

FEBRUARY 10, 2014

Parashat Ki Tisa

Sharing the Expense

Then they shall give (Exodus 30:12)

ונתנו (שמות ל:יב)

The Torah specifies that the money that was collected during the census had to be given equally by each and every member of the nation: “The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel” (30:15). We learn later that most of the silver collected went to “casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil” (38:27). These sockets served as the anchors for the beams and pillars that formed the walls of the sanctuary. Thus, the Torah requires that each and every individual contribute equally and share in the expense of the foundation that supported the Tabernacle. The importance of infrastructures demands that the burden of their cost be shared in a fair and equitable manner.

Just as every member of the Jewish nation shared the expense of the infrastructure of the Tabernacle, the United States continues to share the financial burden Israel faces as it combats external threats to its security.

Spiraling defense costs force Israel to spend more on defense as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) than any other nation in the industrialized world. Moreover, while Israel officially allocates close to seven percent of its GDP to defense, the actual costs to the Israeli economy are much higher, taking into account lost productivity and the need for reserve duty, internal security and anti-terrorism spending. Even as Israel faces its own substantial budgetary pressures, during the next decade, Israel may well have to spend \$160 billion on defense, a significant increase over the previous 10-year period. With these threats and costs in mind, both Congress and the president have supported the funding of the ten-year Memorandum of Understanding each year since the agreement went into effect in fiscal year 2009. Recently, Congress passed \$3.1 billion in security assistance for Israel as well as record levels of support for missile defense. As part of the comprehensive budget agreement, the House of Representatives restored funding to Israel to its pre-sequester levels, allocating the full \$3.1 aid package to Israel outlined in the MOU. Also in the bill is \$268.7 million in funding for U.S.-Israel cooperative anti-missile programs, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. In the Middle East, a region long plagued by wars, terror and religious extremism, this bipartisan commitment to Israel’s security assures that America’s close friend and ally has the military capabilities to deter attacks from hostile neighbors or to prevail on the battlefield. For more on U.S. aid to Israel, click [here](#).

Just as the entire nation shared in the expense of the infrastructure of the Tabernacle, through its foreign aid to Israel America willingly shares in defense against terrorism and radical regimes. ■

Holding them Responsible

This people has sinned a great sin (Exodus 32:31)

חטאה העם הזה חטאה גדולה (שמות לב:לא)

Standing on Mount Sinai, Moses was suddenly told to “get down” (32:7) off the mountain due to the fact that the people of the nation “have made a golden calf.” Yet, after Moses rallied the Levites to fight against those people who worshipped the idol, we discover that only three thousand people (out of over six hundred thousand) actually engaged in idolatry. Why was the entire nation blamed? Rabbi Mordechai Yitzchak Aizik Rabinovitch, in his work *Tomer Devorah*, explains that the entire nation is blamed “because they did not protest and stood at a distance...and their

hearts were not stirred at all, and with a cold spirit and calm demeanor they watched the entire episode with their hands over their mouths...”

Like the Jewish nation who was held responsible for their failure to prevent the few from worshipping the Golden Calf, Israel holds Hamas responsible for standing by as terrorist groups shoot rockets at Israel’s southern region.

While 2013 represented one of the quietest years on Israel’s southern front in recent memory, in January the citizens of Israel’s southern region saw a marked increase in rocket fire, as Gaza-based terrorist groups fired three times as many rockets as they had in previous months. At the end of last month, rockets were fired near Eilat as well as in the Eshkol Regional Council area as children made their way to school. What precipitated the increase? According to [The Times of Israel](#), smaller groups can now fire rockets unimpeded because “Hamas withdrew most of the 900-strong force it employs along the Israel-Gaza border” tasked with preventing rocket and mortar attacks. Hamas originally created the force to prevent terrorist factions from firing into Israel, in order to “[preserve the truce](#)” and maintain quiet along the Gaza border. However, Hamas recently decided to shift tactics, removing the force, thereby giving tacit approval to the groups to resume their rocket and mortar attacks at Israel. In response, Israel Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon warned Hamas that it was responsible for such attacks. “If [Hamas] doesn’t know how to impose its authority on terrorist organizations operating from its territory we will continue to act to make it, and those who are active in terror and fire at Israel, pay a heavy price.” For more on Hamas, click [here](#).

Just as Moses held the Jewish nation responsible for its failure to prevent the sin of the Golden Calf, Israel will hold the Hamas regime responsible for its failure to prevent terrorist groups in Gaza from firing rockets into Israel. ■

Dangerous Material

They have made them a god of gold (Exodus 32:31)

ויעשו להם אלהי זהב (שמות לב:לא)

Many commentators wonders: Why does Moses point out that the idol the nation constructed was made specifically out of gold? Rashi (on 32:31) explains that in effect, Moses places some of the blame on God. “[Said Moses to God]: You are the one who caused them [to build the calf], for You gave them an abundance of gold...what should they do in order that they not sin?” Moses notes that in essence, the people were like “kids in a candy store.” The very presence of that much gold encouraged them to use it in the manner they were familiar with. For this reason, they built a golden calf.

In his defense of the nation, Moses reminds us that proximity to dangerous material leads to destructive behavior—a lesson we must remember as the world works to find an agreement with Iran that prevents them from ever developing even one nuclear weapon.

The Obama administration continues to work tirelessly to negotiate an agreement that will end Iran’s nuclear weapons Quest. At the same time, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has recently stated that Tehran will never dismantle even a single centrifuge. As Congress strictly oversees the implementation of the interim agreement by Iran, it must ensure that if Tehran violates the deal, sanctions relief will be revoked. Recently, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-NJ) strongly [outlined](#) “one of our greatest national security challenges—a nuclear-armed Iran” and the imperative of dismantling it. The Chairman remains committed to the fact that any agreement with Iran “is verifiable, effective, and prevents them from ever developing even one nuclear weapon.” Menendez stated that the Iranian nuclear program should rest on bipartisan support to ensure that as President Obama has pledged any final agreement will result in the dismantlement of Iran’s illicit nuclear program and “make it impossible [for Iran] to develop a nuclear weapon.” For more on Iran visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Moses reminds us that proximity to dangerous material is a recipe for disaster. For this reason, America must ensure that Tehran dismantle its illicit nuclear program and cease weapons-related research so that Iran will not be capable of building nuclear weapons. ■

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