

JULY 29, 2013

Parashat Re'eh

Seeing the Difference

Behold... (Deuteronomy 11:26)**ראה (דברים יא:כו)**

When instructing the Jewish people to choose divine blessings by following the commandments, and to avoid the curses that result from abandoning those same commandments, Moses told them “Behold”—to look carefully at the two options placed before them. Why did he specifically invoke the visual sense (as opposed to hearing—as in “*Shema Yisrael*”? S’forno (on 11:26) explains that Moses specifically instructed the people to look so they could easily identify the variances between the two options from which they must choose. “Look and see, so that you will not follow the middle path, as most do, for I place before you a blessing and a curse.”

Moses reminded the people to open their eyes to easily see the wide difference between following the path of good or evil. The international community must similarly open its eyes and recognize the true nature of Hezbollah.

In a major change of its policy toward the Middle East, the European Union took an important and long overdue step, placing Hezbollah’s military wing on its terror list, the [Associated Press](#) reported. The E.U.’s 28 foreign ministers unanimously reached their decision, blacklisting the Lebanese terrorist organization and imposing visa bans and asset freezes upon it. Israel’s Justice Minister, Tzipi Livni said, “Finally, after years of deliberations, the claim that Hezbollah is a legitimate political party has rightfully failed. Now it is clear to the entire world that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization,” she said. The Iranian-backed terror group, which has dramatically upgraded the range and lethality of its weapons stockpiles since 2006, was responsible for a lethal suicide [bombing](#) on a bus in the Bulgarian resort of Burgas last July, which killed five Israeli tourists. Still, the E.U. designation attempts to distinguish between Hezbollah’s “political” and “military” wings, a distinction the U.S. rejects. According to the State Department, “the United States does not distinguish between Hezbollah’s political/military/terrorist wings. Hezbollah’s numerous branches and subsidiaries share common funding, personnel, and leadership, all of which support the group’s violent actions.” While this new designation is a welcome first step, the E.U. must go further and sanction all of Hezbollah, and abandon the false distinction it has created between the group’s military and political wings. The entire group—and all its wings—promote the murder of innocents. For more on Hezbollah, click [here](#).

Just as Moses instructed the Children of Israel to see the two vastly different choices in order to reject a middle path, the E.U. must similarly choose to reject a path that only labels one wing of Hezbollah a terrorist organization. ■

A Path of Thorns

A blessing and a curse (Deuteronomy 11:26)**ברכה וקללה (דברים יא:כו)**

Rosh, in his commentary on the Torah, (on 11:26), describes the decision between a life of following the commandments versus a life of abandoning them. Rosh uses a parable that illustrates the challenges of choosing the meaningful life of *mitzvot*. “A parable is told of an elder who sat at a fork in the road...One path was initially thorny but ended smoothly. The other began smoothly but ended in thorns. [The elder] warned the travelers and said to them, ‘Although you see this path begins with thorns, take it and not the other, for it ends smoothly.’ Anyone who listened

to him and took the thorny path and made a bit of effort would ultimately travel easily and in peace...” While the better path is more difficult at the outset, following that path pays great dividends in the end.

The elder encouraged the travelers to take the initially thorny path because it would prove better in the end. As Egypt struggles to create a more open, moderate society, the leadership must recognize that the challenges it faces now can greatly pay off later on.

Legal experts recently began work on rewriting Egypt’s constitution. The original constitution was approved by a government referendum last year, but critics claimed the version failed to protect minorities and human rights. According to [Bloomberg News](#), “[Mohamed] Morsi pushed a constitution through a referendum last year, ignoring opponents who said the document favors Islamists and infringes on basic rights.” According to [Reuters](#), military leaders set a an ambitious timeframe for the revisions, calling for elections in around six months and tasking a panel of ten legal experts to present proposed changes to the current Islamist-tinged document within 30 days. A spokesman for Egypt’s main secular alliance, the National Salvation Front, called the start of constitutional revisions “a very positive development.” In response, Muslim Brotherhood leaders have shown no signs that it is ready to engage with the new administration or the army, demanding the full reinstatement of ex-president Morsi and staging round-the-clock demonstrations in Cairo. Israel and the U.S. have stressed that any new constitution must safeguard the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed at Camp David in 1979. For more on Egypt, click [here](#).

While Egypt struggles to draft a new constitution, the choice to follow the thorny path of greater freedom and inclusion, while difficult now, will prove wise and pay dividends for the people of Egypt down the road. ■

Following Through

The blessing, if you shall listen (Deuteronomy 11:27)

את הברכה אשר תשמעו (דברים יא:כו)

Kli Yakkar (on 11:27) notes that whenever the Torah commands us to listen, soon afterwards we are also instructed to take action to follow through on that listening. For example, earlier in Deuteronomy Moses told the people that they will be rewarded “because you listen to these ordinances, and keep, and do them” (7:12). Listening must always be followed with action. This, Kli Yakkar explains, is because “listening only has in it the acceptance of words in thought, independent of whether he will accept upon himself [to in fact follow through] with action.” Accepting an idea in one’s heart is not enough. Rather, one must follow through on that mental acquiescence with concrete action.

Kli Yakkar reminds us that hearing and accepting an idea must be followed with concrete action. As the Palestinians recently agreed in principle to return to talks with Israel, they must follow through and return to the negotiating table.

Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the Palestinian leadership agreed to meet with Israelis to resume long-stalled peace negotiations, [The Times of Israel](#) reported. After more than three years of stalemate, the two sides will reunite in Washington to engage in talks without preconditions. “We have reached an agreement that establishes a basis for resuming negotiations. This is a significant and welcome step forward,” Kerry said in a press conference in Amman. “Both sides understand that the difficult road ahead is worth traveling. They have courageously recognized that in order to live side by side, they must begin by sitting together in direct talks,” he added. The diplomats set to meet in Washington are Israeli Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, Isaac Molho (an aid to the Israeli Prime Minister), and Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat. Despite Israel’s willingness to make concessions on a final status agreement, peace talks between the sides have been stalled since 2010, as the Palestinian leadership has thus far refused to resume talks until a myriad of preconditions are accepted. For more on the peace process, click [here](#).

For years the U.S. and Israel have encouraged the Palestinian Authority to return to negotiations with Israel. While they have recently agreed to a framework for negotiations, as Kli Yakkar reminds us they must follow through with action that can lead to a final peace agreement. ■

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