

MAY 4, 2015

Parashat Emor

Global Kiddush Hashem

And I will be sanctified (Leviticus 22:32)

ונקדשתי (ויקרא כב:לב)

Two weeks ago, Nepal suffered a massive earthquake that killed thousands, injured many thousands more, and devastated an entire country. Nations around the world sent aid with [Israel leading the way](#). As Jews, this incredible act of national *chesed* (kindness) fills us with pride. This tiny country—the Jewish state—was ready, in a matter of hours, to send two hundred and fifty soldiers to build a field hospital and begin searching for survivors in the wreckage. Israel's *chesed* should spur us to follow suit.

The Torah conveys two related concepts associated with the impact we have on those around us: *Kiddush Hashem*, literally, “sanctifying the name [of God],” and *Chilul Hashem*, “desecrating the name.” The many Jews throughout history who chose death rather than abandon their faith, as well as the soldiers of the IDF and victims of terrorism in Israel, are all said to have died “*al kiddush hashem*”—“in the sanctification of the Name.” Yet, the Talmud (Yoma 86) suggests that death is not the only way to sanctify God's name in the world. “Abaye explained: As it was taught: ‘And you shall love the Lord thy God,’ (Deut. 6:5) i.e., that the Name of Heaven be beloved because of you. If someone studies Scripture and Mishnah, and attends on the disciples of the wise, is honest in business and speaks pleasantly to persons, what do people then say concerning him? ‘Happy the father who taught him Torah, happy the teacher who taught him Torah; woe unto people who have not studied the Torah; for this man has studied the Torah look how fine his ways are, how righteous his deeds!’” The good work that we do not only helps others; it brings *Kiddush Hashem* and spreads holiness and sanctity around the world.

How can we explain the scale, scope and speed of Israel's national response? Israel acts because it can, so it must. It recognizes that as a Jewish state, its ability to use the IDF's knowledge and training obligates it to act, help, and save lives. But in the process, Israel is also creating a *Kiddush Hashem* on a scale that no community of individuals could ever achieve on its own. Of course we are proud. But we also recognize that our work to support the Jewish state helps not only Israel, but people everywhere. This strengthens our resolve to ensure that Israel will always have the means, strength and ability to come to the aid of people in need, anywhere in the world. ■

Helping Those in Need

You shall not wholly reap the corner of your field (Leviticus 23:22)

לא תכלה פאת שדך (ויקרא כג:כב)

Last year, the world discovered with horror that Hamas spent nearly \$100 million to construct terror tunnels for smuggling weapons, money and supplies into Gaza, as well as launching terrorist attacks within Israel's borders. During the summer 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Israel Defense Forces discovered 32 tunnels, 14 of which crossed directly into Israel. Today [Hamas has resumed its tunneling activity](#), creating a very real threat to the thousands of Israeli civilians living close to the Gaza border.

In the middle of a chapter dealing with the Jewish holidays, the biblical text turns briefly to the subject of aiding the poor, “And when you reap the harvest of your land you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field, neither shall you gather the gleaning of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger...” (verse 22) The

appearance of these verses seems even more unusual in light of the fact that the commandment to leave gleanings for the poor appears in almost identical language two chapters earlier. (See Leviticus 19:9-10) Why are they repeated here? The Sages answer: “Because in this section it says, ‘and [you] shall reap the harvest’ (v. 10)—if you are harvesting to fulfill a commandment, you must also set aside gifts for the poor.” (Midrash Hachefetz 14) We cannot even mention harvesting for ourselves without turning our attention to others in need.

It is precisely this ethic of helping others in need that has motivated friends of Israel in Congress to propose legislation that will protect Israeli civilians from underground tunnel attacks. Last week, Representatives Gwen Graham (D-FL) and Doug Lamborn (R-CO) introduced a bipartisan proposal as an amendment to the [National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#), which was added to the NDAA by a unanimous voice vote. The amendment authorizes research and development of an anti-tunneling defense system to protect Israel from terrorist attacks. Rep. Lamborn states that “Tunnels are an age-old threat that have re-emerged in a very dangerous way.” Rep. Graham added, “Our closest ally in the Middle East—Israel—lives under the constant threat of terrorist attacks from underground tunnels. The U.S.-Israel Anti-Tunnel Defense Cooperation Act will launch an unprecedented new initiative to protect Israel from this dangerous menace. To secure peace, we must first help Israel secure their state from attacks. Iron Dome has saved countless civilian lives, and an anti-tunneling defense shield will save countless more.” ■

Remembering Past Sacrifices

A memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns (Leviticus 23:24)

(זכרון תרועה (ויקרא כג:כד))

Philosopher George Santayana famously noted that, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This realization motivates our study of history; we hope to learn from our mistakes and build upon our successes. It also explains why Jewish tradition places a great emphasis on memory during the High Holidays. Only by recalling the failures and triumphs of the past year can we hope to turn a new page and begin anew.

The holiday of Rosh Hashanah is not mentioned by name in the biblical text. Nowhere is it called “Rosh Hashanah.” Rather, the Torah refers to the first day of the seventh month as *zichron teruah*, “a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns.” (verse 24) What does this strange term mean? Rashi (on verse 24) explains that these two words allude to “the mention of verses of remembrance and verses [that relate to the] Shofar, to remember for you the binding of Isaac—that a ram was offered in his place.” According to Rashi, the Shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah recalling the great sacrifice Abraham made in the distant past, which serves as both a reminder of past tribulations, as well as a great act which brings merit to us, his descendants. On Rosh Hashanah, we recall the great acts in our past, which serve to inspire our future actions.

This past week marked the anniversary of a monumental day in human history. On May 8th, exactly seventy years ago, a great proclamation was heard around the world; with Hitler’s suicide the Nazis finally surrendered to the Allied forces, ending years of death and destruction brought about by the German War machine. Our grandparents and great-grandparents, who served and suffered during those terrible, terrifying years, don’t need to be reminded about the power of a single, evil regime who wreaked havoc on the entire world. Yet, only seven decades later, our generation seems to have forgotten the simple truth that there are nations who have killed millions of people to further their evil goals, and others who, if given the means, would do so today.

Today, the world stands at a critical crossroad, as the international community has the ability to use its economic and diplomatic strength to coerce Iran to abandon its fanatic pursuit of nuclear weapons. Should the world miss this chance, and allow Iran to become a nuclear state, we will once again face the terrible prospect of yet another fanatical regime. As we do on Rosh Hashanah, we must remember the sacrifices of the past, and take the necessary steps to ensure that we do not make tragic mistakes that will cause untold suffering to both the United States and the world. ■

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