



Sermon Tidbits

FEBRUARY 4, 2008

Parashat T'rumah

Fine Friendship

V'asu aron *"They shall make an ark"* (Exodus 25:10)

Ramban explains that the most important aspect of the Tabernacle was the ark, because it held the most sacred object – the Torah. Since the ark was the focal point of the entire Tabernacle construction, its laws are mentioned first. When looking at the large structure of the Tabernacle, with all of its beauty and majesty, one would be surprised to note that the purpose of all its grandeur – the walls of deep hued purple and the bountiful gold – was all for a set of simple stone tablets. It's vital to remember, though, that the fineries associated with the Tabernacle were not for the ark or the tablets. Rather, the Tabernacle was made beautiful and grand to celebrate what was written on the tablets. What is most valuable to us not only requires the greatest protection, but the finest of adornments.

The idea that we protect and adorn that which is most valuable to us remains true today. Freedom, liberty and security are our most treasured of possessions.

One reason for the strength of the alliance between the United States and Israel is the fact that our two countries share these values. But there are other, more tangible, reasons. U.S.-Israel cooperation in matters of intelligence and defense has been of benefit to both countries, including in the development of new technologies. Israel's strong, first-world economy and advanced technology sector has made it a natural trading and business partner for American companies and goods.

These reasons and many others account for the broad and deep support that the vast majority of all Americans express for Israel. And they explain why we must continue to work so hard to protect and adorn the relationship between these two great nations. ■

All In

Vayik'chu li t'rumah *"they shall take for me an offering"* (Exodus 25:2)

As B'nei Yisrael prepare to build the tabernacle, we find this interesting *pasuk* at the beginning of our *parashah*. The word *li* can mean either "to me" or "for me." How do we know which? Midrash Tanchumah (T'rumah 1) tells us that the word must mean "for me," because bringing something "to" the God who created the entire universe implies that HaShem did not previously own it. Second, why does Torah use the word *vayik'chu* instead of *vayit'nu*? It would make more sense to "give" an offering than to "take" one. Rashi, in his commentary, explains that "taking" in this case means setting it aside before it is collected.

Another interpretation is that "taking" implies that there is something in the transaction that benefits the giver. You're not just giving – you're also getting in return! And notice that B'nei Yisrael isn't just giving money. They don't

attend a fundraiser and make checks payable to the Tabernacle Fund. The *mishkan* is the responsibility of the entire people and will only be built with the active participation of the entire people.

There are times in our people's history – such as the building of the *mishkan* – that might best be described as “all in” moments. These are times when events present us with the opportunity to commit ourselves completely to the holy work of Am Yisrael.

With the Jewish state under constant bombardment from thousands of rockets, a growing terrorist threat on her northern and southern borders, and the looming threat of Iran still pursuing all the elements necessary for a nuclear weapon, this is one such moment. It is time for us to be “all in.”

As Americans committed to a strong relationship between the U.S. and Israel, we should seize this opportunity to be “all in” by making our voices heard to our elected officials. ■

Protect and Defend

V'hayu ha'k'ruvim porsei k'nafayim “The k'ruvim will have their wings spread” (Exodus 25:20)

In the description of sacred objects adorning the *mishkan*, we are told that the *k'ruvim* faced each other and “covered” the *kaporet* with their wings. The word used for cover in this case is *sochechim*. Indeed, the *k'ruvim* served as the *schechach* for the *kaporet* and served to guard and watch over the *mishkan*.

This is not the first time that *k'ruvim* are described as protectors. In *Bereishit* (4:24) we are told that the *keruvim* guarded the path to the *eitz chayim*.

Like the *k'ruvim*, Israel must protect her citizens from constant Qassam rocket attack. There have been more than 4,000 Hamas rocket attacks since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 and over 2000 since this past August alone. Despite Israel's commitment to continuing to provide Gaza with fuel, food and provisions to deter a humanitarian crisis, rockets continue to fall on Sderot and other towns in Israel. A recent study found that between 75% and 90% of all children in Sderot suffered from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – and that therapists and doctors don't know how to treat them because the stress causing the symptoms is ongoing.

Israel must be able to defend herself and her citizens, and has so far exercised incredible restraint in using non-military tactics to pressure Hamas. Members of the U.S. House of Representatives have introduced a resolution condemning ongoing Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli civilians and supporting Israel's right to defend its citizens. The resolution is authored by Reps. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Scott Garrett (R-NJ) and Shelley Berkley (D-NV).

Israel has the right and responsibility to defend her people, and if these vicious rocket attacks don't subside, Israel may be forced to take more serious actions to protect its innocent civilian population. It is appropriate that our representatives in Congress recognize this and that the United States continue to provide such leadership to support the Jewish State. ■