

FEBRUARY 11, 2013

Parashat Terumah

A Tangible Closeness

And I will dwell among them (Exodus 25:8)

ושכנתי בתוכם (שמות כה:ח)

Why did God command the nation to build a Tabernacle? After all, why would an incorporeal deity require a physical home? Nachmanides (see his introduction to the book of Exodus) explains that the Tabernacle served to represent the tangible bond between God and the Jewish nation. Yehuda Nachshoni (see Hagut B'Parshiot Hatorah vol. 1 p. 328) writes that according to Nachmanides, the completed Tabernacle represented "direct contact between God and man, [just as] God spoke directly with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

The Tabernacle physically demonstrated the strong bond between God and the Jewish nation. Similarly, the president's planned visit to Israel tangibly demonstrates the values that the U.S. and Israel both share.

For decades, interactions between American and Israeli dignitaries, officials and military leaders both in Israel and in the United States have demonstrated the unique relationship between the two countries. The White House recently announced that U.S. president Barack Obama will be making his first visit to the Jewish state as president of the United States. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro said that President Obama's visit to Israel will display the close ties between the two states. Shapiro said the planned visit will represent a "continuation of the close coordination" between the U.S. and Israel that will continue in the second term. He said the agenda items of the talks in Israel include preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, dealing with the collapse of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime and the volatile situation in Syria, ensuring Israel's ability to defend itself and the Palestinian issue. Shapiro said Obama would like to "find ways of demonstrating the depth, breadth and quality of the Israeli-U.S. partnership, and deepen the consultations we have on a regular basis throughout our government on all those key items on the agenda." Yet, Obama's visit is only one of the numerous, ongoing interactions between the two countries. The United States and Israel share the same values and a common commitment to democracy and freedom. Close strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel further U.S. interests, promote regional peace and enhance the security of both nations. For more on the shared values between the U.S and Israel, click [here](#).

The construction of the Tabernacle in the midst of the nation conveyed the tangible closeness between God and the Jewish people. Today, the direct, personal interactions that regularly occur between Israeli and American officials testify to the strong, close friendship shared by the two nations. ■

Truth and Falsehood

And you shall make the boards (Exodus 26:15)

ועשית את הקרשים (שמות כו:טו)

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (see Noam Elimelech on Parashat Terumah) derives a beautiful message from the choice of words utilized to describe the boards in the Tabernacle. He notes that the letters in the word for board, *keresh* (קרש), and the word for falsehood, *sheker* (שקר), are the same. From this fact he explains, "that one should break himself from the attribute of falsehood and strengthen oneself in the opposite attribute [of truth] just as *keresh* is the opposite of *sheker*, until one becomes like a beam of the Tabernacle..." Constructing a Tabernacle and bringing godliness into our midst can only be accomplished by rejecting falsehood and lies, and building with boards of truth.

In contrast to the lesson we learn from the text about the amazing achievements we can build if we begin with an honest foundation, Iran continues to spread lies even as it seeks negotiations with the West.

Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of terrorist organizations including Hezbollah in Lebanon, recently denied any connection to the July bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria that killed six people, including five Israelis. According to [The Times of Israel](#), Bulgarian investigators released a report on the bombing that blamed Hezbollah, a known agent of the Islamic Republic. "This has nothing to do with Iran," The Iranian ambassador to Bulgaria, Gholamreza Bageri said. "We are against any form of terrorism and strongly condemn such actions." Hezbollah receives military training, financial support and weapons from Iran. According to the Middle East Forum, the U.S. estimates that Iran provides Hezbollah with \$60-100 million annually. The group has been accused of several major terror attacks in the past 20 years, including the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that killed 85 people. Tehran has repeatedly called for the destruction of Israel. The Iranian regime has backed up these threats by providing hundreds of millions of dollars in military and financial support to terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, providing them with some of its most advanced weaponry. Despite this, the Islamic Republic misleads the world as they claim to oppose "any form of terrorism." For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Noam Elimelech reminds us that lying and falsehood can never lead to constructive outcomes. While Iran denies its connection to terrorism, its support for Hezbollah proves that it is willing to deceive the world to achieve its goals. ■

A Wise Path (Haftorah)

And there was peace (Kings I 5:26)

ויהי שלום (מלכים א' ה:כו)

Before describing the construction of the first Temple in Jerusalem, the text relates that, "The Lord gave Solomon wisdom...and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a covenant together" (5:26). Radak (on 5:26) explains that while Solomon enjoyed peace treaties with other countries, the covenant with Hiram "was established and strong," and led to Hiram supplying the cedar wood critical for the construction of the Temple. Yehuda Kil, in the Da'at Mikra commentary, adds that Solomon's wisdom included the wisdom of foreign relations, which led to the productive peace agreement with Hiram.

Just as Solomon's commitment to peace produced a strong agreement with a foreign leader that benefited both nations, Israel has, since its inception, sought real and lasting peace agreements with its neighbors.

Time and again the Jewish state has demonstrated its willingness to make tough sacrifices for peace. In 1979 Israel withdrew its forces and uprooted Jewish settlers in the Sinai Peninsula to achieve peace with Egypt. Israel has also left its positions in the Gaza Strip, parts of the West Bank and South Lebanon to reach peace with its neighbors. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), after Israeli President Shimon Peres tasked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with forming the new government, the prime minister said the next government will be committed to peace and called on Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to return to the negotiating table. "Every day that passes without talks is unfortunate. We are looking for a solution of peace between our nations." To demonstrate his commitment to reenergizing stalled peace talks, Netanyahu also sent Yitzhak Molcho, the special envoy to negotiations with the Palestinians, to Washington to discuss with U.S. officials how to advance the peace process ahead of President Barack Obama's imminent visit, [The Times of Israel](#) reported. Molcho "has held countless barely publicized meetings with Saeb Erekat and other Palestinian negotiators in recent years." For more the peace process, click [here](#).

Since the birth of the Jewish state, a stable, peaceful Middle East has been the goal of every Israeli government. Today, Israel continues to seek a solid peace modeled after the treaties of King Solomon, whose peace agreements brought stability and tangible benefits to the Jewish people and their neighbors. ■

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