

FEBRUARY 3, 2014

Parashat Tetzaveh

A Beam of Light

To cause a lamp to burn continually (Exodus 27:20)

להעלות נר תמיד (שמות כז:כ)

Aaron was commanded to kindle the light of the *menorah* in the Tabernacle, a practice maintained by his descendants in the Temple in Jerusalem. Yet, with the destruction of the Temple, was the injunction to light a *ner tamid* (an eternal light) lost? Rabbi Charles Savenor, quoting the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah) which reads, “As olive oil is a source of light, so too is the people Israel,” explains that in the absence of the light of the *menorah*, the Jewish people represent a source of light for the world. “Without the *ner tamid*, we take its place in illuminating the world with Torah and God’s aspirations towards which humanity should strive.” The notion was reinforced by Isaiah, who foresaw a day when the Jewish people would become “a light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6).

In place of the *ner tamid* that Aaron kindled in the Tabernacle, the light of the Jewish nation illuminates the world. Soon, by harnessing a beam of light, an Israeli innovation will one day soon protect people across the globe.

Over the past few years, the deployment of the Iron Dome missile defense system has dramatically altered the landscape of Israel’s south, providing a measure of protection from rockets and missiles fired from Gaza. Yet, each rocket fired from the Iron Dome system incurs significant cost, and the system cannot protect against mortars fired from extremely close range. Next month, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems of Israel will unveil the [Iron Beam](#) system, “a high-energy, laser-based defensive system designed to knock mortar rounds, artillery shells and other projectiles out of the sky.” The system would be most relevant to the Negev town of Sderot, which is situated less than four kilometers from Gaza and, therefore, largely unprotected by Iron Dome. According to [NBC News](#), “Iron Beam is complemented by Arrow II, an Israeli interceptor designed to shoot down ballistic missiles at atmospheric heights. Israel plans to integrate them with the more powerful rocket interceptors Arrow III and David’s Sling, both of which are still in their testing phases...The United States has extensively underwritten the projects, seeing them as a means of reassuring its Middle East ally as instability rocks the region.”

In the absence of the *menorah*, the Jewish people represent the light that shines forth. One day soon, an important Israeli innovation will harness the power and energy of light to protect people in Israel and around the world. ■

Consistency

To cause a lamp to burn continually (Exodus 27:20)

להעלות נר תמיד (שמות כז:כ)

According to Rashi, the *menorah* in the Tabernacle was not required to remain lit at all times. In fact, the lamp only needed to remain lit, “From evening to morning” (27:21). What then is the meaning of the term *ner tamid*? Commenting on the meaning of the word *tamid* (always), Rashi explains that “each and every evening is called ‘always’” (on 27:20). Thus, rather than ensuring that the lamp remained lit at all times without interruption, the people were commanded to consistently light the lamps of the *menorah* each evening.

Through the commandment to kindle the *menorah* each evening, the Torah emphasizes the importance of consistency—a value critical in our efforts to support the strong relationship between Israel and the United States.

The most effective way to secure a strong relationship between the United States and Israel is by ensuring that our voices in support of this relationship are heard on a consistent basis. Supporters of Israel who have built meaningful relationships with elected officials have long understood that good relationships require constant communication, which allow them to educate America's elected officials, policy makers and opinion leaders about the importance of America's bond with Israel. The greatest mistake that we can make is to think that because we called our Senator earlier this year, we need not do so again. When we call our elected official to encourage our member of Congress to support financial aid for Israel, and then call again to encourage her to vote to impose sanctions against Iran, and then call yet again to ask her to support increased cooperation between Israel and the U.S. we're demonstrating the importance of these issues to us by effectively and consistently conveying our message. Consistency is also critical in the world of public opinion. Today, with a 24 hour news cycle and the pervasiveness of social media, attacks against Israel and attempts to weaken the bond between Israel and the United States seem never-ending. From comments on websites to letters to newspaper to protests spread through viral videos, the campaigns against the Jewish state continue unabated. The most effective response to these efforts is consistency. The strength of our message depends on our willingness to make our voices heard time and time again. To get involved, visit www.aipac.org/TakeAction.

The mitzvah to light the *menorah* teaches us the critical role of consistency in life. Our consistent efforts to ensure a strong U.S.-Israel relationship have, over time, reaped powerful results for America's democratic ally, Israel. ■

Words and Actions

Upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron (Exodus 29:20)

על תנוך אזן אהרן (שמות כט:כ)

In the ritual of initiation for Aaron and his sons who would serve as the priests in the Tabernacle, Moses is commanded to take the blood of a ram and “put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot” (29:20). Rabbi Bradley Artson quotes the ancient commentator Philo who explained that the ear, thumb and toe represented the power of words and action. “The fully consecrated must be pure in words and actions and in life; for words are judged by hearing, the hand is the symbol of action, and the foot of the pilgrimage of life.” The high priest must unite all three elements—his words, deeds and life—in the service of the people.

The consecration of the high priest emphasized the important connection between words, action and life. Today, the world must hold Iran to this principle, and ensure that it matches its words with concrete action.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that his country has a “serious will” to reach a deal that resolves international doubts about its nuclear program, [The Washington Post](#) reported. “I strongly and clearly declare that nuclear weapons have no place in our security strategy and that Iran has no motivation to move in that direction,” Rouhani said. He added that, “We have never sought anything other than peaceful use of nuclear technology and we will not accept obstacles being put in the way of our scientific progress.” According to [AFP](#), Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, also speaking at the conference “warned the West not to take the media-friendly Iranian’s offer at face value, insisting there was no concrete evidence of any fundamental change in the nature of the Islamic regime. ‘Hassan Rouhani can say something but it doesn’t make it real,’ Netanyahu said. ‘It’s false.’” Responding to Rouhani’s proclaimed desire for peaceful nuclear power, Secretary of State John Kerry [challenged Iran](#) to back its words with action. “While the message is welcome, the words themselves are meaningless unless actions are taken to give them meaning,” Kerry said. “If you are serious about a peaceful program, it’s not that hard to prove that your program is peaceful.” For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

The consecration of the priests emphasized the important link between words and action. The United States must insist that Iran back its words of peace with action, and immediately abandon its nuclear weapons program. ■

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