

**Note** – *The following are notes – we spent time looking in the Torah at various passages – please look up the passages to understand their context in this sermon. A handout used that evening is found on the last page.*

Israel created a wall in the sky – Iron Dome has stopped many rockets –

Israel’s astonishingly effective Iron Dome air defense has prevented Hamas from killing Israeli Jews and spreading terror in the civilian population. Ironically, though, the better Iron Dome works, the less sympathy the rest of the world has for a nation that remains under rocket attack.

- Bars, restaurants, and the Mediterranean beaches are still busy. Businesses are open. Although traffic is lighter than normal, the roads are hardly abandoned.
- Incoming rockets that would ordinarily wreak havoc are being blown up in the air, causing nothing but a boom, a puff of white smoke, and falling debris.
- Iron Dome’s success rate hovers around **90 percent**.
  - o No other system in the world is as effective in shooting down short-range and medium-range rockets.
- Iron Dome success creates painfully high expectations for continued success.
- The burden is felt most intensely by the operators of the seven (soon to be eight) batteries of Iron Dome interceptors.
- Israeli air force has chosen to have human beings push the firing buttons.
  - o The people who fire the buttons are low-ranking officers, typically from 19 to 23 years old.
  - o The officers are authorized to fire extra interceptors if they feel an extra margin of safety is required or to overrule the Iron Dome targeting software if they think it might be mistakenly perceiving a harmless airplane as an incoming rocket.
  - o “They’re making sometimes very hard choices,”<sup>1</sup>

Hamas is constantly probing the system for weaknesses.

More than ½ million Israelis have less than 60 seconds to find shelter after a rocket is launched and many have only 15 seconds.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-07-11/israels-iron-dome-is-amazing-and-thats-a-problem>

As we have learned today and over the course of this week, **that wall in the sky can be breached.**

- Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem.
- The Romans did too.
- The walls of Israel's sense of security were damaged by the Syrians and Egyptians in 1973, by Hezbollah in the Lebanon war, and now by Hamas.

Daniel Gordis wrote from Israel today saying, "To live here means to accept that our walls can be breached. To live here means to live with periods of fear, with loss, with the knowledge that as soon as it is over, the clock will start ticking until the next round. That is the way that things have always been, and it is the way that they will always be. Periodically, we or our children, or theirs, will retreat to safe-rooms, reinforced with steel and cement, hear the siren, hear the boom, wait the requisite time and exit, only to do it again down the road.

To live here means trying to make the walls as secure as we can, but knowing that whether they are walls of stone or domes of iron, they will never be impregnable. If we are to live here, it has to be not because we are safe, but because we believe it matters. Thus, if we are to live here, we have to make it matter."<sup>2</sup>

Rabbis built wall between two parts of a story – Parashat Pinchas begins with part 2 of the story

- Part 1 – pg. 1059 – Numbers 25:1 through end of Parashat Balak
- Part 2 – pg. 1074 – Numbers 25:10-13

Makes sense why they would want to build a wall between the two.

- Part 1 – zealous act
- Part 2 – blessing of peace and entrance into the priesthood (priesthood inherits NO land in Israel)

But Pinchas was a broken man and God's blessing of peace was imperfect

- Look at way first paragraph of Parashat Pinchas is written in the Torah
  - o Smaller *yud* in Pinchas
  - o Broken *vav* in Shalom

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<sup>2</sup> <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/we-have-been-here-before/>

- Shalom = peace but also WHOLENESS

Situation in Israel is one of brokenness, of zealotry, of broken peace.

First, terrorists kidnapped and killed 3 Israelis

Second, zealous Israeli youth kidnap, torture, and kill a young Palestinian

- Worst part, most horrifying – they burn him
  - Julia said that that's what stands out to her – Jews burning another human being, after what we went through as a people

There is no doubt that Israel has the right to defend itself and that it is insane that there are close to ONE THOUSAND rockets that have been fired into Israel.

We recognize that in order to defend ourselves, we need to fight back, to strike at the terrorists – and they use strategies we would never use

- Placing launchers in civilian zones and using human shields
- Purposefully targeting Israeli civilians and now civilian aircraft coming into airspace

But we have to remember the letters from the start of this week's parasha

- letters that are smaller
- letters that are broken

The Teaching - The letters seem to be telling us that TRUE peace, COMPLETE peace cannot be brought about by violence.

At Israel Conference on Peace, excerpts from speech by Israeli author, David Grossman:

Today, in an Israel that has known so much disappointment, hope (if ever mentioned at all) is always hesitant, a bit timid, and apologetic. Despair, on the other hand, is utterly confident and self-assured, as if speaking on behalf of a law of nature, an axiom that states that between these two peoples there shall never be peace, that the war between them is a heavenly decree, and that altogether, it will always be bad here, nothing but bad. As despair sees it, anyone who still hopes,

who still believes in the possibility of peace, is at best naïve, or a deluded dreamer, and at worst, a traitor who weakens Israel's wherewithal by encouraging it to be seduced by false visions.

...We cannot afford the luxury and indulgence of despair. The situation is too desperate to be left to the despairing, for accepting despair amounts to an admission that we've been defeated. Defeated not on the battlefield, but as human beings. Something deep and vital to us as humans was taken away, was stolen from us, the moment we agreed to let despair to have a dominion.

We who have gathered here today, and many others who are with us in spirit, insist upon hope. A hope that is not wide-eyed, a hope that won't give up. A hope that gives us – Israelis and Palestinians both – our only chance to resist the gravitational pull of despair.<sup>3</sup>

Haftorah for this week - 1 Kings 19:11-13 – pg. 1096

Still small voice – we pray for that voice to be heard, the voice of hope.

We hope and pray that the current conflict will come to an end quickly and with minimal loss of life.

But when the rockets stop flying and the airstrikes end, we know that it will be an incomplete peace.

We pray tonight, and over the course of this Shabbat, that once this current crisis subsides, we can search for methods and partnerships that will complete the *vav* in the word *Shalom*, a greater and complete peace.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/2.1434/1.601993>

## **Handout for Sermon**

### Excerpt – Daniel Gordis – We Have Been Here Before

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*(space for Numbers 25:10-13, as written in Torah)*

### Excerpt - David Grossman - Israel Conference for Peace

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