



Sermon Tidbits

MARCH 4, 2013

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei

Calling it Like it Is

The Lord has called by name Bezalel (Exodus 35:30)

קרא ה' בשם בצלאל (שמות לה:ל)

Noting the unusual fact that Bezalel was specifically appointed to lead the construction of the Tabernacle, the Midrash (Midrash Hagadol) emphasized the importance of assigning proper designations. “Said Rabbi Yochanan: Everything must be attributed, whether for good or bad...even in matters of leadership. Regarding good leadership it is written, ‘See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel,’ and regarding evil [leadership] it is written, ‘for I knew that you would act very treacherously, and called you a transgressor from the womb’” (Isaiah 48:8).

The Midrash highlighted the importance of calling things as they are—whether good or bad. Today, the European Union must put that lesson into practice and finally designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group.

Hezbollah has killed more Americans than any terrorist group other than al-Qaeda and has launched dozens of attacks against Israel since it withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000. Hezbollah’s network poses a direct threat to American interests and allies, dominates the Lebanese government and has amassed 60,000 rockets aimed at Israel’s northern cities and towns. Numerous countries including the United States, England, Egypt and Canada explicitly designate the Iranian-backed organization as a terrorist group. Yet, according to an op-ed in the [The Chicago Sun Times](#), “while European governments decried acts of Hezbollah terror around the world, the European Union until now has refused to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization,” ignoring Hezbollah’s “staggering record of bloodshed.” Following the recent release of an official Bulgarian report that explicitly implicates Hezbollah in last year’s Burgas bus bombing that killed five Israeli tourists and a Bulgarian bus driver, officials from around the world have called upon the E.U. to add Hezbollah to its list of terrorist organizations. President Obama’s national security adviser Thomas Donilon, in [The New York Times](#), joined Israel’s president [Shimon Peres](#) and [Canadian officials](#) in publicly calling on the E.U. to “add Hezbollah to the European Union’s terrorist list.”

The Sages remind us of the importance of proper designations, whether for good, like Bezalel, or for bad, when harmful leadership rises to power. America must share that reminder with the member states of the European Union, who have yet to find the fortitude to label Hezbollah as a dangerous, destructive terrorist organization. ■

A Perfect Partnership

And Bezalel and Oholiab shall work (Exodus 36:1)

ועשה בצלאל ואהליאב (שמות לו:א)

Moses appointed two individuals, Bezalel and Oholiab, to lead in the construction of the Tabernacle and its vessels. The Zohar (Pekudei) notes that the two were chosen specifically for qualities that each brought to the work. Bezalel, translated from the Hebrew to mean “in the shadow of God,” represented the attribute of *chesed*—kindness. Oholiab, from the tribe of Dan, represented the attribute of *din*—justice. When joined together, these two attributes of kindness and justice formed the perfect partnership necessary to construct the structure and vessels that would represent the divine presence on earth.

Like Bezalel and Oholiab, whose unique individual qualities formed an excellent working partnership, the United States and Israel have come together to work on a project critical to both countries' future security.

For years the United States and Israel have collaborated in developing sophisticated missile systems aimed at creating a multi-layer defense shield capable of repelling missile attacks from a range of distances. These efforts led to the development of the Iron Dome system that played a critical role in defending Israeli cities and towns from rockets fired from Gaza late last year. While the Iron Dome system focuses only on short-range projectiles, the U.S. and Israel have been working on longer-range defense systems as well. According to the [Associated Press](#), "Israel and the U.S....carried out a successful test of the next-generation Arrow 3 missile defense system, for the first time sending an interceptor into outer space, where it could destroy missiles fired from Iran." The missile system, jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and Boeing, is designed to destroy hostile missiles outside Earth's atmosphere. [Reuters](#) reported that "Boeing thinks that potential clients for the system may include India, Singapore and South Korea. 'As we prove out that technology, and show that it's not only affordable but effective, we think there will be additional global market opportunities for that capability,' Dennis Muilenburg, chief executive of Boeing's defense, space and security arm, said last year." According to [The Wall Street Journal](#), Israel's Ministry of Defense said U.S. officials were on hand for the launch. For more on U.S.-Israel defense cooperation, click [here](#).

Bezalel and Oholiab each brought critical individual qualities to the partnership that enabled the construction of the Tabernacle. Now, teams from the U.S. and Israel are combining their unique abilities to create a partnership that will hopefully soon provide critical security to both nations. ■

Celebrating Rebirth (Parashat HaChodesh)

This month is for you (Exodus 12:2)

החדש הזה לכם (שמות יב:ב)

Although tradition counts Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of the new year, Nissan is paradoxically considered the first month of the Jewish calendar. Eliyahu Kitov (Book of our Heritage Vol. II pp. 124-125) notes that the Hebrew word for "year" (*shanah*) is connected to the word "old" (*yashan*) while the word "month" (*chodesh*) is connected with the word "new" (*chadash*). "The word hints at miracles and wonders, beyond the boundaries of nature...In every month the Children of Israel hope that the strength of their youth will be renewed...In the month of Nissan...more than in any other month, they hope for something new to happen in their lives. Therefore it is written, 'This month is for you.'"

Parashat HaChodesh celebrates the potential for rebirth and redemption, instilling within us a sense of excitement about our potential as individuals and as a people. Nearly 65 years after the birth of the state of Israel, the Jewish state also serves as a source of excitement, exhilaration and pride for Jews around the world.

At February's Mobile World Congress, the world's largest mobile phone conference, held in Barcelona, Spain, the Israeli app Waze won the Judges Choice Award "for best overall mobile application, beating other top contenders such as Dropbox, Flipboard and Square," the website [NoCamels](#) reported. At Paris Fashion Week in January, Dutch designer Iris van Herpen unveiled two ensembles from her new haute couture collection that were made with an Israel-developed Objet Connex multi-material 3D printer, the website [Israel21c](#) reported. A similar Stratasys Dimension 3D printer produced a custom-designed robotic exoskeleton that enables American preschooler Emma Lavelle to use her arms. Indeed, it seems that we've grown accustomed to the almost daily news of exciting scientific and technological advances reported from Israel. This is perhaps because Israel has become known as a world leader in technology, agriculture and medicine, making ground-breaking advances. From pill-cams to water recycling technologies to e-readers to amazing agricultural advances that will help feed the world, Israel continues to excite us with its seemingly endless list of new creations. For more on Israel's achievements, click [here](#).

As we announce the coming of the month of Nissan, the first month of the year, we must also celebrate the excitement of birth that we share with the people of Israel, whose new creations continue to renew, excite and exhilarate us. ■

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