



Sermon Tidbits

FEBRUARY 27, 2017

Parashat Terumah

The Power of Partnership

With their faces one to another (Exodus 25:20)

וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו (שְׁמוֹת כה:כ)

Earlier this month, Islamic forces fired four rockets from the Sinai desert towards Eilat. The Iron Dome defense system identified three of the rockets as potential threats to the population and [shot them out of the sky](#). There were no injuries or damage reported from the rocket salvo, but teams later found a [rocket fragment in a hotel swimming pool](#). This episode highlights the lawlessness and rampant terrorism that both Israel and Egypt must confront in the Sinai region, while it also reminds us of the fantastic success of Iron Dome. As we all know, the success of Iron Dome was only possible because of teamwork—a partnership between the United States and Israel. As we learn from the construction of the Mishkan, great projects are built with teamwork.

Among other vessels for the Tabernacle described in our parashah, we read about the dimensions and details of the Ark of the Covenant. On the crown of the Ark was the *kaporet* covering, which was crowned with two cherubs facing one-another. The language used to describe their positioning is, *ish el ahiv*, literally, “one toward its brother.” Why does the Torah describe the cherubs in this manner? Dr. Rachel Anisfeld writes that this language communicates the importance of working together as a team. “How do we bring God’s presence down to earth? Where does He reside today? In the places where we face each other, working together in a common enterprise, like the two cherubs with their wings outstretched, together creating a canopy over the ark.” Dr. Anisfeld [notes](#) that this term, *ish el ahiv*—“one man toward his brother”—is repeated numerous times throughout the parashah, most often, later, in the feminine—*ishah el ahotah*—“one woman toward her sister”—referring to the joining of separate cloths together to make a cover for the Tabernacle. She writes, “The Tabernacle is constructed on the principle of teamwork and friendship, of the joining of separate pieces. Indeed, the construction of the Tabernacle is the model of a task that cannot be accomplished by one person. It requires weavers, sculptors and carpenters, artists, engineers and managers, all working in concert. The physical details of construction mirror the human process—people are being joined together as well as planks, one facing toward the other.”

Teamwork provided the crucial support necessary to build the Iron Dome and other rocket systems now protecting Israel. Recently, it has also played a critical role in the system’s upgrade over the last few years. Although the system was successfully deployed several years ago, a joint American-Israeli team has been working to improve its accuracy and effectiveness. Last week, the IDF [announced](#) that it had completed a series of complex tests on an upgraded version of the Iron Dome. According to the [Jerusalem Post](#), “The experiments, which were conducted in the south of the country, focused on the use of the ‘Tamir’ interceptor and its ability to intercept a number of targets which were fired simultaneously at different ranges. The Tamir interceptor is made of parts produced by both the United States and Israel, as part of an agreement signed in 2014 between the two counties. In the agreement, the manufacturing of the Iron Dome was moved to Raytheon’s plant in the United States, who helped to fund the interceptors’ production.”

Since its first deployment, Iron Dome has intercepted roughly 85 percent of projectiles fired towards Israeli civilian centers, saving countless lives and changing the face of battle between Israel and her enemies—all the product of the power of partnership. ■

Standing Tall for Truth

And you shall make the boards (Exodus 26:15)

ועשית את הקרשים (שמות כו:טו)

The brief talk was striking for its simple truth. Perhaps that's why it was shared tens of thousands of times and [viewed millions of times](#) on social media. In her remarks to the press after her first Security Council meeting, United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley [expressed](#) some remarkable words of truth about the anti-Israel bias that dominates the agenda of the United Nations. "The Security Council just finished its regular monthly meeting on Middle East issues, it's the first meeting like that, that I've attended, and I have to say, it was a bit strange," said Haley. "The Security Council is supposed to discuss how to maintain international peace and security, but in our meeting on the Middle East, the discussion was not about Hezbollah's illegal buildup of rockets in Lebanon, it was not about the money and weapons Iran provides to terrorists, it was not about how we defeat ISIS, it was not about how we hold Bashar al-Assad accountable for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of civilians, no, instead, the meeting focused on criticizing Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East. I am new around here, but I understand that's how the Council has operated, month after month, for decades."

Indeed it has. Rather than fulfilling its stated [goal](#), "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors," the United Nations has, almost since its inception, served as a vehicle for the advancement of lies, slander and bias against the Jewish state. The beams of the Tabernacle remind us that a person who fails to stand up for truth ultimately becomes a vessel for deceit and deception in its stead.

Terumah describes, in almost mind-numbing detail, the blueprints for the construction of the Tabernacle—the temporary, movable Temple that Moses constructed in the desert at Sinai. Commentators throughout Jewish history have extrapolated significant meaning not only from the details of these blueprints, but from the language used to describe them. Describing the beams that formed the foundation of the Tabernacle we read, "And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia-wood, standing up." (26:15) Why does the verse emphasize that the beams should be "standing up?" The Ba'al Shem Tov explained that the word *keresh*—meaning beam—represents human beings, who stand upright. Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb notes that the letters of the word *keresh*, when transposed, spell out the word *sheker*—falsehood or untruth. "Each plank, each *keresh*, represents truth, which in our tradition is permanent, in contrast to falsehood, *sheker*, which does not last." Thus, through its choice of language, the Torah communicates that we must choose to "stand up," representing the value of truth. Otherwise, we become vehicles for the promotion of *sheker* in the world.

In her brief remarks, Ambassador Haley [continued](#): "I'm here to say the United States will not turn a blind eye to this anymore. I am here to underscore the ironclad support of the United States for Israel. I'm here to emphasize the United States is determined to stand up to the UN's anti-Israel bias. We will never repeat the terrible mistake of Resolution 2334 and allow one-sided Security Council resolutions to condemn Israel. Instead, we will push for action on the real threats we face in the Middle East. We stand for peace. We support a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is negotiated directly between the two parties, as President Trump reiterated in his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday. The outrageously biased resolutions from the Security Council and the General Assembly only make peace harder to attain by discouraging one of the parties from going to the negotiating table...It is the UN's anti-Israel bias that is long overdue for change. The United States will not hesitate to speak out against these biases in defense of our friend and ally, Israel."

It is gratifying that the United States' representative at the United Nations has taken such a strong, articulate position defending Israel in the face of blatant anti-Israel bias. While we are grateful for such full-throated support of the Jewish state, we must continue to encourage not only Ambassador Haley, but our elected representatives as well, to stand up for truth in the United Nations, so that the UN one day fulfills its mission of advancing true peace not only in the Middle East, but around the world. ■

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