).

The lasting lesson of Purim reminds us that we, as a people, cannot rely on others to determine our fate. We must shape our own future and the future of the state of Israel through our individual actions.

Did You Know

Thanks to the year-round hard work of activists throughout the country, the pro-Israel community has a relationship with each one of the 96 new legislators, helping to make the 113th Congress the most pro-Israel ever.

Here are a few more facts about the new Congress:



Their diverse backgrounds include a former radio talkshow host, veterinarian and museum director.



There are 20 female senators — the most in history.



This Congress includes the most Latino and Asian House members ever.



Reflecting demographic change, there are now more representatives from North Carolina than from New Jersey.



There are more members of Congress born in the 1980’s than ever before.

Do you know your member of Congress? Work with your congregation’s leadership to invite him or her to your synagogue to speak about the importance of the U.S.-Israel friendship.

Seconds to Safety

WHEN SIRENS SOUND IN ISRAEL, SIGNALING A ROCKET ATTACK, Israelis like Yair, the young boy who dictated the letter on the next page to his mother, have anywhere from 15 to 30 seconds to get to their shelters.

But thanks to U.S.-Israel missile defense cooperation, a new, multi-tiered system is being developed and strengthened to protect children like Yair and their families from incoming rockets.

Pro-Israel activists played a key role in successfully lobbying Congress for funding that ended up being a matter of life or death.

During November's crisis in Gaza, a rocket defense system known as Iron Dome was able to intercept more than 420 of the close to 500 rockets Hamas fired toward Israeli population centers. The success of the system saved lives and according to military experts, helped Israel avoid a ground war in Gaza.

High Price

But Iron Dome is expensive, with each interceptor missile costing \$45,000. Within just seven days during the crisis, it cost more than \$22 million to prevent Hamas rockets from harming or killing Israelis.

Recognizing the strategic importance of the Iron Dome, President Obama requested, and Congress approved, \$205 million for the system in 2011.

After a surge in rocket attacks last March, Congress requested \$680 million in additional funding for the program over a period of three years.

If approved by the full Congress this year, the funding will ensure procurement of additional Iron Dome batteries and projectiles. Israel currently has five batteries. Military experts say they need thirteen batteries to protect all of Israel. Each one costs \$50 million.



Gaza

Iranian-backed terrorists in Gaza launched more than 1,500 rockets into Israel last November—some reached as far as Tel Aviv.

Hizballah has 60,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel from Lebanon.

“The U.S. has a long-standing and iron-clad commitment to Israel’s security and one of the most important examples of this commitment is in our cooperation on missile defense technology.”

— U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro



Finding Solutions

Clearly, much more needs to be done to help Yair and all Israelis stay safe. Israel’s director of military intelligence, Major General Aviv Kochavi, recently estimated that in total, 200,000 rockets and missiles are aimed at the Jewish state from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

In addition to Iron Dome, the United States and Israel developed the Arrow 2, the only operational system that has consistently proven that one missile can shoot down another at high altitudes and supersonic speeds.

The two countries also are working on the development of the Arrow 3 to intercept long-range ballistic missiles, like the ones that Iran reportedly has and has threatened to hurl at Israel.

And, the United States and Israel are collaborating on the development of a system, known as David’s Sling. It will protect against short- and medium-range missiles and rockets, like the ones that Syria and Hizballah in Lebanon have in their arsenal.

Next step?

The lobbying efforts of Americans like you helped secure funding for Iron Dome, ultimately saving the lives of Israelis.

Please contact your member of Congress and encourage their support to ensure future funding for these urgently needed systems.

Visit www.aipac.org/takeaction

“I feel frightened by the thought of a missile killing us...”

Last November, as Hamas launched rocket after rocket into Israel, Yair, age 9, was understandably having trouble falling asleep. So he dictated this letter to his mom and asked her to send it to people who could help. She sent it to AIPAC.

For the past five years they have been throwing rockets at us and all we did is defend ourselves. This year they have crossed a line. So we responded with Operation Pillar of Defense. We did not start this operation to dominate their country – we did it so they could understand we don’t want them to throw rockets at us.

Right now it’s the middle of the war. I feel frightened by the thought of a missile killing us. I feel frightened by the thought of no more me. They scared me with the commercial on TV that they will reach me and kill me in a suicide attack. I feel they might capture us or kill us. I am happy the Iron Dome is working. If you could say thanks to the people that did it, that would be good. But the Iron Dome is not stopping all the rockets. We need more defense. Please help. Please send this letter to anybody that can help Israel. Thanks for reading this. Most important people in your position wouldn’t even bother to look.

*– Yair,
Jerusalem, Israel*



Children take cover during a Hamas rocket attack.

In just a few weeks, more than 10,000 pro-Israel activists will gather in our nation's capital to attend the annual AIPAC Policy Conference and to lobby their members of Congress about issues shaping America and Israel's future. Even if you aren't planning to join them this year, you can have a significant impact on U.S.-Israel policy matters by visiting with members back home or writing and emailing them.

Prep

Just like any important meeting or presentation, you want to be sure to do your homework before your lobbying appointment or prior to sending a letter or email.

Review the salient points you want to make and anticipate the kinds of questions the member of Congress or congressional staff might ask in a meeting. Be sure your answers are brief and to the point.



Who?

Before your lobbying appointment, be sure you are familiar with the member's background, interests, views on the subject and votes on relevant matters. Also, get to know the member's staff in Washington D.C. and locally.



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When meeting in person, be mindful of the time and careful to state your case succinctly. Most members of Congress split their days into 15-minute intervals, juggling among phone calls, hearings, votes and a variety of appointments with constituents.

Thank You!

Manners

Don't forget to express gratitude to the member of Congress if he or she has been supportive on a specific piece of legislation or on a key issue.



Focus

To ensure you are successful in getting your point across, don't enter the office or start your emails with a laundry list of dispirit items to discuss. Zone in on one issue and give those you are meeting with time to ask you questions and garner more information.



Write

Follow up with a letter or email after an appointment or key vote, thanking the member for his or her time or support. When appropriate, ask the member and the staff for a specific action item such as initiating legislation or voting for a bill or resolution.



www.aipac.org

Encourage lawmakers to visit the AIPAC website for up-to-date information. You also can find easy-to-digest memos on the site that you can include in your letter, leave behind in your meeting or link to in an email.

Points of Persuasion



Listen

Hear their concerns and be attentive to their questions.