

V'asita ---And You Shall Make

There are doers. There are makers. And there are talkers.

In this week's Torah portion, *Terumah* (Exodus 25:1- 27:19), we find instructions for building the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle that was our first, formal place of worship. It is important to note that after the revelation at Mount Sinai, we did not stay and venerate that mountain. Consider the fact that there was never a Jewish tradition that encouraged pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. Indeed, there is not even a consensus as to the exact location of Sinai. Rather, we were instructed to build a Tabernacle and later a Temple and later still, *Betei Knesset*, houses of worship and study that we lovingly call synagogues; places where we could gather for worship, study and nurturing our Jewish family and faith. As it is written in this week's *parashah*:

V'asu li mikdash v'shkhanti b'tokham, And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them (Exodus 25:8).

Therefore, in every generation we came together and built together. The *mitzvah* is in the doing. Thirty times in our Torah portion we find the imperative: *V'asita, And you shall make!* Thirty times we are commanded to be doers and makers---and not just talkers of extravagant and empty promises.

This coming week, Rabbi Susan and I will be in Washington, D.C. with some 18,000 others for the annual AIPAC Policy Conference. AIPAC is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and it is the most significant and

effective organization dedicated to enhancing pro-Israel and American relations. Joining us at the Conference will be more than a dozen Temple Sinai members, some 4,000 student leaders, thousands of people from different faiths, and the vast majority of the members of Congress. In this era of partisan bickering, the AIPAC Policy Conference is the largest gathering of bipartisan cooperation in the nation. Democrats and Republicans standing together to reaffirm our support for Israel.

Normally, nearly all the Presidential candidates speak at the AIPAC Conference. This year, however, because the Conference falls on the eve of and the very day of “Super Tuesday,” most of the Democrat Presidential candidates will not be able to make a personal appearance. Still, Mayor Mike Bloomberg will address the gathering and I won’t be surprised if former Vice President Joe Biden, a frequent “star” of the Conference finds the time to attend. Others may as well. However, one candidate made a big point to say that he will not attend. Of course, it is the right of any person or any candidate to attend or not to attend. Schedules and demands can get the better of us. But a politician cannot attack AIPAC’s unique gathering of bipartisan cooperation and then have the audacity to claim that he/she “favors Israel’s right to live in peace.” How disingenuous! Their cold calculation banks on the growing scourge of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric on the radical fringes of society to enhance their election campaign. And how very cynical it is for them to say that Israel, the home of 7 million Jews and more than a million Arab Christians and Muslims has “the right to exist.” It is quite telling that those same candidates do not speak of the vital necessity of American support to protect Israel from

Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas and the existential threats from Hezbollah, and the murderous regimes of Syria and Iran.

Note that AIPAC does not “back” one political party or another either in the United States or in Israel. Prime Ministers of Israel and their opponents are both given the main stage to speak at the Policy Conference. So, one can tell a great deal about the true character a Presidential candidate who mischaracterizes the substance, content and intent of AIPAC. Yes, we understand that certain candidates are so desperate to achieve their political aspirations that they fall prey to exaggeration, posturing, and in the most heinous of cases, demonizing vulnerable groups to gain populist favor. We understand it...and we are saddened by it. It is a sin committed by candidates of both parties.

In contrast to the talk, talk, talking by campaigns of divisiveness, the Torah extols us to be makers and creators of sacred places for us to gather and elevate humanity. 18,000 of us makers and doers will be in Washington DC to meet with leaders of both parties in order to strengthen American-Israel bonds and to lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence of all people and nations around the world. Know that you can watch many of the speeches and presentations at the AIPAC Policy Conference by logging on to:

<https://watch.aipac.org>.

May the Torah portion of *Shabbat Terumah* remind each of us that we have positive and blessed gifts to help make this world a better place!

Shabbat Shalom!

Rick

Rabbi Rick Rheins