

Israel Connection

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Purim: A Timeless Message about Activism

PURIM IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST JOYOUS TIMES OF THE YEAR; however, in many ways the importance of the holiday actually transcends the celebration we have come to know.

The Baal Shem Tov provided insight into the special nature of the holiday when he explained that the Book of Esther should not be read as an historic document alone, but rather as a timeless message about the importance of action.

It is this message that must resonate with us today. Esther is often compared to a citizen lobbyist because she spoke truth to power and helped King Achashverosh understand the evil nature of the plot to kill the Jewish people. It was only because Esther possessed knowledge, and was willing to act, that the Jewish people were saved.

More than two thousand years later, we confront a succession of extraordinary events—the Iranian quest for nuclear weapons, the rise of Islamist fundamentalist



The Scroll of Esther, known as the Megillah, tells the story of the salvation of the Jews of the Persian Empire.

political parties throughout the Middle East, and a growing movement to delegitimize Israel's very right to exist. These developments are as powerful of a threat to the state of Israel as Haman was to the Jewish people so long ago.

The Purim story illustrates that with leadership and cour-

age, we can follow Ester's example. Through education and action, we can do our part to help ensure a strong and secure Israel in our day.

The story tells us never to squander the unique opportunity, the right and the responsibility we have to lobby our elected leaders.

As Mordechai reminds Esther, "...perhaps it is for just such a time as this that you reached this ...position." (Book of Esther 4:14)

In fact, this March, as part of AIPAC's Annual Policy Conference, more than 13,000 Americans will lobby their leaders in Washington, D.C., in support of a strong U.S.-Israel friendship.

The Purim story also is a tale that celebrates partnership.

Several sources in the Midrash portray Esther and Mordechai as playing parallel roles. They work in cooperation with one another to improve the world around them.

So too, today, we see the importance of America and Israel working together to put forth shared values of freedom and democracy, to protect one another's mutual interests and to prevent common threats from doing harm to either nation.

Purim not only reminds us of the importance of leadership and courage, but also calls us to celebrate the ties that bind us to those we respect and trust—to those who share our vision of the world and our commitment to making that world a much better place.

Did You Know? Foreign Aid Creates Jobs

IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY, foreign aid continues to help U.S. companies develop foreign markets, create jobs at home and

build stable business environments in developing countries.

Foreign markets offer one of the best opportunities to expand the American economy.

Read more about foreign aid and the mutual benefits of the U.S.-Israel relationship inside this issue.





uses small radar-guided missiles to blow up incoming Katyusha-style rockets. Recognizing the value of this system, Congress approved \$205 million to help Israel fund the Iron Dome in 2011. The system has shot down incoming rockets, targeting Israeli schools, homes and communities—saving countless civilian lives.

SANCTIONING IRAN: With the release of last fall’s report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) corroborating that Iran is closer than ever to having nuclear

Moments in Time

Throughout Israel’s modern history, the United States has demonstrated its steadfast dedication to the safety, strength and security of a key strategic ally that shares its values and vision.

AIRLIFTING AID: When Egyptian and Syrian forces simultaneously launched a surprise attack against Israel on Yom Kippur 1973, America was the first and only country to offer aid. Through Operation Nickel Grass, an overt strategic airlift operation, the United States delivered vital weapons and



United States Congress passed more than a dozen bills and resolutions over the next two decades, imposing sanctions on Iran. One of the toughest, signed in 1995, issued a total embargo on United States’ dealings with Iran, prohibiting all commercial and financial transactions with Iran.



supplies to Israel—22,325 tons of tanks, artillery and ammunition. This was the first U.S. airlift to Israel, and critical to the tiny nation’s ability to defend itself.

ESTABLISHING FREE TRADE:

In 1985, the United States and Israel signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The FTA helped the economies of both countries by eliminating all duties and virtually all other restrictions on trade between the two countries. The agreement was the first of its kind and served as the model for similar agreements between the United States and Canada, Jordan and Mexico.



TAKING THE LEAD: In the wake of CIA reports in the early ‘90s that Iran was pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, the

FUNDING IRON DOME: Israeli civilians living in cities such as Sderot have been victimized by more than 7,000 rocket and mortar attacks from Hamas in Gaza since 2005. The Iron Dome missile defense system

weapons, Congress passed bipartisan legislation to sanction the Central Bank of Iran. The sanctions will dramatically escalate the pressure on Tehran by targeting its only financial institution capable of conducting international financial transactions. Sanctions are having a dramatic effect—the Iranian currency has dropped 35 percent in recent months.

IT’S MUTUAL:

Learn more about the bilateral friendship at: www.aipac.org.

Aid to Israel: In America's Interest

The U.S.-Israel relationship is a two-way street. By helping Israel defend itself, the United States promotes its own interests at home and overseas. Here are some of the many ways that the United States benefits from providing security assistance to Israel.



DETERS MAJOR CONFLICT

U.S. aid has helped to deter major conflict by making clear to potential foes that they cannot defeat Israel on the battlefield.

SAVES LIVES

Israeli military innovations helped save the lives of American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Because we have a deep strategic relationship with Israel, our military is able to learn from the Israel Defense Forces' vast combat experience.

PROMOTES PEACE

U.S. assistance has allowed Israel to remain strong militarily, allowing it to take historic risks for peace with the Palestinians and to sign peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

CREATES JOBS

Israel spends 75 percent of its security assistance back in the United States purchasing American-made military equipment from the Gulf Coast to the Northeast Corridor to the Pacific Northwest.

A Bipartisan Commitment

AT THIS TIME OF TREMENDOUS UNCERTAINTY in the Middle East, it is particularly important that the United States live up to its commitment to Israel's security. In 2007, the United States and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that pledged \$30 billion in U.S. security assistance to Israel over a 10-year period. The first four years of that agreement have already been implemented. Congress approved \$3.075 billion in aid to Israel for fiscal year 2012. Congress must approve aid each year.

The 10-year agreement embodies America's commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge, which Congress has defined as Israel's "ability to counter and defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors."



'Round the Clock

At any given time of day or night, somewhere in America, citizen activists are working in a variety of ways to ensure the United States and Israel remain steadfast friends.



6:30 a.m.



Members of Herzl Ner Tamid in Seattle log onto the AIPAC website for the morning news from Washington, D.C. and Jerusalem, and to check details for a congregational gathering that evening with their local congressman.



2:00 p.m.



Activists in Charleston, West Virginia host a meet and greet with a congressional candidate and encourage her to write a position paper, detailing her views on issues affecting American policy toward Israel and the Middle East.



8 a.m.

Fifteen synagogue members in Minneapolis gather at a congregant's home for a breakfast meeting with a candidate and hear his views on American foreign policy in the Middle East.



5:30 p.m.

Pearl Kagan, Past President of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, near Chicago, invites her fellow synagogue board members to join her in Washington, D.C., for next year's Policy Conference March 3 - 5, 2013.



9 a.m.



Rabbi David Gelfand, from Temple Israel of the City of New York, sends out an email reminding synagogue members to urge their lawmakers to support foreign aid.



7:00 p.m.



Young professionals in Los Angeles host a briefing with Middle East expert Aharon Barnea at Young Israel of Century City.



11 a.m.

Members of Florida's Boca Raton Synagogue meet with their congressman's staff in the district office to get to know them better.



9:00 p.m.

Birmingham Rabbi Jonathan Miller sends his congregants the latest issue of *Israel Connection*.



Noon



Synagogue members in Houston host a luncheon where AIPAC staff brief congregants about the issues affecting the U.S.-Israel relationship.



Make pro-Israel political activity part of your day—every day. Scan with any QR code reader, available for most U.S. smart phones, to find information about AIPAC events near you.

