

JANUARY 30, 2012

Parashat Beshalach

Perpetual Light

And by night in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21)

ולילה בעמוד אש (שמות יג:כא)

The Torah tells us that the cloud and pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the desert was a constant presence that “departed not from before the people” (13:22). Rashi explains that “the pillar of fire complemented the cloud, and the cloud complemented the fire, for before one set, the other rose.” Why was their continuous presence so important? Rashi explains that following the distress of the Exodus, they represented God’s constant presence, and their absence, even momentarily, might have traumatized the nation. For this reason God ensured that at no point were the people without the guidance of the cloud by day, or the light of the pillar of fire during the night.

Through miraculous intervention the Israelites had a constant, dependable source of light that afforded them comfort and security in the desert. Thanks to a new Israeli light fixture, people in developing countries are now also enjoying the comfort and security that light provides—even in areas that lack existing electrical power.

While solar powered lights seem like an obvious answer to the challenge of providing light to areas without existing power grids, many lights do not last in the field very long due to mechanical failure, vandalism and theft. To address these challenges, Israeli startup Globe Light & Water System has developed the Orion, an integrated light fixture that stands alone, requires no maintenance, monitors itself for overheating, lasts for an extended period of time, and is designed to deter theft and vandalism, the website Israel21c reported. The fixture contains a built-in microprocessor that constantly monitors and regulates factors such as bulb temperature and battery charge, prevents overheating, and saves energy. According to Zeev Jakoby, managing director of Globe Light and Water, the system is having an impact: “We’re already developing lighting systems for Nigeria, Ethiopia and Colombia, and are in the negotiation process with several other countries. Meanwhile, there’s great interest from countries in other parts of the world.”

Rashi tells us that in the desert God provided a consistent source of light to guide the people. Now, Israel provides a similarly dependable source of light, illuminating a path forward for developing nations around the world. ■

Time for Action

And the children of Israel went... (Exodus 14:22)

ויבאו בני ישראל... (שמות יד:כב)

The Midrash records the tumultuous moments before God split the sea, miraculously saving the Jewish people from the rush of the Egyptian army. While numerous versions of the Midrash exist, according to the Mechilta the salvation occurred just in the nick of time: “At that moment, Moses was standing before God in extended prayer. God said to him, Moses, my beloved [children] are drowning in the sea, the water is closing in on them, a hated foe chases them, and you stand in protracted prayer? Moses responded, Master of the Universe, what is [in the power of] my hand to do? [God] said to him, ‘And lift up your rod’” (Exodus 14:16).

According to this Midrash, God told Moses that with time running out there was no choice but to act. We must learn from this example and make sure—as the amount of time available to peaceably prevent a nuclear Iran dwindles—that Congress acts with its full diplomatic force to prevent the Islamic Republic from gaining a nuclear capability.

Iran recently decided to begin enriching uranium closer to weapons-grade level at an underground bunker, and is now enriching uranium to the 20 percent level at a previously undisclosed bunker on an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps base according to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Enrichment to the 20 percent level marks 80 percent of the work needed to produce fissile material for the core of a nuclear weapon. Using its current centrifuges, Iran could have a sufficient stockpile of higher-enriched uranium to produce enough weapons-grade material for a bomb by the end of this year according to former deputy director of the IAEA, Olli Heinonen. Tehran's dangerous escalation comes just months after an unprecedented IAEA report detailed for the first time that Iran had engaged in activities related to the production of nuclear weapons. The United States must act quickly—and with the full force of its remaining economic tools—to prevent Iran from achieving its goal of developing a nuclear weapon. As new sanctions on the [Central Bank of Iran](#) (CBI) take effect, President Obama must strictly enforce the measure and sanction any foreign financial institution conducting significant transactions with the CBI, and continue to press buyers of Iranian oil to look elsewhere for supplies. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Time is running out to prevent Iran from obtaining sufficient quantities of higher enriched uranium to facilitate a quick breakout to produce a nuclear weapon. Just as God told Moses at the edge of the sea: with the clock ticking, immediate and decisive action is necessary to prevent a calamity from befalling the Jewish nation. ■

Eternal Hatred

And Amalek came (Exodus 17:8)

ויבא עמלק (שמות יז:ח)

Starting with its attack against the Israelites in the desert, the nation of Amalek consistently demonstrated hatred for the Jewish people. Amalek's record of reprehensible acts extends all the way to Haman, the villain of the Purim story, and beyond. Describing the nature of Amalek, the Torah tells us of Amalek's first cowardly attack against the Israelites when it "smote the hindmost of you, all that were enfeebled in your rear" (Deuteronomy 25:18). The Midrash (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), adding a chilling detail—and explaining that Amalek struck specifically at the weak and defenseless—notes that according to Rabbi Yehoshua, "they would enter under the cover of the clouds of glory, kidnap Jews and murder them."

From the very beginning Amalek resorted to any and every tactic in its desire to harm the Jewish people. Sadly, it seems that some radical Islamic groups have decided to follow in Amalek's footsteps by encouraging and promoting continued acts of violence and aggression against Israel and her citizens.

During a recent event celebrating the 47th anniversary of Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement, Grand Mufti Mohammed Hussein—the top Muslim cleric of Jerusalem and the PA—cited a *hadith* (saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) claiming that the Earth's end of days will not happen until Muslims kill Jews in a religious battle, [Yediot Achronot](#) reported. Hussein said that "The Hour (of Resurrection) will not come until you fight the Jews. The Jew will hide behind stones or trees. Then the stones or trees will call: 'Oh Muslim, servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'" In the same week, senior Hamas official Mahmud Zahar said that the Palestinian terrorist group will never give up its armed struggle against Israel, [Agence France Presse](#) reported. "We are fighting for our dignity and rights. Jihad is our path, our life, our pride and we will not renounce it no matter the sacrifices," said Zahar. Meanwhile, marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27th, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "We mustn't bury our head in the sand. The Iranian regime is planning the annihilation of Israel and is working towards Israel's destruction—its agents [Hizballah] fired over 12,000 missiles towards Israel's cities. They are not concealing their intent to kill as many [Israelis] as possible."

From the birth of the Jewish nation Amalek attempted to use any means to attack and harm the Jewish people. The fact that radical Islamic groups now carry Amalek's banner, seeking any possible avenue to kill innocent Israelis, is an ill harbinger for a true and lasting peace. ■