God Loves Diversity

A story is told about the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism. As he lay on his deathbed, his disciples gathered and asked who they should choose as his successor. The Baal Shem Tov replied, “I cannot tell you who to choose, only who not to choose. Whomever comes and applies, ask him, ‘How do you overcome pride?’ If he says that he knows, he is not the one. For the battle against pride is never ending.”

In today’s society, it is far too easy to believe that my way of thinking is the only way to think. Our personalized Facebook feeds, specialized blogs, and even politicized news outlets can lead us to the prideful conclusion that “it’s all about me.”

But Judaism is a communal religion, and we are a communal people. As far back as Pirkei Avot, Hillel commanded us, “Do not separate yourself from the community.” (Avot 2:5) Yet, we are not a monolithic community. As British Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote, “One of the most profound religious truths Judaism ever articulated was that God loves diversity; He does not ask us to serve Him in the same way.”

Today’s Jewish community is increasingly diverse. Jews identify through countless different religious and political ideologies. Yet, the challenge for our community is not how we can all learn to agree. Rather, it is how we can learn to stand together despite our differences.

America’s support for Israel can be one answer to this call. While we might disagree on many issues facing our country and community, support for Israel ought not be one of them.

Despite a highly fractured political climate, Congress unites in bipartisan support for Israel. This only happens because so many activists, from both political parties, across the country, constantly educate elected officials on the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

As we enter the New Year, it is our job to remind Congress, and ourselves, that despite differences and disagreements, we can come together with civility to make our strategic partnership with Israel even stronger.

The Case for Bipartisanship

Politics in America is divisive. In fact, by some measures, Democrats and Republicans are more divided today than at any other point in last two decades. And yet, there is one issue that consistently transcends partisan politics on Capitol Hill: America’s support for Israel.

Israel’s security and the future of the U.S.-Israel alliance depend on steadfast support from both sides of the political aisle.

There are two practical reasons why.

First, consider the history of party control in Congress. Majority control of the Senate and the House has alternated repeatedly between Democrats and Republicans over the course of U.S. history. To account for these dynamics, pro-Israel activism is most effective by working with both parties.

The second reason is a matter of numbers. In the Senate, members possess the right to filibuster—or block—a bill’s consideration on the floor. In order to overcome the filibuster, bills need a three-fifths approval—which one party rarely holds.

Therefore, the security of Israel requires a consistently pro-Israel Congress. And a consistently pro-Israel Congress requires a bipartisan approach.

Leaders in Congress agree.

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) attested to the strength of bipartisanship at AIPAC Policy Conference in March 2016: “Israel is unique, and the commitment to Israel is unique. It bonds both Republicans and Democrats in common cause. That was true yesterday, it’s true today, and will be true tomorrow.”

Joining his colleague on stage, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) agreed: “The [partnership] with Israel and America brings more bipartisanship inside Congress. It’s only a helpful ability that we can work together, we stand on the stage together, and we travel to Israel together.”

Learn more about what you can do to advance bipartisan support for Israel in Congress. www.aipac.org.
INNOVATION BEYOND ISRAEL’S BORDERS

122 projects. 7 different countries. Nearly 1 million people helped.

That is the work of Innovation: Africa—a team of problem solvers dedicated to using Israeli solutions to save lives in rural African villages.

Given similar climates and available resources in both Israel and Africa, Israeli solar, water and agricultural technologies are a natural fit for African villages. As such, Innovation: Africa uses Israeli know-how to provide schools, orphanages and medical clinics with clean water, light, and refrigeration for vaccines and medicines. For example, the Damani Primary School—one of the smallest schools in South Africa’s Limpopo district—now uses solar technologies provided by Innovation: Africa to illuminate classrooms serving 146 schoolchildren.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Ron Prosor touted the life-saving work of this organization. “The amazing work that Innovation: Africa is doing serves as an inspiration to all Israelis. This is the face of Israel that I am so proud to represent in the halls of the United Nations.”

LEADING THE WORLD IN CYBERSECURITY

Israel is a leader in cyber technology. In January 2016, the Jewish state hosted leaders from around the world for CyberTech, the world’s largest exhibition of cyber technologies. The conference presented strategies, solutions and technologies to address the global cyber threat to finance, transportation, utilities, defense, research and development, manufacturing, telecommunication, health and government.

In the Negev Desert, the world’s top cybersecurity talent is cementing Israel as a major cyber power. The Jewish state’s work to develop the southern city of Beersheba as a cyber city has led to the creation of an advanced technology park, which houses “cyber firm incubators” and global companies such as PayPal, Lockheed Martin and Deutsche Telekom.

“No other country is so purposefully integrating its private, scholarly, government and military cyber expertise,” wrote The Washington Post in May.

In June 2016, the United States and Israel signed a Letter of Intent to increase cyber security cooperation. According to the Prime Minister’s Office, “The declaration expresses the vital nature of an international integration of forces in order to more effectively deal with joint threats in the cyber sphere, especially given the commitment of the U.S. and Israeli governments to expand and deepen bilateral cooperation in cyber defense, which has grown in recent years.”

This letter builds upon the significant progress both countries have made to further cyber security collaboration, backed by bipartisan support in Congress.

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Israel is a world leader in environmental sustainability and preservation.

A global leader in water technology, Israel currently recycles more than 80 percent of its water—with an ambitious goal to recycle 95 percent by 2020. Just as Israel shares its groundbreaking drip irrigation methods with arid countries throughout the Middle East and Africa, its revolutionary water recycling technologies are also exported globally to those in need in other parts of the world—including the United States.

Israeli-owned company IDE Technologies has implemented a transformative water desalination solution along the coast of Southern California to help alleviate the region’s severe water shortage. The plant uses IDE’s reverse osmosis technology, which is gentle on the environment and more energy efficient than other systems. Part of a plan to generate nearly 10 percent of the region’s water supply from desalinated water, the plant can produce 50 million gallons of drinking water per day.

Israel is also a leader in solar technology development, regularly sharing its technologies with the rest of the world. In February 2015, Israeli company Energiya built the first utility-scale solar field in East Africa. And in 2016, Energiya executed a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement with Georgia Power Company for the construction of a utility-scale solar field located on 79 acres in Glynn County, Georgia.

Another popular American company and an industry leader in electric vehicles, Tesla Motors, is partnering with Herzliya-based SolarEdge Technologies Inc. to create the Powerwall, a cost-effective rechargeable battery. The Powerwall is fueled by solar energy and provides a more economical approach to powering homes.
For three incredible days, be part of America’s largest pro-Israel gathering.

Join members of Congress, scores of diplomats, leading journalists, rabbis, synagogue members and more than 4,000 student activists. If you want to help ensure that America always stands with Israel, the annual AIPAC Policy Conference is the place to be.

Expand your experience by also joining us for the pre-conference Shabbaton!

The Shabbaton is a pre-conference educational seminar available exclusively for Policy Conference delegates. On Friday and Saturday, March 24 and 25, we will host engaging in-depth discussions about the U.S.–Israel relationship in a restful and respectful Shabbat environment.

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1
Opportunity to make your voice heard and strengthen the U.S.–Israel relationship

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