

Shabbat Parashat T'rumah/Shabbat Rosh Hodesh Adar I  
The Gift of Israel

As I sit down to write this week's *d'var Torah*, I am reflecting on just how fortunate we are to be living in a country like Canada, where democracy is legitimate, systematic, and creates a society where even though we are not always happy with decisions that are made or current societal conditions, we have the ability freely and openly to express ourselves through the democratic process. Last week, our Prime Minister represented these values on his visit to Israel, speaking up in support of the partnership between our country and the State of Israel. As struggles for Israel to make peace with its neighbors continue and the on-going internal conflicts in Middle Eastern countries that do not embrace democracy rage on, I am inspired to be even more appreciative of the miraculous way that Israel has been able to establish itself as a country based on democracy. A democratic Jewish state in Israel is not only a gift for the Jewish people, but also a light to the rest of the Middle East region and world. It is our responsibility as a global Jewish community – as did Prime Minister Harper – to stand side-by-side with Israel in these trying times, whether or not we fully agree with all of its domestic policy or religious decisions.

In this week's *parasha*, God and Moses begin to lay out the instructions for the building of the *mishkan*, the portable desert Tabernacle. Standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, the people are still “homeless,” with only the promise of the future possession of the land of the forefathers. They are living in *sukkot*/temporary huts, which do provide shelter, but cannot be called “home.” Even what would be the “House of God” during the Israelites’ journeying through the wilderness would be temporary: to be assembled, disassembled, and reassembled as the nation would travel from place to place in the desert. One can only imagine how much the Israelites must have yearned for a sense of permanence after so many years of slavery and transience. Just as was the case for later generations of Jews, the Land of Israel for them was a dream waiting to become a reality.

In our generation, we have the tremendous good fortune of having a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel. As the name of this week's *parasha* implies, it is a *t'rumah*, a “gift” that has been given and fought for over the last sixty-one years. Unfortunately, in our world, as has been the case for our entire history, this is a gift which we must cherish and NEVER take for granted. Current events only serve to highlight this fact. It is our responsibility to throw our love, support, and travel plans into a strong bond between ourselves and our sacred home. If we do not take this attitude and approach to our relationship with the State of Israel, we run the risk of allowing those who wish for Israel no longer to exist to claim victory over her and over us. We can never allow this to happen.

The children of Israel were asked voluntarily to donate gifts of fine woods, linens, precious metals...etc. toward the building of the desert Tabernacle in order to build a special home for God. We too must volunteer our support, in whatever form possible, toward the continued building and strengthening of the State of Israel.

Shabbat Shalom and Hodesh *Tov*/Happy New Month of Adar II!