

JULY 26, 2010

Parashat Eikev

Crucial Support

Your clothing did not grow old upon you (Deuteronomy 8:4)

שמלתך לא בלתה מעליך (דברים ח:ד)

Describing the miraculous staying power of the Israelites' garments in the desert, Rashi (on 8:4) explains that when Moses alluded to the Clouds of Glory, he implied that they miraculously "washed and ironed their clothing." Moreover, the clouds also protected the Israelites from the sun. Yet, the Midrash teaches us that the Clouds of Glory were more than a biblical era dry cleaners—they formed a defensive shield, protecting the nation against attack. Commenting on the verse, "And [the cloud] came between the Egyptian camp and the Israelite camp," (Exodus 14:20) the Midrash notes that "[the Egyptians] would shoot arrows and catapult stones, and the angel and the cloud absorbed them."

Similar to the miraculous Clouds of Glory which protected the Israelites in the desert, a new missile defense shield is poised to protect the citizens of Israel from deadly attacks.

Recently, an Israeli defense system successfully shot down multiple rockets simultaneously, passing its final test and clearing the way for its deployment later on this year. The Iron Dome system, designed to intercept short-range rockets, was developed with \$205 million in financial backing by the United States, with the full support of both the Obama Administration and Congress. Speaking at the Brookings Saban Center for Middle East Policy on July 16, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Andrew J. Shapiro spoke about the efforts which the United States has taken to bolster Israel's security, including "research and development, and the funding of the Iron Dome missile defense system, developed to answer the threat of short to medium ranged rockets being fired by both Hamas and Hizballah." He also noted that U.S. support for Iron Dome will, "provide Israel with the capabilities and the confidence that it needs to take the tough decisions ahead for a comprehensive peace." For more on U.S.-Israel defense cooperation, click [here](#).

The Clouds of Glory in the desert gave the Israelites a sense of security as they traveled to the Promised Land. The United States' firm commitment to bringing that same level of security to the people of Israel continues to bear fruit, providing a modern-day "cloud of glory" that will protect Israel's citizens from attack. ■

Removing Sickness

And the Lord will take away from you all sickness (Deuteronomy 7:15)

והסיר ה' ממך כל חלי (דברים ז:טו)

Commenting on the biblical promise to protect the nation from sickness, the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 16:8) states: "Said Rabbi Acha: It is in man's hands that sickness should not come upon him. How do we know this? From the verse, 'And the Lord will take away from you [*mimecha*] all sickness'—it is 'due to you' [*mimecha*] that sickness should not come upon you." According to this view there are two possible ways to prevent illness: by following the Torah's commandments (whereby we are blessed with spiritual protection from sickness), and our innate ability to protect ourselves from disease and heal the ailing.

The Midrash indicates that the path to our wellbeing lies in adherence to the commandments, but also in our own efforts to heal the sick. Recently, a team from Israel followed both precepts of the Midrash—helping desperate people in need by bringing healing and care to victims of a terrible accident in the Congo.

On July 3, citizens in Sange, Congo—a town of 50,000 about 40 miles from the regional capital city Bukavu—packed the local cinema to watch the World Cup. While they were watching the tournament, an oil tanker overturned, tragically igniting the cinema and the surrounding neighborhood, leaving at least 235 people dead and many more severely burned. Upon learning about the fire, United Nations workers in Sange quickly called on Gila Garawy, a U.S.-born Israeli woman living in the Congo. Garawy then contacted Israel’s Foreign Ministry and informed her associate, head of MASHAV (Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation) Ambassador Haim Divon, who immediately galvanized Israeli resources to aid the victims. Within 48 hours an Israeli team was in place providing expert care to the victims. As Ambassador Divon told the website Israel21c.org, “We want to be able to give our utmost in such a tragic situation.”

In the Congo, the state of Israel followed the Torah’s teachings, once again demonstrating that it is ready, willing and able to provide the personnel and equipment to alleviate suffering and heal the sick. ■

Constant, Careful Vigilance

The eyes of the Lord...are always upon it (Deuteronomy 11:12)

עיני ה'...בה תמיד (דברים יא:יב)

Commentators struggle to understand how an all-knowing, ever-present God could focus on one location more than another. How could God watch the Land of Israel more than any other place? Rabbeinu Bachya (11:12) offers a mystical explanation: “The verse comes to teach us that the Land of Israel is not placed under the influence of stars or constellations like other lands, and it is not given over to the care of celestial gods like other climes. Rather, the honored, glorious Holy One cares for [the Land of Israel] constantly, and does not appoint over her from the other forces a ruler or leader” (also see Ramban on Leviticus 18:25 for an extensive deliberation on this idea). Therefore, while God cares for other lands through the assistance of a spiritual intermediary or proxy, God watches the Land of Israel “personally.”

The Torah’s description of God’s careful watch over the Land of Israel reminds us that we must devote great attention to things we hold dear. The United States must heed this lesson by paying careful attention to companies doing business with Iran, especially as it moves to implement sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

During a news conference after a recent meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron, President Obama said that “The new sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, the United States and other countries are putting unprecedented pressure on the Iranian government.” The prime minister expressed his agreement with the president. “It is not too late,” Cameron said. “America and Britain, with our partners, stand ready to negotiate and to do so in good faith. But in the absence of a willing partner, we will implement with vigor the sanctions package agreed by the United Nations Security Council.” The recently passed Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA)—the toughest Iran sanctions legislation to date—expands the scope of the sanctions, imposing far-reaching restrictions on energy, finance and other sectors that continue to do business with Iran. The United States and its allies must act swiftly to ensure full compliance and enforcement of the sanctions, which represent the best chance to peaceably convince Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

As demonstrated in our *parashah*, pressing matters require an unwavering vigilance. President Obama must follow this example by taking special interest in overseeing the strict enforcement and implementation of CISADA in order to dramatically increase the pressure on Iran to change its nuclear policies once and for all. ■