



Sermon Tidbits

FEBRUARY 20, 2012

Parashat Terumah

The Gift that Gives Back

And they shall take for me an offering (Exodus 25:2)

ויקחו לי תרומה (שמות כה:ב)

While it is commonly assumed that in order to be a generous giver one must lose something in the process, from a textual nuance in this week's *parashah* we learn that this is not always the case. The Torah uses the word "take" to describe the Jewish peoples' giving of *terumah*, which according to Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekudah was intended as payment for the Israelites "taking" the Torah. Rabbeinu Bachya then noted that when sharing Torah knowledge, one can give it away without actually losing it. "A parable is said about two merchants, one selling spice and the other cloth. When they exchange wares...each one is missing what he before had. But Torah [knowledge] is different. One [person] teaches the Order of Zeraim to another...and the [second] who knows the Order of Moed teaches it to the one who knows Zeraim. Each benefits, and yet retains what he had originally."

When Torah knowledge is shared, each person is enriched without losing anything. Both the United States and Israel similarly benefit from the sharing of valuable knowledge and expertise. From high-level meetings in Washington and Jerusalem to in-depth intelligence sharing, the two allies work together to counter emerging threats to both nations.

The United States and Israel have developed a resilient friendship, based in large part to an unshakable dedication to common values. Commitment to democracy, the rule of law, freedom of religion and speech and human rights are all core values shared between our country and Israel. Moreover, there is no other country in the Middle East—and few in the entire world—with which the United States shares the same strategic cooperation. American-Israeli gifts are constantly exchanged in the form of strategic dialogues among leaders, combined military planning and exercises, intelligence-sharing and technological development. American and Israeli military and intelligence coordination benefit both nations by providing a powerful deterrent to those in the Middle East who seek to harm either country. Shared Israeli military innovations help save the lives of American troops deployed around the world, and by sharing Israel's vast combat experience with American military officials, the Israel Defense Forces gives the United States a critical boost in military tactics and field operations. For more on the U.S.-Israel relationship, click [here](#).

To think of giving as a loss is simply untrue when it comes to sharing. Just as those who share the Torah gain so much, the United States and Israel both benefit from their strong friendship.

Innovation through Visualization

According to all that I show you (Exodus 25:9)

ככל אשר אני מראה אותך (שמות כה:ט)

The Midrash explains that Moses lacked a sufficient description of some of the vessels of the Tabernacle to properly build them. After describing the intricacies of the Menorah's construction, God told Moses, "And see that you make them after their pattern, which is being shown to you on the mount" (25:40). The Talmud (Menachot 29a) elaborates on this verse by explaining that, "Rabbi Yossi the son of Rabbi Yehudah said, an Ark of fire, and a Menorah of fire descended from the heavens, and Moses saw them and then constructed [the real items] in their image." The Midrash

(Lekach Tov on 25:9) notes that through the fire, God showed Moses a complete visual layout of the Tabernacle in order to enable Moses to properly configure every part of the holy structure.

The ability to visualize a concept is critical to the successful engineering of any project, whether it is the Tabernacle in the desert or a modern-day structure. This idea is being put into action by a young Israeli entrepreneur who was recently recognized for teaching children to visualize science and engineering through normal, every-day play.

Youth Business International, headed by Britain's Prince Charles, selected Amir Asor—the 26-year-old Israeli CEO of the Decade Group—as its 2011 Entrepreneur of the Year. According to Israel's [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), the program teaches children the fundamentals of engineering and robotics as they play with toy building sets. Asor designed lessons that use Lego and K'Nex construction toys to cultivate children's minds while they have fun. "The child doesn't have to concentrate, just to play. They quickly pick up how to visualize a design concept from beginning to finish." To adults, these children are constructing great innovations, but the children think that they are simply playing. The company currently employs 25 people but is in the process of expanding to Los Angeles, the Bahamas and Latin America. "We use the child's natural instinct for playing and link it with learning," Asor says. "Establishing this connection will make the child continue to be curious for the rest of his life."

God understood that Moses needed to first visualize the vessels of the Tabernacle in order to properly construct them. Today, an Israeli entrepreneur recognizes that the ability to visualize scientific and engineering concepts will inspire children to utilize these skills not just for play, but for the rest of their lives. ■

The Power of Mobility

They shall not be taken from it (Exodus 25:15)

לא יסורו ממנו (שמות כה:טו)

When describing the Ark, which secured the Tablets of the Covenant, the Torah includes an unusual instruction: "The staves shall be in the rings of the Ark; they shall not be taken from it" (25:15). Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 96) lists this as a Torah commandment prohibiting the removal of the Ark poles. Why was it so important that these staves never be removed? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained that since the Torah, like the Jewish people, is not meant to be stationary, its ability to be moved should never be altered. How important was it that the Ark remain mobile? Rambam (Laws of the Vessels of the Tabernacle Chapter 20) explains that, "We are warned that the poles may not slip off the rings, and one who removes a pole from its rings [is punished with] lashes."

The prohibition against removing the poles from the Ark emphasizes that the ability to be transported is critical to the usefulness of certain items. Iran's leadership is coming to understand this fact as locating ships to transport the country's oil is becoming increasingly difficult.

More stringent American and European sanctions of Iran are making the shipping of oil from Iran to Europe a growing challenge for the Islamic Republic, [The Wall Street Journal](#) recently reported. While a full European Union oil embargo is not slated to come into effect until July 1, shipping giants such as AP Moller Maersk A/S, and Frontline Ltd. will no longer call at Iranian ports. Smaller ship owners have also become unwilling to send their vessels to Iran. The E.U. imposed new sanctions on Iran on January 23, adding to the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and signed into law late last year. The new sanctions have ratcheted up pressure on the Islamic Republic by pushing up insurance premiums and requiring a large amount of due diligence to ensure compliance. "Even if Asian buyers remain willing [to purchase Iranian crude], they may struggle to find ships," said David Fyfe, head of the International Energy Agency's oil markets division. The Obama Administration must continue to strictly enforce the terms of the sanctions in order to pressure Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Iran's oil industry, like the Ark, only functions properly when its products can be transported. As long as Tehran is more interested in nuclear weapons than exporting its products, Iranian industries will continue to suffer. ■