

JUNE 9, 2014

Parashat Shelach Lecha

Praising the Land

Send out men (Numbers 13:2)

שלח לך אנשים (במדבר יג:ב)

In Parashat Shelach Lecha we read that God commanded Moses to send out the spies, while in the retelling of the story in Deuteronomy (1:22) Moses relates that the idea to send the spies came from the people. In Rabbi Yosef Karo's work *Maggid Meisharim*, he explains that the nation was unworthy to enter the Land due to sinful behavior in the desert. To bring them merit, God placed into their hearts the idea to send spies who would not only praise the Land themselves, but would cause the nation to praise the Land with great joy and excitement. Sadly, things did not go as planned. Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg writes, "From that time there is an obligation upon the leaders of Israel to speak in praise about the Land of Israel, to fix that which the people damaged in their sinful slander of the Land."

Parshat Shelach Lecha reminds us of the great merit of praising the blessings of the Land of Israel. Today, we not only praise the Land for its agriculture, but for the great blessings which Israel and its citizens bring to the world.

While in ancient times we praised the Land of Israel for "flowing with milk and honey," today Israel flows with high-tech advances. Recently, an Israeli company announced an amazing innovation that has the potential not only to change the lives of millions of women around the world, but to save many of those lives in the process. According to the website Israel21c.org, "After eight years of painstaking research, Israeli life-sciences company Eventus Diagnostics (EventusDx) has produced a blood test for the early detection of breast cancer." The Octava Pink test, which is now available in Israel and Italy and is undergoing clinical trials to receive US Food and Drug Administration approval, is the first blood test ever that can reveal cancer, and not merely markers that might indicate cancer or something else. Moreover, the blood test has a much higher accuracy rate than the biopsies currently used today (95 percent accuracy for healthy women and 75 percent accuracy for those with breast cancer, compared with only a 50 percent accuracy rate for biopsies).

The sin of the spies reminds us that we must make every effort to counter those who slander Israel by praising its merits. Thankfully, the modern state of Israel, flowing with blessings, gives those who praise it a lot to talk about. ■

Danger at the Border

Amalek dwells in the land of the South (Numbers 13:29)

עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב (במדבר יג:כט)

As they laid out their findings on the dangers lurking in the Holy Land, the ten spies reported that Amalek, which had fought with Jews following the Exodus from Egypt, had settled in the south of Israel. The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 16:11) notes that Amalek dwelled well to the southeast of Israel. What was it doing dwelling in the Negev? "For Esau had commanded [Amalek] (his great-grandson) to travel in advance of them and meet them on the way [in battle]." At the instruction of Esau, the people of Amalek left their normal homeland of Seir and dwelled in the Negev, hoping to attack Israel as it passed through the expected path towards the Land of Israel.

Like Amalek which left its homeland to instigate a battle with Israel, tens of thousands of terrorists have migrated to Syria creating instability and the potential for great danger both in the Middle East, and around the world.

The civil war in Syria, now in its fourth year, has long presented Israel with the danger of violence and bloodshed at its border. Yet, as Hezbollah continues to fight alongside the Assad regime, the turmoil in Syria has created a unique opportunity for Al Qaeda and other Islamist groups. [Time Magazine](#), in a story on a new report by the Soufan Group notes, “In just three years, 12,000 foreign fighters have traveled to Syria to fight, creating a terrorism incubator that may prove dangerous not only to Israel, but to the West...The greatest concern about terrorism resides in the perhaps 3,000 fighters the report says traveled to Syria from Western countries to fight with rebel groups dominated by Islamic extremists...The fundamentalists might in time choose to direct violence against Western targets, ‘the far enemy’ in the parlance of al-Qaeda— and recruit those battle-hardened foreign fighters to return to their home countries and carry out attacks.” This past month, a French citizen who had fought for a year in Syria killed three people at a Jewish museum in Belgium.

Amalek left its homeland to attack the fledgling Jewish nation in Israel. Today, thousands of radical Islamists have migrated to Syria, where they develop into battle-hardened soldiers devoted to the ideals of terrorism and jihad. ■

Unavoidable Consequence

I have pardoned according to your word (Numbers 14:19)

סלחתי כדברך (במדבר יד:יט)

When God threatens the people with the terrible punishment of instant annihilation following the sin of the spies, Moses pleads for forgiveness, which God grants. Yet, in the very next verse (14:20) God tells Moses that the people who refused to believe in the nation’s ability to conquer the Land would perish as they wander for forty years in the desert. If God had indeed forgiven the people, why were they punished? Ohr Hachayim (on verse 20) explains that they were only partially forgiven. Moses had only asked that the nation not be destroyed immediately. God insisted that, “Nonetheless, I must impose justice upon them with patience and slowness to anger.” The terrible sin of the spies could not be swept under the rug. The people had to bear the consequences of their actions.

Just as the Jewish nation was forced to bear the consequences of its destructive choice, the Palestinian Authority must also accept the consequences of its destructive choice to form a unity government including the terrorists of Hamas.

Last week, after Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas swore in a new unity government which includes the Islamist group Hamas, senior U.S. lawmakers said that they would be reluctant to send aid to the new government. While President Abbas could have continued to pursue the peace process with his willing partner, Israel, he instead chose to align with Hamas, a terrorist organization that perpetrates terror attacks against Israel and has consistently refused to accept the Quartet principles of recognizing Israel, rejecting violence and accepting previous Israel-Palestinian agreements. Representatives from both parties in Congress decried the unity government. “Hamas is no partner for peace; nor a legitimate recipient of aid,” Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement. Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) said, “I am deeply disappointed with the announcement today of a Palestinian government that includes the terrorist organization Hamas. As long as Hamas rejects the Quartet principles and the existence of the State of Israel, United States funding for this unity government is in jeopardy.”

The U.S. Congress authorizes the nearly \$500 million in annual aid Washington sends to the Palestinian Authority (PA). U.S. law is clear—no funds can be provided to a Palestinian government in which Hamas participates or has undue influence. Therefore, America should suspend aid to the PA while it conducts a thorough review of continued U.S. assistance to ensure that the law is completely followed and implemented. The U.S. should further reject any attempts to downplay Hamas’ role in the government and closely monitor PA spending to ensure no funds are supporting Hamas, it’s “security forces” or propaganda.

Just as those who sinned in the desert bore the consequences of their misguided choice, the Palestinian Authority must also suffer the consequences of its choice to align with terrorists, rather than pursue lasting peace with Israel. ■

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