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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Half-Shekel Tithe for Building Temple Reinstated by Sanhedrin After 2,000 Years

By Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz January 30, 2017

breakingisraelnews.com

“Everyone who is numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the Lord. The rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than the half shekel, when you give the contribution to the Lord to make atonement for yourselves.” Exodus 30:15 (The Israel Bible™)



image:

<https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/half-shekel.jpg>

The recreated half-shekel used to pay the Temple tax. (Courtesy Reuven Prager)

After a 2,000 year moratorium, it is now possible for a Jew anywhere in the world to perform the mitzvah (commandment) of paying the half-shekel, a Biblically-mandated tax incumbent on every Jew to finance the day-to-day operations of the Temple.

There are now two ways to perform this commandment: one method for people who can hand-deliver their offering, and another for those who can't.

While the Temple was standing, every Jewish man was required to give one half-shekel weight of silver, approximately eight grams of silver (worth about \$4 today), as a mandatory tax to support the Temple. Each man was obligated to give the same amount, regardless of his economic condition. The coins, once deposited in the Temple courtyard, were hekadesh (sanctified) and not permitted to be used for any other purpose.

The nation of Israel continued to observe the commandment even after the First Temple was destroyed until the practice was outlawed by Roman Emperor Hadrian in the year 135 CE. Even Jews who lived outside of Israel continued to donate the half-shekel, despite the Roman Senate forbidding the export of gold and silver.

Twenty years ago, Reuven Prager revived this mitzvah. He began minting silver coins that adhered to the Biblical requirements, producing a new and unique design every year. Those who wish to perform the mitzvah buy the silver coins from Prager, and then deposit them with Otzar Hamikdash (Treasury of the Temple), an organization set up to collect these coins.

Otzar Hamikdash duly deposits them in their vault. To date, the organization has collected more than 200,000

coins.

In Temple Times, when it was incumbent on every Jew to make a triannual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, depositing the half-shekel tax was a simple matter. Today, when most Jews live in the Diaspora (outside of Israel), it is much more difficult.

For Jews outside of Israel, performing this mitzvah can be inconvenient or even impossible. The coin should be deposited with Otzar Hamikdash in their Jerusalem location. Prager has arranged a method of sending the silver coins from the US.

The nascent Sanhedrin has instituted a way to revive the mitzvah to rebuild the Temple. Last September, in honor of counting the first complete year of the 50-year Jubilee cycle on Rosh Hashanah, the Sanhedrin issued a medallion which can be used in place of the actual silver coin to perform the mitzvah.

The biggest advantage of the Sanhedrin coin is that the medallion represents the half-shekel and is not considered sanctified. It therefore does not have to be physically deposited, but the funds are still dedicated for use in the Temple. The Sanhedrin and the Temple Movement hold reenactments of the ceremonies, training Kohanim, men of the priestly class, to accept the tithes. Funds raised from the Sanhedrin medallions are dedicated to priestly training and the recreating of special vessels and utensils for Temple use.



The jubilee medallion issued by the nascent Sanhedrin. (Courtesy)

The Sanhedrin approves of Prager's version of the half-shekel but saw a need that led to the creation of the medallion.

“The half-shekel was a tax intended to be used for a specific purpose,” Rabbi Hillel Weiss, spokesman for the Sanhedrin, explained to Breaking Israel News. “As such, it was dynamic and not simply stored away. As the preparations for the Temple move forward, the need for that tax is reemerging.

“The medallion itself is not sanctified to the Temple, but any money raised by the medallion is sanctified and cannot be used for any other purpose.”

Rabbi Weiss described the Biblical precedents for such an arrangement. There were several cases of sanctified items, like tithes, that could be redeemed for 120 percent their value.

And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. Leviticus 27:31

Similarly, people who could not bring their own sacrifices bought tokens in the Temple which were redeemed for the animal or grain that were actually used in the sacrifice. Until the return of the three yearly pilgrimage festivals in Jerusalem makes it possible to reinstate the practice of the half-shekel tax being hand-delivered by every Jew to the Temple, the Sanhedrin's medallion is helping the Temple become a reality.

Is a new Middle East war on Israel's horizon?

Jonathan Marcus

The current frontier with Syria is about a third of the way up the opposite escarpment. And just a couple of kilometres beyond that is another ridge, which is Jordan.

This is Israel's front line with Syria. The Syrian army was evicted from the Golan Heights when Israeli forces captured it in the 1967 Middle East war.

Israeli law was extended there in 1981 - effectively annexing this crucial strategic high ground. It is now a heavily fortified area. We pull up alongside a platoon of Merkava tanks, key sensors and weaponry shrouded in tarpaulin covers against the winter damp.

Once things were fairly simple here. Israel faced the Syrian army across the ceasefire demarcation lines, monitored by UN observers. But there was almost no need for them. This was Israel's most peaceful frontier since 1973. But the civil wars in Syria and the collapse of Syrian government control in many areas have changed all that.

'Closer than ever'

The geography here is not the only thing that is complicated. The war in Syria has altered the strategic map as well. Opposite the southern Golan the ground is held by a local force - the Yarmouk Martyr's Brigade - which owes its allegiance to so-called Islamic State. Israeli troops see its fighters exercising and monitoring their positions, but there is rarely trouble.

What alarms Israel most is what is happening further north, with the victory of Syrian government forces backed by Iran and Tehran's ally, the Lebanese Shia militia group, Hezbollah. Clashes visible in Syria demonstrate its proximity to Israel's frontier.

Professor Asher Susser, a senior fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University, summed it up in one sentence.

"The changes in Syria," he told me, "have brought Iran closer to Israel's borders than ever." He told me that at least in theory it creates "the possibility of Iranian-Hezbollah co-operation not only along the border between Israel and Lebanon but along the border between Israel and Syria as well". In his view there is "a dangerous potential for a long border from the Mediterranean, across Lebanon and Syria, with Hezbollah and Iran at very close quarters with Israel.

"Israel," he stressed, "has never faced that kind of situation on its northern border before."

'Iranian corridor'

So what exactly is Tehran's goal in Syria? For an answer I turned to Ehud Yaari, veteran Middle East commentator for Israel's Channel 2 Television News.

"The strategic objective of the Iranians today," he told me, "is to establish a land corridor between Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon; to reach the Mediterranean and the Israeli frontier."

This land corridor, he explained would go "from Iran via the Shia regions of Iraq, through the western Iraqi desert, linking up with Assad and Hezbollah. "This," he stressed, "is strategically the major threat to Israel today".

Iran of course is not the only foreign country involved in the fighting in Syria.

Russian air power - along with Hezbollah fighters and other Shia militias on the ground - played a decisive role in propping up the Assad regime. Russia has twice announced the scaling down of its military deployments, but actually shows every sign of being in Syria to stay.

Russian complication

The presence of Russian aircraft and especially long-range radars and air defence missiles greatly complicates the threat environment facing the Israeli air force.

It has struck at arms shipments going from the Syrians to Hezbollah on several occasions, having set a "red line" that rejects the transfer of sophisticated missile systems to the Shia militia.

Ehud Yaari told me that the presence of the Russians has not significantly affected the Israeli Air Force's freedom of action over southern Syria.

"There is an understanding," he explains, "a sort of a hotline between Israel and Russia where a Russian-speaking Israeli Air Force officer and a Russian officer in Syria are co-ordinating and making sure that you don't have any mishaps."

This arrangement, he insists, is working and this is fundamentally because the Russians' strategic interests and

those of Iran are very different. Mr Yaari says that the Russians are not very interested in protecting Hezbollah arms shipments or the security situation south of Damascus, close to the Israeli border.

Widening threat

How big a threat is all of this to Israel? A series of military briefings suggests that Hezbollah and its growing armament is seen as perhaps the primary challenge to Israel's security. Hezbollah, due to its training and equipment, is now viewed as a fully-fledged army rather than a semi-amateur militia.

"It has lost heavily in the Syrian fighting but it has also gained invaluable combat experience," a brigadier told me. Hezbollah fighters march near portraits of Iranian and Hezbollah leaders.

Israel sees an increasing threat from Iran and its allied militia. It has established a well-entrenched infrastructure in southern Lebanon with a huge arsenal of missiles of varying ranges.

The fear among Israeli military experts is that under Iranian tutelage it might seek to establish a similar platform for operations in Syria as well.

There is a precedent here as Ehud Yaari explains.

"The major concern now is that the Syrian regime will be able to negotiate deals with the different factions of the rebels in the southern region of Syria so that they withdraw from border areas.

"This," he says, "is exactly what happened in other areas of Syria, especially in the countryside around Damascus."

Such a move could open the way to the entrenchment of Hezbollah, Iranian Revolutionary Guards or other Shia militias sponsored by Iran in the south.

Putin key

At present this is more a potential rather than an actual threat.

Professor Asher Susser told me that, in the long-run, much depends upon how the Russians play the game of regional alliances.

"If the Russians and the Turks are on one side of the equation and the Iranians on the other," he told me, "that may put a limit on what it is that the Iranians can achieve."

This is why he believes that Israel's contacts with Moscow are so important. "This," he told me, "is a relationship that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reinforced over the last year or two. "Mr Putin and the Russians," he says, "have an understanding of Israel's strategic needs which, if they take them into consideration, may put a brake on this Iranian-Syrian project."

Nobody knows when or how the fighting in Syria will end. Several Israeli experts I spoke to hope for some kind of regional deal that might constrain the freedom of movement of Iranian-backed militias in Syria.

But agreement or not, the new actors on Israel's frontiers present a new and more complicated set of challenges.

Turkey – A Prophetic Piece Aligned

by Joe Southerland raptureready.com

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“And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all

his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee” (Ezekiel 38:3-6).

In the late 1980s, and again in the late 1990s I served two, two-year tours of duty in Izmir, Turkey and Ankara, Turkey, respectively. I loved living in the Republic of Turkey. It was a unique anomaly in the world; a truly secular nation with a 95 percent Muslim population.

However, the nation I once knew...is no more, for since those times Turkey has dramatically changed to align itself into its prophetic end-time position.

The secular Turkey I loved...

It was a nation formed by the strong hand of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in the ashes of post World War I, Ottoman Empire, as he helped save the Turkish people in a war of preservation against the nation of Greece. After the victory, he truly became a benevolent dictator for the remainder of his life and dedicated himself to reform Turkey into a westward looking nation.

Among his many accomplishments he: completely separated the Islamic religion from the federal government; made each person take a last name; gave woman equal rights and the vote; created a written Turkish language based on western letters, and most importantly for the freedom of his people set in place a constitution which guaranteed the military would keep in check the corrosive influences of the Muslim faith.

It was within this nation that he had formed, that I traveled freely about with my family and friends, taking in all the historically rich heritage that Turkey had to offer, and in particular its lush and lengthy biblical history.

Noah's ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. Abraham sojourned in Haran. The once lost Hittite Empire of Uriah the Hittite was discovered here. Paul of Tarsus was born here and would travel amongst, and preach and write epistles to many of its citizens. The apostle John lived in Ephesus and the ruined cities of the seven churches he wrote of Revelations are here. It was a wondrous blessing to visit this land where the hand of God had helped shaped Mankind's path towards salvation.

Weekly we went to church with missionaries who were quietly planting the seeds among the Turkish people. Most of the Turks we encountered were welcoming people who were cultural, non-practicing Muslims. We all had hope of a slow gradual change in Turkey as one soul at a time was reached for Christ. We prayed that this secular yet Muslim nation would lead other Islamic nations to shake off the oppressive yoke of the Koran, so the Word of God could grow.

Unfortunately, I am saddened to say from a recent trip back to Turkey and what has been unfolding politically over the last decade, the nation of Turkey I once knew, and loved and prayed for is no more.

The Koranic curtain closes upon Turkey...

In short, over the last decade the cancerous growth of fundamentalist Islam has crept into the government and a building tide of events has placed the radical Islamist Recep Tayyip Erdogan in near dictatorial power. And now for years Erdogan has been systematically, and slowly undoing everything Ataturk once so wisely set in place.

Even more tragically, last year's failed coup has shifted Erdogan's pro-Muslim reforms into high gear as he silences his opposition through purging tens of thousands of secular Turks from the media, military, courts, government, and education systems. He has taken Turkey in a dramatic turn away from the West and it is now rushing head long back towards its Islamic roots.

We are now witnessing the spiritual darkness of what I call the "Koranic Curtain" closing down upon the people of Turkey in similar fashion to how the Iron Curtain fell and crushed the freedom of the peoples of Eastern Europe. But the darkness behind the Koranic Curtain is far, far worse.

The people of every nation imprisoned behind the Koranic Curtain are subject to a theocratic group of evil men guided by the writings of a flawed sinful, man whose religious tome tells them they are justified in violently controlling every aspect of people's lives.

Not a shock, but a prophetic fulfillment...

That said, as students of biblical prophecy this development should come as no shock.

Decades ago as I roamed the country of Turkey, I knew the prophecy experts of the day said the Gog/Magog War of Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 foretold that the peoples of these Turkish lands would accompany the Gog/Magog alliance in a war with the intention to exterminate Israel. Today's prominent prophecy scholars still echo the same interpretation listing Turkey among the nations which shall march upon and then be crushed against the mountains of Israel.

However, way back in the later days of the Cold War it was very hard to image how a staunchly secular Turkey could join a military alliance with one of its greatest enemies, the USSR (pre-1990 communist Russia for you young readers), and a group of backward (in the minds of the Turks I worked with at that time) Muslim nations.

But here we are and Ezekiel's 2,600 year old prophecy has come to pass. Now Turkey's greatest enemy the USSR has long since collapsed, and Turkey is now governed by a radical Muslim dictator who is aligning with the Koranic Curtain countries of the Middle East.

The Lord God will set the hook...

Turkey is now positioned ideologically and politically to fulfill its end time prophetic role.

Though a palpable tension still exists between Turkey, and Russia and its Iranian partner, it is not hard to envision that any issues can be readily set aside to execute mutually shared goals against Israel. As we read in the opening verse it is the Lord God's mighty hand which shall set the hook in the jaws and bring forth these nations.

Be in awe as the Lord God methodically maneuvers the peoples, tongues and nations in order to bring about His divine purposes, working on a time scale and in ways we can only glimpse upon.

Keep watching the Middle East, as always it will remain the center of prophetic fulfillment.

Marantha!

Billionaire George Soros has ties to more than 50 'partners' of the Women's March on Washington

NY TIMES

by Asra Nomani (female)

What is the link between one of Hillary Clinton's largest donors and the Women's March? Turns out, it's quite significant.

In the pre-dawn darkness of today's presidential inauguration day, I faced a choice, as a lifelong liberal feminist who voted for Donald Trump for president: lace up my pink Nike sneakers to step forward and take the DC Metro into the nation's capital for the inauguration of America's new president, or wait and go tomorrow to the after-party, dubbed the "Women's March on Washington"?

The Guardian has touted the "Women's March on Washington" as a "spontaneous" action for women's rights. Another liberal media outlet, Vox, talks about the "huge, spontaneous groundswell" behind the march. On its website, organizers of the march are promoting their work as "a grassroots effort" with "independent" organizers. Even my local yoga studio, Beloved Yoga, is renting a bus and offering seats for \$35. The march's manifesto says magnificently, "The Rise of the Woman = The Rise of the Nation."

I know — and most of America knows — that the organizers of the march haven't put into their manifesto: the

march really isn't a "women's march." It's a march for women who are anti-Trump.

As someone who voted for Trump, I don't feel welcome, nor do many other women who reject the liberal identity-politics that is the core underpinnings of the march, so far, making white women feel unwelcome, nixing women who oppose abortion and hijacking the agenda.

To understand the march better, I stayed up through the nights this week, studying the funding, politics and talking points of the some 403 groups that are "partners" of the march. Is this a non-partisan "Women's March"?

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, a march "partner," told me his organization was "nonpartisan" but has "many concerns about the incoming Trump administration that include what we see as a misogynist approach to women." Nick Fish, national program director of the American Atheists, another march partner, told me, "This is not a 'partisan' event." Dennis Wiley, pastor of Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ, another march "partner," returned my call and said, "This is not a partisan march."

Really? UniteWomen.org, another partner, features videos with the hashtags #ImWithHer, #DemsInPhily and #ThanksObama. Following the money, I pored through documents of billionaire George Soros and his Open Society philanthropy, because I wondered: What is the link between one of Hillary Clinton's largest donors and the "Women's March"?

I found out: plenty.

By my draft research, which I'm opening up for crowd-sourcing on GoogleDocs, Soros has funded, or has close relationships with, at least 56 of the march's "partners," including "key partners" Planned Parenthood, which opposes Trump's anti-abortion policy, and the National Resource Defense Council, which opposes Trump's environmental policies. The other Soros ties with "Women's March" organizations include the partisan MoveOn.org (which was fiercely pro-Clinton), the National Action Network (which has a former executive director lauded by Obama senior advisor Valerie Jarrett as "a leader of tomorrow" as a march co-chair and another official as "the head of logistics"). Other Soros grantees who are "partners" in the march are the American Civil Liberties Union, Center for Constitutional Rights, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. March organizers and the organizations identified here haven't yet returned queries for comment.

On the issues I care about as a Muslim, the "Women's March," unfortunately, has taken a stand on the side of partisan politics that has obfuscated the issues of Islamic extremism over the eight years of the Obama administration. "Women's March" partners include the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which has not only deflected on issues of Islamic extremism post-9/11, but opposes Muslim reforms that would allow women to be prayer leaders and pray in the front of mosques, without wearing headscarves as symbols of chastity. Partners also include the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which wrongly designated Maajid Nawaz, a Muslim reformer, an "anti-Muslim extremist" in a biased report released before the election. The SPLC confirmed to me that Soros funded its "anti-Muslim extremists" report targeting Nawaz. (Ironically, CAIR also opposes abortions, but its leader still has a key speaking role.)

Another Soros grantee and march "partner" is the Arab-American Association of New York, whose executive director, Linda Sarsour, is a march co-chair. When I co-wrote a piece, arguing that Muslim women don't have to wear headscarves as a symbol of "modesty," she attacked the coauthor and me as "fringe."

Earlier, at least 33 of the 100 "women of color," who initially protested the Trump election in street protests, worked at organizations that receive Soros funding, in part for "black-brown" activism. Of course, Soros is an "ideological philanthropist," whose interests align with many of these groups, but he is also a significant political donor. In Davos, he told reporters that Trump is a "would-be dictator."

A spokeswoman for Soros's Open Society Foundations said in a statement, "There have been many false reports about George Soros and the Open Society Foundations funding protests in the wake of the U.S. presidential elections. There is no truth to these reports." She added, "We support a wide range of organizations — including those that support women and minorities who have historically been denied equal rights. Many of whom are concerned about what policy changes may lie ahead. We are proud of their work. We of course support the right of all Americans to peaceably assemble and petition their government—a vital, and constitutionally safeguarded, pillar of a functioning democracy."

Much like post-election protests, which included a sign, "Kill Trump," were not "spontaneous," as reported by some media outlets, the "Women's March" is an extension of strategic identity politics that has so fractured America today, from campuses to communities. On the left or the right, it's wrong. But, with the inauguration, we know the politics. With the march, "women" have been appropriated for a clearly anti-Trump day. When I shared my thoughts with her, my yoga studio owner said it was "sad" the march's organizers masked their politics. "I want love for everyone," she said.

The left's fierce identity politics and its failure on Islamic extremism lost my vote this past election, and so, as the dawn's first light breaks through the darkness of the morning as I write, I make my decision: I'll lace up my pink Nikes and head to the inauguration, skipping the "Women's March" that doesn't have a place for women like me.