

During one of my stints living in Jerusalem, a former professor of mine invited me for Shabbat lunch. During the meal, his son kept saying he wanted a red kippah—or so I thought. It turned out that although אני רוצה כיפה אדומה does literally mean “I want a red kippah,” *kippah adumah* also has a specific translation I did not know. The little boy did not want a red kippah; he wanted his parents to read to him what we call Little Red Riding Hood. In Hebrew, she is called כיפה אדומה.

Speaking of Jerusalem, if I ask you to picture the famous dome there, I’m sure we would all have the same image in our minds. We would think of the Western Wall, where on the north end of the land above the wall is the famous gold dome known as The Dome of the Rock. Tonight, you will leave here with a new layer of meaning regarding the word *kippah*, and a new image in your mind linked to references to Israel’s famous dome.

I am talking about כיפת ברזל—literally “a *kippah* of iron”—an iron kippah. In English, it is being called the Iron Dome. Remember President Reagan’s missile defense system known as Star Wars? Remember the Patriot missiles that America used to help Israel shoot down Saddam Hussein’s SCUD missiles during the First Gulf War? That’s what the Iron Dome is all about. It is a defense system developed in Israel by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. The idea is to shoot down rockets fired by terrorists—not militants, but terrorists!— from Gaza into southern Israel.

On one hand, this is as amazing piece of technology. Its job is much harder than that of the Patriot missile, because Iron Dome is designed to protect against much shorter range weapons. That means Iron Dome has to be extremely fast. It must determine that a rocket has been launched, calculate its trajectory, and sends this information to a control center that determines the projected location that the rocket will hit. If that shows to

the rocket to be a threat, as opposed to showing that it will land in the middle of nowhere, an interceptor missile is fired to take out the rocket well before it reaches its destination.

Testing of Iron Dome began in mid 2008. Only now has it been declared fully operational by the IDF, and its deployment authorized by Israel's Minister of Defense, Ehud Barack.

Iron Dome is not perfect. It takes 15 seconds to do its job. Rockets fired from Gaza into towns like Sederot can have a flight time of less than that. Iron Dome missiles are far more expensive than the cruder missiles they take out. Of course, part of Iron Dome's brilliance is determining whether a missile is actually a threat or will land in an area where no damage will result. So all in all, Iron Dome is an amazing piece of technology.

It is also a testimonial to Israel's resilience and technological sophistication. If you attended the wonderful AIPAC even here at Shaarey Tefilla, you heard Jonathan Medved talk about the incredible technological advances and innovations that come out of Israel, in addition to the global leaders in technologies that do business and establish headquarters in the State of Israel. There is a part of me—a big part of me—that looks at Iron Dome with great pride.

But as Tevye so often pointed out, there is another hand. There is another side to the coin. There is another part of me that looks at Iron Dome and wants to weep at the waste. The incredible amounts of money, the countless manhours spent, the creativity and technological brilliance that Iron Dome required in order to become a reality—what other things could Israel have done with those shekels, with those manhours, with all that creativity and genius? What sorts of things could have come out of Israel

instead of Iron Dome that would have benefitted people all over the world? We'll never know, not because Israel made a bad decision—please do not misunderstand and think I am criticizing Israel for going forward with Iron Dome—but because seventeen years after Arafat, may his name and memory be erased, made such a show of that infamous handshake with Yitzchak Rabin, of blessed memory, Palestinian leadership still chooses death over life, war over peace, statelessness rather than peaceful coexistence. Seventeen years later, nothing has changed. Put a magic wand in the hand of virtually any Israeli government official and say solve the problem, and he would wave it and create two states, one demilitarized, living in peace with one another. Give virtually any Palestinian leader that wand, including Abbas, and he would wave it and there would be no Israel. Israel had to invest in Iron Dome. The shame is that the terrorists gave Israel no choice.

As we sit here enjoying a beautiful Shabbat service in the safety of Carmel, Indiana, our heads are covered with all sorts of *kipot*—leather, suede, knitted, crocheted, satin, and more. As our brothers and sisters in Israel do the same, there is one more *kipah*, the כיפת ברזל (*kipat barzel*), the *kippah* of Iron. May we live to see the day when Israel will not need to live under the protection of an Iron Kippah, an Iron Dome. Until that day comes, may God bless that כיפת ברזל that it may never be penetrated, never fail, and if indeed there are Palestinians who truly desire peace with Israel, let them rise up and overthrow by whatever means necessary the hate mongers and lovers of death who currently lead them. Until then, may Israel's Iron Dome shine brighter than the gold Dome of the Rock. How ironic—the beautiful gold dome stands for death, while the invisible Iron Dome stands for life. As always, we choose life.