



Sermon Tidbits

FEBRUARY 27, 2012

Parashat Tetzaveh, Shabbat Zachor & Purim

An Early Warning (Tetzaveh)

And the sound shall be heard (Exodus 28:35)

ונשמע קולו (שמות כח:לה)

The high priest's robe was ornamented with golden pomegranates and bells that rang as he walked. Thus, when he entered the Tabernacle, "the sound would be heard...and he did not die." How did the sound of these bells prevent the high priest from dying? Ramban (on 28:35) explains that the bells announced his entrance, requesting permission from God to enter the sanctuary. If the high priest entered without "knocking" it would represent crassness, rendering the high priest unfit to enter the Holy of Holies. Therefore, by announcing the high priest's impending entrance, the bells literally saved his life.

The bells on the robe of the high priest warned of his arrival and protected him from harm, just as the sounds of alarms, beeps and buzzes in our modern lives are often designed to maintain safety. Now, an Israeli startup has developed a mass notification system which, harnessing this concept, has the potential to save thousands of lives.

eVigilo is an Israeli company that creates national alert systems for life threatening situations such as natural disasters. The company has been so effective that it was chosen by Israel's Home Front Command to generate "National Message," the Jewish state's alert system. Its success lies in its "mass alert platform that according to the company can reach millions of people in seconds, to improve personal safety and save lives," the website NoCamels.com reports. The web-based platform sends automatic e-mail and SMS messages in cases of disasters. In the event of an incoming tsunami wave for example, software automatically calculates the effects of the incoming storm and alerts the international community to begin reacting. Within the threatened area, it informs civilians of approaching danger by displaying messages across a wide variety of media, including television, cell phones and billboards.

The decorations on the high priest's robes chimed to protect his life, an idea now employed by Israeli innovators. While we can't control natural disasters, alert systems like eVigilio, recalling the bells on the high priest's robe, can help prevent unnecessary deaths. ■

Impactful Speaking (Parashat Zachor)

You shall not forget (Deuteronomy 25:19)

לא תשכח (דברים כה:יט)

First we are commanded to remember Amalek's brutal attack against the Jewish nation, and then the Torah commands us not to forget it. These instructions seem repetitive but The Talmud (Megillah 18) explains that the second instruction adds a crucial element to the first: "'You shall remember'—I might have thought that [this applies only to thoughts of] the heart. When it says, 'You shall not forget,' [an injunction against] forgetfulness of the heart has already been stated. So how must we fulfill [the commandment] 'You shall not forget'? With the mouth." This means that remembering Amalek's actions is insufficient. Rather, we must vocalize the memories that transform internal viewpoints into passionate speech and action.

The Torah reminds us to “not forget” Amalek in our minds, and “to remember” their misdeeds through our actions. As the threats looming over Israel raise our concern for the Jewish state, we must heed this lesson and do more than just feel for Israel in our hearts. Our inner concern must be voiced and transformed into advocacy.

With more than 100,000 rockets and mortars pointed at Israel, and Iran rapidly advancing its nuclear weapons program, friends and supporters of the Jewish state here in the America may feel impotent to take meaningful action to keep Israel safe. We forget that members of Congress rely on their constituents to keep them current about the U.S.-Israel relationship. As the economy and domestic concerns occupy much of their attention, the public must make sure that other items, especially regarding foreign affairs, are not overlooked. Today, tens of thousands of Israel’s friends regularly communicate with their elected representatives, advocating for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Without question those voices play a critical role in America’s determination to ensure that Israel remains strong and secure. Yet, as important as those voices are, imagine the impact if those numbers were not in the thousands, but in the millions! It’s easy to feel concerned for the Jewish state. However, instead of just worrying, we must also speak out. For more on how you can help make a difference, visit www.aipac.org/TakeAction.

The *mitzvot* to remember and also not forget Amalek’s attack against the Jewish nation remind us of the importance of transforming our thoughts into speech and our speech into action. We must apply that warning and speak out about the dangers facing Israel. While it’s important to never forget, we must also take the time to remember. ■

The Truth Comes Out (Purim)

And on whose head a royal crown is set (Esther 6:6)

ואשר נתן כתר מלכות בראשו (אסתר ו:ו)

According to the Midrash, Haman’s downfall began with an innocent slip of the tongue. King Ahasuerus asked Haman how he would reward a man whom “the king delights to honor” (Esther 6:6). Haman, assuming that he was the man the king intended to honor, suggested that the king dress the man in royal clothing, mount him on the royal horse, “on whose head a royal crown is set” (Esther 6:8), and ride him around the city proclaiming, “Thus shall be done to the man the king delights to honor. The Midrash states (Pirkei D’rabbi Eliezer Chapter 3) that as soon as Haman mentioned the crown the king said, “You evil man! It is not enough for you without the crown? If so, what have you left for me?” Haman tried to backtrack, but the damage was done. This gaffe revealed Haman’s secret plots against the king and the stage was set for his defeat at the hands of Esther and Mordechai.

The slip-up that revealed Haman’s true wicked intentions to Ahasuerus is similar to a recent slip-up by Iran’s official news service, which has given the world a glimpse of the true sentiments behinds Iran’s nuclear program.

While the Iranian leadership continues to deny that its nuclear program is military in nature, a recent article by the official Iranian news service offers a clear view of Iran’s nuclear ambitions. On the one hand, [Agence France Presse](#) recently quoted Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, saying that “the Iranian nation has never been seeking an atomic weapon and never will be,” and that possessing a nuclear bomb “constitutes a major sin.” Yet, on the other hand, Iran refuses to grant International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors access to Iran’s military site in Parchin, where suspected nuclear warhead design experiments were conducted. Moreover, [Fars](#), Iran’s official news agency, gave a little too much insight into Iran’s nuclear program when it reported that the wife of Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan Behdast, an Iranian nuclear scientist killed in a recent bombing, “sought the annihilation of the Zionist regime wholeheartedly.” The article explains that the ultimate goal of this scientist—working on a supposedly peaceful nuclear program—was the destruction of Israel. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Haman’s slip of the tongue, which laid bare his hope to overthrow the king, led to his ultimate downfall. While Iran continues to insist on the peaceful nature of its nuclear program, its actions and its recent public blunder reveal a regime determined to acquire the means to “wipe Israel off the map.” ■