



Sermon Tidbits

JANUARY 27, 2014

Parashat Terumah

From the Heart

Whose heart stirs him (Exodus 25:2)

אשר ידבנו לו (שמות כה:ב)

When commanded to collect donations for the construction of the Tabernacle, Moses was commanded to take a voluntary donation from every man “whose heart stirs him” (25:2). Rabbi S.R. Hirsch in his commentary on the Torah (on 25:2) explains that the word *yidvenu* is related to the word *nataf*, meaning “to flow out from within.” This teaches us that the gift must come from “the most complete freedom of will.” The Tabernacle could only be built from gifts given without coercion, which truly came from the hearts of the people. Had the donations been coerced, they would have been compromised, and rendered unfit to build the holy Sanctuary.

Only gifts collected without coercion or duress were meaningful enough to be used to build the Tabernacle. Today, peace will come when the Palestinians demonstrate that their pronouncements of peace truly come from the heart.

In his recent address to the United Nations, Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor compared the weak peace pronouncements of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas with the genuine actions of King Hussein of Jordan. He [said](#), “President Abbas could learn a great deal from King Hussein of Jordan about demonstrating his commitment to making peace. I and most Israelis will never forget the sight of King Hussein consoling the Israeli families whose children had been killed in a terrorist attack. Contrast this picture, with a picture from just a few weeks ago when released terrorists were given a heroes’ welcome by the Palestinians and embraced by President Abbas. Murderers were met with fireworks and festivities and showered with candies and congratulations.” Prosor noted that the Palestinian leadership has yet to learn that real peace requires real commitment. “You cannot condemn terrorism to international media and congratulate terrorists on Palestinian media,” he said. In a recent speech welcoming Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper to the Knesset, Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein echoed Prosor’s sentiments, [saying](#) that, “When you want to begin a peace process you need a partner. Today, sadly, the Palestinian Authority and its leadership do not constitute a partner, as long as the wild incitement continues, including the use of Nazi symbols...in the schools and kindergartens of the P.A.”

The gifts to the Tabernacle had to be authentic and come from the heart in order to be accepted. Similarly, peace with the Palestinians will only happen when Israel has a true partner with a desire for peace that comes from the heart. ■

A Historic Connection

And acacia-wood (Exodus 25:5)

ועצי שטים (שמות כה:ה)

As the Jewish nation was situated in the desert, where did they get the acacia wood to construct the Tabernacle? According to the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 94:4), the wood was exported from Israel. “Said Rabbi Levi...the [Jewish people] had hidden away the wood from the time of Jacob... they cut [the trees] from Migdal Tzivaya (in the Jordan Valley).” The Midrash points out that much later in history when Jews inhabited the Jordan Valley they refrained from using the wood from these special acacia trees that grew naturally in their locale, “because of the holiness of the Ark.” Even from their earliest time, Jews saw a historic connection between the Tabernacle and the Land of Israel.

According to the Midrash, the wood used to construct the Tabernacle highlighted the Jews' historic connection to the Land of Israel. Recently, the United Nations cancelled an exhibit intended to highlight that very connection.

Bowing to pressure from Arab states, the United Nations recently cancelled an exhibit co-organized by the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) and UNESCO, the U.N. body for education, science and culture, called "People, Book, Land - The 3,500 Year Relationship of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel." According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), UNESCO explained that they were cancelling the exhibit out of concern for the peace process. The President of the Arab group within UNESCO wrote a letter expressing "deep worry and great disapproval" over the program showing the age old connection between Israel and the Jewish people. In response, UNESCO cancelled the exhibit, explaining that "UNESCO is deeply committed to the successful outcome of the peace process in order to achieve stability in the region and we have a responsibility in ensuring that current efforts in this regard are not endangered." According to [The Times of Israel](#), Rabbi Avraham Cooper, associate dean of the SWC and project director of the exhibition, which had been approved by UNESCO, called the cancellation, "a slap in the face of every Jew." World Jewish Congress (WJC) President Ronald S. Lauder [said](#) that, "It is sad that Arabs deny the 3,500 connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, especially when that connection is part of their own tradition. With this decision, UNESCO has done a disservice to the peace process and implicitly endorsed Arab rejectionism."

Jewish connection to the Land of Israel dates back to biblical times, when Abraham planted the seeds of trees that were used to construct the Tabernacle in the desert. By succumbing to the Arab world's refusal to acknowledge this historic connection, the U.N.'s recent action will make lasting peace much more difficult to achieve. ■

Spreading the Light

To give light over against it (Exodus 25:37)

והאיר אל עביר פניה (שמות כה:לז)

Moses was instructed that when the priests lit the Menorah in the Tabernacle, "they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it." Rashi (on 25:37) explains that the lamps on the three outer branches on each side would be lit facing the center branch. Yet, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin writes in *Aznayim L'torah* (on 25:37) that the wicks were not lit facing the center of the Menorah, but facing the priest lighting the lamps. The light of the Menorah was intended to shine outward, brightening the entire world.

The Jewish people were instructed to light the lamps of the Menorah as a sign of their mission to bring light to the world. Today, one way that Israel fulfills this mission is through its impressive achievements in the scientific world.

Earlier this month, Israel was officially admitted as a full member of CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, at a ceremony held on in Geneva, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. According to the website [LiveScience.com](#), "Israel is actively involved in several big CERN projects, including the ATLAS experiment that found the Higgs boson and is now on the hunt for evidence of extra dimensions of space and dark matter." At the ceremony, where the Israeli flag was raised to join the other 20 CERN member nations, Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman said that Israel's admission as the 21st member of CERN "is a recognition of the high level and quality of scientific research in Israel and its contribution to the welfare of the human race." Liberman noted that although Israel's population is only one thousandth of the world's population, Israel creates more than 1 percent of the scientific knowledge in the world, and boasts the highest number of scientists, technicians, and engineers per capita in the world, 140 per 10,000 individuals. Six Israeli scientists have won Nobel prizes in the field of chemistry over the last decade, and two Israelis have won the Nobel Prize in economics. Israeli scientists have contributed to the advancement of agriculture, computer science, electronics, genetics, health care, optics, solar energy, and engineering, and Israel, which has successfully launched a satellite into space, is one of the first 12 space faring countries in the world. "Israel is committed to the advancement of science and technology for the good of mankind," Liberman [said](#).

The lamps of the Menorah shone outward to instruct us to work to shine the light of holiness around the world. The Jewish state works to fulfill that mission by spreading the light of science and knowledge across the globe. ■

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