



Middle East Spotlight

A History of Resilience

August marks the coming of Tisha B'av, the day on the Jewish calendar which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, and the subsequent exile of the Jews from the land of Israel. We mark the passing of this day as a way to acknowledge the hardship our people has endured, but it is also an opportunity to reflect on the resilience of the people of Israel—and the state of Israel—in the face of enormous adversity.

In the last several years, Israel has been the target of an aggressive Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign aimed at encouraging businesses and institutions to stop investing in the Jewish state. However, even as the BDS movement is attempting to convince businesses to boycott Israel, leading international businesses are taking part in the new Israeli “Move to the South” campaign. This initiative is encouraging Israeli and international businesses to set up their offices and R&D facilities in Israel’s Negev Desert. Lockheed Martin, a major defense contractor responsible for building the F-35, was one of the first companies to join, opening a new facility in Be’er Sheva. Cisco and Hewlett-Packard are also a part of this campaign.

Despite the long-time control of Gaza by the terrorist organization Hamas, who recently entered into a unity government with the West Bank based Fatah, Israel facilitates the entry of humanitarian supplies into Gaza for the benefit of the civilian population. In response to widespread power outages and heavy flooding this past December, the IDF opened the Kerem Shalom Border Crossing for extended periods of time to transfer emergency supplies to the Palestinians. In that time, the IDF transferred 241 tons of cooking gas, 223,000 liters of Benzene, 763,000 liters of diesel fuel, two trucks filled with emergency supplies and 148 trucks of consumer goods.

Furthermore, as the Middle East continues to spiral into unrest, Israel has met these challenges with a helping hand even in the face of danger. Syria’s civil war has resulted in nearly 170,000 civilian casualties and despite Syria’s hatred of Israel, the Israeli army has helped to secretly and safely sneak injured Syrians over the border into Israel to receive critical medical care. Last year, the IDF built a field hospital in the Golan Heights to meet the needs of the hundreds of Syrians making their way to the border in search of treatment. The hospital treats Syrians who cross the border, regardless of their loyalties, guided by the mitzvah of *pikuah nefesh*, the saving of life.

It is hard to imagine a time in our history as a people when we have not, or will not, face enormous challenges. Tisha B'av asks us to remember these tragic times, but also inspires us to be proud of our tradition of surviving and thriving against all odds. Today, more than ever, the Jewish state of Israel faces each hardship with a true spirit of resilience.