

JULY 22, 2013

Parashat Eikev

Completing the Task

All the commandment (Deuteronomy 8:1)

כל המצוה (דברים ח:א)

Moses instructed the Israelites to fulfill “all the commandment” in order, “that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the Land” (8:1). Rashi explains that Moses doesn’t advocate the fulfillment of a specific commandment, but instead teaching us how to properly fulfill all of the commandments. Rashi writes, “If you began a *mitzvah*, complete it, for the commandment is only named after he who completes it.” Rabbi Achimeir Kallah notes that once we begin a commandment, we tell ourselves that we’ve fulfilled our obligation. To counter this feeling Moses offers unique encouragement, stating that it’s not enough to begin a task but we must fulfill “all” of the commandment.

Rashi reminds us that we must not only begin *mitzvot* but complete them as well. Seen in this light, the international community must complete the task it began and take the necessary steps to halt Iran’s dangerous nuclear program.

Despite the international community’s strong steps in hopes of curbing Iran’s nuclear weapons program, the research continues unabated. According to [The Washington Post](#), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lamented what he called a lack of urgency in dealing with the growing Iranian threat. “I have a sense that there’s no sense of urgency...on Iran,” Netanyahu told CBS’s, Face the Nation, “And yet Iran is the most important, the most urgent matter of all.” Recently, in a broad show of bipartisan support for containing the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, the House Foreign Affairs Committee signed a letter to President Obama calling for him to increase pressure on the Islamic Republic, [The Washington Times](#) reported. The House members who wrote to Obama pointed to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency that cited an acceleration in Iran’s nuclear activities. While the report stopped short of saying outright that Iran was moving more quickly toward development of a nuclear warhead, lawmakers said recent findings could be read that way. “Our diplomacy and sanctions strategies must reflect these dangerous realities,” they wrote. The U.S. must ramp up the pressure until the Islamic Republic bows to the will of the international community and halts its illicit nuclear weapons research. For more on Iran, click [here](#).

According to Rashi, it is not enough to simply begin a task. While the United States has spearheaded the international effort to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon, the task is not complete. ■

Living with Less Water

Drinks water as the rain of heaven falls (Deuteronomy 11:11)

למטר השמים תשתה מים (דברים יא:יא)

According to Rashbam (on 11:13), even before the Israelites entered the Land of Israel, Moses warned them that life there would be different than any other place. Unlike Egypt, which watered its crops from the ever-flowing Nile, the Land of Israel depended on rain. “But the land, which you go over to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water as the rain of heaven falls” (11:11). Should the nation of Israel sin, then the rains would stop. Should they follow the commandments, they would be blessed with rain from the heavens (see 11:13-17).

The people of Israel have always had to deal with a scarcity of water. Yet today, Israel is recognized as a world-leader and a sought-after partner in developing new water-related technologies.

In an era of booming populations, shrinking resources and environmental degradation, Israel leads the world in developing critical water-related technologies. For example, the world's largest seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant, which opened 2005 in Israel's southern city of Ashkelon, can produce up to 330,000 cubic meters of fresh water daily, or around 5 percent of Israel's total water needs. Israel's water know-how has attracted attention from experts around the world seeking to collaborate. Recently, a major American university signed an agreement to work collaboratively with an Israeli partner to jointly develop exciting, new water-related advances. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the presidents of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the University of Chicago launched a program that will foster water research at a molecular scale. Ben-Gurion University president Rivka Carmi and University of Chicago president Robert Zimmer signed the agreement at the President's residence in Jerusalem, in the presence of Israeli President Shimon Peres and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who spearheaded the initiative. "I've made water a component of every Chicago sister-city program in the world," Emanuel told [Israel21c](#). "That's the value I have put on it. I want Chicago to be at the epicenter of water research and conservation, and I couldn't think of anybody better than Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, which is at the epicenter of research on how to maximize scarce resources." For more on Israel's achievements, click [here](#).

Even during biblical times, the people of Israel recognized that they would need to learn to adapt to scarce water resources. The modern state of Israel's knowledge in dealing with this global challenge attracts attention, investment and collaboration that will improve the lives of people in Chicago and around the world. ■

Preparing our Children

To talk of them (Deuteronomy 11:19)

לדבר בם (דברים יא:יט)

The textual similarities between the end of the first chapter of the Shema (6:7-9) and the second chapter of the Shema (11:18-20) forces us to take note of the subtle differences between them. In chapter 6, we are instructed "and you shall teach the [commandments] diligently to your children, and [you] shall talk of them," whereas in chapter 11 Moses tells us, "And you shall teach them your children to talk of them." What is added in the second verse? Ramban (on 11:19) explains that in this verse Moses tells us that not only must we teach the *mitzvot* to our children, but "here he says to us that we must teach our children until they—the children—speak [of the commandments] at all times."

We know that we have properly taught our children when they themselves articulate the lessons we conveyed to them. This message can be taken to heart as Jewish children finish high school and begin college life on campus.

As Israel activists, we recognize the critical importance of advocacy on the grassroots level. We have seen, firsthand, the powerful effects of advocating for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Yet, all too often, we neglect to share our passion with our children and educate them about the importance of advocacy on behalf of Israel even at a young age. This is especially important as our children leave home for college. According to [The Cleveland Jewish News](#), "The [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)] movement and supporting groups like Students for Justice in Palestine have taken to college campuses to protest Israeli occupation in Palestine and get college students across the U.S. to think about divestment from Israel... Student-run legislatures at University of California campuses in Berkeley, Irvine and San Diego have passed resolutions urging divestment from Israel..." Students are often surprised at the level of hostility towards Israel that they find at many college campuses, but also don't realize the power they hold to advocate on Israel's behalf. Yet, when armed with information they can counter BDS efforts on campus, write opinion pieces in campus newspapers, organize campus leadership statements, and deliver these statements to their elected representatives in Washington. Moreover, they have the power to educate the future leaders of America about the strong benefits that the U.S.-Israel relationship and the values that both countries share.

Moses insisted that our job as parents and educators is not complete until our children our "talking" about the values we hold dear. We must communicate the importance of our support for the Jewish state to our children, so that they continue to speak out on behalf of Israel long after they leave home. ■