

FEBRUARY 8, 2016

Parashat Terumah

Ill-Gotten Wealth

That they take for me an offering (Exodus 25:2)

ויקחו לי תרומה (שמות כה:ב)

Often, the Sages in the Midrash derive important lessons from the juxtaposition of two sections or topics in the Torah. In this vein, the Sages wonder: what is the connection between Parashat Mishpatim, which delineates numerous interpersonal and monetary laws, and the adjacent parashah, Parashat Terumah, which describes the myriad donations towards the construction of the Tabernacle? Menachem Becker, in his work *Parparot L'torah*, (vol. 2, p. 127) explains that by juxtaposing the two subjects, “The Torah comes to teach every person from Israel that a gift is considered desirable to the Holy One only when it comes from money that was acquired through justice and righteousness. On the other hand, donations that were made from property acquired through oppression, deceit, exploitation or oppression of one’s fellow man in not desired before God...”

By connecting Mishpatim and Terumah the Torah teaches us that ill-gotten gains defile the name of God and contradict the mission and message of the Temple. Last week, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) taught this valuable lessons to the leaders of Hezbollah, when it uncovered a major drug ring that the terrorist group had been using to supply money and weapons to Syria and elsewhere.

[CNN reported](#) that, “The Drug Enforcement Administration announced Monday that an international operation had netted a Hezbollah network using millions in drug money to fund terrorist activity in Syria and Lebanon. The arrests targeted a division of Hezbollah, a Lebanese militant organization, that provides ‘a revenue and weapons stream ... responsible for devastating terror attacks around the world,’ DEA Acting Deputy Administrator Jack Riley said in a statement.” Hezbollah reportedly worked with South American drug cartels to facilitate the movement of millions of dollars in cocaine to the United States and Europe, and then used the proceeds of these drug sales to purchase weapons for terrorist activities in Syria. Through the arrests, the United States shut down a crucial source of funding for the terrorist network.

In addition, according to the [Jerusalem Post](#), the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced sanctions targeting Hezbollah’s financial support network by designating Hezbollah-affiliated money launderers Nouredine and Hamdi Zaher El Dine, as well as a Lebanese trade company involved in the transfer of funds, as designated terrorists or accomplices to terror. Sanctions have also been imposed in the U.S. for engaging in business with those involved. “Hezbollah needs individuals [like Mohamad Nouredine and Hamdi Zaher El Dine] to launder criminal proceeds for use in terrorism and political destabilization,” said Adam J. Szubin, Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence. “We will continue to target this vulnerability, and expose and disrupt such enablers of terrorism wherever we find them,” he stated.

Recent American activities against Hezbollah represent a critical aspect of America’s war against terror, and the powerful effect that the United States can have against terrorist groups that threatens Israel’s well-being and security. We must applaud these efforts and encourage U.S. agencies to continue their work to thwart Hezbollah’s funding through illegal, ill-gotten gains. ■

What We Build, What They Build

And you shall make for me a sanctuary (Exodus 25:8)

ועשו לי מקדש (שמות כה:ח)

At its core, archeology is the study of ancient societies. Very little written record remains from the more advanced ancient cultures. One of the only ways to learn about those cultures, their values, goals and ideals, is by studying the buildings that survived until today. In other words, we can learn a great deal about a society by studying the structures that it built—and builds. Where did that society spend its valuable resources? What values guided its actions and efforts? We can derive all of this—and much more—by uncovering and analyzing the buildings a society leaves behind.

This very fact explains the significance of the second half of the book of Exodus. From Parashat Terumah through the end of Exodus, the biblical text delineates, in excruciating detail, the collection of material, elaborate and specific design, and construction of the Tabernacle in the desert. While the people themselves subsisted in makeshift tents which they would assemble as necessary during their travels, the Tabernacle—or *Mishkan* in Hebrew—was in fact the only meaningful public structure constructed by the Israelites as they traveled towards the Promised Land. Moreover, rather than collect money from specific individuals, Moses turned to the public at large for donations of money and material that were used for the building's construction. Why didn't he first turn to wealthy individuals for funding, as we so often do today to kick-start building campaigns? Why turn to the entire Children of Israel at once for donations? Professor Shaul Regev explains that, "The Temple was intended to be a central place that unites every individual into a cohesive group - the place that the tribes and separate families coalesce into a nation. The focus on the service of God in this special place will bind them nationally as well. In order to achieve these goals, the Temple must be built from public funds—and not from individual donations, so that the entire public has a connection to it."

What we build collectively speaks volumes about our public goals and aims. For the Israelites, the collective construction of the Tabernacle not only spoke about their national goals, but also served to shape and form the fledgling nation. The same principle applies to present-day Israel, which has built a modern, bustling 21st century society, combining the allure of Jewish history with the great advances of the past hundred years. And, tragically, the same lessons apply to the terrorist rulers of Hamas, who have once again diverted public funds and materials to reconstruct a terrorist apparatus with the goals of attacking Israel.

The heavy rains last week in the Middle East not only brought much needed water supplies to the region; they also collapsed a number of Hamas terror tunnels under construction in the Gaza Strip. According to the [Jerusalem Post](#), one of the collapsed tunnels "was used to kidnap IDF soldier Oron Shaul during Operation Protective Edge." Speaking at the funeral for Hamas operatives killed in the collapses, Deputy Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that the organization is digging new tunnels and testing rockets in order to develop and improve them, [Ynet reported](#). "The resistance is digging east of Gaza and conducting rocket tests west of Gaza on a daily basis," Haniyeh said. "Tunnels underground, and rockets above the ground. We are continuing on the path of jihad and towards the territories' liberation. The resistance is in a state of preparation, improvement and equipping of all its weapons in order to be ready for the any conflict with Israel."

In the Omnibus Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2016 passed late last year, the United States Congress designated \$40 million for a new U.S.-Israel tunnel detection initiative. American and Israeli cooperation will help Israel deal with underground threats from Gaza and Lebanon. It is the hope that these badly-needed funds will give Israel the necessary capability to identify and destroy the terror tunnels that threatens Israel's southern residents. Sadly, Hamas continues to demonstrate to the world through its building projects, that it remains committed to terrorism, murder and the destruction of the Jewish state rather than building peace and prosperity in Gaza. ■

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