

FEBRUARY 24, 2014

Parashat Pekudei

A Detailed Accounting

These are the accounts of the Tabernacle (Exodus 38:21)

אלה פקודי המשכן (שמות לח:כא)

Rabbi Simcha Raz (see *Shivim Panim L'Torah* vol. 2 p. 249) suggests that the detailed accounting of the exact amounts of money and valuables donated towards the construction here conveys a critical message: “Providing a documented accounting is obligatory for anyone dealing with public funds.” Even Moses, trustworthy as he was, felt compelled to document the proper utilization of funds. With regard to the public welfare, no less than a full, explicit accounting will suffice.

Just as Moses provided a full accounting to the nation to assuage their concerns about misuse of funds, the Obama Administration must similarly continue to alleviate any concerns about violations of current sanctions against Iran.

[The New York Times](#) recently reported that the largest bank in France, BNP Paribas, is suspected of having violated American economic sanctions by doing business with Iran. Officials suspect that the bank “processed transactions for companies and countries—including Iran—that the United States government has sanctioned,” and also suspect that the bank routed some of the transactions through the United States financial system. In response, during a joint press conference with French President François Hollande, President Obama promised to enforce existing sanctions against Iran, warning companies who would do business with Iran in possible violation of existing sanctions that the United States would “come down on them like a ton of bricks.” According to [The Wall Street Journal](#) Obama’s message “underscored the concern of Western officials that sanctions could begin to lose their bite as private firms, encouraged by apparent progress in nuclear talks, explore options to return to Iran.” Congress must demand a complete, detailed accounting of the economic effects of the current sanctions on Iran, as well as transparent evidence that the United States truly is coming down on sanctions violators “like a ton of bricks.” For more on Iran, click [here](#).

Just as Moses gave a detailed accounting in order to forestall any concern of impropriety, the Obama Administration must provide a detailed accounting of U.S. efforts to enforce sanctions already in place against the Islamic regime. ■

A Sound Investment

All of the gold (Exodus 38:24)

כל הזהב (שמות לח:כד)

Why does the text note specifically that “all the gold that was used for the work,” instead of simply referring to “the gold” (38:24), as it does in connection to the silver (38:25) and copper (38:29). Normal construction entails a certain amount of waste shavings lost during grinding, evaporation during purification, etc. Ohr Hachayim (on 38:24) suggests that the word “all” reflects the miraculous nature of the construction of the Tabernacle. In contrast to normal building projects, the construction of the Tabernacle entailed no loss whatsoever. “All of the gold”—every last bit that the nation donated—was used to build the vessels, with no waste on the one hand, and no surplus left over afterwards either. Thus, the nation donated the perfect amount of gold, which precisely matched the need.

Just as the funds for the Tabernacle represented a robust use of the Jewish nation’s riches, the funds that the United States invests in Israel’s security represent a similarly sound investment of American capital.

U.S. security assistance to Israel in the annual foreign aid bill is the most tangible manifestation of American support for the Jewish state, especially during a time of tremendous turmoil in the Middle East. Foreign aid helps advance vital U.S. national security interests, promote American values and develop foreign markets that serve to create jobs at home. Using foreign aid dollars wisely today helps prevent the more costly wars and crises that might otherwise occur, as foreign aid helps to avert unstable areas from becoming breeding grounds for terror, poverty, disease and lawlessness—threats that can spill over into other countries and undermine American interests. Prevention—whether of terror attacks, weapons proliferation, pandemic disease, economic meltdown, societal collapse or the spread of radical ideology—is always cheaper and easier. And, at little more than one percent of the federal budget, foreign aid is a cost-effective and relatively small investment that saves U.S. taxpayers money. Yet, despite years of effort by public policy officials to educate the American public to the contrary, [The Washington Post](#) reported last year that the average American thinks that twenty eight percent of the U.S. budget goes to foreign aid, a level that “would make foreign aid pricier than Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, or all defense spending.” Moreover, when informed of the actual percentage that foreign aid costs in the overall budget, Americans dramatically changed their opinion about foreign aid, with more than half responding that we spend either the right amount on foreign aid or not enough. It is incumbent upon us, as supporters of the U.S.-Israel relationship, to speak out and inform not only our elected officials, but our friends, coworkers and neighbors the true, real facts about U.S. foreign aid. For more on security assistance to Israel, click [here](#).

America’s foreign aid budget is a solid investment of U.S. capitol, which produces tangible benefits and savings for the American people. Like the money dedicated to the Tabernacle, it’s a solid investment by any measure. ■

A Powerful Combination

And Moses saw all the work (Exodus 39:43)

וירא משה את כל המלאכה (שמות לט:מג)

Kli Yakkar (on 39:43) notes that while the text originally refers to the work after it was completed as *avodah* (39:32) when the people finished the construction and presented it to Moses, the work is referred to as *melachah*. What is the difference between the two? He explains that *avodah* refers to specific work. The creation of each vessel required *avodah*. Yet, oftentimes, even high-quality individual works simply do not mesh together. *Melachah* refers to the successful combination of individual parts to form a beautiful finished product. Moses blessed the nation when he saw the *melachah* and recognized that not only were their individual efforts successful, but more importantly, when combined together they successfully formed a beautiful Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle represented the combination of many individual efforts to create a final product that brought the light of spirituality to the world. Recently, an Israeli company unveiled an important project resulting from a combined effort that will literally bring light to the people of East Africa.

Israeli solar energy pioneer Yosef Abramowitz recently announced the construction of a \$23 million solar energy project in Rwanda which will help provide electricity to the energy-starved country as well as save money by turning to the sun for energy rather than to expensive diesel fuel. The solar field, which is already under construction, will be built by Scatec Solar of Norway. Yet, the project was only possible due to the critical contributions of Engergiya, an Israeli company which provided seed money and strategic guidance for the project, investment and planning from American-owned Dutch solar company Gigawatt Global, as well as two critical grants: “The first being the Overseas Private Investment Corporation under President Barack Obama’s Power Africa Initiative... The other was the Energy and Environment Partnership, which includes the British, Finnish and Austrian governments,” [The Times of Israel](#) reported. Each of these unique international partners contributed a critical element that made the dream of solar electricity in Rwanda possible.

The finished Tabernacle represented the combination of individual efforts to form a powerful finished product. Today, Israelis are collaborating with global partners to provide power to the people of one of the poorest nations in Africa. ■

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