

How One Man Helped Fulfill Isaiah 35 in Israel

Many of you have heard about Israel's "start-up nation" reputation. Israel has more start-ups (new cutting-edge businesses designed to grow rapidly) per capita than almost any other nation. Why are we so successful? Simple: Because when you are fighting for survival, losing is not an option.

The Loser?

I have to be honest. I have never been a fan of Shimon Peres. In my lifetime, he was known as a left-wing dove—even nicknamed "loser" because of number of political campaigns he lost. However, I decided to read his appropriately titled autobiography, *No Room for Small Dreams*, published just after his death. I was stunned to find out how crucial his contribution had been to Israel's survival.

In 1960, Shimon Peres was a civil servant. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion kept him out of politics so he could use him as he wished. Already in his 20s, Shimon proved himself indispensable. When the first leader of the Israeli army told Ben-Gurion it was impossible to arm the military, because it was illegal for other nations to sell Israel weapons, Peres was tasked with the job. With no experience, the "dreamer" found a way and made secret deals that resulted in Israel winning the War of Independence.

Dare to Dream

Next, he teamed up with an American pilot to create Israel's aviation industry. Israel had no money, and Peres had many detractors. But the dreamer dreamed on, and with the prime minister's blessing, he succeeded.

When everyone told him it would be impossible to rescue the

hostages at Entebbe in 1976, he kept looking for a military option—so that there would be no negotiations with terrorists. He remembered his mentor, Prime Minister Ben- Gurion, saying, “If an expert says it can’t be done, get another expert.” In the end, the hostages were rescued, and a movie was made about it.

Peres Goes Nuclear

However, I was deeply moved by how his tenacity and never-say-never mentality resulted in the acquisition of nuclear power for Israel. On a whim, one day in France, he asked the prime minister if he could have permission to speak to the French about helping Israel obtain nuclear power—for energy. It was preposterous. As a nation, we were a mere 12 years old. But after just a few moments, the French leaders came back and said they would help. Peres was stunned.

“Golda Meir [who would become prime minister] insisted that such a project would hurt Israel’s relationship with the United States, while Isser Harel, the Mossad chief, raised fears of a Soviet response. Some predicted an invasion by ground forces, while others envisioned an attack from the air. The head of the foreign relations committee said he feared the project would be ‘so expensive that we shall be left without bread and even without rice’.”

Not to Be Dissuaded

Peres pushed on, looking for scientists and engineers. Despite the rejection from top officials, he had the confidence of the prime minister. I have always found that, in ministry, if I have the backing of leadership, I can face any critic or opposition. However, even the scientists thought he was nuts. Even if the French helped, how could they learn nuclear science in a matter of months?

“Innovation, I have come to understand, is always an uphill climb. But rarely does it find so many obstacles arrayed

against it at all once. We had no money, no engineers, no support from the physics community or the Cabinet or the military leadership or the opposition.”

Because the government would not give this “fantasy” a budget, Peres went around the world and raised millions of dollars. He then approached the physicist Albert Einstein said was the best, and he joined the cause. In short order, Peres assembled a team, and they went to France to study.

The Desert Blossoms (Isaiah 35)

Next, they would start building the reactor in Dimona. You have to understand—Dimona is in the middle of the desert. His team lived in upscale Haifa and Tel Aviv. Who wants to raise their kids in sand and dirt? But the dreamer sold his vision, and they came. He explained to them, and to their French counterparts, that he would build a city for them—and he did!

When we think of the prophetic passages in Isaiah about the desert bursting into bloom, we think of the fact that Israel grow roses in the desert, has a highly successful dairy farm and has learned how to grow root vegetables in the wilderness heat (Normally these vegetables grow in colder climates like Russia.). But building a nuclear reactor in the middle of the desert is just as prophetic—if not more.

Near-Disaster!

However, everything nearly fell apart when the French prime minister was about to be voted out of office. Peres needed his signature, and that of his foreign minister, to ensure that the relationship would continue with the next administration. Panicked, he hopped on a plane to Paris. First, he met with the foreign minister who was against the proposal.

“I wanted to be sure he understood the power he held in his hands, and the consequence of his decision, one way or the other. This was not a moment that would be forgotten; it was

one upon which history would hinge.”

Peres persuaded him. Stunned by his good fortune, he now sought an audience with the prime minister, who was in Parliament, fighting for his job. He took time out to meet with Peres and told him to wait for him in his office, but he never came back to sign the document. By the end of the day, he was ousted from office.

The next day, Peres met with him, downcast, knowing they had failed. Finally, the dreamer had come face to face with reality. There would be no nuclear Israel. But then ...

“[The former prime minister] took a piece of stationery from a desk that was no longer his and drafted a letter to the chairman of the French Atomic Energy Commission. The French government had approved the deal, he confirmed, and the chairman should fully cooperate in its execution. He signed it as France’s prime minister. At the top of the page, he wrote the previous day’s date.”

Maybe this was one reason why Peres did not allow this book to be published until after his death—Israel obtained nuclear power through a forged document!

Peres goes on to say, being careful not to reveal if we actually have nuclear weapons, (psst ... we do) that the idea that we might have them served as the greatest deterrent to war.

As a believer, I have learned that the biggest miracles come when you dare to dream big.

For truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be thrown into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you will have them (Mark 11:23-24).

Footnote: Recently Prime Minister Netanyahu, once a bitter political enemy of Shimon Peres, announced that the Dimona nuclear reactor would be named after Peres. {eoa}

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