



Sermon Tidbits

MARCH 9, 2015

Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei

The Power of Partnership

And Moses assembled (Exodus 35:1)

ויקהל משה (שמות לה:א)

In a ceremony in Jordan last week, Israeli energy minister Silvan Shalom and Jordan's water minister Hazem al Nasser signed an agreement that will bind and benefit the two countries together for decades to come. According to [Newsweek](#), "Israel and Jordan have agreed on a 'historic' \$900 million water sharing project which will replenish the Dead Sea with water from the Red Sea and also supply Israel and Jordan with water." The countries will build a desalination plant in Jordan which will supply water for both countries, and the brine produced from desalination will be pumped into the Dead Sea, guaranteeing the survival of this critical body of water. Most importantly, the two countries will partner together and pool their resources to mutually benefit from each other.

This is exactly the type of partnership Moses envisioned when he gathered the people to construct the Tabernacle. Commenting on the concept of *kehillah* (congregation) which is derived from the word *vayakhel* ("And Moses assembled" – 35:1), Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks [writes](#), "The beauty of a *kehillah*...is that when it is driven by constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals, so that each can say, 'I helped to make this.' That is why, assembling the people on this occasion, Moses emphasizes that each has something different to give."

Jordan and Israel will benefit because they will share their abilities, resources and goodwill and partner to build for the future. Like the nation of Israel who gathered to build the Tabernacle, we achieve our greatest accomplishments when different interests gather together for the common good. ■

Capable Youth

Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur (Exodus 35:30)

בצלאל בן אורי בן חור (שמות לה:ל)

After directly appointing Bezalel by name, proclaiming "See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah," Moses describes in great detail Bezalel's talents and abilities in construction, workmanship, inspiration and wisdom (see 36:30-36). Why does Moses go to such great lengths not only to designate Bezalel as the right choice to lead the construction of the Tabernacle, but to also describe his incredible abilities? Moses might have been concerned that the people would question his choice due to a simple factor: his age. According to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 69), at the time he was chosen to head the project Bezalel was 13 years old! Moses insisted that regardless of age, Bezalel's capability and talent made him the ideal candidate to lead the project.

One of the most exciting aspects of AIPAC's recent Policy Conference was the passion, exuberance and drive of the thousands of young people who gathered in Washington to advocate on behalf of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. These young people came from hundreds of high school and colleges, and represent a critical force standing for Israel on campuses across the country – an increasingly difficult mission, in light of growing anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment at many institutions of higher learning. We must applaud the capable young people who have already gotten involved in Israel advocacy, and encourage young people with the talent, inclination and ability to make a difference to get involved. Their voice isn't just important for tomorrow; our youth are making a difference for Israel today. ■

Sufficient Supplies

For the stuff they had was sufficient (Exodus 36:7)

והמלאכה היתה דיים (שמות לו: ז)

Imagine working with just enough supplies to get the job done once. Imagine a painter with just enough paint to cover the job – not a drop more. Now compare his or her work with a colleague who paints with an ample supply of material. Which painter will produce better results? Clearly, the person working with ample materials will be more effective because she works differently. She can work without constantly worrying whether she'll run out of the supplies she needs to get the job done right. A person with limited supplies is hamstrung in critical ways. This person is always afraid of running out of necessary supplies, so he or she uses a bit less and does a less perfect job.

Fortunately for Bezalel, the largess of the Jewish nation allowed him to work like a painter with ample paint when constructing the Tabernacle. When Moses put out the call for the people to donate towards the construction of the Tabernacle, the nation emphatically answered that call by giving so much material that Moses actually had to call for them to stop giving. When describing the amount of material donated by the people, the text seems to contradict itself, relating that “the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.” (Exodus 36:7). Ohr Hachayyim, noting the contradiction asks simply: Which was it? “If it was sufficient, then there wasn't too much, and if there was too much, then it wasn't sufficient?” Did they collect just the right amount, or too much? Answering this question, S'forno explains that they gave just the right amount, “in such a way that they would not have to minimize the manner of their work out of worry that they run out of raw material.” Bezalel worked with the most expensive supplies in the world: gold and silver, fine linens, exotic woods and animal skins – not materials available at the craft store. Moreover, these were goods donated by the nation for a holy purpose, and not to be wasted. Yet, the people gave enough that Bezalel could work without worrying whether he'd run out. He had enough to paint two coats of gold – or three if he felt it necessary. He never felt the need to hold back out of fear that he'd run out. He had extra – and that was just enough!

Imagine trying to protect a country working with the same restrictions. Imagine wondering, every time you fired a mortar, whether you'd have enough ammunition to protect the soldiers on the ground and complete your objective. Imagine being an IDF soldier manning an Iron Dome Battery – and in addition to having to account for the wind, weather, range, and target area before deciding whether to fire the rocket, your commanding officer also told you, “We have a very limited supply of rockets. We can't shoot all of the Kassams down. So choose carefully.” Which rockets should be shot down: those fired at Be'er Sheva or Tel Aviv? Thankfully, those soldiers never have to make such a choice, because the military support delivered from the United States to Israel ensures that IDF soldiers need not fear running out of supplies in their defense of the Jewish State.

According to [The Times of Israel](#), among the many elements of the [U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014](#) passed by Congress and signed by President Obama late last year is the authorization of “an increase of \$200 million in the value of US weapons held in forward stockpiles in Israel, to a total of \$1.8 billion. In the event of an emergency, Israel can access the stockpiles as long as it reimburses the U.S. for any weapons used.” This legislation serves as the latest example of how the United States has always stood by Israel in times of need, from the critical military resupply mission [Operation Nickel Grass](#) during the Yom Kippur War to the transfer of crucial weapons during last summer's Gaza War. In his [address to Congress](#) last week, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu noted just a few of the examples of the personal assistance that Israel has received from U.S. President Barack Obama. After mentioning assistance with the Carmel fire of 2010 and crucial, timely help with a crisis in Cairo in 2011, Netanyahu also noted Obama's “support for more missile interceptors during our operation last summer when we took on Hamas terrorists.”

America's ironclad commitment to Israel's security ensures that IDF soldiers and commanders can take the necessary actions to protect and defend the people of Israel, without ever having to worry about whether they'll run out of the supplies they need to get the job done. Like Bezalel, the extra materials they have really are “just enough.” ■

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