

JANUARY 6, 2014

## Parashat Beshalach

### Selective Vision

**What have we done? (Exodus 14:5)**

**מה זאת עשינו (שמות יד:ה)**

When the Jews turned towards the desert after leaving Egypt, Pharaoh and his servants chased after them proclaiming, “What have we done, that we have let Israel go from serving us (14:5). Rabbeinu Yerucham, in his ethical work Da’at Chachman U’ mussar (3:26) wonders what the Egyptians were thinking. After all, they didn’t let Israel go; they were coerced to release the Jews through a series of devastating plagues! How could they so quickly forget the past? He explains that human nature causes us to adjust the facts to match our desires. Pharaoh’s desire for vengeance overwhelmed his ability to see the truth. Rabbeinu Yerucham writes that once a person chooses a course of action, “Then he is seduced by all types of seductive arguments which lead him to refuse to relent one iota.”

The Egyptians chose to only see what they wanted to see so that they could recapture the escaped slaves. Sadly, a group of academics recently based a vote to boycott Israel by also only seeing what they want to see regarding the conflict in the Middle East.

In December, the 5,000-member American Studies Association (ASA) voted to boycott Israel citing “Israel’s violation of international law and U.N. resolutions among reasons for boycott of Israeli academic institutions,” [Haaretz](#) reported. The boycott “bars the ASA as an organization from ‘formal collaborations with Israeli academic institutions, or with scholars who are expressly serving as representatives or ambassadors of those institutions... or on behalf of the Israeli government.’” In a letter to the ASA, Israeli Ambassador the United States Ron Dermer [wrote](#), “rather than standing up for academic freedom and human rights by boycotting countries where professors were imprisoned for their views, [the ASA] chose to lash out against Israel, where academics are free to say what they want, write what they want and research what they want.” Thankfully, numerous universities repudiated the ASA’s action. Recently, The Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations [announced](#) that over 100 American Universities are in opposition of the ASA boycott. “We are pleased that we have reached a major milestone with over 100 universities publicly claiming their opposition to the boycott...” In response to the boycott vote, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said, “Targeting Israeli institutions solely because they are in Israel—the only democratic country in the Middle East where scholarship and debate are encouraged and flourish—is based on a myopic and fundamentally distorted perspective of Israel and the conflict and is manifestly unjust.”

Just as Pharaoh ignored the facts to justify his desire to take vengeance against the Jews, a group of American academics are ignoring the facts in order to single out and criticize the Jewish state. ■

### Self-Destructive Hatred

**And he made ready his chariots (Exodus 14:6)**

**ויאסור את רכבו (שמות יד:ו)**

According to Rashi (on 14:6), rather than having his servants ready his chariots on his behalf, Pharaoh himself readied his own chariot. Moreover, Rashi explains that by taking this active role the Pharaoh convinced the Egyptians to follow him in his blind, bloody pursuit of the fleeing Jewish nation. Chizkuni, noting Rashi’s comment adds, “From

this we derive that hatred ‘perverts the rod.’” Blinded by his hatred for the Jewish nation, Pharaoh defied logic, custom and common sense in a mad pursuit that destroyed not only his rule, but devastated his country.

Like Pharaoh, whose blind hatred caused him to ignore reason and follow a self-destructive path, the Hamas terrorist regime in Gaza, blinded by hatred for Israel, continues its self-destructive pursuit of conflict, terrorism and murder.

On the same day that [The New York Times](#) reported that Hamas legislators “approved a 2014 budget totaling \$589 million for the Gaza Strip that included a staggering 75 percent deficit, militants in Gaza [launched](#) an upgraded ballistic rocket into the Mediterranean Sea, testing an improved version of the 200mm M-75 Missile, which, with a range of about 80 kilometers (50 miles), can reach much of Israel’s heartland, including Tel Aviv. During Israel’s brief war with Hamas in November 2012, a number of M-75 rockets, which are manufactured based on Iranian technology, were fired at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Over the past several weeks, Hamas has engaged in numerous attacks against Israel, including the [killing of an Israeli working](#) on the border fence, and the firing of rockets at Israel’s southern region, including one that landed next to a [children’s bus stop](#) in the Ashkelon area. In response, Israel deployed its Iron Dome batteries in the south as a precautionary measure. Hamas, which rejects Israel’s right to exist and actively seeks its destruction, believes the complete annihilation of Israel can be the only resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To that end since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, it and other terrorist groups have fired nearly 7,000 rockets into Israel, and smuggled sophisticated Iranian weapons, including advanced anti-tank and anti-aircraft rockets, into Gaza in tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border. For more on Hamas, click [here](#).

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh’s hatred for the Jews propelled him on a self-destructive quest. Today, Hamas’ blind hatred for Israel has prompted the group to follow a similarly self-destructive path of violence, murder and terrorism. ■

## Demonstrating a Commitment

**When Moses held up his hand (Exodus 17:11)**

**כֹּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ (שְׁמוֹת יז:יא)**

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During the battle against Amalek, “when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed” (17:11). The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 29a) explains that Moses’ raised hands encouraged the fighters to gaze towards the heavens, instilling in them the faith that brought them to victory. Ayal Hoz interpreted this action differently writing that “Moses’ hands served to psychologically boost morale, representing a clear demonstration of the fact that Moses believed that the nation would triumph.”

Like Moses’ hands, which gave the Israelites the advantage in their battle with Amalek, the United States recently affirmed its commitment to ensuring Israel’s advantage against its adversaries in the Middle East.

By a resounding 399-0 vote, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly backed the Israel Qualitative Military Edge Act (H.R. 1992), enabling Israel to enhance its qualitative military edge (QME) in the region—a critical piece of Israel’s defense. The United States has long played an active role in protecting Israel’s QME over regional adversaries and militant groups in the Middle East. The House’s unanimous vote for H.R. 1992 signals a clear interest on the part of lawmakers to reinforce American efforts to deter conflicts in the region and help the Jewish state advance its national security priorities. The bipartisan bill, co-authored by Reps. Doug Collins (R-GA) and Brad Schneider (D-IL), requires the president to submit an assessment of weapons systems sales to countries in the Middle East every two years. Previous legislation required the executive branch to report on Israel’s QME every four years. Additionally, the new bill ensures that threats of cyber warfare will be assessed in future analyses. Congressman Peter Roskam (R., Ill.) [urged](#) the House of Representatives to pass the Israel Qualitative Military Edge (QME) Enhancement Act. “As we know, when Israel is strong in the Middle East, good things happen,” Roskam said. “This is not just for Israel’s sake, but it’s clearly in the best interest of the United States.”

Ayal Hoz interpreted Moses’ raised hands as a clear demonstration that he believed that the Jewish nation would triumph. Today, by unanimously standing behind legislation that enables Israel to enhance its QME over its regional adversaries, the House of Representative is also demonstrating that it believes the Jewish state will triumph. ■

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